

DRAFT

**Meeting Report from the Economic Programme Management Group (EPMG)
Tuesday 28 October 2004**

Chair: Ned O'Connor

Attended: Liam Browne, Oliver Clancy, John Condon, Tommy Cooke, Michael Dee, Toss Hayes, Walter Heneghan, Eileen Horgan, Bernard Lennon, Donal Mullane, Caroline O'Reilly, John Quinn.

Apologies: Isabel Cambie, Claire Cashman, John Doyle, Celine McHugh, Nicholas Ryan, Billy Shoer.

Meeting

Agenda Item 1: Liam Browne (community sector) and Walter Heneghan (business sector) were introduced and welcomed to the group.

Agenda Item 2: The Chair outlined the progress made so far with the Ballingarrane estate.

- The IDA has received planning permission for their 50-acre site. It is anticipated that site development will start in 2005.
- Tipperary Institute has made a decision in principle to move to Ballingarrane, the cost is another matter and has to be agreed within the Department of Education.
- The hotel site has been sold to a developer, who is confident that they can bring a top niche operator on board. It is expected that planning permission will be sought before the end of the year.

Agenda Item 3: Imaging Group

- **Public Affairs Unit (PAU)**

John Condon circulated an update (attached) on progress to date.

- **Information Unit (IU)**

This unit has identified what economic data is available. The group now reacts to queries as they arise.

- **Hotel Unit**

The hotel at Ballykisteen is most advanced. There are about ten other hotel projects in process in the county. It remains to be seen how many of these will proceed – the tax break deadline may be a determining factor. This unit has completed its task in marketing the county and attracting hotel interests and has now closed.

There was discussion around the importance to the county of the Cahir bypass being included as part of the Dublin/Cork dual carriageway. The provision of dual carriageway infrastructure is needed in the county if the county is to maintain economic growth. There is potential for logistics hubs to accompany infrastructure development. Plans are progressing for a significant hub at Limerick Junction.

Agenda Item 4: 'Ahead of the Curve'

Michael Dee from Enterprise Ireland made a presentation (attached) outlining the main points from the Ahead of the Curve document. Currently the document is still a report and there is an interdepartmental group working on it. The group will be reporting to the Minister within the next week or two. There are many recommendations in the report, but it remains to be seen which ones will be adopted. It is likely that there will be some significant changes in agencies by the new year.

Discussion included

- Need to grow indigenous business
- Need to train labour force – new FÁS competency development programme - emphasis on training workers
- Need for continued state aid through the dev. companies for new micro set-ups
- Omissions in the report: of failure of deregulation; over regulation; role of migrant workers; cost of energy
- Need to keep significant manufacturing job numbers. Increase in service jobs brings more risk as services can close down/move out overnight.
- Sustainability of minimum wage economy

The Report will have been accepted by the next meeting of the EPMG group and the CDB economic strategy will be reviewed next year (5 year review). Locally we can focus on

- One step up – FÁS competency development programme
- Entrepreneurs
- Broadband infrastructure
- Collaboration (on boards such as the EPMG)

We will need the government decision on the document before we can respond to it.

Action: Work will begin on the economic strategy review next year. All members will be asked for input.

Agenda Item 5: Broadband

Don Davern outlined the position on broadband rollout in the county and in the country. Don emphasised the need for the County Council to drive the roll out. The telcos won't do it as they do not have the resources. The county councils will have to ensure that there is ducting in place for rent, this is the only way that there will be competition and a drop in price.

The main issues arising:

- Connectivity between Dublin and Clonmel

There are just two options currently – via Eircom and BTESAT fixed lines – both of which are very expensive. Waterford is already connected via an additional ESB wrap around system. Clonmel, Kilkenny City and Carlow are not connectable to Dublin (and to international links).

- Connectivity within South Tipperary

Iarnród Éireann has an under-utilised infrastructure which could be used to connect Cahir, Tipperary Town and Carrick-on-Suir into Clonmel (assuming that Clonmel has got competitive connectivity to Dublin).

- Roll out of broadband

General policy in the towns – Need to roll out more ducting as opportunities arise to new housing estates and when additional street works are being undertaken – local authority needs to maintain ownership of these ducts.

Tipperary Town and Carrick on Suir – priority has to be for metropolitan area networks with ducting similar to Clonmel.

Cahir is preparing an application for broadband through SERA. The current approach is to consider wireless. It has not been finalised yet.

Cashel – Major difficulty in that its not on a rail line – it will have only one option to connect with outside world – via Eircom – no competition – costs likely to be high – satellite an option but slow.

Rural areas – satellite seems best option.

Michael Dee indicated that Cahir is involved in an INTEREG wireless project that is likely to go ahead next year.

Action: It was agreed that a working group would be set up to determine the best way forward with the roll out of broadband in the region. Many of the issues are regional/national, so it might best be tackled regionally. The Chair will follow up with regional managers.

Agenda Item 6: Action Reports

Updates are on the website. www.southtippcdb.ie under action implementation/economic group/October 2004.

The action 1.2.4 has been completed. Michael Dee outlined the promotional campaign to attract graduate emigrants back to the region. There was very little interest by graduates in returning to the area. There were 5 expressions of interest.

Action: Michael Dee to enquire if the database produced is available to the CDB.

Agenda Item 7: AOB

Tipperary Town has had the announcement of 30 jobs with the decentralisation of the Security Regulator. They will be housed in the old garda building. This is an extra allocation of decentralised jobs.

There are now over €80m in wind energy projects in with planning with the County Council. There are issues that need to be resolved.

- Connections to the national grid need to be prioritised.
- The Landscape Characteristics Report could be described as over prescriptive and over descriptive. The report will be going out for public consultation soon and members of the EMPG will have the opportunity to address these issues.

Agenda Item 8: Next meeting

Next meeting will be on Tuesday 22 February @ 2.15pm in Carrick-on-Suir. Venue to be identified.