



**ANNUAL
REPORT**

2019

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Chairperson's Statement

On behalf of the Board, I am pleased to present the Annual Report for the National Oversight & Audit Commission (NOAC) for the calendar year ending 31 December 2019.

Having joined the Board as Chairperson in September 2018, I have enjoyed watching the growth of NOAC as we adopt new structures and processes and further develop our brand and presence in the local government audit environment.

This growth caps off six years of excellent work since our establishment where our overall goal has always been to ensure that NOAC is continually recognised as one of the main authoritative bodies that scrutinise performance and encourage positive improvements in local government services.

Underpinning our day to day work is the requirement to see NOAC recognised as an organisation that can help deliver real reform. Central to this is making sure that local government delivers value for money while adhering to proper governance. NOAC also ensures that it supports the best practices that are central to the work of local authorities.

The impact of increasing demands across local government and the changing landscape in which councils operate mean that planning and oversight have never been more important. Robust plans that project how local authorities' outcomes and priorities will be delivered and funded are essential to ensuring the sustainability of services for the public.

It is important that NOAC be there to ensure that these decisions are taken in a planned and co-ordinated way and that the impact of decisions on communities and outcomes is transparent and also understood.

During 2019, NOAC developed the Strategy and Framework Work Programme 2020 – 2022 to form the basis of the Commission's ongoing, long-term strategic objectives of overseeing the consistent, high quality delivery of local government services and the evaluation of public service reform implementation and underpins the core business processes of the Commission.

The principle themes set out in the Strategy were used to develop key actions as set out in the NOAC Multi Annual Work Programme 2020-2022. This report reforms the previously used working group structure and sets out the principal actions, timeframes and key performance indicators over the next three-year period.

Work commenced in 2019 to develop a branding to consist of a logo and visual design that will help set NOAC apart as an independent and authoritative body in the local government sector. This report is the first published with the new branding.

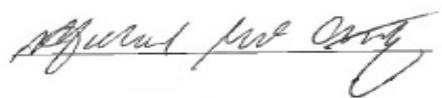
In tandem with the branding, NOAC began development of a new website in 2019. The current website has been the primary mode of communication in recent years, with NOAC reports being published there since establishment in 2014. With a view to increasing user interaction, reaching wider audiences, providing relevant information to interested stakeholders and driving best practice in transparency, the new website will launch in 2020.

In 2019, NOAC continued its work, started in 2017, of compiling profiles of each local authority based primarily on the material in our reports to date. These profiles formed the basis for meetings with the Chief Executives, who provided additional information on the local authorities themselves and expanded on the particular context within which they each operate.

Work continued in 2019 on the Local Authority Customer Satisfaction survey and reviews of aspects of Financial Performance as well as the annual Performance Indicators and Public Spending Code Quality Assurance reports.

These three reports represent a considerable amount of information and comment on local authority performance for the year and provide an invaluable resource not only to the local authorities themselves but also to various government departments that operate through the authorities and to the wider public that are affected by how well their local authority carries out its functions.

I wish to express my gratitude to the Chief Executives, liaison officials and performance indicator coordinators of the 31 local authorities for complying with the various requests for information made by NOAC during 2019 and to the other bodies, agencies and departments that supported NOAC in its work over the last year.



Michael McCarthy
Chairperson

June 2020

Executive Summary

This report was approved by the members of NOAC on 23 June 2020.

This is the sixth annual report of the National Oversight and Audit Commission (NOAC), covering the period 1 January 2019 to 31 December 2019.

NOAC was established in 2014 as an independent statutory body to provide oversight of the local government sector in Ireland. It is a key element of the local government reform agenda that emerged from the proposals set out in the Action Programme for Effective Local Government and is underpinned by the Local Government Reform Act 2014.

NOAC reports and recommendations are presented to key decision makers in the local government sector as well as the relevant Joint Committee of the Houses of the Oireachtas.

During 2019, NOAC published several reports and documents and hosted workshops including:

- ▶ Local Authority Customer Satisfaction Survey 2019 and Workshop;
- ▶ Performance Indicators information briefing and Local Authority Performance Indicator Report 2018;
- ▶ Public Spending Code Report 2018;
- ▶ Good Practice in Local Government Conference;
- ▶ Strategy and Framework Work Programme 2020-2022; and
- ▶ Multi Annual Work Programme 2020-2022.

Sub-groups, set up to further various projects, carried out the majority of NOAC's work in 2019. These sub-groups were then redefined in July 2019, under the Multi Annual Work Programme based on themes set out in the Strategy and Framework Plan. These new "work groups" will take effect from 2020.

For the purpose of reporting the activity in 2019, the sub-groups operating were:

- ▶ Local Authority Customer Survey sub-group;
- ▶ Performance Indicators sub-group;
- ▶ Public Spending Code (PSC) sub-group.
- ▶ Financial Performance sub-group;
- ▶ Local Enterprise Offices (LEOs) sub-group.;
- ▶ PMO Projects; and
- ▶ Housing.

NOAC completed the second survey on local authority customer satisfaction. This year, a further 11 local authorities were surveyed and a report was published on the findings in July 2019. The survey will be carried out in the remaining ten local authorities in 2020.

The Customer Service Workshop was held in the Custom House on 22 November 2019. The various presentations given at the workshop showed the many good initiatives being developed and implemented by local authority staff working in this area.

NOAC would like to express its gratitude to the presenters and participants at the event.

In September 2019 NOAC published its 2018 Report on Local Authority Performance Indicators, NOAC's fifth Performance Indicators report to date. This report included a validation review of six authorities with regard to the accuracy and reliability of a subset of indicators. This was the first Performance Indicators report to feature trend analysis. Trend analysis can be valuable as an early warning indicator of potential problems and it can show where improvements have been made year on year.

As part of Performance Indicator Report NOAC held the Performance Indicators information briefing and invited the Local Government Management Agency (LGMA) and the Housing Unit of the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government (DHPLG) to present at the event. The data co-ordinators and housing team representatives from local authorities attended.

NOAC published the Public Spending Code Quality Assurance Report 2018 for the local government sector as part of the requirements for local authorities, set out in the Public Spending Code developed by the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform.

The Financial Performance sub-group agreed three topics for consideration and development of reports over the next three years and engaged with the MyPay service provider and the LGMA to gain an understanding of the project and develop a report.

NOAC, in association with the County and City Management Association (CCMA) and Local Government Management Agency (LGMA), held its second Good Practice in Local Government conference on Tuesday, 26 February 2019 in Kilkenny Castle. Presentations given on the day highlighted many of the initiatives taken by local authorities that highlight significant, diverse and often highly original approaches to tackling the challenges both local authorities and communities face.

NOAC continued to review the performance of individual local authorities using profile meetings in 2019, a project that began in 2017. Throughout the year, profiles of local authorities were developed using relevant data contained in the NOAC reports published to date. The Chairperson and Secretariat then met with the Chief Executives and senior officials in the local authority office to discuss the Profile Report, how the local authority operates and any other particular issues. The Chief Executive and members of the management team were then invited to attend a meeting with the NOAC Board to present and answer questions from the members of NOAC on the various items covered in the profiles, which were explored in more detail.

NOAC commenced the development of a new Strategy on 2019 by holding a two-day workshop in July 2019 where its members developed strategic objectives, critical actions, management of resources and managing stakeholders.

These workshops produced the Strategy and Framework Work Programme 2020-2022 and the Multi Annual Work Programme 2020-2022. These two documents set out the actions that will deliver NOAC's mandate over the period 2020 - 2022. The strategy and underpinning work plan has five overall themes through which tasks and actions will be delivered.

In addition to the Strategy a Multi Annual Work Programme was developed which built upon, re-ordered and grouped with timelines, the actions in the Strategy and proposed a number of new Working Groups to bring these actions forward in 2020.

Emerging from the Multi Annual Work Programme developed in 2019, NOAC commenced work to produce a new branding and website for NOAC. This consists of a new logo for NOAC, with associated guidelines along with the development of a new website that will contain additional features to the existing website. Pending the new website, the existing site was enhanced with additional content that better reflects the full extent of NOAC's work. The branding was finalised in May 2020 and is featured for the first time in this report. The website is currently in development and will launch in 2020.

The Joint Committee on Housing, Planning and Local Government invited the NOAC Chairperson Michael McCarthy to the meeting of the Committee on 9 May 2019 to discuss matters relating to the Performance Indicators Report 2017.

The Local Government Audit Service (LGAS) Conference held its annual conference in 2019 and following an invitation to attend the NOAC Chairperson presented to the local government auditors giving an overview of the work of NOAC and its activities.

Following the establishment of the Office of the Planning Regulator (OPR), NOAC along with other stakeholders were invited to sit on the OPR's advisory panel to develop its methodology for conducting reviews of the performance of planning authorities was created in 2019.

In December 2019, the NOAC Chairperson, accompanied by members of the NOAC secretariat met with the President, Vice President and Directors of the AILG. The NOAC Chairperson outlined the new Strategy and Framework Work Programme (2020 - 2022) and gave backgrounds on the development of NOAC's other reports.

Following the development of the NOAC's Strategy for the Period 2020-2021 the Chairperson of the LGMA, Owen Keegan, was invited to a meeting with the NOAC Chairperson to discuss the Strategy and its implementation. The Strategy was well received by the LGMA who noted its ambition and the importance of support from the LGMA in its implementation.

NOAC members attended the launch of a research report that the LGMA Research Unit delivered for the CCMA's Environment, Climate Change and Emergency Planning Committee on the climate actions the sector undertook between 2011 - 2018

The Value for Money (VFM) Unit of the Local Government Audit Service (LGAS) carries out studies and issues reports on value for money in local authority operations. To facilitate a review of the the VFM outputs a review group comprising of representatives of the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government, LGAS, local authorities, the LGMA and a member of the NOAC Secretariat was formed.

NOAC Membership

NOAC's membership is statutorily prescribed as a minimum of six and a maximum of nine members. There is provision for the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government to increase, by order, the number of members to a maximum of 12 for a period of up to two years.

Statutory Instrument No. 536 made by the Minister on 19 October 2016 increased the number of members to 11 for the period up to 18 October 2018. On 18 October 2018, Statutory Instrument No. 442 provided for an extension of the increased membership numbers for a further two years.

At the end of 2019, there were eight board members on the NOAC Board.

The terms of Colleen Savage and John Buckley ended on 30 June 2019. Constance Hanniffy was reappointed to NOAC on 1 July 2019 until 30 June 2021. Barry Quinlan was appointed as a board member and the Officer of the Minister replacing Paul Lemass on 22 May 2019.

The members and their term details are as follows:

Members and their term details				
Role	Member	Appointed	Reappointed	End of Current Term
Chairperson	Michael McCarthy	24/09/2018	N/A	23/09/2023
Members	Constance Hanniffy	01/07/2014	01/07/2019	30/06/2021
	Martina Moloney	01/07/2014	01/07/2016	30/06/2021
	Tara Buckley	01/07/2014	01/07/2017	30/06/2020
	Sharon O'Connor	21/10/2016	19/10/2018	18/10/2020
	David Holohan	21/10/2016	19/10/2018	18/10/2020
	Michael McGreal	21/10/2016	19/10/2018	18/10/2020
	Barry Quinlan	22/05/2019	N/A	21/05/2024
	John Buckley	01/07/2014	01/07/2017	term ended 30/06/2019
	Colleen Savage	01/07/2014	N/A	term ended 30/06/2019
	Paul Lemass	02/09/2014	N/A	term ended 19/02/2019

Member Biographies



Michael McCarthy, Chairperson

Term Dates: 24 September 2018 – 23 September 2023.

Michael is the CEO of the Irish Solar Energy Association. He was appointed as Chairperson of the National Oversight and Audit Commission in September 2018. He was an elected TD for the Cork South-West constituency from 2011 to 2016. He is a former member of the Daíl Public Accounts Committee. He was elected to Seanad Éireann, for the period 2002–2011. Michael was an elected member of Cork County Council from 1999 to 2003.



Constance Hanniffy

Term Dates: 1 July 2014 – 30 June 2021.

Constance Hanniffy is a graduate of NUI Galway and holds a BA (Hons) in Community and Family Studies. She was an elected member of Offaly County Council from 1974 to 2014 and a member of the Midlands Regional Authority from 1994 to 2014. She was also a member of the Irish delegation to the Committee of the Regions from 1998 to 2014. She is a Board Member of the Sue Ryder Foundation and a member of the Offaly County Council Audit Committee. She is a past member of the National Economic and Social Forum (NESF) and of the Taoiseach's Devolution Commission (1995–97) which made recommendations to Government on local government reform. She previously served as a member of the D/ECLG's Consultative Committee on the Local Government Reform Green Paper. She is a past member of the BMW Regional Assembly and the former chairperson of its EU monitoring committee.



Martina Moloney

Term Dates: 1 July 2014 – 30 June 2021.

Martina Moloney was a career official in Irish local government for almost thirty-seven years. She holds a BA and MA in Public Management and a Doctorate in Governance and is a member of the Institute of Accounting Technicians. She worked in eight local authorities and held the post of Director of Community and Enterprise and Corporate Services in Galway City Council, before being appointed as County Manager in County Louth and subsequently as County Manager in Galway prior to her retirement in July 2014.



Tara Buckley

Term Dates: 1 July 2014 – 30 June 2020.

Tara Buckley is Director General of RGDATA (Retail Grocery Dairy & Allied Trades Association) which represents the interests of 4,000 Irish family-owned shops, convenience stores and supermarkets. A graduate of Trinity College Dublin and former journalist and political correspondent, Tara is a member of the Government's Retail Consultation Forum; the Brexit Forum at the Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation, the Garda Strategic Retail Forum; the National Waste Management Forum; the Retail Forum at the Food Safety Authority and the National Planning Framework Advisory Group.



Sharon O'Connor

Term Dates: 21 October 2016 – 18 October 2020.

Sharon O'Connor is Chairperson of the Northern Ireland Education Authority since April 2015 and was previously Chief Executive of Derry City Council from 2011 to 2015. She is a member of the Accounts Commission Scotland. She has had over 20 years' experience as a Chartered Director, Non-Executive Director, Vice Chairperson, Committee Chairperson and Board Member and in 2009/10 was the Institute of Directors, Public Sector Director of the Year.



David Holohan

Term Dates: 21 October 2016 – 18 October 2020.

David Holohan (BCOMM, MBA, APA, C Dir, M.Inst.D, CMgr FCMI, Chartered FCSI) is Head of Equity Strategy at Mediolanum Asset Management. He was previously Chief Investment Officer at Merrion Capital and has worked in asset management firms and hedge funds, both in London and Dublin. David holds an MBA with merit from Imperial College London, is a Chartered Fellow of the Chartered Institute for Securities & Investment (UK), also a Chartered Fellow of the Chartered Management Institute (UK), a Chartered Director (UK) and Member of the Institute of Directors (Ireland). He was appointed to the Board of the HPRA by the Minister for Health in January 2016. David is Chairperson of the Governing Body of IADT and is Chairperson of the Board of the charity One in Four.



Michael McGreal

Term Dates: 21 October 2016 – 18 October 2020.

Michael McGreal was the Company Deputy Chairperson of IPB Insurance CLG until 31 December 2018 and Chairperson of the Board Remuneration and Nomination Committee. He was a member of Roscommon County Council from 1985 -2014 and served as Chairperson of the Council. Michael was a member of the West Regional and the BMW Regional Authority's. He was also a member of the Board of Inland Fisheries Ireland and an alternate member of the Committee of the Regions from 2010 to 2014. Michael holds a Diploma in Corporate Governance from UCD Michael Smurfit Business School and is a member of the Institute of Directors.



Barry Quinlan

Term Dates: 22 May 2019 – 21 May 2024.

Barry Quinlan is an Assistant Secretary, heading up Local Government Division, at the Department of Housing; Planning and Local Government. After beginning his career in the private sector Barry has now over twenty years' experience working in the Civil Service. He has worked in the Housing; Planning and Local Government Divisions of the Department. Prior to returning to the Local Government Division Barry worked on housing policy and housing delivery. Barry has worked on Rebuilding Ireland; the Social Housing Strategy; the Housing Assistance Payment Programme; Public Sector Reform; Putting People First; New Local Authority Structures; LG Efficiency Review Implementation; Work-Force Planning; Shared Services; HR initiatives and IR negotiation and change management.



John Buckley

Term Dates: 1 July 2014 – 30 June 2019.

John Buckley is an accountant and a barrister-at-law. Prior to his appointment to NOAC, he served as Comptroller and Auditor General. He has over 40 years' experience in public audit and was the first Director of Value for Money Audit in the Office of the Comptroller and Auditor General. He also serves on the Council of the Economic and Social Research Institute and chairs its Audit Committee.



Colleen Savage

Term Dates: 1 July 2014 – 30 June 2019.

Colleen Savage is a consultant in consumer insight and marketing strategy using a combination of quantitative and qualitative research skills. She has worked across the private sector, bringing the consumer perspective to strategy and communication development. She has also conducted research on citizen perceptions on public policy areas such as equality and human rights, voting intentions and effectiveness of government strategy. She was a member of the National Consumer Agency for two years, before it became part of the Competition Authority.



Paul Lemass

Term Dates: 2 September 2014 – 19 February 2019

Paul Lemass is an Assistant Secretary in the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government (DHPLG) with responsibility for the Local Government Division. Prior to this he was Ireland's Environment Counsellor in Brussels from 2010 – 2014, including the period of the Irish Presidency in 2013. He holds a primary degree in Mechanical Engineering from UCD, and a Masters in Business Administration from Northwestern University, Chicago, and has worked in private, non-profit and public sector roles throughout his career.

Board Member Fees

The annual fees payable to members of NOAC, excluding the Officer of the Minister, are:

Member: €7,695.

Chairperson: €11,970.

NOAC implements the “one person one salary” principle in respect of the payment of member fees for Irish public servants. In accordance with this, the Officer of the Minister is not paid a fee.

Travel and subsistence expenses incurred are paid at standard civil service rates. The rates and rules applicable in 2019 are available at <https://www.revenue.ie/en/employing-people/employee-expenses/travel-and-subsistence/index.aspx>

A table listing the attendance of members at NOAC meetings in 2019 is provided in Appendix 1.

NOAC would like to thank the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government, who provide the venue for these meetings.

NOAC Sub-Groups

Since establishment, NOAC has used sub-groups to carry out the majority of work by furthering various projects.

NOAC has had several internal sub-groups since establishment and started 2019 with seven.

However as only a number of these have been active, the newly adopted Strategy and Framework Work Programme and Multi Annual Work Programme reordered these for the period 2020-2022. This should ensure that the groups have a more sustainable workload and allow better alignment with the work programme identified.

For the purpose of reporting the activity for last year, the membership of the sub-groups during 2019 until the adoption of the Strategy and Framework Work Programme and Multi Annual Work Programme, with the name of the Chairperson listed first, is as follows:

- ▶ **Customer Survey:**
Colleen Savage, Tara Buckley, Paul Lemass and Michael McGreal;
- ▶ **Performance Indicators:**
Martina Moloney, Constance Hanniffy and Sharon O'Connor;
- ▶ **Public Spending Code:**
John Buckley, Paul Lemass/ Barry Quinlan and Martina Moloney;
- ▶ **Financial Performance:**
John Buckley, Tara Buckley, Paul Lemass/Barry Quinlan and Martina Moloney;
- ▶ **Local Enterprise Offices:**
Constance Hanniffy, Tara Buckley and Colleen Savage;
- ▶ **PMO Projects:** David Holohan, Martina Moloney and Michael McGreal; and
- ▶ **Housing:**
Paul Lemass and John Buckley.

Customer Survey Sub-Group

The role of the Customer Survey Sub-Group is to initiate and oversee customer surveys that NOAC commissions.

This relates to its functions under section 126C(1)(a) of the 2001 Local Government Act to scrutinise local authority performance against relevant indicators that relate to customer service and under section 126C(1)(c) to support the development and enhancement of best practice. The sub-group determines the activities or functions that should be the subject of surveys, develops requests for proposals and reviews questionnaires.

NOAC engaged IPSOS/MRBI, a marketing company, to carry out a citizen satisfaction survey of all local authorities over a three-year period. Customer service is an important area for local authorities and this three-year programme sets out to undertake a customer survey in similar sized local authorities each year.

The first survey, conducted in 2018, surveyed the 10 largest local authorities. The second survey, completed in March 2019, was conducted with the 10 medium sized local authorities and Galway City. It was published in July 2019. The 2020 survey will be carried out in the remaining 10 local authorities: Westmeath, Laois, Offaly, Cavan, Sligo, Roscommon, Monaghan, Carlow, Longford and Leitrim. The survey will be conducted using the same questions and same sample size.

Customer Service Workshop

A Customer Service Workshop was held in Custom House on 22 November 2019. The majority of local authorities were represented on the day.

Presentations were made by IPSOS/MRBI who explained how the survey was conducted and the findings of the report. Waterford City & County Council gave a presentation on how they managed their Customer Service as their satisfaction ratings exceeded the average rating in a number of areas in the 2019 report. Kildare County Council presented on managing Customer Service in the context of a large scale roads, transportation and public safety project, which impacted its citizens and many other road users over a long period. Cork County Council gave a presentation entitled "Communicating Through our Services". This project is an in-house dedicated innovation unit in Cork County Council using service design as their transformation approach. Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown County Council talked about the new Civic Hub and presented on "Delivering Better customer service through organisational change". Finally, the LGMA gave a presentation on the work being undertaken on the Local Government Service Catalogue Project.

There was plenty of engagement, interest and feedback on all the topics on the day. The presentations were followed by breakout sessions and included discussions on the common issues faced by local authorities, the current strengths and weaknesses of customer services in the local government sector, and who, outside of the public sector, inspires their sense of customer service.

The members of NOAC's Customer Service Sub-Group found the workshop to be very informative and worthwhile as an overview of many excellent initiatives being taken by local authorities to improve customer service. NOAC is grateful to all the presenters and participants.

Performance Indicators Sub-Group

The Performance Indicator Sub-Group's mandate is to recommend appropriate performance indicators in respect of local authority activity, and to oversee the data collection, verification, compilation and publication of a report on those indicators annually.

The performance indicators consist of 37 measurable values that demonstrate how effectively a local authority is achieving key objectives.

To date the performance indicator sub-group has published five performance indicator reports. Each year the sub-group reviews the set of indicators and liaises with the local authorities and other stakeholders on improvements or changes that could be incorporated into its report.

The sub-group compiled the guidelines for the report in early 2019 based on the learning from the previous year's report, changes in methodology for existing indicators and the development of new indicators.

On 15 February 2019 NOAC held its' Performance Indicator Information Briefing to provide further direction to data coordinators from local authorities on the 2018 report guidelines.

Last year, NOAC increased the number of indicators from 35 to 37 with the addition of a new waste/environmental indicator regarding schools with green flags and a corporate indicator regarding the overall cost of ICT expenditure as a proportion of revenue expenditure.

The LGMA, which collected the data on NOAC's behalf using the LGRReturns system, also provided a commentary on the indicators which was included as an appendix to the 2018 Performance Indicators report.

After a follow up on individual data items with local authorities by the NOAC Secretariat, the sub-group visited six local authorities and carried out an assessment of the accuracy and reliability of a subset of indicators.

Public Spending Code Sub-Group

The Public Spending Code requires annual quality assurance reports to be submitted to the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform in respect of all public expenditure.

NOAC has the function of compiling a composite quality assurance report for the local government sector from the 31 individual local authority quality assurance reports.

The Public Spending Code was developed by the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform and it applies to all public bodies in receipt of public funds.

All Irish public bodies are obliged to treat public funds with care, and to ensure that the best possible value for money is obtained whenever public money is being spent or invested.

Financial Performance Sub-Group

The group was established in September 2015 to progress NOAC's function under section 126C.

(1)(b) of the Local Government Act 2001 to scrutinise the financial performance, including in relation to value for money, of local authorities in respect of their financial resources. The sub-group agreed three topics for consideration and development of reports. These were as follows:

Management of the payroll shared service (MyPAY)

The MyPay system has been implemented for payroll in all but three local authorities. Seventeen authorities use it for superannuation recording and payments. Preliminary surveys were conducted at the Shared Services Centre in Portlaoise and a meeting was held with the LGMA. The information obtained from this work forms the basis for a report.

Procurement in Local Authorities

A review of procurement identified in 2017 local authority audit reports commenced. It is intended to update these with the findings from the 2018 reports. This will form the basis of a report that analyses the work undertaken by local authorities in implementing changes identified by the Local Government Audit Service.

Non-Mortgage Loans

A review of the Local Government Audit Service report "An Overview of Interest Only Loans In Local Authorities" commenced in 2019.

NOAC Activities

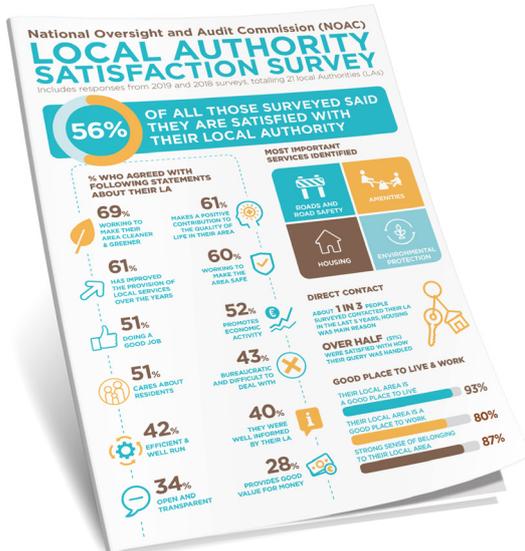
Customer Survey Report

In 2019, NOAC published the Local Authority Satisfaction Survey 2019.

Findings of the Report:

- ▶ The majority of respondents (58% vs 53% in 2018) are satisfied with their local council and agree that they are doing a good job (54%);
- ▶ Clare and Waterford were rated highly in 'Overall Satisfaction' and were believed to be 'doing a good job'. Perceptions of councils are generally positive, the majority (63% vs 59% in 2018) believe that their council is making a positive contribution and that services have improved over the years (63%);
- ▶ Perceptions of transparency (39% agree that council is transparent vs 29% in 2018) and efficiency (47% agree that council are efficient vs 37% in 2018) are less positive.
- ▶ It was found 26% of respondents believe that they can influence decisions affecting their area;

- ▶ The majority (84%) have at least some knowledge of their local council. Just 5% 'know a great deal' about their council, while the majority know 'just a little' (51%);
- ▶ Word of mouth and radio are the most common ways to find out about the council across the board. Younger age groups are more likely to utilise social media, while older age groups use newspapers and radio;
- ▶ The most important services provided by the council fell into four main categories, roads and road safety, housing, amenities and environmental protection;
- ▶ Awareness of council services is low for all services except road maintenance (66%) and local authority housing (58%);
- ▶ In line with this lack of knowledge, the majority do not feel informed by their local council however, those who feel informed were more likely to be satisfied at 76% compared to 46% (vs. 72% and 40% in 2018) amongst those who were uniformed. Kerry (60%) and Waterford (59%) were both above average with residents feeling informed;
- ▶ In light of the lack of knowledge about their council and its services, just 30% (27% in 2018) believe that they are getting good value for money. Clare (40%) and Waterford (41%) scored above average in this category; and
- ▶ About 1 in 3 contacted their council in the last 5 years, with housing topping the list of reasons for this contact. Overall, over half were satisfied with how their query was handled (51%).



This report is available in full at www.noac.ie

Local Authority Performance Indicators Report

In September 2019 NOAC published its Local Authority Performance Indicator Report 2018.

In the report, NOAC identified a number of items for particular mention:

Debt Collection - The report noted that the collection of debt is a challenging aspect of the work of local authorities. In 2018, the national average collection rates improved on the previous year's figures for commercial rates and housing loans. It remained the same for rent and annuities.

Libraries - The report showed that, overall, the average number of library visits per head of population was 3.58%, a slight increase on the 2017 average of 3.56%.

Revenue Expenditure Per Capita - The report noted that, in 2017, the average expenditure per capita recorded was €897.89, which was an increase from €842.00 in 2016. In 2018, the figure recorded was €978.91.

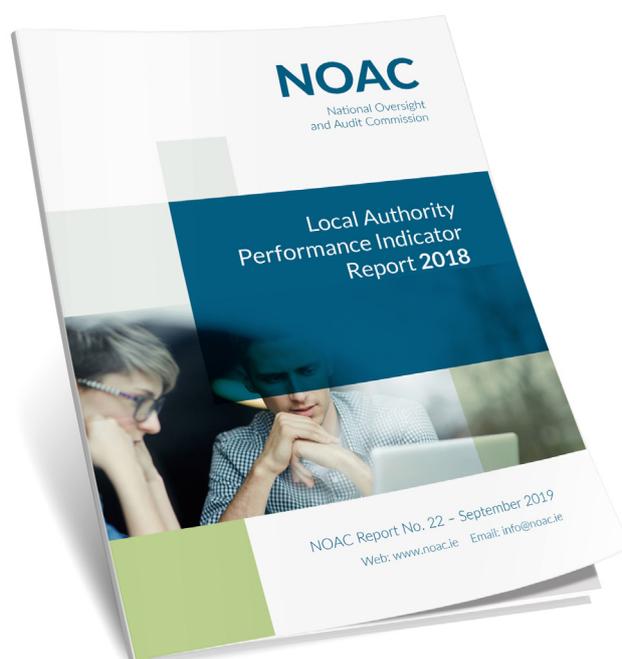
Green Flag Status - A new Waste / Environment indicator was added to the 2018 report under the heading of E4: the percentage of schools that have been awarded green flag status. The report noted that in 2018, Roscommon recorded the highest percentage of schools awarded green flag status at 70% and Westmeath the lowest at 37.8%.

Building Control - The report advised that the number of new buildings notified to local authorities in accordance with the Building Control Act increased by 14.35% in 2018 compared to the figure recorded for 2017.

The report noted that eight local authorities did not meet the minimum 12-15% requirement contained in the Code of Practice for Inspecting and Certifying Buildings and Works in relation to inspections of new buildings for which valid commencement notices have been received compared to only two local authorities in the 2017 report.

Whole Time Equivalent Staff - The report noted that the total number of whole-time equivalent staff employed by the local authority sector at the end of 2018 was 28,307.84. This represented an increase of 3.39% or 927.62 staff since 2017.

Other Issues - The report noted that a common concern raised by local authorities at the validation visits was the burden historical land loans place on finances. The lack of clarity regarding the future repayment of these liabilities was noted as a cause of concern.



Trend Analysis

The five years of data collected since the first report provided an ideal time to review the trends the data shows and discuss the changes noted. The trend analysis showed that:

- ▶ Housing stock across all local authorities has increased year on year from 2014 to 2018;
- ▶ The national average percentage of local authority dwellings that were vacant at the year-end decreased from 2015 to 2017 and a slight increase was recorded in 2018;
- ▶ The time taken to re-let a dwelling from the date of vacation to the date when a new tenancy commenced decreased slightly from 2017 to 2018;
- ▶ The number of adults in emergency accommodation that are long-term (i.e. 6 months or more within the previous year) homeless as a percentage of the total number of homeless adults in emergency accommodation at the end of year has increased from 2014 to 2018;
- ▶ The ratings in Pavement Surface Condition Index for local primary roads shows that over the period 2015 to 2018 the biggest increase in local primary roads was in the highest category of roads, 9 – 10, recording an increase of 12 percentage points. This trend shows the condition of regional and local primary roads have improved over the last 5 years;
- ▶ Since 2014, the national median percentage of households situated in an area covered by a 3 bin service has increased;
- ▶ The national average number of pollution cases in respect of which a complaint was made and the number of cases closed have increased year on year from 2015 to 2018;
- ▶ The median percentage of buildings inspected as a percentage of new buildings notified to the local authority have decreased year on year from 2015 to 2018 (from 24% in 2015, 19.42% in 2016, 17.20% in 2017 and 16.75% in 2018);
- ▶ The total number of WTEs has increased from 26,807 in 2014 to 28,308 in 2018, the percentage of working days lost to certified leave increased from 3.53 days in 2014 to 3.74 days in 2018 and the percentage of working days lost to self-certified leave remained broadly the same.;
- ▶ The national average cost of ICT provision per WTE decreased from €2,932 in 2014 to €2,925 in 2015 to €2,680.80 in 2016 and increased to €2,807.96 in 2017 and €2,894.57 in 2018. The figures for 2017 and 2018 include an increase from 50 to 56% in the apportionment of the LGMA general charge to the indicator calculation;
- ▶ The national revenue account credit balance across the 31 local authorities has increased since 2014 from €3.4m to €37m in 2018;
- ▶ The national median percentage of commercial rates collected in the year has increased year on year from 72% in 2014 to 86% in 2018; and
- ▶ The cost per capita for the Planning Service went from €26.97 in 2014 to €29.24 in 2018 and the cost per capita of the Libraries went from €30.52 in 2014 to €33.98 in 2018.

Quality Assurance Review of the Data

NOAC, while developing the Local Authority Performance Indicator Report 2014, incorporated a validation process to carry out an assessment of the accuracy and reliability of a subset of the indicators and local authorities.

The report noted that, in 2019, seven indicators were selected for validation:

- ▶ **H2:** Housing Vacancies
- ▶ **M1:** 5 Year summary of Revenue Account Balance
- ▶ **L1:** Library Visits and Issues
- ▶ **L2:** Cost per capita of operating a Library Service
- ▶ **J3:** No. of mentoring recipients
- ▶ **P3:** % of Planning Enforcement cases closed as resolved
- ▶ **C1:** Total Number of WTEs

The local authorities chosen for validation in the report were:

- ▶ Dublin City Council;
- ▶ Louth County Council;
- ▶ Kilkenny County Council;
- ▶ Offaly County Council;
- ▶ Cork County Council;
- ▶ Roscommon County Councils

NOAC would like to thank the NOAC Secretariat, local authority coordinators who arranged the visits and the Chief Executives and other local authority staff who met with the NOAC members in the course of the visits.

The report noted that NOAC is broadly satisfied with the validity of the data of each local authority. This report is available in full at www.noac.ie

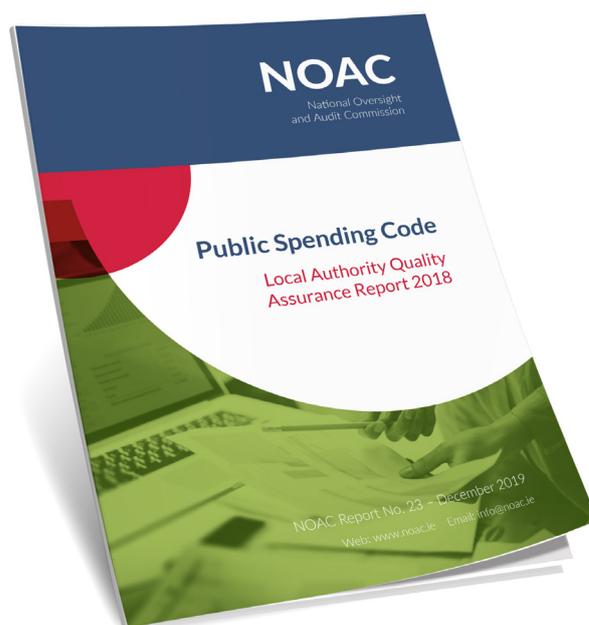
Public Spending Code Report

In 2019, NOAC published the Public Spending Code: Local Authority Quality Assurance Report 2018.

The Public Spending Code is comprised of a set of rules and procedures that ensure these standards are upheld across the Irish public service and brings together, in one place, details of the obligations of those responsible for spending public money.

As local authority funding derives from a number of sources, including grants from several Government Departments, it was decided that the Chief Executives of individual local authorities should be responsible for carrying out the quality assurance requirements in Part A04 of the Code and that their reports should be submitted to NOAC for incorporation in a composite report for the local government sector.

The Quality Assurance reporting requirement in the Public Spending Code consists of the following five steps:



1. The local authority must draw up an inventory of projects/programmes at the different stages of the Project Life Cycle in respect of all capital and current expenditure projects to a value greater than €0.5m. The Public Spending Code requires the inventory to break down capital expenditure being considered, incurred and recently ended between capital projects and capital grant schemes.

The report noted that of the 31 authorities, none had a current expenditure programme recently ended in 2018.

The report advised that 12 authorities did not have a current expenditure project or programme in their 'under consideration' category. However, since publication of the report this has been reduced to 11, as Galway County Councils' current expenditure was not featured in the report due to an administrative error. This will be noted in the 2019 report.

2. The local authority must confirm publication on their website of summary information on procurements in excess of €10m related to projects in progress or completed in the year under review and provide a link to the relevant website location.

The report advised that out of the 31 local authorities, 23 either provided a link from which it could be discerned that no procurement in excess of €10m arose in 2018, or else clearly stated that no such procurement arose in 2018.

In respect of several of the latter, the report noted that a link was provided to where procurement details would be published if applicable.

3. The local authority must complete seven specified checklists. The completion of the checklists is based on an appropriate sample of the projects/areas of expenditure relevant to that checklist.

The report noted all local authorities fulfilled the requirement.

4. The local authority must carry out a more in-depth review of selected projects/programmes such that, over a three to five year period, every stage of the project life cycle and every scale of project will be subject to a closer examination.

Initially the review requirement was that the value of the projects selected for the in-depth check each year should be at least 5% of the total value of all projects in the inventory when averaged out over a three-year period. This was amended in 2016 to a requirement that revenue projects selected for in-depth review must represent a minimum of 1% of the total value of all revenue projects in the inventory, while the requirement in respect of capital projects remains 5% of the total value of all capital projects in the inventory. Both of these minimums can be through in-depth reviews carried out in the years 2016 to 2018.

The report noted that all local authorities have carried out in-depth checks of a selection of projects from their inventories.

It was reported that of the 31 local authorities, the following did not meet either the current or capital target or both:

- ▶ Leitrim County Council did not carry out any in depth checks for current expenditure for the three year period 2016 to 2018; and

- ▶ Monaghan County Council in depth checks for capital expenditure for the three year period 2016 to 2018 totalled 14.84%, 0.16% short of the required 15%.

5. The local authority must complete a short summary report consisting of the inventory, procurement reference, the seven checklists and the local authority's judgment as to the adequacy of the appraisal/ planning, implementation or review work that it examined as part of the in-depth checks, the reasons why it formed that judgment and its proposals to remedy any inadequacies found during the entire quality assurance process.

The report noted that all 31 local authorities complied with Step 5.

This report is available in full at www.noac.ie

Good Practice in Local Government Conference

NOAC, in association with the County and City Management Association (CCMA) and Local Government Management Agency (LGMA), held its second "Good Practice in Local Government" conference on 26 February 2019 in Kilkenny Castle.

Presentations given on the day highlighted many of the initiatives taken by local authorities that highlight significant, diverse and often highly original approaches to tackling the challenges both local authorities and communities face. It demonstrated the local authority's ability to deliver better outcomes.



From left to right: NOAC members Barry Quinlan, Sharon O'Connor, Michael McGreal, Constance Hanniffy and NOAC Chair Michael McCarthy at the 2019 Good Practice in Local Government Conference.

Speakers from local authorities across Ireland presented case studies, including:

Monaghan County Council showed how, by removing the barriers and improving service delivery and by making small well-planned and informed changes, local authorities can enhance and improve the experience for all customers, especially those marginalized and often forgotten.

South Dublin County Council looked at the interesting Mydoorstep project. This gives people the ability to make informed decisions on home purchase based on the most up-to-date and relevant property information.

Clare County Council discussed Rural Development and **Waterford City and County Council** looked at Process Improvement in their Council. Topics of particular interest and relevance to NOAC were the subject of the afternoon session with presentations related to the Performance Indicator and Internal Audit reports as well as Economic and Environmental initiatives with speakers from **Laois, Kerry, Cork, Tipperary and Carlow County Councils** covering these topics.

The Minister of State for Local Government and Electoral Reform acknowledged the wide variety of services provided by local authorities and said "This seminar provides an excellent opportunity for participants to learn from each other and develop innovative approaches to achieve objectives". The Minister concluded by commending NOAC, the CCMA and LGMA for organising this seminar and said "the case studies showcased are some examples of good practice and should provide encouragement for those in local authorities to continually strive to achieve the highest standards in delivering services to the public".

Details of the conference is available in full at www.noac.ie

Local Authority Scrutiny Programme

In February 2017, NOAC decided to review the performance of individual local authorities.

Over time, the process has evolved and this has allowed it to become structured, formal and documented. Given the importance of the work, it will continue to be led by the Chair of NOAC (or a delegated alternate, if required) with support from NOAC members and the Secretariat.

The starting point was to get an overall picture derived from the relevant data contained in the NOAC reports published to date, including:

- ▶ Performance indicator results;
- ▶ LGAS audit reports;
- ▶ Local authority financial position and revenue collection performance;
- ▶ Private rented sector inspections;
- ▶ Housing stock management and maintenance data;
- ▶ Internal Audit Report; and
- ▶ Customer Satisfaction Survey (where relevant).

Profiles reports were initially drafted by NOAC and these were forwarded to the Chief Executives of the relevant local authorities.

NOAC, through the Chair and Secretariat would then hold a site meeting with the Chief Executive and management team in the Local Authority office for a general discussion on the profile and to discuss how the local authority operates, particular issues that affect the local authority and to invite the submission of relevant material outlining the particular context within which it operates.

Following on from the site meeting, the Chief Executive and members of the management team are invited to attend a session with the NOAC Board where Local Authorities would present and take questions from members on the various items covered including from the profile report.

Both meetings are attended by the Secretariat and minutes are made. Local authorities are also invited to submit and present material. It is intended that this material will be published along with reports. This is also an ongoing programme and it is also intended that six local authorities would be selected for this process in 2020.

Local authority Scrutiny Programme Activity 2019

Local Authority (LA)	Site meeting in the Local Authority	Local Authority attending NOAC
Roscommon County Council	01/11/2018	15/01/2019
Tipperary County Council	03/12/2018	05/03/2019
Donegal County Council	10/01/2019	16/04/2019
Laois County Council	11/03/2019*	21/01/2020
Waterford City and County Council	11/10/2019*	03/03/2020
Clare County Council	30/10/2019**	TBA***
Carlow County Council	12/12/2019	TBA***

*Meetings were held in early 2020 with Laois and Waterford City and County Councils.

**Meeting with Clare County Council was cancelled due to Covid 19.

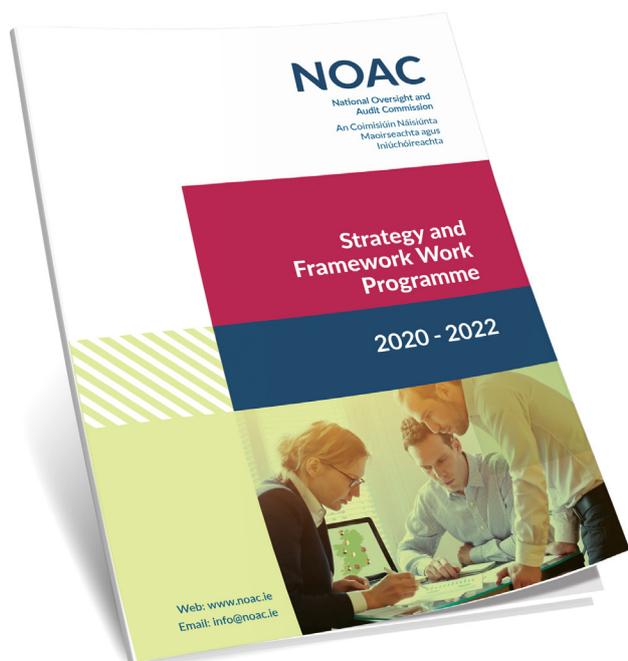
***To be announced.

Other NOAC Activities

NOAC Branding and Website

Work began in 2019 to produce a logo and visual design that will set NOAC apart as an independent and authoritative body in the local government sector. This report is the first published with the new branding.

It also began development of a new website. The current website has been the primary mode of communication in recent years, with NOAC reports being published there since establishment in 2014. With a view to increasing user interaction, reaching wider audiences, providing relevant information to interested stakeholders and driving best practice in transparency, the new website will launch in 2020.



Strategy and Framework Work Programme 2020 – 2022

Commencing in June 2019, NOAC developed a Strategy for the period 2020 to 2022 based upon its vision, mission and core values.

This sets out the key statutory functions of NOAC which serve as a focus and mandate for the delivery of its work programme over the life of the corporate plan from 2020 to 2022.

The document was prepared by the NOAC members, following consultation with stakeholders including the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government, County and City Management Association (CCMA) and the Local Government Management Agency (LGMA).

It was developed with the support of Dr Seán Ó'Riordáin of Seán Ó'Riordáin and Associates who are public policy & management specialists and Mr Paul Reilly of Audit Scotland (Accounts Commission) as well as the NOAC Secretariat.

This strategy was approved in December 2019 and forms the basis of the Commission's ongoing, long-term strategic objectives of overseeing the consistent, high quality delivery of local government services and the evaluation of public service reform implementation and underpins the core business processes of the Commission.

In this context, it was envisaged that the objectives and strategies outlined in it will be translated into detailed work programmes of the Commission.

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 Board focused on key actions for the period 2020 to 2022. In addition, progress on these actions will be reviewed annually and the work programme amended as required.

Thematic based actions and tasks 2020-2022

Within the above framework, NOAC identified 24 critical actions to be implemented over the course of the strategy period. Each will have a time-frame and set of performance indicators to underpin on-going monitoring and evaluation of implementation.

Secretariat

The Board Members of NOAC will provide overall direction for NOAC in accordance with the strategy and underpinning work programme. Members of the Board will need to be adequately supported by a secretariat under the leadership of a Chief Officer.

In addition to the tasks set out the Secretariat will be required to provide general administrative support to NOAC including the generation of reports, management of websites and communications, appointment of Board Members, organisation of NOAC meetings (minimum 8 per year) and working groups (as required).

Monitoring and evaluation

NOAC agrees that monitoring of local government requires a pro-active monitoring of its own actions and therefore will put in place key actions to ensure such interaction programmes and the review / evaluation of published NOAC reports.

The strategy and framework, including the details of the 24 critical actions are available in full at www.noac.ie

Multi Annual Work Programme 2020 – 2022

Following on from its Strategy for the years 2020 – 2022, NOAC produced a Multi Annual Work Programme in December 2019. This built upon, re-ordered and grouped with timelines the actions in the Strategy and proposed a number of Working Groups to bring these actions forward.

The work programme addressed the following key areas: –

Working Groups

Previously NOAC has had up to seven sub-groups or working groups (WGs).

As a result of evaluation of the work programme in the strategy the following working groups have been created as set out below:

- ▶ **WG1:** LG Governance, Efficiency and Reform;
- ▶ **WG2:** Performance Indicators;
- ▶ **WG3:** Communications and Customer Survey; and
- ▶ **WG4:** Financial Management and Performance;

Some activities come directly under the Chair of NOAC.

NOAC Meetings / Members

NOAC would expect to meet at least eight times a year of which three meetings will be attended by local authorities as part of the Scrutiny Programme. NOAC also aims to make six scrutiny visits per year to local authorities.

Relationships

In order to increase the effectiveness of NOAC, the secretariat will explore the potential of using other research capabilities including external options and external experts.

Communications

In order to improve the awareness of NOAC the Secretariat will seek to ensure that material relating to the work of NOAC is published online in a timely manner and that progress is made on the new web site to help increase awareness of the role and work of NOAC.

Secretariat

In order to ensure effective delivery of the work programme certain skillsets will be important for the Secretariat. 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 a business case should be prepared in 2020 to look at staffing, however a balanced approach to include outsourcing of tasks will be required, including report writing.

This report and the full Multi-Annual Work Programme Actions 2020-2022 is available in full at www.noac.ie

NOAC Engagement

Joint Committee on Housing, Planning and Local Government

The Joint Committee on Housing, Planning and Local Government invited the NOAC Chairperson Michael McCarthy to the meeting of the Committee on 9 May 2019 to discuss matters relating to the Performance Indicators Report 2017.

The NOAC Chairperson Michael McCarthy and Martina Moloney, Chairperson of the Performance Indicators sub-group attended the meeting.

The NOAC Chairperson gave an opening statement and an overview of the Performance Indicators Report 2017 and with the assistance of Martina Moloney, Chairperson of the Performance Indicators sub-group answered questions from the Committee members.

The Chairperson of the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Housing, Planning and Local Government thanked Michael McCarthy and Martina Moloney for attending and engaging with the committee.

The full transcript is available at https://www.oireachtas.ie/en/debates/debate/joint_committee_on_housing_planning_and_local_government/2019-05-09/

NOAC Chair Attendance at Local Government Audit Service (LGAS) Conference

The LGAS held its Annual Conference over two days starting on 7 February 2019. The NOAC Chairperson attended and presented on the afternoon of the second day. The presentation included an overview of the NOAC and an update on activities of the board.

Engagement with the Office of the Planning Regulator (OPR)

The OPR was created to review the organisation, systems and procedures applied by planning authorities in their performance of their planning functions. An advisory panel to develop its methodology for conducting reviews of the performance planning authorities was created in 2019. The Chair of NOAC attended meetings of the panel and nominated a member of the NOAC Secretariat to attend future meetings as NOAC's representative. The Performance Indicators sub-group also met with the OPR regarding approaches to reviewing local authority performance in planning to avoid duplication of effort.

Meeting with Association of Irish Local Government (AILG)

On 17 December 2019, the NOAC Chairperson, accompanied by members of the NOAC secretariat met with the President, Vice President and Directors of the AILG. The AILG is the primary body representing the democratically elected members and their member local authority.

As two important stakeholders in local government, NOAC considered it prudent that the bodies should meet. Many useful opinions were exchanged at the meeting.

The NOAC Chairperson outlined the new Strategy and Framework Work Programme (2020 – 2022) and gave backgrounds on the development of NOAC's other reports.

As part of NOAC's Strategy and Framework work programme, it was suggested that future engagement with the AILG could come in the form of workshops, meetings and invitations to relevant events in 2020 and beyond.

Meeting with Local Government Management Agency (LGMA)

Following the development of the NOAC's Strategy for the Period 2020-2021 the Chairperson of the LGMA, Owen Keegan, was invited to a meeting with the NOAC Chairperson to discuss the Strategy and its implementation.

The Strategy was well received by the LGMA who noted its ambition and the importance of support from the LGMA in its implementation.

They highlighted the challenges with regards public perception faced by Local Authorities and the associated media interest.

The LGMA will present to the full NOAC Board on its work, plans and potential for co-operation and support between the two bodies in 2020.

The County and City Management Association (CCMA) / LGMA Climate Strategy

NOAC members attended the launch of a research report that the LGMA Research Unit delivered for the CCMA's Environment, Climate Change and Emergency Planning Committee on the climate actions the sector undertook between 2011 - 2018.



The report outlined the local authority achievements with respect to climate action, and that the local government sector has been proactive in many areas, providing a range of services to the public, including critical infrastructure, flood risk management and water resources, as well as nature-based solutions and public engagement, each of which have delivered positive climate actions.

Engagement with Local Government Audit Service (LGAS) – Value for Money (VFM) Unit

The Value for Money (VFM) Unit of the Local Government Audit Service (LGAS) carries out studies and issues reports on value for money in local authority operations.

Cognisant of the increasing broad range of activities undertaken by local authorities and the demands placed on them, the LGAS decided to carry out a review of the output of the VFM Unit in 2019, to ensure it is best placed to deliver on legislative commitments.

The LGAS formed a working group comprised of representatives of the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government, LGAS, local authorities, the LGMA and a member of the NOAC Secretariat. After several meetings and a survey of all local authorities, they produced a review on the VFM unit for the management of the LGAS. It was proposed that the VFM Unit should, where possible, align the topics selected with areas selected by NOAC for review and bring its reports to NOAC after publication.

Resources and Expenditure

NOAC is supported by a Secretariat, staffed with a full-time equivalent of 5.4. The Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government provide the staff.

These staff support NOAC and manage its work programme, along with other duties. NOAC is funded from the Local Government Fund and its allocation from that Fund in 2019 was €200,000.

Expenditure

NOAC expenditure for 2019 was €175,633.54, which was incurred as follows:

2019 Budget - €200,000.00	
Expenditure	Amount
Member Fees (including PRSI)	€70,448.58
Travel and Subsistence	€36,181.21
IPSOS MRBI Local Authority Satisfaction Survey	€46,740.00
Workshops	€3,695.91
Conference Fees	€595.00
Desktop Publishing / Press Release	€16,014.60
Other (Miscellaneous Expenses)	€1,958.24
	Expenditure
TOTAL	€ 175,633.54

The members consider this statement of expenditure to be a true and fair view of NOAC spending during 2019.

Appendice

Appendix 1:

Attendance at NOAC Board Meetings									
Member	15/01/ 2019	05/03/ 2019	16/04/ 2019	28/05/ 2019	25/06/ 2019	17/09/ 2019	05/11/ 2019	10/12/ 2019	Total
Michael McCarthy	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	8
John Buckley	✓	×	×	✓	✓	N/A	N/A	N/A	3
Tara Buckley	✓	×	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	7
Constance Hanniffy	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	8
David Holohan	✓	✓	×	✓	×	✓	×	×	4
Paul Lemass	×	N/A	0						
Michael McGreal	✓	✓	✓	×	✓	✓	✓	✓	7
Martina Moloney	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	8
Sharon O'Connor	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	8
Colleen Savage	×	✓	×	✓	✓	N/A	N/A	N/A	3
Barry Quinlan	N/A	N/A	N/A	×	✓	✓	✓	✓	4

Appendix 2:

Terms of Reference of NOAC

NOAC was established under the Local Government Act 2001 (the Act) (as amended by the Local Government Reform Act 2014) with effect from 1st July 2014. NOAC has adopted a corporate governance regime in accordance with best practice.

The purpose of this document is to set out the terms of reference of NOAC. These terms of reference, approved by NOAC on 4 July 2017, are effective from 1 July 2017.

1. Membership

Members of NOAC shall be appointed by the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government in accordance with section 126H of the Act. The Commission shall be made up of at least 6 members.

Only members of NOAC have the right to attend Board meetings. However, the staff of the secretariat and other individuals may be invited to attend for all or part of any meeting, as and when appropriate or necessary.

Appointments to NOAC shall be for a period of up to 5 years, which may be extended for one further period of up to 5 years.

In the absence of the Chairperson, the remaining members present shall agree one of their number to chair the meeting.

2. NOAC Secretariat

NOAC's secretariat will ensure that the members receive information and papers in a timely manner to enable full and proper consideration to be given to the issues.

The secretariat is also responsible for the formal induction of new NOAC members and organising mentoring for members where required.

3. Quorum

The quorum necessary for the transaction of business shall be 4 members. A duly convened meeting of NOAC at which a quorum is present shall be competent to exercise all or any of the authorities, powers and discretions exercisable by NOAC.

4. Frequency of Meetings

NOAC shall meet at least 8 times a year, and as otherwise required.

5. Notice of Meetings

Meetings of NOAC shall be summoned by the secretariat at the request of the Chairperson.

Where at all possible, notice of each meeting confirming the venue, time and date, together with an agenda of items to be discussed, shall be forwarded to the members no later than two working days before the date of the meeting. Supporting papers shall be sent to the members at the same time.

6. Minutes of Meetings

The secretariat shall minute the proceedings, discussions and decisions of all meetings of NOAC, including recording the names of those present and in attendance.

Minutes of NOAC meetings shall be circulated to all members for approval at the next NOAC meeting.

7. Duties

The day-to-day running of NOAC shall be carried out by the secretariat who will report on the work as appropriate by email and at NOAC meetings.

The members shall advise and support the secretariat.

NOAC shall satisfy itself that financial controls and systems of risk management are robust and defensible.

NOAC shall keep itself up to date and fully informed about strategic issues and changes affecting it and the environment in which it operates.

NOAC shall ensure that on appointment, members receive a formal letter of appointment setting out clearly what is expected of them in terms of time commitment, sub-group service and involvement outside NOAC meetings.

NOAC may, from time to time, establish such sub-groups of NOAC as are necessary to assist it in the performance of its duties. They may include members who are not members of NOAC if specialist skills are required. Where a sub-group is put in place:

- ▶ the terms of reference shall be specified in writing and approved by NOAC and reviewed annually;
- ▶ NOAC, on the nomination of the Chairperson, shall appoint its members;
- ▶ NOAC shall receive reports from the sub-group that reflect activity undertaken by the group;
- ▶ all protocols concerning the operation of NOAC shall be applied to a sub-group;
- ▶ notes of sub-group meetings shall be circulated to all NOAC members.

NOAC shall review the results of its performance evaluation process that relate to the composition of NOAC and corporate governance generally.

NOAC shall keep under review corporate governance developments (including ethics-related matters) that might affect the State body, with the aim of ensuring that its corporate governance policies and practices continue to be in line with best practice.

NOAC shall ensure that the principles and provisions set out in the Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies (and any other corporate governance codes that apply to it) are adhered to.

8. Reporting Responsibilities

NOAC shall keep the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government informed, outside of the Annual Report exercise, of significant matters arising within the State body.

9. Other

NOAC shall, at least once a year, review its own performance, constitution and terms of reference to ensure it is operating at maximum effectiveness and implement any changes it considers necessary.

10. Authority

NOAC is authorised to obtain, at its own expense, outside legal or other professional advice where the members judge it necessary to discharge their responsibilities as members of NOAC.

