

NOAC's Workplan to end 2016

NOAC's initial focus will be on establishing its systems and work practices. A degree of flexibility is required as its work evolves on an on-going basis. Activities that will be undertaken by NOAC in the period up to end 2016 will relate primarily to matters having a national or regional relevance. Activities may change arising from any review of NOAC's Statement of Strategic Intent. Accordingly, the following list is not prescriptive:

Organisational

- NOAC will establish sub-groups to which it will delegate various functions including thematic reviews, customer surveys, performance indicators and development of a template/framework for its scrutiny function.
- NOAC will initiate reports from time to time into any aspect of local authority activity that it believes merits examination.
- NOAC will deal with Ministerial requests for reports under section 126D as and when received. This will involve obtaining a draft report from the relevant regional assembly and/or local authority as appropriate, which the Commission will accept or amend having examined the issue.
- NOAC will engage with the CCMA with a view to organising an event where individual LAs could showcase best practice

Approach to Reviews

- NOAC will follow up on any material items raised as a concern in the local authority audit reports produced by the Local Government Audit Service.
- If NOAC is asked to undertake a role under the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform's Public Spending Code, it will examine the implications of what would be involved and the potential impact on its functions and resources.
- The development of the performance standards and performance indicators that NOAC will apply after 2015 to its general scrutiny of the performance of local government bodies will be undertaken on an incremental thematic basis. This thematic approach to have commenced in late 2014 with the local authority housing function.
- The identification of best practice issues that require support and development will also be derived from a thematic review of the various activities undertaken by local authorities over time. These investigations will include an assessment of any shortcomings of systems at the central government and D/ECLG level that are impacting on local authority performance.
- Adherence to service level agreements will be monitored and evaluated as part of the thematic examination of the various local authority activities.

- Oversight of the implementation of national policy for local government (which applies not only to D/ECLG policy areas but also to functions on which local authorities report to other Government Departments and agencies under their aegis such as Gateway and Local Enterprise Offices) will be carried out in the course of the thematic reviews. Analysis of the implementation will include an assessment of the supports and resources made available by the national-level agency for delivery of the policy at local level.

Specific Actions

- Before the end of 2014, NOAC will review the existing suite of service level indicators that have been in use since 2004 and recommend a reduced list of more relevant qualitative indicators by which local authorities can collate historic data and monitor their performance in respect of 2014 and for the purposes of the collection of data by local authorities in respect of 2015.
- NOAC will agree a programme of work with the Value for Money Unit within the Local Government Audit Service and will review the reports produced by the Unit in 2015 and 2016.
- A specific work item for 2015 will be an examination of the major revenue collection accounts of the 31 county and city councils.
- A further work item for 2015 will be the timeliness of production of the Annual Financial Statements of local authorities.
- Evaluation of the service level agreements with the Local Enterprise Offices will commence in the latter half of 2015.
- During 2015 NOAC will seek a progress report from the Local Government Management Agency's Programme Management Office (PMO) on the implementation of the public service efficiency reforms and, in particular, whether the business case assumptions were comprehensive and whether savings are in line with projections.
- All local authorities are required to submit their adopted corporate plans (for the period 2015 - 2019) to NOAC to allow an appraisal of their adequacy. NOAC will also evaluate implementation of the local authority corporate plans from 2016 onwards by examining a selected number of local authorities each year.
- No later than the 30th April in each year, NOAC will prepare and submit to the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government its Annual Report in respect of the preceding year.
- NOAC will arrange for a citizen engagement survey to indicate levels of awareness of and engagement with local authorities among respondents to be followed by a customer survey to gauge levels of satisfaction among users of local authority services.