



Comhshaol, Pobal agus Rialtas Áitiúil  
Environment, Community and Local Government



**Circular      LG 1/2015**  
**AL 1/2015**

21 January 2015

### **Local Economic and Community Plans**

Dear Chief Executive,

I am directed by the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government to forward for attention general policy guidelines under section 66H(3) of the Local Government Act 2001 (inserted by section 44 of the Local Government Reform Act 2014) appended to this Circular on the making of integrated Local Economic and Community Plans (LECPs), comprising both economic and community elements under section 66B. Material in the guidelines has already been substantially communicated to local authorities but is now being formally conveyed in the form of Ministerial directions as provided for in the legislation.

The Guidelines on Local Economic and Community Plans are set out in 3 Parts, as follows:-

Part 1: General guidance regarding both the economic and community elements and the integrated process for the development of the LECP;

Part 2: Specific guidance on the economic elements in respect of local economic development;

Part 3: Specific guidance on the community elements (based on the guidance issued by the Department in March 2014).

The statutory requirement to adopt the LECP is a central component of the local authority role in economic development and is an important measure in the Government's Action Plan for Jobs. Local authorities are responsible for necessary arrangements and action to ensure compliance with this requirement. Subject to this, recommendations on steps to deliver an integrated Plan are set out in Part 1 of the Guidelines.

The relevant provisions in the Act provide considerable detail on what is required for the formulation and making of the LECP, which is a reserved function of the elected council, including matters to be addressed and requirements relating to content, consistency, matters to have regard to, consultation, and procedures and responsibilities. While these requirements will need to be carefully adhered to, this detail is not repeated in this circular and guidelines, but various matters are elaborated or supplemented by the guidelines. Similarly, it is fully recognised that local authorities already perform many functions in relation to economic development and community development. The material in the 2012 [Action Programme for Effective Local Government – Putting People First](#), the relevant provisions of the 2014 Act and the present guidelines, draw significantly on this experience with a view to highlighting and extending good practice and helping to ensure that the new statutory requirements in these areas are comprehensively met. While the Act enables a wide range of matters to be prescribed in regulations, these are, for the most part being dealt with in the guidelines at this stage. The possible need for regulations will, however, be kept under review.

It is also recognised that the local authority role in this area is likely to be an evolving one, particularly with regard to economic development, involving creativity, innovation and initiative, and is not capable of being rigidly defined by legislative provisions or prescriptive guidance. Accordingly, the guidelines, which reflect input from extensive consultation with stakeholders and relevant information sources, are not intended to be unduly prescriptive but, rather, to help ensure reasonable consistency across authorities and that all necessary aspects are addressed in the formulation of the LECPs.

Moreover, it is appreciated that, in many areas, work in connection with the formulation of the LECP is already progressing. In taking this work forward, it can be aligned with the process set out in Part 1 of the Guidelines, without replicating or duplicating any of the work to date, while the matters set out in Parts 2 and 3 can be incorporated in the formulation and adoption of the LECP. The Guidelines can also be used as a check against work done to date. Where external expertise has been engaged in connection with the LECP, it would be desirable to share the results between authorities as far as possible. In the event that work on the preparation of the LECP has not commenced, it should now proceed.


Part 1 of the guidelines accompanying this circular relates to the process up to and including the formal adoption of the LECP. Further guidance will issue regarding the monitoring, implementation and review of LECPs in due course. It should also be noted that local authority performance of the economic development and community development functions will be subject to examination and report by the National Oversight and Audit Commission. While the process of formulating the LECP is substantial and is likely to give rise to extensive underlying documentation, the LECP itself should be as succinct, clear, impactful and action-focussed as possible. The Department intends to engage closely with local authorities during the course of the development of the LECP and to facilitate any further initiatives to inform and support the process which may be considered useful, particularly in

relation to on-going policy developments, and dissemination of output from any data-analysis which may be undertaken centrally, or other relevant information.

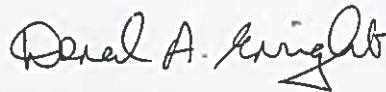
A copy of this circular, and the Guidelines, should be given to each elected member. Copies are available on the SharePoint system.

Any queries in relation to the economic elements of LECs may be directed to Gerry Byrne of Local Government Policy Section (Tel. 01 888 2718 or email [gerry.byrne@environ.ie](mailto:gerry.byrne@environ.ie) ). Any queries in relation to LCDCs and the community elements of LECs may be directed to Caroline Clarke of Community Division (Tel. 096 24253 or email [caroline.clarke@environ.ie](mailto:caroline.clarke@environ.ie)).

Yours sincerely,



Denis Conlan  
Local Government Policy Section



Donal Enright  
Alignment/Local Government Community Services

To each: Chief Executive.

Copy for information to: Cathaoirleach; Chairman of LCDC; Chairman of SPC for Economic Development and Enterprise; Chief Officer of LCDC; Director of Service responsible for Economic Development and Enterprise; Regional Assembly Cathaoirleach; Regional Assembly Director, Designated Chief Executive; Association of Irish Local Government.

# **Guidelines on Local Economic and Community Plans**

## **Issued by the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government**

Under Sections 66H and 128E of the Local Government Act 2001, in conjunction with  
Circular LG 1/2015 / AL 1/2015

21 January 2015

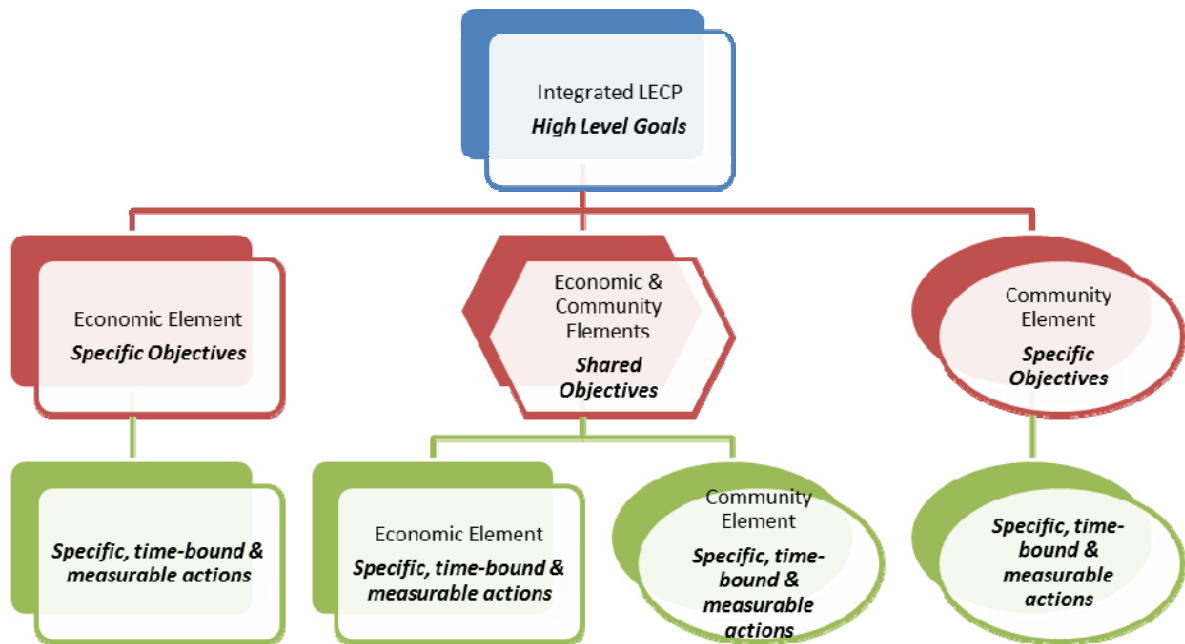
### **Part 1: General Guidance for the Formulation of LECPs**

#### **Overview**

- 1.** The Local Government Reform Act 2014 provides a stronger and clearer role for local government in economic development and community development, which is a key element in achieving the vision set out in the Action Programme for Effective Local Government: *“that local government will be the main vehicle of governance and public service at local level, leading economic, social and community development”*.
- 2.** The purpose of the LECP, as provided for in the Local Government Reform Act 2014, is to set out, for a six-year period, the objectives and actions needed to promote and support the economic development and the local and community development of the relevant local authority area, both by itself directly and in partnership with other economic and community development stakeholders. The expansion and strengthening of local authority functions in economic development and local/community development provided for in the Act is an important means to advance the overarching purpose of local government, as highlighted in the [\*Action Programme for Effective Local Government – Putting People First\*](#), “to promote the well-being and quality of life of citizens and communities”. This overarching vision needs to inform each LECP. Accordingly, the LECP should not, itself, be formulated as a high level strategy but, rather, needs to be as action-focused as possible, recognising that delivery will be through the programmes of other stakeholders as well as by the local authority.
- 3.** As the framework for the economic development and local/community development of the local authority area, the LECP will also be the primary mechanism at local level to bring forward relevant action arising from measures under the [\*Action Plan for Jobs\*](#) and other statements of Government policy including the report of the [\*Commission for the Economic Development of Rural Areas\*](#) (CEDRA).

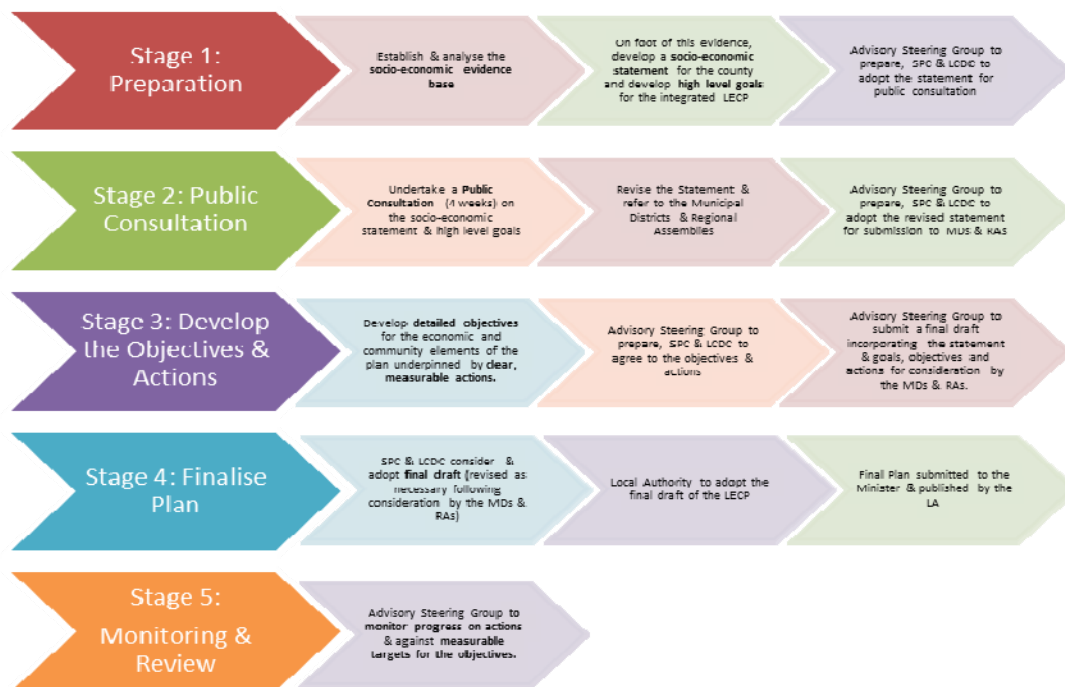
## **Integrated Process**

4. The economic elements of the LECP will be developed by the SPC for Economic Development and Enterprise while the Local Community Development Committees (LCDCs) will develop the community elements of the LECP. The LECP as a whole, into which both the economic and community elements will be integrated, will be adopted by the local authority.
  
5. Each LECP must be consistent, in the first instance, with the existing Regional Planning Guidelines 2010-2022 and subsequently with the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategies (RSESs) to be prepared by the Regional Assemblies and a new National Planning Framework which, it is envisaged, will replace the National Spatial Strategy. The LECP must also be consistent with the statutory City/County Development Plan, and should be consistent with current Government policy in relation to economic development (at present the [\*Medium Term Economic Strategy 2014 – 2020\*](#) (MTES) and Enterprise strategy as set out in [\*Making it Happen – Growing Enterprise for Ireland\*](#)), as well as having regard to other national policy initiatives under the [\*Action Plan for Jobs\*](#). However, it should be recognised that these LECPs will be developed and implemented within an evolving national policy context. Local authorities, supported by the Department, should endeavour to ensure that all relevant policies are reflected in the development and review of the LECP, which should also be sufficiently resilient to allow for possible changes in scenarios on which policy is based.
  
6. The main features of the overall LECP will consist of high level **Goals** for the integrated Plan, supported by specific **Objectives** under the respective economic and community streams. Each objective within the economic and community elements will be achieved through the implementation of specific, time-bound and measurable **Actions**. It is recognised that certain objectives may arise in both the economic and community elements. However, the particular actions required to achieve these objectives should be provided for under each of the two streams, with responsibility for the delivery or oversight of specific actions being assigned to either the SPC for Economic Development or to the LCDC. Integration between economic and community elements is primarily likely to arise in relation to the overall process and shared information base, as well as for particular aspects such as jobs, skills and labour market access. Where direct integration is not appropriate, it will be necessary to ensure adequate co-ordination between the two elements.



7. It is expected that the process for the development of the LECPs will initially consist of four broad phases: preparation, public consultation, development of objectives and actions, and finalisation of the LECP, followed by a fifth phase for monitoring and review of the implementation of the Plan. The approach to the public consultation phase will need to take into account the importance of matching consultation processes with different stakeholder needs across both the economic and community sectors. A flow chart outlining the key steps in the process is provided below. Where a local authority has commenced work on the LECP, this should be built on and aligned to the next phase of the LECP development process set out below. Particular note should be taken of the need to establish clear targets in Phase 3 (development of objectives and actions stage) against which progress in meeting specific objectives can be measured during Phase 5 (Monitoring and Review stage<sup>1</sup>).

<sup>1</sup> As the LECP will be guided in part by the local authority's corporate plan, review of the corporate plan following adoption of the LECP has been recommended in circular LG 25/2014.



**8. Responsibilities under the Local Government Reform Act 2014 in relation to the process for formulation of the LECP include the following:-**

- i. the making of the overall Plan as a reserved function of the elected council of the local authority;
- ii. preparation of the economic elements of the LECP by the SPC for Economic Development and Enterprise which is to perform this function on behalf of the local authority;
- iii. preparation of the community elements of the LECP by the LCDC;
- iv. consultation with the Regional Assembly to ensure the consistency of the LECP with the RPG/RSES and adoption of a statement on the draft of both elements of the Plan by the assembly;
- v. consultation with the Municipal District members<sup>2</sup> to ensure consistency between the economic and community elements and consistency with the core strategy and objectives of the statutory Development Plan, and adoption of a statement on the draft of both elements of the LECP by the Municipal District members as a reserved function.

**9. In preparing the LECP, local authorities should also engage with the regional economic forum (see Part 2, paragraphs 5 to 8) with a view to ensuring coherence in**

<sup>2</sup> For those local authorities without Municipal Districts, consultations may be undertaken with Area Committees or equivalents.

the regional context<sup>3</sup> generally, having regard to the RPG/RSES and other relevant policy frameworks such as the Regional Enterprise Strategies being developed under the auspices of Enterprise Ireland. The role of the Advisory Steering Group (see paragraph 17 of this Part) will be critical in managing communications between all relevant stakeholders listed above.

### **Mutually Supporting Economic and Community Aspects**

- 10.** Economic development and local and community development, while distinct functions which involve some different challenges, approaches and skills, are mutually supportive in building sustainable communities with strong local economies. As a consequence, the economic and community elements of the LECP will have areas of common interest and action. For example, the local authority's investment in place-making activities will be supported by community-based work such as local tidy towns efforts and other local improvement initiatives under the local and community development programmes.
- 11.** Similarly, strong economic performance helps to build stronger communities and is fundamental to their welfare through greater prosperity, job creation and financial stability. Equally, local and community development interventions can support economic activity from the ground up, while also helping to combat social exclusion and poverty, for example, through targeted interventions to improve education, training and employment opportunities within disadvantaged or marginalised communities. It is important that these “integrated elements” are highlighted in the LECP to ensure a coordinated delivery of actions for both economic and local/community development.

### **Shared Information Base**

- 12.** The performance of all local authority functions should be informed by good quality information. Both the economic and community elements of the LECP should be based on best-available evidence and relevant, comprehensive, and accurate statistical and other data, and be cognisant of the targets in EU 2020. Accordingly, a major requirement for the integrated aspect of the LECP will be the use of a shared evidence base to inform decision-making by the LCDC and SPC for Economic Development in drafting the Plan. While the approach to the development of the Plan should be generally a “bottom-up” one, data input can be based on more centralised research, data mining, and data analysis. The Department will explore possible ways of providing support in this regard. Data derived for initial preparation of the LECP should be used also throughout the planning process and for monitoring of implementation and measuring performance.

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<sup>3</sup> References to “regional” in this context relate to a level approximating to the areas of the former regional authorities and current EU NUTS 3 regions. The RSES will be formulated from this level, in effect, “sub-regions”, of the regional assemblies, involving statutory committees of the assemblies (Strategic Planning Area Committees).



13. This shared evidence-base is likely to include:–
- i. An analysis of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (‘SWOT’ analysis) in relation to economic development and community development in the area. This should include an overview of the local economy, population, and geography (with particular focus on main centres of population and strategic economic locations), as well as a profile and trend analysis of key economic aspects such as the local workforce/labour market, enterprises, investment, transport/travel patterns, and infrastructure, and an examination of local economic resources and activities, educational and research facilities and their interaction with business or other organisations, environmental quality and heritage, sectoral strengths and other relevant social, economic and demographic factors. Consideration should also be given to an examination of this background material prepared by neighbouring local authorities as part of the preparation of their LECP;
  - ii. A high-level overview of relevant aspects of the existing Regional Planning Guidelines 2010-2022 (RPGs), and subsequently the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategies (RSEs), and any relevant national or regional policy, strategy, initiative, or plan, focussing particularly on progress and opportunities locally, and further action required;
  - iii. A high-level review of previous local strategies and plans, focussing primarily on the impacts/outcomes of such plans, and ensuring that approaches which have proved unsuccessful are not repeated;
  - iv. The analysis should take account of performance relative to the high level [EU 2020 targets](#) and the five targets laid out in the [National Reform Programme for Ireland](#);
  - v. For the purpose of the economic element in particular:-
    - a. a comparative analysis of the economic situation of the area, including (i) employment data, industry analyses, value chain analyses for specific industries and businesses operating in the local authority area and (ii) comparison of the results with national performance, neighbouring local authorities and other high performing areas;
    - b. detailed information about existing enterprises in the area;
    - c. a retail market analysis of the area, including an analysis of the existing retail mix in the main towns/shopping areas and the retail vacancy rate in those areas. Consideration should be given to the work already undertaken by local authorities as part of their responsibilities under the retail planning guidelines.

### **Socio-economic Statement**

14. From the analysis of the evidence-base, a socio-economic statement, with high level goals and targets for the overall Plan, should be prepared. While the formulation and adoption of the LECP involves an extensive body of work and range of processes, it is strongly recommended that this statement should be as succinct as possible. These

goals should represent the broad outcomes to be achieved by the LECP within the overarching purpose stated in the *Action Programme for Effective Local Government* of promoting well-being and quality of life.

15. Some examples of headings under which such high-level Goals might be specified are listed below:-
- i. maximising economic activity, performance, and opportunity and improving prosperity and quality of life of the community;
  - ii. increased level and quality of employment and income;
  - iii. effective development and use of the local workforce, including improved skills and educational opportunities;
  - iv. reduced social exclusion and disadvantage in the community;
  - v. maximising the attractiveness of key locations, (including in respect of urban centres, given their economic and social importance for the wider rural hinterland), as places in which to live, visit, work, or transact business;
  - vi. improvement in the level and quality of community identity, solidarity and civic participation;
  - vii. protection and enhancement of the environment, including through resource-efficiency measures and applying the principles of sustainable development;
  - viii. securing implementation of the locational or place-specific aspects of relevant national, regional and city/county level planning frameworks and strategies.

#### **Linking Overall Goals to Economic and Community Elements**

16. The **high-level Goals** should be elaborated further within both the economic and the community elements of the LECP, in the form of specific, measurable **Objectives**, which will, in turn be supported by practical, time-bound **Actions** to deliver these objectives within the individual components of the LECP. Further guidance in relation to the elaboration of objectives and actions is provided in Parts 2 and 3 of these guidelines, dealing with the economic elements and the community elements, respectively, of the LECP.

#### **Process and Timescale for Formulation of Plan**

##### **Advisory Steering Group**

17. In order to ensure that the preparation of the economic and community elements of the LECP are co-ordinated, and duplication (both in terms of effort and engagement with stakeholders) is avoided, it is recommended that each local authority should establish an Advisory Steering Group to assist in the preparation, drafting, adoption, and monitoring of the LECP.

The Advisory Steering Group should include:-

- i. at least one member of the LCDC;
- ii. at least one member of the SPC for Economic Development and Enterprise;

- iii. the chief officer (or a nominee) of the LCDC;
- iv. the Director of Service supporting the SPC for Economic Development and Enterprise, or his or her nominee; and
- v. subject to avoiding unwieldy size, any person that both the SPC for Economic Development and Enterprise and LCDC consider likely to make a significant contribution to the work, whether or not a member of the LCDC or the SPC. This may include senior personnel from relevant public and private sector organisations, individuals with entrepreneurial expertise, third level institutions, members of the relevant regional economic forum (provided for in Part 2 of this guidance) or other relevant interests.

- 18.** Specific functions of the Advisory Steering Group will be to advise and assist on:-
- i. the development of the socio-economic statement setting out the high level goals for the area;
  - ii. the arrangement and management of the consultation process for the development of the economic elements and the community elements of the LECP based on the high level goals in the socio-economic statement, and the additional consultations identified for the community element and set out at paragraph 6 of Part 3;
  - iii. the particular areas of activity to be covered respectively by the economic elements and the community elements of the LECP, as well as areas of complementary and co-ordinated activity, taking account of the need to reduce duplication and unnecessary overlap and to maximise the use of available resources;
  - iv. the integration of both the economic and community elements into a single, coherent LECP;
  - v. ensuring that, for each action, there is clarity as to where responsibility rests for leading/coordinating;
  - vi. ensuring the LECP is consistent with the relevant statutory City/County Development Plan; and
  - vii. ensuring the LECP is consistent with any Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) or, as appropriate, Regional Planning Guidelines, any National Planning Framework or other national policy, that may apply.

- 19.** It is intended that the Advisory Steering Group will focus on practical arrangements for the smooth preparation of an integrated Plan, from determining its scope through to final adoption. Size, membership and work methodologies should reflect this, recognising also that the local authority and LCDC have legal duties in this regard. In undertaking this work, the Advisory Steering Group may also seek inputs from other sources, including from the relevant regional economic forum referred to in part 2 of this guidance. Once the LECP has been made and published, it will be the role of the Advisory Steering Group to advise and assist on its implementation and monitoring arrangements. It will be a matter for the relevant local authorities to determine the

appropriate relationship between the Advisory Steering Group and any pre-existing coordination arrangements such as non-statutory area-based strategic planning groups and economic forums.

### **Spatial Planning Dimension**

- 20.** The LECP is an important implementation vehicle for national and regional policy on economic development and local/community development. It is required to complement the City/ County Development Plans that set important statutory frameworks in relation to, for example, appropriate locations for new development such as business parks, retail development and industry. The LECP needs to be consistent with the broad locational policies of the Development Plan and not present alternate or competing proposals that would lead to inconsistency. The review role of Regional Assemblies and Municipal Districts set out in the Local Government Reform Act 2014 is important in this regard. An important part of the rationale for the enhanced local government role in economic development is to forge a stronger link between spatial planning and economic development and ensure that the planning development role is focussed strongly towards pro-actively supporting and promoting economic activity rather than being excessively regulatory in emphasis or concentrated primarily on building rather than other aspects of development.

### **Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) and LECPs**

- 21.** It is the responsibility of the local authority preparing the LECP to take account of the SEA Directive and Article 6 of the Habitats Directive and ensure compliance as appropriate.

### **Duration of the LECP**

- 22.** The first LECPs should be completed by 31 December 2015 and will cover a six-year period. The first iteration of the LECP will be reviewed when the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategies (RSESs) are developed (expected in 2016). The review will provide an opportunity to ensure consistency between the LECP and their respective RSESs and will also provide an opportunity to review, amend and re-prioritise the high level goals and specific objectives and actions, where this is considered appropriate.

### **Implementation, Monitoring and Review**

- 23.** An implementation, monitoring, evaluation and review framework in relation to the objectives and actions in the economic and community elements of the LECP, incorporating relevant targets, timescale, performance indicators and progress milestones must be developed as part of each Plan. Local authorities should note the Regional Indicators Report prepared by the former regional authorities in this regard. Further guidance will be issued in relation to implementation, monitoring, evaluation and review aspects in due course.

## **Part 2: Economic Elements of the LECP**

### **(A) The Economic Development Role of Local Government**

#### **Purpose and Nature of the Local Authority Economic Development Role**

1. Formulation of the Economic Elements of the LECP is part of the wider economic role of local government. Local Government has a significant impact on the overall economy, accounting for an estimated €5.4 billion between capital (€1.2 billion) and current (€4.2 billion) expenditure in 2014. It exerts a major influence on the local economy as provider, enabler, procurer or regulator in a range of matters such as infrastructure, sustainable development, and local services, as well as directly providing in the region of 27,500 jobs and working to promote local economic development in various ways, including co-ordinating response to possible local economic setbacks. These roles are reflected in the [Local Government Sectoral Strategy to Promote Employment and Support Local Enterprise - Supporting Economic Recovery and Jobs – Locally.](#)
2. In addition to this significant impact on economic activity, in the future, economic development must, of itself, be regarded as a “mainstream” local authority function alongside these more traditional roles. A non-exhaustive list of matters arising in the promotion of economic development is provided in section 66B (2) of the 2001 Act. The rationale for and nature of the local government role in economic development are outlined broadly in Chapter 3 of the Action Programme, with more specific examples in the Appendix 1 of the *Action Programme for Effective Local Government*.

#### **Main Categories of Local Authority Economic Action**

3. The main features of the local authority’s role in promoting and supporting economic development may be summarised under 6 main “Economic Action Areas” as follows:

##### ***Economic Action Area 1: Formulating the economic development plan and advising on the economic components of the community elements of the LECP:***

This is an important function in its own right but the Plan is also the framework within which the entire local authority economic development role should be developed and pursued. Input to the Plan should be obtained from a wide a range of economic development stakeholders, including business leaders, development agencies, higher education institutions and other key influencers of economic development. Engagement with the relevant regional economic forum (provided for in paragraphs 5 to 8 of this Part of the guidelines) is considered critical in this regard and to ensure that the LECP takes full account of regional considerations.

***Economic Action Area 2: Promoting economic development through general local authority powers and functions:***

While certain local authority functions have a very specific economic character, the economic development role needs to be approached from the perspective that ALL local government activity has the potential to contribute to this overarching goal, and it should be a lens through which all relevant activities of the local authority are viewed. In addition, the impact of local authority functions on local and regional competitiveness is significant, particularly in relation to local housing markets, and also in terms of investment in and management of key infrastructure including roads, and direct impact on the cost of doing business in an area.

Economic Action Area 2 involves embedding and prioritising the objective of economic development in all relevant local authority functions (for example, planning, infrastructure, environment, amenity, etc.) and focusing these functions towards that objective, without compromising statutory duties e.g. of a regulatory nature. This approach should also be reflected in the local authority's corporate plan. By performing its mainstream functions in an efficient and business oriented manner – ensuring that core services are delivered efficiently and that the administrative process associated with regulatory functions is minimised – local authorities can significantly and positively impact the competitiveness of the area. Other important issues to consider in the context of local authority functions include maximising the economic impact and effectiveness of local authority expenditure (e.g. in local authority housing) or providing a strategic overview for future development, considering not only publically owned land-banks but also opportunities for private sector development.

The local authority role in housing and related planning and infrastructural functions, are crucially relevant to the overall economy, both in supporting competitiveness and maintaining balance and sustainable development in the housing market, which is critical to avoid any repeat of cyclical economic instability. In particular, local authorities have a key role in ensuring that an appropriate supply of housing relative to demand is provided, whether through public or private sector development, in the right locations, of the right type, and at affordable price.

***Economic Action Area 3: Operation of the LEOs:*** Local Enterprise Offices (LEOs) are a core instrument of local enterprise support and development for SMEs and micro-enterprises with a focus on providing financial supports, mentoring, networking support, business and entrepreneurial advice, business training and information, and advice on local authority supports or activities that affect enterprise including, rates, procurement or planning.

***Economic Action Area 4: Economic components of the local/ community development role:*** In addition to the LEOs, which are working closely with other national and local players to provide a customer driven service to develop entrepreneurial and job creation ideas without displacing existing business or jobs, action in this area should include:-

- i. the 114 completed Community Enterprise Centres which provide essential incubator space for new businesses, facilitate and provide business development programmes and training courses, as well as collaborating with other community enterprise initiatives;
- ii. workforce development through improved educational opportunities and other local community activation measures, in particular for disadvantaged groups within the community;
- iii. place-making activities and local improvement measures such as support for tidy towns efforts, protection and enhancement of the physical fabric of places and heritage/historical resources, and other measures to improve the local environment, particularly with a view to realising economic potential, for example in relation to tourism; and
- iv. enhanced coordination between community development and economic development arising from a closer alignment of local and community development programmes with local authority functions.

The last three actions in this area also form part of the community element of the LECP and relate directly to programmes and priorities that will be overseen and managed by LCDCs. It will be necessary, accordingly, to ensure integration across both elements of the Plan for these aspects.

***Economic Action Area 5: Action Plan for Jobs & Labour Market Activation:*** Local authorities will need to continue to engage with the *Action Plan for Jobs*, including building on the *Sectoral Strategy to Promote Employment and Support Local Enterprise; Supporting Economic Recovery and Jobs – Locally*, and the best practice examples in the database of over 2,300 projects and promotional activities undertaken by local authorities to support job creation and economic development in [Supporting Enterprise, Local Development and Economic Growth](#). Local authorities provide support for job seekers through community employment, the Redundant Apprentices Scheme, Job Initiative, JobBridge and Gateway, to provide short-term quality working opportunities in local authorities for people on the live register. Employment under these schemes is closely aligned to the functions of local authorities particularly in the areas of environmental improvements, tidy towns, maintenance and development of public spaces, parks and recreation spaces, etc. This enables local authorities to fulfil commitments in respect of the labour market activation agenda, while undertaking work complementary to their core activities.

***Economic Action Area 6: Further specific economic development action in line with regional priorities:***

This involves proactive measures specifically designed to promote economic activity, beyond the mainstream local authority functions referred to at Economic Action Area 2. In contrast to the other action areas which are largely within the remit of individual local authorities, many of the actions in this area need to be pursued primarily in a regional context (see paragraphs 5 to 8 of this Part) and should be strongly informed by the work of the regional economic

forum, particularly to identify matters that should be pursued on a regional or inter-authority basis rather than by authorities individually. Particular features of this action area are likely to include:-

- i. engaging with key business leaders and organisations in the area and region to identify the greatest potential for economic development and how the local authority can contribute to its achievement, especially through the regional economic forum. In addition, local authorities, through this forum, should focus efforts on promoting and supporting the competitiveness of their area and wider region;
- ii. working closely with key economic development agencies such as the Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation, Enterprise Ireland, the IDA, and Fáilte Ireland, to ensure a coherent and coordinated approach to economic development, adding value to their efforts by virtue of the local authority's particular capacity, expertise, knowledge and standing, with particular focus on economic activities or sectors which are strongly "place-related" or related to functions or services for which the local authority is responsible. It should be noted that Enterprise Ireland will have a lead role in the development of regional enterprise strategies which will be critical in this regard. The regional economic forum will provide advice and feed into the development of these strategies;
- iii. identifying factors related particularly to the area that can contribute to economic development, including particular advantages, strengths, capacities, opportunities, potential synergies, linkages, and other factors favourable to increasing enterprise, investment, and economic activity, and the development of associated place branding and marketing initiatives to exploit these advantages. This function will be strongly informed by the information and analysis outlined in Part 1 of these guidelines;
- iv. working in tandem with wider economic initiatives, including new programmes such as the ERDF Urban Development Fund, the SFI Research Centres Programme, the Irish Strategic Investment Fund and the Strategic Banking Corporation of Ireland, to identify how local authorities, particularly in a regional context, can best support and capitalise on such initiatives in their economic development role;
- v. promoting integrated urban development, particularly in larger urban centres, including the mobilisation of efforts to secure substantial new enterprises, whether through attracting foreign direct investment or expansion of indigenous enterprises, which can yield a significant quantum of high quality, sustainable employment, geared towards current and evolving markets, with capacity for growth and where possible, spin-off economic activity; and
- vi. engaging proactively with third level institutions and other education service providers and research institutes to develop the local workforce to meet identified needs of business sectors.



4. Action Area 6 is the least clear-cut and possibly the most challenging of the categories outlined above. It involves action beyond the boundaries of traditional local authority functions, requiring vision, innovation, creativity and, most importantly, leadership on the part of the local authority. Action in this area is likely to include contributing to the generation of somewhat larger scale economic activity than would generally arise under the Areas 2 to 5 above and as already indicated, this is likely to arise particularly in the context of regional economic development efforts. This likely to involve a thematic approach, potentially requiring collaboration across local authority boundaries, and focussing on priorities identified by economic development agencies and relevant private sector interests. In many cases, it may require a particular level of critical mass in terms of population and relevant resources. The local authority role in this area should, as far as possible, avail of and bring to bear economic expertise and skill from relevant public and private sector organisations, research and third level institutions, as well as from within the local government sector. In areas of large population which have experienced economic decline and related social challenges, it is likely to require the local authority leading a vigorous and concerted economic regeneration drive, such as some authorities have already embarked on. The extent to which local government meets the challenge of this Economic Action Area is likely to determine the degree to which it is perceived as making a significantly enhanced contribution to economic development.

#### **Local Authority Economic Development Role in a Regional and Inter-Agency Context**

5. Local authorities cannot effectively perform their economic development function in isolation from each other and it is important that local authorities take into account regional factors in preparing the LECP, especially in relation to Economic Action Area 6. In particular, regional co-ordination is essential to avoid wasteful duplication, negative competition, or unrealistic “wish lists”. It is also important, particularly in pursuing Economic Action Areas 2 and 6, to replicate, adapt, or extend existing good practice and measures which have proved beneficial to economic development in other areas. Collaboration with other local authorities and agencies is likely to be an important facet of action in these Economic Action Areas. It is likely also that the necessary commitment of relevant agencies to economic development objectives will require engagement at regional level, including in relation to any proposed targets.
6. In the future, the economic elements of LECPs will be formulated in accordance with a regional framework set out in the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) and having regard to any regional enterprise strategies prepared by Enterprise Ireland. Pending adoption of the regional strategies, local authorities should liaise in order to agree, provisionally, broad features of economic strategy and objectives at NUTS3 level (approximating to the areas of the former regional authorities and which will form the building blocks for the future RSES). These should be in line with the planning/locational policy frameworks of the existing Regional Planning Guidelines,

which should help to inform the formulation of initial LECPs, while also having regard to work being carried out concurrently on the development of the new RSES.

7. Building on successful practice to date in some local authorities, a regional economic forum, made up of key stakeholders from the private and public sectors, should be established at NUTS 3 level to foster innovative thinking, build partnerships, and ensure coordinated action to promote economic development. Local authorities have found it beneficial for the forum to be headed by a respected figure who can act as a “champion” for economic development.
8. This non-statutory Forum will provide advice on the development of the economic elements of the LECP to the Advisory Steering Committee, SPC and LCDC, as necessary, as well as advising on the development of the regional enterprise strategy (under the auspices of Enterprise Ireland) and informing the development of the overall RSES. The forum will thereby create an important link between the local and regional economic development processes to enhance coherence between local, regional and national policy on economic development. It is envisaged that the Forum would be established and supported by the regional assembly, with membership including business leaders, senior personnel from relevant public sector organisations, including economic/enterprise development agencies, individuals with entrepreneurial expertise, third level institutions, and any other stakeholders with an interest in, and an ability to influence, economic development within the NUTS 3 area.

#### **Supporting the Economic Development Role within Local Authorities**

9. Local authorities need to ensure that necessary systems and structures are in place to support the enhanced role of local government in economic development under the Local Government Reform Act 2014. The Act requires the establishment of Strategic Policy Committees (SPCs) for Economic Development and Enterprise which will take a lead role in preparing and developing the economic development elements of the LECP.
10. To support the work of this SPC and to ensure that there is a consistent representation of economic development interests and consistency of approach among senior management within the local authority, a specific Director of Services for Economic Development should, where appropriate, be assigned. The *Action Programme for Effective Local Government* (paragraph 3.3.8) envisaged these assignments, as a minimum, in the case of cities and counties containing NSS gateways and hubs, and the merged authorities in Limerick, Tipperary and Waterford. This Director would provide leadership in promoting economic development, ensuring that economic development objectives are considered in all local authority services and policies, and, critically, would engage with all stakeholders, especially in the private sector, to inform local authority plans and strategies for economic development. Other staff assigned to the economic development function should have relevant

knowledge/skills, with provision for continuing professional development in this dynamic area. It is also envisaged that local authorities should be able to avail of some economic expertise through the regional assemblies. The review of the corporate plan should provide a suitable opportunity to address any organisational or other measures needed to perform effectively economic development functions.

## **(B) Economic Elements of the LECP**

### **Content of Economic Elements**

**11.** The economic elements of the LECP will guide and support the economic development role of the local authority within the wider regional context referred to above. The core drivers of the LECP's economic elements will be:-

- its **Objectives** - Sustainable Economic Development Objectives (SEDOs); and
- the **Actions** identified to achieve them, covering the full range of Economic Action Areas identified at paragraph 3, including matters contained in the Sectoral Strategy, *Supporting Economic Recovery and Jobs – Locally*.

#### ***Objectives***

**12.** The LECP should set out a finite set of key objectives which need to be prioritised to make a significant contribution to achieving required overall economic development outcomes. The SEDOs need to be specific, measurable and time-bound and the LECP should specify relevant outcomes and appropriate metrics in respect of each objective. The following is an indicative “menu” of the types of objectives, in very general terms, which are likely to warrant inclusion, subject to being adapted or extended, as appropriate, and made more specific, having regard to local circumstances and priorities and wider regional considerations:-

- i. attracting substantial investment and new enterprise with significant employment, income and growth potential;
- ii. sustaining/expanding existing enterprise, particularly in sectors having significant growth potential in international markets;
- iii. improving the quality and diversity of employment in the area;
- iv. economic transformation/regeneration of urban centres affected by economic decline;
- v. strengthening the economic fabric of smaller towns/villages and their capacity to advance rural economic regeneration;
- vi. economic development objectives in the local/ community development programmes and the micro-enterprise support function; and
- vii. economic objectives in relevant national, regional, sub-regional and city/county level plans and strategies.

### ***Actions***

- 13.** The specific actions and practical measures by which the SEDOs are to be achieved, identified in conjunction with the regional economic forum and relevant economic development agencies, should be set out in the LECP. Timescales and other relevant metrics (performance indicators and progress milestones) to enable monitoring of progress in implementing the Actions and measurement and assessment of their effectiveness towards achievement of the SEDOs, should be specified. While it is for each local authority to determine, in the context of the 6 Economic Action Areas, the particular actions required to achieve the SEDOs, many of the examples in Appendix 1 of the *Action Programme for Effective Local Government* will be relevant.
- 14.** The following is an indicative summary of some broad areas of action which are likely to warrant inclusion (with appropriate detail and adaptation to the local authority area) in the LECP:-
- i. action to promote competitiveness and a favourable business environment, including moderation of business costs, addressing housing requirements, regulatory impact and efficiency of public services;
  - ii. action to develop economic activities which have strong “place-related” aspects and marketing/promoting the area, or specific places in the area, accordingly, or other promotional activity which the local authority is well placed to lead or assist, in concert with other economic development agencies, as appropriate;
  - iii. action to enhance the physical, social, environmental, or cultural character and quality of the area (including aspects such as the natural/built environment, public realm, urban environment, local heritage/history, sport, leisure, civic/cultural/ recreational amenities, facilities and activities) which can contribute to economic development, directly (for example tourism), or indirectly by enhancing the attractiveness of the area to investors and as a business location;
  - iv. formulating a systematic approach in other “mainstream” local authority functions (for example, spatial planning/land use, infrastructure, housing, traffic and parking) to help underpin economic activity generally and advance prioritised sectors or areas of economic activity;
  - v. action, including appropriate measures arising from decisions on the report of the Commission for the Economic Development of Rural Areas (CEDRA), to address economic decline outside of larger urban centres and to promote economic activity particularly in towns/villages with potential benefit also to the rural hinterland and enabling them to act as focal points for rural economic regeneration. The establishment of Rural Enterprise Development Zones (REDZ), recommended by the CEDRA report, should be specifically considered in this regard;

- vi. measures to attract national and EU investment in the delivery of the strategy e.g. INTERREG funding and the new ERDF Urban Development Fund;
- vii. action related to relevant initiatives of investment programmes such as the SFI Research Centres Programme and the Irish Strategic Investment Fund;
- viii. action to support a shift towards low-carbon and climate resilient economic activity, including increasing efficiency in the use of resources and in energy use, reducing greenhouse gases, and promoting the supply and use of renewable energy sources, by-products and wastes;
- ix. providing a co-ordinated local focus to support and inform the efforts of the economic development agencies and identifying any gaps in that regard, particularly through the on-going engagement with these agencies in the regional economic forum;
- x. identifying possible risks to local employment, developing strategies to address them in conjunction with relevant agencies and coordinating/mobilising response to such eventualities;
- xi. economic development measures within the local/ community development programmes;
- xii. measures to support labour market activation under Pathways to Work and commitments in the Action Plan for Jobs; and
- xiii. measures related to the delivery of support to micro-enterprises locally, in accordance with the provisions of service level agreements with Enterprise Ireland, to SMEs in line with the Action Plan for Jobs and to other businesses operating in the local authority area, as appropriate.

**15.** Other areas of action, primarily in the context of regional economic development opportunities, include:-

- i. targeting relevant economic sectors/activities with strong potential for success and growth based on the inherent attributes, resources, capabilities or other strengths of the area;
- ii. measures to capitalise on identified potential, including development of critical mass, clustering, synergy, or a platform/catalyst to generate or stimulate further sustainable economic activity, identifying particular local opportunities in that regard, and specifying action to maximise that potential in line with the principles of smart specialisation and place-making;
- iii. action to improve infrastructure of strategic importance to economic development within the context of the region and regional economic development priorities;
- iv. promoting linkage/synergy between businesses (including between existing and enterprises and prospective investors), third level institutions or other relevant parties, such as business networks, arrangements for provision/sharing of data, information, and market intelligence, and interaction/collaboration between sectors and organisations; and

- v. mobilising necessary action (by relevant agencies/institutions in relation to factors of strategic importance to economic development such as educational opportunity, relevant research, technology and innovation, strategic infrastructure (physical or ICT), public transport and access generally, effectiveness and productivity of the work force and enhancement of its skill base and resilience, with particular focus on sectors targeted for economic development in the region.

## **Approach to formulation of the economic elements of the LECP**

### **Information and Input**

- 16.** The information base outlined at paragraphs 12 and 13 in Part 1 is an essential platform for the LECP. Further sources of information of specific relevance to the economic element are referenced in this section. Duplication with work of other agencies must be avoided, but such work should, provide a framework/platform for the local authority economic development role, with local objectives and actions being formulated in consistency with national policy and regional objectives and strategies. A statement of current economic performance using relevant data could help to provide an economic baseline for the formulation of the LECP. This could help to identify where performance needs to improve and could be used to develop likely scenarios of future performance and policy options.
- 17.** Sources of information and other input of particular relevance to the formulation of the economic element of the LECP could include the following:-
- i. national policy and regional strategy in relation to economic development and related matters;
  - ii. engagement with leaders of key enterprises regarding potential for and approaches to, promoting economic activity and maximising growth in the area, especially through the regional economic forum;
  - iii. input of other relevant parties in business, educational, civic, cultural, and social sectors to maximise the contribution of, and synergy between, their sectors or institutions towards achievement of the SEDOs, and promotion of economic development generally in the area;
  - iv. plans or proposals of private sector entities for investment, development, or other projects in the area; and
  - v. other relevant policy/strategy documents or study reports at national, regional and local levels; an indicative list of current items is provided in an appendix to this Part.

### **General Principles to Guide Formulation of Plan**

- 18.** In formulating the economic elements of the LECP a baseline and related projections should be constructed, planned Objectives determined and Actions to achieve the

Objectives identified. The Plan should be evidence-based and informed by certain broad principles, including:-

- i. **Analysis:** It is necessary to identify factors which are liable to impact positively or negatively on economic performance (“externalities”). It is also important to assess what actions are likely to work well towards achievement of objectives - it cannot be assumed that a particular measure will have the desired effect or is the correct means to achieve a particular objective. It is necessary to identify potentially conflicting factors and to avoid aspirations that are not likely to be achievable, or actions which will not contribute to desired objectives. The nature of factors influencing economic activity in particular locations needs to be analysed, recognising that some (for example, scale of population and conditions that arise only with large urban centres) are not capable of being addressed by a local plan.
- ii. **Coherence:** Possible conflicts in objectives should be addressed or minimised, for example by ranking objectives in terms of priorities, and feasibility, and also by allowing for possible trade-offs between objectives.
- iii. **Consistency:** The LECP should be internally consistent as far as possible but, it is essential there are no conflicts in the actions that are taken to achieve objectives.

#### **Matters to Have Regard To in Formulating the Economic Element**

**19.** Section 66C of the Local Government Act 2001 provides for general matters to which local authorities must have regard in preparing the LECP. More specific factors influencing economic development which it would be desirable to consider in formulating the economic element of the LECP include:-

- i. current and on-going national policy developments, including the results of the forthcoming review of National Enterprise Policy and the Tourism Policy Review and other emerging matters such as the work of the National Competitiveness Council on the costs of doing business and competitiveness challenges;
- ii. current and on-going national initiatives to support economic development including:-
  - a) the Ireland Strategic Investment Fund, which will provide funding on a commercial basis to areas of productive investment in the Irish economy with a particular focus on supporting economic activity and employment;
  - b) the Strategic Banking Corporation of Ireland which has made available some €500 million to support SMEs in accessing credit;
  - c) Construction 2020 which aims to support a more competitive, innovative construction sector which will provide sustainable employment;
  - d) changes to planning and development legislation announced in September 2014, which will encourage development and penalise vacant sites;
  - e) the work of Science Foundation Ireland in promoting excellence in research and innovation to make Ireland more attractive for SMART industries, including €250 million to be invested in five new world-class Science Foundation Ireland (SFI) research centres; and

- f) the establishment of a specific Urban Development Fund under the European Regional Development Fund under which local authorities can access funding (on a matching funding basis) for the enhancement and improvement of urban areas in decline. Local authorities should also have regard to other opportunities for EU funding in relation to economic development, and should engage with the EU Affairs Unit of the Regional Assemblies in Brussels to ensure timely identification of such opportunities;
- iii. approaches to economic development that have proved successful in other areas;
- iv. need for adequate balance and diversity in the nature of development and economic activity in different locations, including town centres versus out of town locations;
- v. the importance of maintaining and maximising the potential of existing enterprises, including the large proportion who trade within the domestic market, as well as promoting new economic activities, for example through promoting innovation on the part of existing enterprises;
- vi. possible support needs of categories of enterprises which may not come within the remit of the economic development agencies or the LEOs, including in relation to cost competitiveness within the area, and scope to help indigenous enterprises to compete domestically and globally;
- vii. need for strong focus on skills requirements, e.g. in relation to international marketing, particularly by indigenous enterprises, having regard, for example, to labour market information in the Regional Labour Markets Bulletin produced by Solas on behalf of the Expert Group on Skills Needs;
- viii. the general economic and fiscal environment, including likely constraints on the public finances;
- ix. cost implications of any proposals, based on rigorous costing and the need to maximise value for money;
- x. the importance of “place-related” factors to competitiveness (particularly for certain sectors such as tourism), subject to the likelihood that all locations will not have capacity to fulfil the same economic roles or reach the same level of performance. Unrealisable aspirations to disperse economic development equally to all locations need to be avoided;
- xi. the need to respond to changes in the competitiveness environment and to requirements of enterprise in that regard;
- xii. wider economic trends and issues, particularly with regard to economic development in the regional context, including:-
  - a) trends in economic activity/enterprise, including regional variations, geographic concentration, and changes in the structure of enterprises;
  - b) potential for indigenous enterprises expanding into global markets as an increasing source of economic development;
  - c) in the context of foreign direct investment, the need to focus increasingly on services;



- d) changes in the factors that provide advantages for economic development (e.g. the likelihood that FDI may be increasingly influenced by factors such as educational attainment and attributes of local areas );
- e) interaction between factors influencing local economic activity (e.g. between operation of the local labour market, housing market transport or locational factors) and possible need for research on these to address gaps in knowledge; and
- f) the possibility that economic development may be more broadly-based in the future, with possible increased difficulty in identifying specific areas of potential growth.

**Assessment of SEDOs**

20. The SEDOs should be subject to a specific written assessment and report to ensure consistency with the RPGs/RSEs, by the planning or economic staff of the Regional Assembly, prior to finalisation of the LECP. The SEDOs should include a high level economic appraisal to ensure their robustness from a value for money and economic return perspective. A copy of this report should be submitted to the Department’s Planning Section.

**Implementation**

21. While much of the material in these guidelines is concerned with formulation of the LECP, having regard to the statutory requirement to do so, the most critical aspect of the entire process is the effectiveness of implementation of the specific Actions contained in the Plan. These will need to be followed up vigorously, including by engagement with other agencies and interests, as well as by supporting action within the local authority’s own functions, including spatial implementation aspects. Since the nature of this work will depend on the content of the Actions, specific guidance is not being issued in that regard. Each local authority should draw up implementation arrangements to suit the content of its Plan and local circumstances. This could, for example, involve either incorporating implementation programmes in respect of key Objectives within the LECP or as separate instruments flowing from it. As part of on-going implementation, local authorities may consider it desirable to develop particular initiatives, projects, incentives, etc. to support the implementation of Actions. It may be useful to refer to practice in other local authorities which have followed a well-structured approach to economic development (Louth being just one example).

## Appendix to Part 2

### Indicative List of Relevant Policies & Strategies to Inform the Economic Elements of LECP

#### *National Policies & Plans*

- [Action Programme for Effective Local Government – Putting People First](#)
- [Action Plan for Jobs](#) (2015 Action Plan for Jobs will be published here)
- [Construction 2020 – A Strategy for a Renewed Construction Sector](#)
- [Costs of Doing Business in Ireland 2014](#)
- [Delivering our Green Potential – Government Policy Statement on Growth and Employment in the Green Economy](#)
- [Developing a Green Enterprise](#)
- [Energising Ireland’s Rural Economy – Commission for the Economic Development of Rural Areas \(CEDRA\).](#)
- [Evaluation of Enterprise Supports for Start-Ups and Entrepreneurship](#)
- [Food Harvest 2020](#)
- [Green Paper on Energy Policy in Ireland](#)
- [Harnessing our Ocean Wealth](#)
- [Ireland’s Competitiveness Challenge 2014](#)
- [Ireland's Competitiveness Scorecard 2014](#)
- [Local Government Sectoral Strategy to Promote Employment and Support Local Enterprise - Supporting Economic Recovery and Jobs – Locally](#)
- [Making it Happen – Growing Enterprise for Ireland](#)
- [National Reform Programme for Ireland](#)
- [Our Cities: Drivers of National Competitiveness](#)
- [Policy Statement on Foreign Direct Investment in Ireland](#)
- [Regional Labour Markets Bulletin 2014](#)
- [Review of Business Mentoring Services in Ireland](#)
- [Social Housing Strategy 2020](#)
- [Supporting Enterprise, Local Development and Economic Growth](#)

***Regional Policies & Plans:***

- Regional Planning Guidelines for NUTS 3 Areas
- Regional Operational Programmes 2014 – 2020 for NUTS 2 Areas
- Gateways and Hubs Development Index 2012
- Forfás Regional Competitiveness Agendas
- County Incomes and Regional GDP Reports (CSO)

***Local Level Policies & Plans:***

- [Limerick 2030 An Economic and Spatial Plan for Limerick](#)
- Economic Baseline Study – Meath Local Authorities (*copies of this may be sought directly from Meath County Council*)
- [One Waterford - Delivering Jobs, Efficiency and Growth](#)
- [Delivering Local Development in Derry-Londonderry, Northern Ireland](#)

## **Part 3: Community Elements of the LECP**

### **Role of LCDCs and Local Authorities in Local and Community Development**

#### **Local Authorities and Local and Community Development**

1. Local authorities are the key governmental bodies responsible for local and community development at local level and the statutory basis for this role is set out in Section 66 of the Local Government Act 2001. Local authorities have a long history of involvement in community initiatives and service provision at local level, including libraries, leisure, recreation, arts and amenity facilities and services, as well as estate management, urban and village renewal, tidy towns, 'pride of place' and the operation of community employment schemes. These are important and rich interventions that help build social capital and have been a fundamental part of the role local government has played in local and community development to date.
2. *The Action Programme for Effective Local Government - Putting People First* significantly strengthens and expands local government's role in local and community development, with particular focus on promoting the well-being and quality of life of citizens and communities, with the newly established LCDCs as the primary vehicle for the coordination of local and community activity within the administrative area of the local authority.

#### **Role of Local Community Development Committees in Local and Community Development**

3. Local Community Development Committees (LCDCs) have been established "*for the purposes of developing, coordinating and implementing a coherent and integrated approach to local and community development*". The general roles and functions of LCDCs are set out in Part 6 of the Local Government Reform Act 2014 and have been elaborated upon in the [Guidelines for the Establishment and Operation of Local Community Development Committees](#).
4. In the context of developing and implementing the community elements of the LECP the role and function of LCDCs is to:-
  - i. bring a stronger focus on local and community development than heretofore, firstly in terms of setting jointly agreed local and community development goals and objectives that the key public-funded agencies and bodies will work collaboratively to achieve, and secondly in terms of promoting local and community development interventions as fundamental contributions to the development of the LCDC administrative area generally;
  - ii. take a strategic view of public-funded interventions and supports at local level for the purpose of co-ordinating them in a way that meets the high level goals of the LECP, examining both current and potential funding streams, as well as

funding pressures across the area, and exploring how the outcomes that matter to communities and citizens can be achieved as budgets change and contract; and

- iii. bring all the relevant public-funded agencies bodies together to target their resources in a way that delivers on the high-level LECP goals generally and the community objectives and actions specifically. These resources will include:-
  - a) resources directly under the management responsibility of the LCDC including, for example, the new LEADER Programme and the Social Inclusion Activation Programme (SICAP);
  - b) resources under the direct management and oversight responsibility of LCDC partners, for example those local and community development resources managed directly by local authorities, HSE, Education and Training Boards (ETBs), Department of Social Protection (DSP), Local Development Companies (LDCs) etc.; and
  - c) resources under the direct management of other public-funded local development agencies and bodies who may not be represented on LCDCs including for example, Children and Young Peoples Services Committees (CYPSCs), Traveller Interagency Groups (TIGs), Drugs Task Forces (DTFs), Family Resource Centres (FRCs), other Community Development Projects and bodies, etc.

### **Consultation**

5. The community elements of the LECP should be developed in a collaborative, consultative and participative way, affording key stakeholders the opportunity to contribute in a meaningful way. Local communities, organisations, stakeholders and the public in general should have the opportunity to see where their interests, needs and opportunities are reflected in the LECP.
6. There will be consultation on the preparation of the socio-economic statement, covering both the economic and community elements of the LECP. Further consultations on the community elements of the draft should be carried out, once this draft has been prepared under the guidance of the Advisory Steering Group but before it is submitted to the Municipal Districts and Regional Assemblies for consideration. The approach at this stage will be largely a matter for local determination, but there should be a strong focus on stakeholder, community and citizen participation and a process that is open to all.
7. Further guidance on participation and consultation in relation to the community elements is outlined in the section entitled “Key elements of successful participation and consultation” in **Appendix 1 of the Guidelines for the Community Elements of the Local Economic and Community Plan** (March 2014).

## Identifying Sustainable Community Objectives

8. The achievement of specific objectives based on key priorities for communities will require increased communication between agencies/local delivery bodies. It will also require greater clarity of responsibility within particular areas of activity, with a willingness by agencies/delivery bodies to coordinate funding and other interventions in a more collaborative way so as to contribute towards outcomes which may not be theirs alone or may not have been an agency priority. Strategic issues can rarely be addressed by targeting one action area alone. This issue of unemployment, for example, is likely to require actions related to economic development, education and training, employment services, activation policy, infrastructure provision, marketing and employer support. It is important, therefore, that a collaborative approach be taken to the way in which a particular objective is delivered.
  
9. Following the identification of high level goals in the socio-economic statement, the LCDC will be expected to extend the socio-economic analysis on which this is based and identify a number of Sustainable Community Objectives (SCOs) aimed at enhancing the quality of life and well-being of communities in a manner consistent with the overall regional and local planning frameworks. To underpin this analysis, the LCDC should map and profile local service provision. The expected output is a socio-economic perspective of the LCDC area; a map of key local service provision within the LCDC area e.g. services operated by HSE, DSP Intreo offices, etc., as well as services provided by voluntary bodies; a range of sustainable community objectives and highest priority actions required to deliver on the objectives.
  
10. In identifying the SCOs, LCDC members, particularly delivery bodies/agencies, will do the following:-
  - i. come together to capture the key strategic issues for the community sector in moving from the current situation to the goals set out in the socio-economic statement. It would be helpful to cluster these issues under each of the high level goals identified in stage one (see Part 1, paragraphs 14 and 15). Consultation should take place with delivery bodies/agencies not on the LCDC in terms of identifying key strategic issues;
  - ii. in the context of the high level goals for the LECP, the LCDC members will agree specific objectives required to drive the sector towards the realisation of the vision. These objectives should seek to address the key strategic issues (to which they should be cross referenced) and enable the goals for the sector to be met. This section should also describe the key stake-holding communities/groups/societal sectors etc. targeted as beneficiaries by each specific objective;
  - iii. members should agree highest priority actions and interventions necessary to achieve the specific objectives for the sector, with responsibilities for actions assigned to the relevant delivery body/agency. These actions will form the key elements of various operational plans of the delivery bodies/agencies.  
These actions should clearly demonstrate:-

- a) identified need based on a needs analysis of named target groups and/or disadvantaged areas;
  - b) a targeted approach to named target groups and/or disadvantaged areas;
  - c) actions that are specific, time-bound and have measurable outputs and outcomes;
  - d) how they contribute to the achievement of the identified objectives;
  - e) measurable impact on named target groups and/or disadvantages areas;
  - f) value for money and the elimination of duplication;
  - g) provision of complementary funding (public, private); and
  - h) that they are sustainable;
- iv. once the actions have been agreed the members should then identify the outputs, outcomes and impacts for each community objective to be included in the community elements of the LECP. See logic model below as an example of how to identify these.

<b>EU 2020 Priorities</b> <b>Employment</b> <i>69-71% of 20-64 year olds to be employed (currently 64.1%)</i>				
<b>LECP High Level Goal</b> <i>Increased level and quality of employment and income</i>				
<b>Sustainable Community Objective<sup>4</sup></b> <i>to tackle under-representation of women in employment and entrepreneurship in areas A, B, and C</i>				
INPUTS	ACTIONS	OUTPUTS	OUTCOMES	IMPACTS
Local Development Company & Local Groups  Local employer strategy developed	Outreach strategy in place in key areas and pre developed programme established	Particular areas targeted,  women engaged with	Women get work in local healthcare provider  Women set up their own businesses	<b>Rise in employment/ participation rates</b>
Education and Training Board	FETAC programmes provided as necessary	Training places delivered  Additional supports provided	Women assess other types of education  Women's general literacy/ numeracy increases	
Lone Parent Group	Mentoring supports	Childcare Assistance provided	Enhanced feeling of confidence, better mental health (social inclusion outcome)	
County Childcare Committee/ LCDP/ SICAP	CETS programme assessed/ childcare costs subsidised			
Local Enterprise Office/ LCDP/ SICAP	Grants provided/ mentoring support provided	Women access grants and mentoring		

<sup>4</sup> This could be a shared objective which would require complementary actions in the economic element of the Plan.

## Assessing the Impact and Proofing the Community Element of the LECP

11. In addition to ensuring consistency with the RSES/RPG and the Core Strategy of the Development Plan, consideration should be given to assessing the impact of the draft Plan on a number of horizontal priorities. These should include:-

- i. Sustainability
- ii. Equality
- iii. Poverty
- iv. Rurality (where appropriate)
- v. Age
- vi. Disability

12. It is acknowledged that this proofing can turn out to be an extremely difficult and time-consuming process and that the extent of proofing required for the community elements of the LECP could be significant given the range of issues it is intended to address. For example, LCDCs should ensure that the LECP is in line with the National Disability Strategy.<sup>5</sup> Similarly, LCDCs must ensure that the community elements of the LECP meet the proofing obligations set out in national policy in relation to other policy areas.

13. It is recommended, therefore, that the following stages be included in the impact assessment process:-

**Screening:** This part of the process should identify those elements of the LECP which are likely to have a significant impact on the various priority areas. Only those that are likely to have such an impact should be included in the assessment. A two-stage screening process (or at intervals during the planning process) which could include initial screening at an early stage of the LECP followed at a later stage by more comprehensive screening when more concrete and specific outcomes/actions etc. had been identified by the Plan.

**Scoping:** Identify the relevant issues arising, using the indicators associated with each objective.

**Assessment:** The assessment should identify the likely direction and scale of the impact – positive, neutral or negative and minor, medium or major, without seeking undue accuracy.

**Review and mitigation:** The reconsideration of an approach or the introduction of mitigation measures in the event of negative impacts.

Ideally the assessment should be included in the consultation process so that the views of those likely to be impacted on can be incorporated into the final

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<sup>5</sup> Objective 1 (d) Action 2: Include Accessibility as an objective throughout all new Local Authority development plans, in line with the National Disability Authority guideline. And Objective 3 (D) Action 2: Community development projects funded by LA shall, as a minimum, take full cognisance of accessibility and inclusion issues and where possible have an access policy



outcome, and where appropriate, integrated with any SEA and/or Appropriate Assessment under Article 6 of the Habitats Directive undertaken.

### **The Community Elements of the LECP**

#### **Nature and Purpose of the Community Elements of the LECP**

14. The purpose of the community elements of the LECP is to promote local and community development within the functional area of the LCDC and to ensure the co-ordination of relevant public-funded local and community development actions in a way that reduces duplication, targets available resources where they are most needed and maximises benefits for communities. The focus of the community elements of the LECP should be primarily on social and economic issues that have relevance and can be addressed at a community level, which involve community engagement or participation, which address the specific needs of communities and which identify areas of priority and indicate the most appropriate programmes or other resources to be linked with each particular priority.
  
15. In drafting the community elements of the Plan, regard should be had to the need to:-
  - i. promote and mainstream equality;
  - ii. develop and implement sustainable objectives;
  - iii. maximise returns from available resources and reduce duplication;
  - iv. ensure meaningful participation by communities in the planning process, and consultation and engagement with communities generally;
  - v. utilise community development principles in the LECP development process specifically and the work of LCDCs generally; and
  - vi. set the local context for mainstream funding programmes such as local development/social inclusion programmes, community services programmes, etc.

#### **Content of Community Element**

16. The Sustainable Community Objectives (SCOs) may include for example:-
  - i. improved quality and increased frequency of community-based services available to promote social inclusion and tackle poverty and disadvantage;
  - ii. physical, social, economic and environmental regeneration of deprived urban and rural communities;
  - iii. enhanced education and training infrastructure;
  - iv. the creation of new jobs, especially in low carbon and green economy; and
  - v. increased access to and use of high quality information and communication technology.
  
17. Specific actions under the following areas to achieve the SCOs may include:-
  - i. education, training and skills development, the provision of life-long learning opportunities, and the development of training infrastructure to support greater

- access to employment and self-employment and improve people's work readiness, including marginalised target groups and young people;
- ii. creation and sustainment of employment and self-employment opportunities, with a particular focus on:-
    - a. developing and supporting small and micro-enterprise; and
    - b. promoting social enterprise and social entrepreneurship;
  - iii. developing social, economic and physical infrastructure to address social exclusion, poverty and disadvantage, reverse social and economic decline and to realise growth potential and the sustainability of communities, including:\_
    - a) supporting bottom-up local community planning;
    - b) expansion of local basic services, including small scale leisure, culture, recreational and tourism infrastructure;
    - c) provision of services related to health and well-being, social integration, tackling disadvantage and combating poverty;
    - d) development of local, community-based transport services to complement existing public and private transport services;
    - e) enhancing access to and use of ICT; and
    - f) maintenance, restoration and upgrading of the cultural and natural heritage of communities, environmental upgrading and general actions to enhance the environmental, amenity and physical attributes of communities;
  - iv. developing synergies between supports for children and young people, such as the educational and developmental opportunities, and investment in services that address issues affecting children and young people;
  - v. enhancing the capacity of communities to improve their well-being through, for example, providing practical assistance and support for community organisations and structures, and developing leadership capacity within communities and the capacity of individuals and communities to engage in policy development and decision-making;
  - vi. promoting the general welfare of communities through, for example, investment in community development activities in the areas of crime prevention, juvenile diversion and support for vulnerable members of communities; and
  - vii. enhancing support for local volunteering, citizen engagement and active citizenship including the participation of youth in decision making.

**18.** It is important in identifying the SCOs to prioritise and develop actions a) where the LCDC has a remit; b) where collaborative working can make progress in relation to the prioritised items; and c) where the objectives can be achieved and actions delivered within the six-year time frame of the LECP, (particularly with the commitment of the bodies/agencies on the LCDC to working together on the objectives and actions identified in the LECP and ensure they are included in their own work programmes). This does not preclude other priorities being addressed by

bodies/agencies on the LCDC, or those that support the LCDC, continuing to work on their own priorities.

- 19.** It is at this point also that performance indicators and progress milestones, which enable monitoring of progress in implementing the actions and measurement and assessment of their effectiveness towards achievement of the SCOs, should be specified. Further guidance on the use of indicators in relation to the community elements is outlined in Appendix VII of the Guidelines for the Community Elements of the Local Economic and Community Plan (March 2014).
- 20.** It is important also that buy-in and commitment to the development and implementation of the community elements of the Plan is given, not only by LCDC partners, but also by other local public funded agencies/bodies and other funded development agencies that are not represented on the LCDC. Delivery of this support will be underpinned at national level through the Inter-Departmental Group on Local and Community Development, which will focus on ensuring that local governance structures under the aegis/responsibility of central funding Departments and agencies commit to the development and delivery of locally set objectives in the LECP. The relationship/agreement with relevant agencies/bodies will be managed through a memorandum of understanding between the LCDC and LCDC member agencies/delivery bodies, e.g. HSE, ETB, local authority itself, or through a joint protocol between the LCDC and non-member agencies/delivery bodies, e.g. CYPSCs, TIGs, FRCs etc.

## Appendix to Part 3

### Key Policies & Strategies to Inform the Community Elements of LECP

Existing information/data should be used as far as possible in formulating the community element of the LECP and, subject to any necessary updating/adaptation in current/local circumstances, regard should be had to relevant analysis and recommendations in existing reports, studies, etc. including but not limited to -

- [OECD Report on Local Development](#)
- [Our Sustainable Future: A Framework for Sustainable Development for Ireland \(2012\)](#),
- [National Action Plan for Social Inclusion 2007-2016](#),
- [Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures - The National Policy Framework for Children and Young People 2014-2020](#)
- [Report of the Commission for the Economic Development of Rural Areas \(CEDRA\)](#),
- [Further Education and Training Strategy 2014-2019](#),
- [Corporate Social Responsibility Plan, Good for Business, Good for the Community 2014-2016](#),
- [Healthy Ireland – A Framework for Improved Health and Wellbeing 2013–2025](#),
- [National Strategy for Traveller/Roma Integration](#),
- [Report of the High Level Group on Traveller Issues 2006](#),
- [20 Year Strategy for the Irish Language 2010- 2030](#),
- [Supporting Enterprise, Local Development and Economic Growth](#),
- [National Reform Programme for Ireland](#)

Also, a range of research and publications are available at national level on key target groups. For example, the National Action Plan for Social Inclusion (2007 – 2016) sets out 12 high level goals in five thematic areas: Children, People of Working Age, Older People, People with Disabilities, Communities.