

## 7. CONCLUSIONS

It is particularly timely to produce a new Economic Profile and Economic Development Strategy for Kildare to 2016 as there are major developments both in the economic environment and the policy arena, which will impact on the development of the county over at least the medium term. While external factors that are determined at the national or even international level have the most important influence on the overall development in the county, with increasing globalisation many differences across countries are reducing, thus increasing the importance of local factors. Taking account of globalisation is particularly important as there has been a general loss of competitiveness particularly in the manufacturing sector, which will continue to play an important role. As a consequence Kildare will need to compete internationally for investment and a skilled workforce, which requires policy makers to take the lead in facing the challenges ahead.

Kildare County Council plays an important role in local development since it controls important planning functions, which can be used to influence the quality of life in the country. Furthermore, the County Council can initiate co-operation between relevant agencies, the social partners local regional and central government across a wide range of areas.

The Strategy that was outlined above breaks with the traditional approach of starting with purely descriptive data analysis and finishing with prescriptive recommendations. Central to the innovative approach adopted here is the fact that in order to identify the appropriate policies one must first understand how the economy works. Thus, an analytical framework that simplifies the complex interaction within the local economy was constructed. Rather than focusing on Kildare specific issues this framework focuses on the general underlying mechanisms that operate in all developed countries. Understanding these enables policy makers to identify trends that pertain not just to Kildare but also to competing regions and countries.

Crucially the development framework recognises that there is a strong linkage between the social partners, the county council and other agencies both in producing and utilising the key growth drivers.

The development framework shows that skilled labour, education/ R&D, infrastructure and quality environment are the key growth drivers. Each of these is necessary to generate growth, concentrating on just one is not sufficient. While Kildare has a good workforce there is no place for complacency and consequently education and R&D will play an important role in driving the success of the county. Furthermore, as Kildare will also need to retain and attract a highly educated labour force, which is increasingly mobile, quality of life issues are becoming ever more important. The factors that determine the quality of life include employment opportunities, education facilities, infrastructure, leisure facilities, a quality built and natural environment and a sense of community. Thus the key growth drivers are highly interrelated.

Given the scarce resources available to the County Council it is essential to prioritise resources. In order to do this a methodology was developed that is consistent with the development framework. This method provides a means of responding to a changed environment without having to re-draw a strategy. Furthermore this approach provides a clarity to decision making that is often lacking.

Ultimately quality of life will be the key to success since the fortunes of developed economies are increasingly tied up with the quality of the labour force, which responds to quality of life changes. In this respect it is also important to consider the spatial balance within the county, which has developed unevenly with over-development in some parts and underdevelopment in others. Finally it is imperative to see beyond purely the local level and instead to consider the resources available in the wider region in order to compete internationally.



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