

Minutes of the National Oversight & Audit Commission (NOAC) meeting  
Tuesday 24<sup>th</sup> November 2015

Venue: PRTB Offices, O'Connell Bridge House, D'Olier Street, Dublin 2

Attended by:

Members      Paul Lemass  
                  Tara Buckley  
                  Connie Hanniffy  
                  Padraig McNally  
                  Martina Moloney  
                  Micheál Nolan  
                  Colleen Savage

Secretariat    Maurice Coughlan  
                  Sheila McMahon  
                  Declan Grehan

Apologies    Pat McLoughlin, Chairman  
                  Kevin Baneham  
                  John Buckley  
                  Henry Upton

Guests        Anita Mullan & Ian McShane, Behaviour & Attitudes

Minutes of meeting of 20/10/2015 and matters arising

It was agreed that Paul Lemass would chair the meeting in the unavoidable last minute absence of the Chairman. The minutes of the meeting of 20 October 2015 were agreed without amendment.

Revised Programme Management Office (PMO) Report

The secretariat advised the meeting that the PMO had been notified of a number of clarifications required to the report on the Local Government Efficiency Review (LGER) recommendations, including the need to take the interim position in the middle column from the 2012 update report in the case of the recommendations requiring legislative change, and also of some repetition in the Shared Services Projects report. However, the PMO were aware that the reports were the first item for discussion by the NOAC members at the meeting today, so were awaiting any comments from the members before providing revised versions.

The members discussed the report and indicated general satisfaction with the format and content. Specific changes requested in relation to the LGER report were to improve the layout and readability by colour coding the recommendations into those that were completed, still being worked on, not being advanced, etc. and clarifying the status of those recommendations described as 'Legislation Required' or 'Ongoing'. In relation to the Shared

Services Projects report, more information/clarification was sought on savings in respect of the MyPay project and on costings in relation to the Road Management Office project, including any more detailed data available from the business cases for these two projects.

Arising from the content of the Shared Services report, the members agreed that NOAC should prioritise reviewing the progress of the Internal Audit project, either on the basis of the currently proposed regional collaboration model or as a shared service between smaller local authorities experiencing difficulty in adequately resourcing the function.

#### Performance Indicators Report - Update

The secretariat updated the meeting on progress to date. The revised Tables received from the LGMA on 23/11 were circulated at the meeting in hard copy. The LGMA had now closed off amendments to the data but the layout and text required further amendments. There are issues about the quality of the data in the case of some indicators and some local authorities and also in relation to the operation of the eReturns system. More detailed guidance will be required in respect of 2015 data and future years and it was planned to review the process of collecting the data in some detail with the LGMA after the report has been published. It was agreed that a workshop should be held with the local authority performance indicator co-ordinators prior to the issue of the 2015 data request. It was also agreed that when the data is published NOAC will issue a press release highlighting the figures that the Commission wishes to draw attention to. Drafting of both the LGMA commentary and the performance commentary to the extent possible was proceeding and a meeting of the Performance Indicators Sub-Group was scheduled for 1 December at 1.30 p.m. to review these drafts, which should be available by then. The objective is to publish the report before the end of the year and clearance by the members of the final document containing all of the various elements can be done via email.

#### Presentation by Behaviour & Attitudes of Local Authority Tenant Survey Results

Anita Mullan from B&A presented the findings of the recent local authority housing tenant survey commissioned by NOAC. In the end, 1,778 tenant names and phone numbers were provided by the local authorities out of which 756 interviews were achieved, which, at 43%, is considered to be a high conversion rate. However, the number of completed interviews was small in the case of a few local authorities so B&A cautioned that the results would not be statistically valid on an individual basis for these authorities. The survey covered 29 local authorities as Westmeath County and Galway City Councils did not provide the names of any tenant volunteers in response to NOAC's request. 79% of the responses came from the local authorities with larger numbers of tenants. While the presentation was confined to the overall findings, B&A also provided NOAC with the results for each of the survey questions broken down by local authority.

Following a discussion of the key findings with Anita and Ian, the members agreed that following the circulation of the full survey report findings, consideration will be given to

whether it would be useful, in advance of the inclusion of relevant extracts in the Maintenance and Management housing study report, to publish some or all of the survey results as an interim research product carried out for the purposes of the housing studies being undertaken by NOAC.

#### Housing Studies – update

The meeting was advised that David Silke of the Housing Agency has met with the LGMA regarding the questionnaire responses, all of which have now been received and the compilation of which was expected to be completed by 20 November. However, David had not received the data for analysis as yet and was pursuing it with the LGMA. It is understood that some of the accompanying documents that will be summarised by the secretariat for the report when received from the LGMA were still being pursued from some local authorities.

#### Corporate Plans Report

The meeting noted that the amended report was now signed off and will be published on the website with the Performance Indicators report.

#### Revenue Collection Performance – update

The follow-up letters to the 11 local authorities regarding rates collection performance and the replies from 6 of these had been circulated. The requested data was still awaited from 5 authorities as well as a reply to the request to Offaly County Council for further information regarding their general revenue balance. When all the replies have been received, the information will be added to the table being compiled by the secretariat of responses to both queries, for review by the Revenue Collection Sub-Group and recommendation as to how to progress this issue.

#### Public Spending Code Report

The individual reports have been received from all 31 local authorities and Declan Grehan is putting together the composite list of all capital and current expenditure items in excess of €500,000. He has also checked the reports for compliance with the requirements of the Quality Assurance process within the code. The final part of the exercise will be preparing a summary of the conclusions from all the in-depth analyses carried out by the authorities. The resulting single report covering all local authority expenditure, which it is hoped to complete in early 2016, will then be submitted to the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform.

#### Local Enterprise Offices (LEOs) – Issues for NOAC

Further to the discussion with the representatives of Enterprise Ireland (EI) and the Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (D/JEI) at the last meeting, the members considered what aspect of LEO activity NOAC should focus on. Although the work-plan provides for the commencement of a review of the operation of the LEO Service Level Agreements (SLAs) in 2015, given that the SLA itself is currently in the process of a review by D/JEI and EI, NOAC's examination should preferably be into the operation of the revised SLAs.

In the interim, the appropriate indicator for inclusion in next year's Performance Indicators report needs to be considered so as to capture the outcome of the LEO focus on mentoring/ soft supports as well as the actual jobs created aspect. In this context it was suggested that it might be worthwhile to have direct discussions with the heads of some LEOs and also to look at the back to work enterprise schemes. The Chair requested that the item be included on the agenda for the first meeting in January.

#### Date of Next Meeting

The secretariat is to liaise with the Chairman regarding the date of the next meeting, which should be early in January 2016, and regarding a suggested schedule of dates for the remainder of the year for agreement by the members.