

Chapter 6 Employment, Economy and Enterprise

6.0 Aims

The main aim of this chapter is as follows:

- To build on Tullamore's current economic strengths, recognise its challenges and strive to improve same, therefore ensuring that its people will have access to a range of quality employment opportunities in the town's catchment area, "**bringing people and jobs closer together**":

6.1 Context

This chapter sets out the employment and enterprise strategy and policies from a planning and economic development perspective for Tullamore over the plan period. The Councils' strategy is consistent with the principles of the National Spatial Strategy 2002-2020, the Midlands Regional Planning Guidelines (MRPGs) (2004), Offaly County Development Board's – "Bringing the Future into Focus 2002-2012, A Strategy for Economic, Social and Cultural Development" and Offaly County Enterprise Board's Action Plan under 'Towards 2016'.

In accordance with the MRPGs, **targeted** population growth levels for Tullamore, coupled with the need to provide a strong employment base and provide alternatives to long distance commuting, indicate that provisions should be made to provide for an increase in employment activity.

The Councils acknowledge and support the role of **employment/investment promotion agencies** within Tullamore which include, IDA, Enterprise Ireland, FÁS and the County Enterprise Board.

6.1.1 The National Economy

The **NDP 2007-2013** sets out the economic and social investment priorities necessary to realise the vision of a better quality of life for all. In excess of €54.6 billion will to be invested nationally over this period to address **economic infrastructure deficits**, which are vital for the Country's future economic growth, regional development and environmental sustainability. A further €20 billion is to be invested in **Enterprise, Science and Innovation**.

At a **regional level**, with interest specifically targeted to Tullamore, development of the Midlands Gateway as the economic driver of the region is set to be the largest beneficiary of national funding. Tullamore as the County town of County Offaly and as part of the Midlands Linked Gateway is a source of economic dynamism within the County and the Region and should be enhanced, promoted and developed for the benefit of the Local, Regional and National economy.

6.1.2 Economy – Frameworks for Renewal

In light of the current economic situation (as of 2010) and moreover, the emerging reality of a slowing economy, three context and key concept documents dealing with the global financial crisis and recession were published recently. These are:

- Building Ireland's Smart Economy: A Framework for Sustainable Economic Renewal (Government of Ireland, December 2008).
- The National Economic & Social Council (NESC) Report 118 "Ireland's Five Part Crisis: An integrated National Response (March 2009)
- National Competitiveness Council (NCC) Report on "Our Cities, Drivers of National Competitiveness" (April 2009).

Building Ireland's Smart Economy elaborates on five key actions that are required in order to establish a framework for economic renewal and these can be summarised as follows:

- Securing the enterprise economy and restoring competitiveness.
- Building on ideas and a strong emphasis on Innovation.
- Enhancing the Environment and securing Energy supplies.
- Investment in critical infrastructure.
- Providing efficient and effective public services and regulation.

The NESC Report advocates an integrated policy approach simultaneously addressing the banking, fiscal, economic, social and reputation dimensions of the current crisis while the NCC supports the promotion of Ireland's cities and an emphasis on the need for better urban governance, integrated land use planning, new funding model for local authorities, enhanced infrastructure and more of an effort to overcome issues related to social exclusion.

While the scale and seriousness of the current national and international crisis has resulted in attempts to devise a new development strategy focussed on macro level objectives, it is strongly recognised that there is a need for a spatial planning framework which may require some change of emphasis of the National Spatial Strategy. In light of the current economic situation, it is imperative that the Councils will be pro-active in seeking to protect existing employment and to develop a renewed approach for enhancing, promoting and encouraging employment, education, training and enterprise at every available opportunity.

6.1.3 Economic Profile

6.1.3.1 Principal Economic Status¹

Table 6.1 below provides the principal economic status for persons aged 15+ years in Tullamore over the period 2002-2006. In this short period of time, persons "at work" increased by over 5% and unemployment marginally decreased by 0.7%. For 2006, the % share of population categorised as "student", "looking after home/family", "retired" and "other" was similar to the County % share of population. The % share of population categorised as "unable to work due to permanent sickness or disability" was comparative to the county statistic.

Table 6.1: Principal Economic Status (Persons 15+)

Principal Economic Status	Tullamore Town and Environs		County Offaly
	2002 % Share	2006 % Share	2006 % Share
At work	53.3%	58.82%	56.90%
Looking for first regular job	0.88%	1.2%	0.90%
Unemployed having lost or given up previous job	6.95%	6.25%	4.40%
Student	8.72%	7.35%	8.70%
Looking after Home/Family	13.40%	10.45%	13.50%
Retired	11.37%	11.14%	10.90%
Unable to work due to permanent sickness or disability	4.66%	4.41%	4.40%
Other	1.07%	0.36%	0.30%
Total	100%	100%	100.00%

Source: Central Statistics Office
Census Reports 2002 & 2006

¹ Table 6.1 relates to figures from 2006 census. It should be noted the Principal Economic Status has altered significantly in the subsequent period nationally and at a County Level (refer to Table 6.2).

Table 6.2 indicates the persons on the Live Register recorded for the Tullamore Local Office published most recently. Between March 2008 and the same month in 2009 there has been over a 40% increase in persons claiming employment assistance or employment benefit, with the rate increasing again in March of 2009. The figures are reflective of what is happening at County and National level. In 2008, the world "banking crisis" coupled with Ireland's slowing construction activities, caused a dramatic increase in the Live Register both in Tullamore and in County Offaly. These statistics indicate a slowing economy which is likely to impact on the future development of Tullamore, and indeed County Offaly, in the short to medium term. The Councils will continue to co-operate with agencies and bodies in relation to employment creation.

Table 6.2: Persons on Live Register

Month/ Year	Tullamore Local Office	Annual % Change	County Offaly	Annual % Change	Tullamore Office, Annual % Share of County Offaly
Mar 08	1839	-	3867	48.14%	47.55%
Feb 09	3105	40.77%	6758	42.77%	45.94%
Mar 09	3410	8.9%	7196	24.38%	47.38%

Source: Central Statistics Office, Census Reports 2009

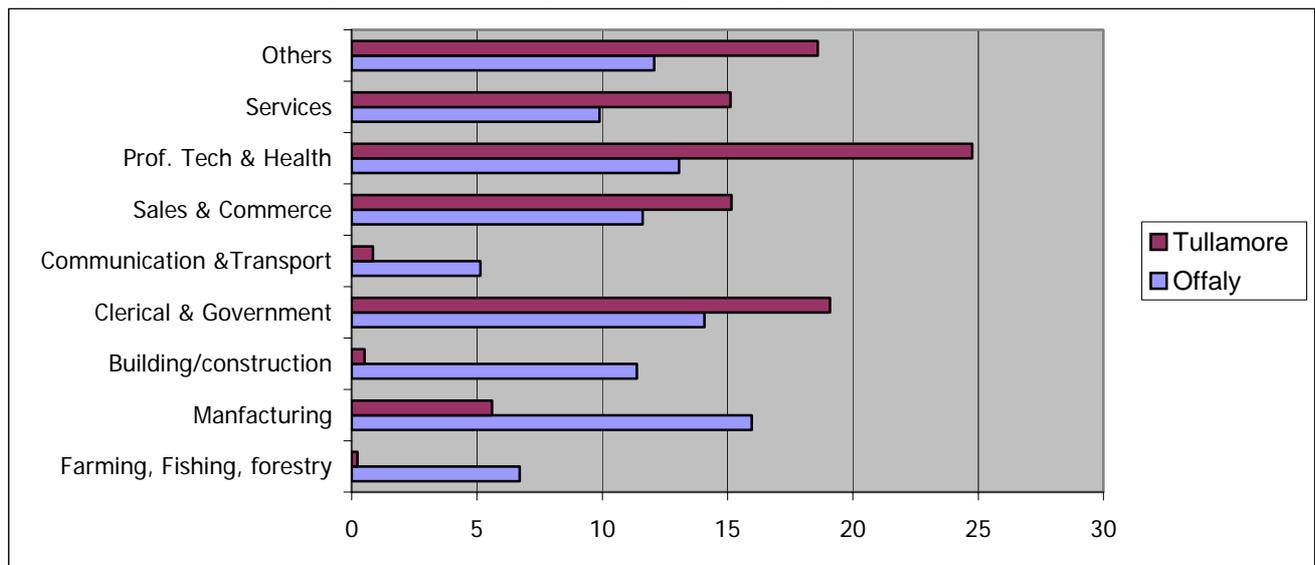
6.1.3.2 Labour Force/Employment

Figure 6.1 displays the % share of persons at work by broad occupational groups in Tullamore and in County Offaly. Some of the key points emerging from this table show that the building and construction sector in Tullamore is approximately 3 times less than the same category at County level. This sector along with Transport and Communications, manufacturing and farming, fishing and forestry are substantially lower than the statistics for County level. In all other sectors, Tullamore is above the County percentage scores. This is particularly the case in the professional, technical and health care sectors where Tullamore lies over 10% ahead of the county score.

It would be expected that the % share of persons employed in the professional, technical and health sectors will increase in the future, given Tullamore's vision and ability to become an important location for knowledge-based industries and to preserve, enhance and continually attract healthcare and associated services and to create a healthcare niche within the town.

In the most recent publication from the Central Statistics Office – 'A profile of the working population of large towns', it is stated that 4,510 workers resided in Tullamore as of April 2006. Of these, a stated 1,864 worked outside the town and 2,646 both lived and worked in the town. 4,827 persons travelled to Tullamore to work thus resulting in a workforce of 7,413 persons. As evidenced below in Figure 6.1, the report identifies that the health sector was the most important contributor to jobs in Tullamore at that time.

The continual growth of Tullamore as part of the Midlands Linked Gateway is necessary to sustain and accommodate increased employment levels. With the planning framework established already, Tullamore provides wide ranging opportunities for new employment. The vision for Tullamore is to attract higher order employment opportunities, while sustaining existing employment industries thereby increasing the % share of people employed in professional, managerial and technical areas.

Figure 6.1 % Share of work population classified by broad occupational group

Source: Central Statistics Office, Census Report 2006

6.1.3.3 Educated Workforce

A skilled workforce related to technological development and innovation will become increasingly important for the location and sustaining of businesses. Table 6.3 provides a breakdown of education attainment levels for persons aged 15+ years within Tullamore. On a statistical percentage breakdown of figures for Tullamore, save for Primary education, the level at which education has been completed has risen within the inter census period. The total number of persons who have completed a third level qualification has increased over the four year period by over 40%.

Table 6.3: Persons aged 15+ years in Tullamore classified by highest education completed 2002-2006

Level of education completed	2002 % of total	2006 % of total	Difference % difference
Primary (incl. No formal education)	1469 (17.05%)	1411 (13.76%)	-58 (-3.9%)
Lower secondary	1562 (18.1%)	1571 (15.32%)	9 (0.57%)
Upper secondary	1987 (23.06%)	2405 (23.46%)	418 (21%)
Third level (non degree)	696 (8.07%)	921 (8.98%)	225 (32.32%)
Third Level (degree or higher)	1091 (12.65%)	1543 (15.05%)	452 (41.42%)
Total whose fulltime education has not ceased	1189 (13.80%)	1624 (15.84%)	435 (36.58%)
Not stated	620 (7.19%)	774 (7.55%)	154 (24.83%)
Total	8614	10249	

Source: Central Statistics Office, Census 2002 and 2006.

6.1.3.4 Distance to work

Total distance and time taken for journeys in commuting to work is an important indicator in assessing the overall quality of life for the inhabitants of Tullamore. Commuters provide less in the way of economic benefit for the areas in which they live than if they worked in the same area. It is a challenge to retain this section (commuters) of the population as

active members of the local economy. In the 2006 Census, 5,732 persons in Tullamore over the age of 15 indicated that they travelled to work. Over 25% of respondents did not state the distance travelled. The largest category of distance travelled was 2-4km in which almost 30% of the travelling population indicated. However, just over 8% of the commuting population travel a distance of 50 km or more. It is also worthy to note that out of all persons travelling a distance to work, almost 53 % use the car as the mode of transport, while less than 1% of commuters use the train.

6.2 Strategy

The following main principles establish the overall economic strategy for the purposes of this plan, having regard to the existing and potential economic strengths of Tullamore in facilitating the development of its overall economy, enterprise and employment.

The Council continues to comply with the principles of the **National Spatial Strategy** (2002-2020) and the **Midland Regional Planning Guidelines** (2004), in providing for the competitiveness of the region in accordance with sustainable development.

Tullamore identified as part of the **Midlands Linked Gateway** (economic driver of the region), will account for a very significant portion of economic and employment growth. The Strategic Development Framework for the Midlands Gateway (Indecon Report, 2006) puts forward the development of Tullamore as potentially fulfilling a productivity gap in scientific and knowledge based activity in particular and thereby implementing a key element of the Strategic Development Plan for the Gateway. Further, given its role as the **County town** of Offaly, Tullamore has a role to play as the **primary retail and services centre for the county** (refer to Offaly Local Authorities Retail Strategy to 2015).

6.2.1 Settlement Hierarchy – Large Scale development

The Council's strategy for sustainable employment is compatible with the settlement strategy for County Offaly. This identified Tullamore as being the top tier of the hierarchy as part of the Midlands Linked Gateway and capital town of County Offaly. Future development must have regard to this settlement hierarchy and its capacity to facilitate the scale of such development proposed. The county's settlement hierarchy (refer to Chapter 4) provides the framework for the allocation of areas of land zoned for employment and enterprise including; industry, business, commercial and employment and other more non-prescriptive zoning objectives namely 'town centre / mixed use' and 'other settlement lands'. Tullamore provides a range of zoned areas to accommodate a wide range of employment and businesses.

Optimum locations for large-scale development proposals are considered in accordance with each settlement's location within the identified tiers in the settlement hierarchy. In general, large-scale **multi-national companies** display a preference for locations within or within proximity to large urban areas that can provide a labour force, skills, infrastructure, services, accessibility and business and social networks. In contrast, established **Irish-owned companies** are distributed more widely.

The Councils, in accordance with proposals set out in the Strategic Development Framework for the Midlands Gateway (The Indecon Report) 2006, recommends that priority be given to IDA (Ireland) and Enterprise Ireland to developing sectoral clusters within Tullamore as part of the future development of the Midlands Linked Gateway. It is acknowledged that the development of **Third Generation activity** related to science and knowledge is necessary in promoting economic growth and prosperity within the town.

The Councils are supportive in encouraging and making provisions for increased employment and enterprise activity, including ensuring that sufficient land is zoned at optimum locations, the provision of necessary infrastructure, where possible and measures in encouraging and sustaining critical mass levels to allow the future economic development of Tullamore.

6.2.2 Small-Medium Enterprises (SME's)

The term small enterprise refers to an individual business/enterprise which **employs less than 10 persons** and the term medium enterprise refers to those which employ up to 50 persons. The Councils acknowledge that the

development of small-scale projects with long-term employment potential are also crucially important to the future development of Tullamore. Offaly County Enterprise Board (CEB) is actively involved in promoting and encouraging the development of SME's throughout the county. The Council further encourages such development within Tullamore.

6.2.3 Tullamore – Attractive Place to Do Business

Tullamore is strategically located in the Midland Region and is part of the Midlands Linked Gateway (NSS & MRPG's). Tullamore has adequate infrastructure provision to support future economic development, with future upgrades already planned for, along with a sustainable vision for the town's future development.

Tullamore is in proximity to Athlone Institute of Technology (AIT). Tullamore has evolved a strong niche in Healthcare and associated development as well as accommodating government offices (refer to Chapter 2). The high quality of lifestyle on offer in Tullamore, in terms of, built and natural environment, history, culture, amenity and leisure, is a key driver in attracting workers, businesses and tourists alike.

In accordance with the MRPGs' population **target** levels for Tullamore, coupled with the need to provide a strong employment base and an alternative to long distance commuting, provisions have been made to accommodate an increase in employment activity.

6.2.4 Factors influencing the future economic growth of Tullamore

The Councils aim to facilitate economic development, growth and employment generating opportunities throughout Tullamore and its environs up to 2016 and beyond primarily through the following measures:

Availability of zoned land: The Council has zoned land, which provides for the future economic growth of the town in a plan led and sustainable manner (refer to the land use zoning map which accompanies this plan).

Availability of infrastructure: Investment in infrastructure is paramount for the facilitation of future economic development activity within the town. This includes the adequate provision and upgrading of the following in particular:

- Transportation – Road and Rail increasing accessibility to airports/ports/other regions (including other economic growth areas/residential areas).
- Water Services – Water, Wastewater treatment infrastructure.
- Energy – Electricity, Gas supply infrastructure.
- Telecommunications – Broadband, mobile phone/telephone infrastructure.
- Waste management.

Local Authority's role: Tullamore Town Council, in partnership with Offaly County Council and the County Development Board, provides a co-ordinating role for all development agencies and is a facilitator for local employment initiatives.

6.3 Policy

Employment and Workforce

TTEP 06-01 It is the Councils' policy to seek to **promote and diversify** the local economy as prescribed under the National Spatial Strategy, Midlands Regional Planning Guidelines and in accordance with the County's agreed settlement hierarchy which provides for balanced development.

TTEP 06-02 It is the Councils' policy to strengthen and channel development into **Tullamore** the primary driver for economic development within the county, a role identified as part of the **Midlands Linked Gateway** as set out in the National Spatial Strategy and the Midland Regional Planning Guidelines.

TTEP 06-03 There is a positive presumption to employment creation and it is the Councils policy to distribute and channel employment sources into suitably zoned and serviced lands already identified in Tullamore for industrial,

manufacturing, commercial, technological and service needs of the town and the Midlands Region over the plan period within the bounds of proper planning and sustainable development.

TTEP 06-04 It is the Councils' policy to **co-operate with potential employers and local, regional and national enterprise authorities**, most notably IDA, Enterprise Ireland, Offaly County Enterprise Board and FÁS in the attraction of investment into Tullamore, including both overseas investment and local investment and the provision of employment/enterprise.

TTEP 06-05 It is the Councils' policy to take a pro-active approach in seeking to **protect** existing employment and to **develop** new opportunities for employment, education, training and enterprise.

TTEP 06-06 It is the Councils' policy to support **employment creation** including where it can mitigate against long distance commuting.

TTEP 06-07 It is the Councils' policy to encourage and facilitate existing and/or future **decentralisation** to Tullamore.

TTEP 06-08 It is the Councils' policy to actively encourage, facilitate and provide for the location and development of **knowledge-intensive** and **technology based specialisation companies** in Tullamore, as appropriate, and in accordance with development/environmental standards and allow for provision of Research and Development/Innovation facilities to support enterprise, employment and learning.

TTEP 06-09 It is the Councils' policy to **facilitate** and work pro-actively with other interest groups (both public and private sector) in the **location of industry, business and enterprise** in particular by:

Zoning of lands within an adequate range of locations for both industry and business/employment uses which can facilitate the provision of large-scale and small-scale development, as appropriate. This includes the identification and possible reservation of lands at suitable locations which will accommodate, where appropriate - business/commercial activity, industry, enterprise, retail etc. having regard to proper planning and sustainable development. The Councils will protect zoned lands from inappropriate development that would undermine future economic activity or the unsustainable development of such areas.

TTEP 06-10 It is the Councils' policy to ensure that sufficient industrial land is available when required, and to encourage and facilitate the expansion of existing industry where it conforms with the proper planning and development of the areas involved.

TTEP 06-11 It is the Councils' policy to **actively encourage the redevelopment of brownfield sites and the reuse of disused buildings** for enterprise and employment creation, in particular disused sites, when such development is in compliance with the **land-use zoning matrix**.

TTEP 06-12 It is the Councils' policy to **co-operate with and facilitate** Government agencies, and other bodies where feasible, in **encouraging home-based employment**.

TTEP 06-13 It is the Councils' policy to encourage the provision of **incubator units** at a scale appropriate to Tullamore's location within the County Settlement Hierarchy.

TTEP 06-14 It is the Councils' policy to **encourage and establish links** between Tullamore and higher educational institutes e.g. Athlone Institute of Technology and other higher educational institutes as appropriate, which will improve the skills base/education of the local population and workforce.

Rural Development on Urban Fringe

TTEP 06-15 It is the Councils' policy to support the development of agriculture where it is compatible with the sustainable development of Tullamore and commensurate with sustaining the farming community.

TTEP 06-16 It is the Councils' policy to consider favourably proposals for on-farm based diversification, which is complementary to the agricultural operation on the farm and is operated as part of the farm holding.

TTEP 06-17 It is the Councils' policy to facilitate and encourage the reuse of redundant farm buildings of vernacular importance for appropriate agri-tourism enterprises, subject to the proper planning and sustainable development of the area.

TTEP 06-18 It is the Councils' policy to co-operate with enterprise development agencies and local development bodies in the provision of enterprise and employment.

6.4 Objectives²

Employment and Workforce

TTEO 06-01 It is an objective of the Councils to facilitate the development of the **Midlands Linked Gateway**, in accordance with national / regional policy. This will include measures to seek to **reserve lands within Tullamore** (part of the Midlands Linked Gateway) which will make provisions for potential national and regionally significant activities and to attract specialist large-scale enterprise development within the county. The Planning Authorities will therefore enhance, promote and protect Tullamore in the interests of providing for and facilitating the potential development of the gateway in accordance with national and regional policy.

TTEO 06-02 It is an objective of the Councils to **co-operate with and seek to facilitate local community based development groups in developing employment clusters including incubator/start up units** as appropriate.

TTEO 06-03 It is an objective of the Councils to **identify a range of optimum locations** which can present opportunities for the location of **specific/specialised enterprise and employment** within the plan area.

TTEO 06-04 It is an objective of the Councils **to encourage**, in co-operation with the IDA, Enterprise Ireland, the Offaly County Enterprise Board and other local development bodies, the development of enterprise and employment facilities within the plan area.

TTEO 06-05 To support agricultural development and encourage the continuation of agriculture as a contributory means of maintaining population in the hinterland of Tullamore and sustaining the rural economy.

TTEO 06-06 To provide a high quality business park on Council owned lands in Clonminch in partnership with the IDA.

¹ The order of listing of objectives is not intended to indicate priorities. Subject to the availability of resources, it is the Councils' aim to monitor and accomplish the objectives listed in this section within the period of the plan.