

Minutes of the National Oversight and Audit Commission (NOAC) meeting
Monday 25th September 2017

Venue: Main Conference Room, Custom House, Dublin 1

Attended by:

Chairman Pat McLoughlin
Members Connie Hanniffy
David Holohan
Paul Lemass
Michael McGreal
Martina Moloney
Sharon O'Connor
Colleen Savage

Secretariat Sheila McMahon
Diarmuid O'Leary

Apologies John Buckley
Tara Buckley

Minutes of last meeting and matters arising

Due to an unavoidable delay by the Chairman, the first part of the meeting was chaired by Paul Lemass. The minutes of the meeting of 22nd August were agreed subject to an amendment on page 2 proposed by Michael McGreal. On matters arising, the secretariat advised that Fearghal Reidy in the LGMA was progressing the organisation of the best practice event and that a number of local authorities had confirmed their participation. The members confirmed that they were not aware of any conflicts of interest in relation to the items for discussion at the meeting.

Performance Indicators Report 2016

Martina Moloney, chair of the Performance Indicators Sub-Group, advised the members that the report was now substantially complete subject to some final checking and incorporation of the LGMA commentary section. It was agreed that the report could now be circulated to those Government Departments to which the data relates, in advance of publication in the next few days. The members expressed their appreciation of the efforts made by all involved in the production of the report, particularly the improved presentation of the data. The addition of the remaining coastline to the information presented in maps was requested. Martina Moloney advised that the letter to Chief Executives, as well as acknowledging the work of the co-ordinators, would alert them to an issue around the recording of re-letting costs that came to light at the review visits. It would also raise the need for robust systems for data gathering, refer to the type of comparative analysis carried out by Wexford County Council and ask the CEs to ensure that the report outcomes are discussed at meetings with the Councillors and

Audit Committees. The sub-group will have to review the indicators and the guidelines for the 2017 activity report and will discuss what follow-up would be appropriate at its next meeting.

ICT Strategy

Pat McLoughlin took over as chair for the remainder of the meeting. The members had been circulated the ICT Strategy forwarded by Claire Gilligan of the LGMA and noted that the next step is the development of an implementation plan for the sector which would be done under the direction of the LGMA ICT Committee.

The members referred to the absence of information on the level of investment required under, and to Value for Money considerations not really featuring in, the strategy, which did not contain a tangible response to the variation in the cost of ICT per WTE as highlighted by NOAC's indicator. The point was made that the common data model should be aligned with NOAC's performance indicators requirements and that it would be advisable for NOAC to be involved at the design stage. After some discussion, it was decided that those directly involved in the preparation of the ICT Strategy implementation plan should be invited to attend the next NOAC meeting for a discussion focussed on the areas of: the level of resources required, value for money, cyber security and the consumer-facing aspect.

Customer Survey Project

Colleen Savage, chair of the Customer Survey Sub-Group, updated the members in relation to the sub-group's meeting of 1st September. The group recommended carrying out a customer survey of the public in 10 local authorities per annum. It had decided to hold a workshop on 9 November at which about 14 authorities and the LGMA would be invited to participate and up to 10 of the authority representatives would also be asked to give short presentations, based on the responses given to NOAC's survey. These would act as a conversation starter to the development of the questionnaire. Ideally the process of selecting a company to carry out the survey would be completed in time for its participation in the workshop development of the questionnaire. The plan was to hold a further workshop next April when the survey results were available and to issue a report subsequent to that. The members indicated their approval to this approach.

Development Contributions

The note outlining the accounting treatment of development contributions requested by the Financial Performance Sub-Group from Sinéad Kehoe of the General Accounts Working Group was circulated to the members, along with a summary of the comments made by the LGAS Auditors in the reports of their audits of the 2015 Annual Financial Statements on the subject of development contributions. This was at the suggestion of the sub-group for consideration by the members as a topic for review at a future stage. While the members found the information of interest, they did not consider that it warranted a thematic review at this time.

Any Other Business

The secretariat had circulated an email received in relation to a software product called MinutePad for use in organising and managing Board documentation. It was noted that no information in relation to cost was included, although this had been requested by the secretariat. It was agreed that such software can be helpful but that if NOAC is to look into this area, it would need to get information and prices from a selection of suppliers.

The secretariat advised the members of an approach in relation to the potential assumption of responsibility for a website that would have resourcing implications for NOAC, and the Chairman undertook to discuss the matter with the Director of the company concerned.

Next Meeting

The next meeting is on Tuesday 7th November at 10.00 a.m. in the Custom House.