

Minutes of the National Oversight and Audit Commission (NOAC) meeting
Tuesday 19th December 2017

Venue: Main Conference Room, Custom House, Dublin 1

Attended by:

Members John Buckley
 Tara Buckley
 Connie Hanniffy
 David Holohan
 Paul Lemass
 Michael McGreal
 Martina Moloney
 Sharon O'Connor
 Colleen Savage

Secretariat Sheila McMahon
 Claire Gavin
 Diarmuid O'Leary

Apologies Pat McLoughlin, Chairman

Guests Joan Martin, Chief Executive, and Paddy Donnelly, Joe McGuinness, Emer O'Gorman, Frank Pentony and Bernie Woods, Directors of Service in Louth County Council

In the unavoidable absence of Pat McLoughlin, it was agreed that John Buckley would chair the meeting.

In accordance with the requirement in paragraph 1.7 of the Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies to have two meetings per annum without the secretariat present, the first part of the meeting was held in the absence of the secretariat.

Minutes of last meeting and matters arising

The minutes of the meeting of 7th November 2017 were approved. The members confirmed that they were not aware of any conflicts of interest in relation to the items for discussion at the meeting.

Meeting with Louth County Council's Chief Executive and Directors of Service

The chair welcomed the Chief Executive and her management team to the meeting and indicated that the draft profile would be revised as appropriate subsequent to the meeting and forwarded to her for any comments. The Chief Executive's introductory remarks addressed Louth County Council's low position on the league table in relation to some of the items included in the profile. In particular, she stated that the Council's rates collection performance

reflects the continuing fallout from the recent economic recession in Louth, adding that the drive to improve the Council's financial position has dominated her tenure as Chief Executive.

NOAC members then followed up with questions on each of the areas covered in the profile – performance indicators, the housing function, corporate planning, customer service and the Council's finance – and also on functions not yet featured in NOAC reports, such as economic and community development.

The chair thanked the Chief Executive and her team for meeting with NOAC and for providing the members with an insight into the work of the County Council from their perspective. A separate note on this engagement will be prepared and provided to Louth County Council in the context of NOAC's Local Authority profiling exercise.

Performance Indicators Report 2016

Martina Moloney, chair of the Performance Indicators Sub-Group, summarised the outcome of the detailed review of the housing stock data supplied by a representative sample of five of the local authorities. In light of the level of inconsistencies and incorrect interpretation of the guidelines indicated by the review and on the assumption that this would be replicated across the authorities, the sub-group was recommending that this data should not be included in the published report for 2016. It also recommended that a revised set of indicators for the housing programme should be developed for 2017 as part of the annual review of the indicators and that the guidelines to local authorities should be enhanced with greater clarity. The group could also look at including templates to assist in achieving consistency in the data provided.

The sub-group's recommendations were approved by the members. It was agreed that the report should clearly state that the H1 and H2 indicators were excluded and why, and that approval of the necessary draft revisions to the text of the report is to be by email. The members noted that a lot of work would be needed on the housing indicators for the 2017 report to take on board the interplay between the local government and social welfare systems and that engagement with the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government would be useful. The sub-group was asked to come back early next year with an outline of the 2017 indicators and to consider how to engage more directly with the staff actually inputting the data.

Customer Survey Project

On behalf of the Customer Survey Sub-Group, Tara Buckley updated the members in relation to the customer survey questionnaire prepared by Ipsos MRBI. Instead of concentrating on a few specified services as originally envisaged, this was now structured to assess the experience whatever the engagement, so as to maximise the pool of suitable respondents. The members provided some input to the questionnaire at the meeting and were asked to provide any outstanding observations by close of business that day because final sign off was needed to

ensure no slippage on the programme outlined in the original timetable. As the intention is that the CCMA will take over the customer surveying after this exercise has been completed in three years' time, the secretariat advised that the LGMA had been consulted about the questionnaire which incorporates their observations. In addition to the survey, a report will be prepared by the sub-group on the Customer Service Workshop held on 9th of November and of the recommendations that came from that.

Best Practice Event

A short update was given on the best practice event on 21st November, which was attended by 30 of the local authorities. Feedback from attendees was that the event was a success and a summary of the event will be published on the NOAC web site.

Any Other Business

As the Chairman was not in attendance, dates for the next meetings were not agreed.