NOAC

National Oversight and Audit Commission

An Coimisiúin Náisiúnta Maoirseachta agus Iniúchóireachta

MULTI ANNUAL WORK PROGRAMME
2020 - 2022

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Introduction

This document set out a multi annual Implementation Work Programme based on the Strategy produced by the Commission for the years 2020 to 2022.

Having regard to the role and responsibilities of NOAC the Commission seeks in implementing its mandate NOAC aims to:

- Be established in its role and have forged a working relationship with its stakeholders, including the D/HPLG, the Chief Executives and elected members of the local authorities;

- Conduct evidence based scrutiny that delivers quality, objective, balanced and relevant reports, which will afford the local government sector the opportunity to improve its performance, enhance the existing culture of continuous improvement and embed best practice within the system as a whole;

- Add value to the local government sector and provide recommendations to build on the efficiencies and savings delivered by the sector to date, with a focus on customer service and cost effectiveness;

- Establish a collaborative approach with the relevant bodies and agencies at the heart of NOAC's work;

- Identify and focus upon those aspects of local authority functions and activities that are important to the citizen/customer;

- Facilitate engagement around improved performance,

- Monitor the adequacy of local authority corporate plans and assess how well these are being implemented.

The majority of NOAC's work is carried out by a number of sub-groups, set up to focus on particular areas and to further various projects. Whereas previously there have been up to seven working groups the newly adopted strategy seeks to reduce this.

NOAC's executive and ancillary services are provided by the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government. NOAC's operations are, however, independent, as required by legislation.

Principle Themes and Work Programme

The Strategy and underpinning work plan therefore has five overall themes through which tasks and actions will be delivered. These themes are set out below:

1. Enhance scrutiny through performance indicators;
2. Examination of financial performance and audit;
3. Reviewing customer service;
4. Monitor delivery of corporate plans;
5. Support and promote innovation, good practice and continuous improvement.

Within these themes the strategy has developed key actions for the period 2020 to 2022.

NOAC Meetings / Members

In accordance with the strategy NOAC would expect to meet at least 8 times a year. These meeting however may not only consist of main meetings but also attendance by stakeholders and local authorities (minimum 3 per year), as part of the scrutiny process.

NOAC's aim is to make 6 scrutiny visits per year to local authorities of which at least half would progress onto a scrutiny meeting with the full NOAC Board as above. Scrutiny visits should be carried out by two NOAC members and at least by two members of the Executive. This work shall be in accordance with an approved defined process.

Working Groups

Previously NOAC has had up to seven working groups (WGs). However as only a number of these have been active the newly adopted Strategy proposes to rationalise these. This should ensure that the groups have a more sustainable work load, based on broad themes and to allow better alignment with the work programme identified.

As a result of evaluation of the work programme in the strategy the following working groups are proposed: -

Title	Code	Note
LG Governance, Efficiency and Reform	WG1: LGER	Includes Corporate Governance, PMO Projects, Local Enterprise Offices and Housing
Performance Indicators	WG2: PI	Similar to previous WG
Communications and Customer Survey	WG3: CCS	Similar to previously with added role of communications.
Financial Management and Performance	WG4: FMP	Includes Financial Performance and Public Spending Code
Chair	Chair	Includes Scrutiny Programme, Annual Reports, Review of Recommendations and Protocols with Stakeholders

These working groups shall meet as required, however they should be at least quarterly and where possible meetings should be co-ordinated to coincide with the main NOAC meetings and utilise video/voice conference facilities where practical. Working groups can be attended by non-NOAC members.

The Commission and Supporting Resources

The 2020 to 2022 strategy calls for a Business Case and Resource plan be prepared for submission to the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government and which allows for an appropriate level of resources to allow the Commission to complete its work plan to, at a minimum, meet statutory requirements.

The Board Members of the Commission will provide overall direction for the Commission in accordance with this Strategy and underpinning work programme. Members of the Board will need to be adequately supported by a Secretariat/Executive under the leadership of a Chief Officer, which will support the work of the commission and ensure that adequate resources are provided. Staffing at NOAC has built up since its formation with at end of 2019 consisting of: -

Grade / Establishment	No (WTE) in place	Notes
Principal Officer (1)	1.0	
Assistant Principal Officer (2)	1.5	
Higher Executive Officer (2)	1.9	
Clerical Officer (1)	1.0	Additional CO in 2019
Total (6)	5.4	

In order to ensure effective delivery of the work programme certain skillsets will be important for the Secretariat/Executive. Key within this are skills relating to governance, policy analysis, economic evaluation, statistics and financial and that the positions within the unit should have regard to these. It is also noted that the Strategy states that the business case may allow for additional research staff however a balanced approach to include outsourcing of tasks will be required, including report writing.

An analysis of the of the adopted Strategy and work programme indicates that Executive/Secretariat staff numbers will need to be kept under review due to a number of factors such as that the workload increasing, external factors and further ongoing changes/variabilities to the programme scope. In addition, it is noted that during 2019 staffing resources in the unit was subject to significant change. Given the above, it proposed that this be considered further during Q1 of 2020 and updated annually thereafter, as required.

Relationships

In order to increase the effectiveness of NOAC, the Executive will explore the potential of using other research capabilities including external options and external experts. These in particular include the Irish Government Economic Evaluation Service, Research Institutions and external procured experts. Other Government Departments and Agencies also play a strategic role in the work of the Commission. These include:

- The Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government;
- Government Departments;
- The Local Government Management Agency (particularly the research capability);
- Local Government Audit Service;

- Other statutory bodies having statutory responsibility for overseeing local government actions including the Environment Protection Agency (EPA), Transport Infrastructure Ireland (TII) and the Office of the Planning Regulator (OPR).

These organisations have a potential to assist or collaborate with the Commission. All relationships and protocols with such bodies will be finalised and agreed by the Commission prior to implementation. As part of this, a process of agreeing the collection, collation and sharing of data, information and research will be critical to underpin the respective statutory roles of such bodies (subject to the requirements of GDPR and commercial confidence, where applicable).

A key relationship is with the local authority system and with the Local Government Management Agency (LGMA). On this basis the Executive, working with the chair will seek to engage with the Chair of the CCMA as well as the Chair and Chief Executive of the LGMA to agree an overall protocol and work plan with the Commission as soon as possible and to cover a number of areas as set out in the strategy.

Having regard to the development of NOACs role and implementation of its work programme, it is proposed that the Commission review further the work of other bodies such as Audit Scotland (Accounts Commission) or other oversight bodies as to such procedures and policies or other matters that would have a relevance and help improve the work of NOAC.

Communications

In order to improve the awareness of the National Oversight and Audit Commission (NOAC) the Executive will seek to ensure that material relating to the work of the Commission is published online in a timely manner and that progress is made on the development of a new web site.

Material setting out the work of the Commission and its role will be developed. This material, along with attendance and presentations at seminars and workshops will be used to help increase awareness of the role and work of the Commission.

Multi-Annual Work Programme Actions 2020-2022

Based on the programme contained within the Strategy, actions have been re-ordered and aligned with the proposed working groups. In addition, the proposed timeframes for each task has been mapped out for the period of 2020 to 2022. In doing so assumptions are made based on level of resources and whether variabilities occur. Each also has a performance indicator attached to assist in monitoring implementation. Progress on these actions will be reviewed annually and the work programme amended as required.

These are set out in the following table: -

WG	No	Principal Action	Timeframe	Key Performance Indicator	2019		2020				2021				2022			
					Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
WG1: Local Government Governance Efficiency & Reform (LGGER)	1	Review of Corporate plans 2015-2019 to include trend analysis	By end Q4, 2019	Publication of Report														
	2	Review of new Corporate Plans 2019-2024 within an agreed risk management framework	By end Q1, 2020	Publication of Report														
	9	Inter-action with Councillors/AILG post adoption of new corporate plans	End Q2, 2020	2 workshops per year														
	12	Review Risk Management Processes in Local Authorities.	End Q4, 2020 and annually thereafter	Review complete and published														
	14	Review Local Government ICT Strategy and implementation.	End Q4, 2020	Review complete and published														
	22	Review performance of the Local Enterprise Offices.	End Q4, 2019 and annually thereafter	Publication of Reviews														
	19	Review performance of the Regional Assemblies.	End Q4, 2019 and annually thereafter	Publication of Reviews														

WG	No	Principal Action	Timeframe	Key Performance Indicator	2019		2020				2021				2022			
					Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
WG2: Performance Indicators (PI)	5	Enhancement of annual KPIs/performance Reports	By end Q4, 2019	Publication of Protocol		X				X				X				X
	18	Explore the development of a National Performance Framework against which to assess overall Local Authority performance.	End Q2, 2020	Appraisal Template in place		X		X										
	23	Prepare and publish annual Performance Indicator Report of local authorities based on data gathered from local authorities to include:- - Carry out 6 LA on Site Validation Meetings in support of preparation of Annual Performance Indicator (PI) Report	End Q3 annually	Reports complete and published		X			X				X				X	
	15	Prepare in depth reports on specific areas of Local Authority activity arising from the Reform of Local Government and Public Service Reform including: Review of performance in the area of economic and Community development, Town Regeneration and Renewal and Climate Change	End Q4, 2020	Reports complete and published						X				X	X			
	17	Improve Data gathering, building on the work and publications of other organizations where possible to avoid duplication and overload.	End Q2, 2020	Agreed framework for data sharing in place		X		X										

WG	No	Principal Action	Timeframe	Key Performance Indicator	2019		2020				2021				2022			
					Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
WG3: Communications and customer Service	4	Implement 3rd phase of the customer satisfaction survey and then migrate same to the LGMA so meet LGMA to agree NOAC expectation of service delivery from LGMA	By end Q2, 2020 and annually thereafter	Publication of Report				X				X				X		
	24	Organisation of Customer Service Workshop	By end Q4 2019 and annually thereafter	Publish presentations		X				X				X				X
	6	Organisation of best practice workshops	By end Q2, 2020 and annually thereafter	Publication of Report				X				X				X		
	7	Preparation of Communications strategy including : branding/logo	By end Q1, 2020 and annually thereafter	Publication of Communications Strategy			X				X				X			

WG	No	Principal Action	Timeframe	Key Performance Indicator	2019		2020				2021				2022			
					Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
Financial Management and Performance	16	Review Financial Performance including: - Management of the payroll shared service, - Review of Procurement in Local Authorities - Review of Non-mortgage loans	End Q4, 2022	Reports complete and published				X	X		X	X			X	X		
	3	Develop annual strategy to deal with the LGAS Reports and Input to the work programme of the LGAS to support the work of NOAC e.g. in relation to Audit , Value for money and SLA Performance	By end Q4, 2020	Publication of Report					X									X
	10	Engagement with the Audit Committees	End Q3, 2020 and annually thereafter	1 event per year			X				X				X			
	20	Public Spending Code	Q4 Annually	Publication of report		X				X				X				X

WG	No	Principal Action	Timeframe	Key Performance Indicator	2019		2020				2021				2022			
					Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
Chair	8	Agree and deliver annual inter-action programme with the CEs/local authorities site visits	By end Q4, 2019 and per annual programme thereafter	Deliver programme to include 6 site visits and 2 annual engagements with Chief Executives														
	21	NOAC Annual Reports	Q1 Annually	Publication of report			█				█				█			
	13	Review implementation of recommendations contained in NOAC Reports	End Q3, 2019 and annually thereafter	Review complete and published		█					█				█			
	11	Agree protocols with other government bodies and agencies	End Q3, 2019 and annually thereafter	1 event per year		█					█				█			

Annual Monitoring and Evaluation

It is agreed that monitoring of local government requires a pro-active monitoring of its own actions and therefore in accordance with the strategy the following will be required: -

- An annual schedule and work programme in line with the Strategy and Multi-annual work programme;
- An annual interaction programme scheduled with Local Authorities;
- A review / ex post evaluation of NOAC reports address extent to which the Board is meeting its own expectations and that recommendations are being implemented;
- Compliance with the Code of Governance for State bodies to be reported upon;
- Development of method statements where appropriate in order to improve and standardise and improve on the delivery of a number of the actions identified.

In addition to the tasks set out in the table above the Executive will be required to provide general administrative support to the commission including the reporting and compliance, generation of reports, management of websites and communications, appointment of Board Members, organisation of NOAC meetings (min 8 per year) and working groups (as required).

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