



NOAC

**National Oversight
and Audit Commission**
An Coimisiún Náisiúnta
Maoirseachta & Iniúchóireachta

Multi Annual Work Programme (2020 – 2024)
2020 Mid-Year Progress Note

1st September 2020

Multi Annual Work Programme (2020 – 2024)

2020 Mid-Year Progress Note

The NOAC Multi Annual Work Plan, published in January 2020 followed on from the publication of the NOAC Strategy for the same period. The Work Programme sought to follow on from the Strategy by implementing the Working Group Structure, assigning Actions to those groups and to progress with the implementation of those Actions.

It should be noted that the implementation of the Multi Annual Work Programme has been affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. In particular, it has caused a pausing of NOAC’s work for a period of 2½ months and the need for the Members and the Secretariat to meet and work remotely. As a result, some meetings have been either postponed or cancelled.

Working Groups

Previously NOAC has had up to seven working groups(WGs). However as only a number of these were active. As a result of Multi Annual Work Plan the NOAC Strategy four working groups were set up alongside the separate work of the Chair of NOAC as set out in the following table: -

Title	Code	Note
LG Governance, Efficiency and Reform	WG1: LGER	Includes Corporate Governance, PMO Projects, Local Enterprise Offices and Housing
Performance Indicators	WG2: PI	Similar to previous WG
Communications and Customer Survey	WG3: CCS	Similar to previously with added role of communications.
Financial Management and Performance	WG4: FMP	Includes Financial Performance and Public Spending Code
Chair	CHAIR	Includes Scrutiny Programme, Annual Reports, Review of Recommendations and Protocols with Stakeholders

Of the working groups progress has been made by all. The target was to hold approximately 4 meetings per year of which 3 have held meetings to date. Terms of Reference have been reviewed by 2 of these groups. The groups are composed of a Chair and two other members, all NOAC Board members. Given current and future Board vacancies arising membership of these groups will need to be reviewed/updated in Autumn 2020.

Actions

The multi Annual Work Plan originally contained 24 actions and with 2 additions makes for a current total of 26 actions. Progress has been made on 23 of the actions to varying extents,

however much has not been in accordance with the timetable. Details of progress on Actions are set out in Appendix A.

In terms of output for NOAC the current projection for 2020 is

- Customer Survey 2020
- Customer Survey Infographic 2018 – 2020
- Annual Report 2019
- Performance Indicator Report 2019
- Public Spending Code Report 2019
- Corporate Plans 2015-2019 - Closeout Report
- Corporate Plans 2020-2024 – Commencement Report
- Scrutiny Programme Reports – 10 to 16 reports
- PI Economic Indicator Review Report

This represents between 18 to 24 reports (compared to x in 2019) and does not account for scoping notes, etc. Other NOAC work/output work underway relates to workshops/seminars (4 – 5 no); new NOAC Branding/Website and meetings and supporting working groups. In addition, it should be noted that the Secretariat is producing 4 reports for another body in 2020 as opposed to 1 in 2019 for that body.

As reflected above the work of the Secretariat has increased very significantly and although some of the tasks are addressing backlog it is clear that this will continue.

Staffing / Resources

The 2020 to 2022 strategy calls for a Business Case and Resource plan be prepared for submission to the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government and which allows for an appropriate level of resources to allow the Commission to complete its work plan to, at a minimum, meet statutory requirements.

The Board Members of the Commission will provide overall direction in accordance with this Strategy and the underpinning work programme. Members of the Board will need to be adequately supported by a Secretariat/Executive under the leadership of a Chief Officer, which will support the work of the commission and ensure that adequate resources are provided.

Staffing at NOAC has built up since its formation with at present consisting of: -

Grade	Establishment	Total WTE – in situ 2020 (2021)	WTE – NOAC 2020 (2021)
Principal Officer	1	1.0 (1.0)	0.9 (0.9)
Assistant Principal Officer	2	1.6 (1.4)	1.3 (1.1)
Higher Executive Officer	2	1.9 (1.8)	1.6 (1.5)
Clerical Officer	1	1.0 (1.0)	0.7 (0.7)
Total	6	5.5 (5.2)	4.5 (4.2)

The table illustrates establishment and WTE numbers for the section and for NOAC. 2021 projections are in brackets. Numbers are also slightly less than the estimate at the end of 2019. In addition, staff are quite busy at this stage and have little/no spare capacity. This is particularly clear when people are out with, as a result, difficulty in making progress and meeting deadlines.

Although the Strategy states that the business case may allow for additional research staff a balanced approach to include partnering and outsourcing of tasks is being pursued in addition to in-house work. Work on outsourcing and partnering with other bodies such as the LGMA and IPA has progressed and the issue of external members of working groups has been raised.

In order to ensure effective delivery of the work programme the Secretariat is working to develop its capacity, skills and expertise. Key within this are skills relating to governance, policy analysis, economic evaluation, data/statistics and financial and that staffing within the unit should have regard to these.

As noted above and in the Strategy and Multi Annual Work Programme there was an undertaking to prepare a business case to review overall resources and submit proposals for approval during Q1 of 2020 and annually thereafter. This has not yet occurred due to the delay in commencing work on the Strategy because of the impact of COVID-19, however it is expected to be progressed in the coming months.

Relationships

As noted in order to increase the effectiveness of NOAC, the Secretariat has been engaging and developing relationships with external bodies. In particular this includes the LGMA, IPA, the Local Government Audit Service (LGAS) and the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government, but also includes other bodies such as the OPR. These organisations have a potential to assist or collaborate with the Commission.

Having regard to the development of NOACs role and implementation of its work programme, it is proposed that the Commission review further the work of other bodies such as Audit Scotland (Accounts Commission) or other oversight bodies as to such procedures and policies or other matters that would have a relevance and help improve the work of NOAC.

Communications

In order to improve the awareness of the National Oversight and Audit Commission (NOAC) the Executive is seeking to ensure that material relating to the work of the Commission is published online in a timely manner and that progress is made on the development of a new brand and web site. Significant progress has been made with this and will be complete in the next few weeks.

Material setting out the work of the Commission and its role will be developed. This material, along with attendance and presentations at seminars and workshops will be used to help increase awareness of the role and work of the Commission.

Due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic meetings to date of the Board, WGs and with Local Authorities have mostly occurred on-line. In addition, video recording of material is being used to help promote and launch material. It is also proposed that a number of NOAC Autumn workshops will take place on-line.

Multi-Annual Work Programme Actions 2020-2022

Based on the programme contained within the Strategy, actions had been re-ordered and aligned with the proposed working groups. Timeframes for each task has been mapped out for the period of 2020 to 2022. However, for a number of reasons such as the impact of COVID-19 and catch-up work some delay is occurring in some actions. Progress on these actions will be kept under review and the work programme amended as required.

The current status on the Strategy Actions is set out in the following table: -

Appendix A

WG	No	Principal Action	Timeframe	Key Performance Indicator	2020					2021			2022			Progress 1.9.20		
					2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028				
WG1: Local Government Governance Efficiency & Reform (LGER)	1	Review of Corporate plans 2015-2019 to include trend analysis	By end Q4, 2019	Publication of Report													Circular with questionnaire issued in May. Response period extended. Returns are being received and reviewed. A note setting out a draft has also been prepared. To complete report in Sept/Oct.	
	2	Review of new Corporate Plans 2019-2024 within an agreed risk management framework	By end Q1, 2020	Publication of Report													Awaiting one outstanding plan. Draft approach prepared for WG. Approach being further developed into a draft report.	
	9	Inter-action with Councillors/ALLG post adoption of new corporate plans	End Q2, 2020	2 workshops per year														
	12	Review Risk Management Processes in Local Authorities.	End Q4, 2020 and annually thereafter	Review complete and published														
	14	Review Local Government ICT Strategy and implementation.	End Q4, 2020	Review complete and published														Secretariat met LGMA and LGMA to send on 2017 Strategy and currently carrying out a review. Scoping note to be developed.
	22	Review performance of the Local Enterprise Offices.	End Q4, 2019 and annually thereafter	Publication of Reviews														Secretariat contacted LGMA and reviewing previous material. Scoping note to be produced.
	19	Review performance of the Regional Assemblies.	End Q4, 2019 and annually thereafter	Publication of Reviews														Draft scoping note has been prepared and considered by WG. To meet Directors of RAs in Sept to discuss approach.

WG	No	Principal Action	Timeframe	Key Performance Indicator	2019				2020				2021				2022				Progress 1.9.20
					Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	
WG2: Performance Indicators (PI)	5	Enhancement of annual KPIs/performance Reports	By end Q4, 2019	Publication of Protocol Annual Guidelines																Ongoing annually in January through PI Guidelines issued. Guidelines issued and Workshop held in January / February 2020.	
	18	Explore the development of a National Performance Framework against which to assess overall Local Authority performance.	End Q2, 2020	Appraisal Template in place																Secretariat to prepare a scoping document on this for Sept. Discussion with Audit Scotland 14.7.20. Work to be outsourced.	
	23	Prepare and publish annual Performance Indicator Report of local authorities based on data gathered from local authorities to include:- - Carry out 6 LA on Site Validation Meetings in support of preparation of Annual Performance Indicator (PI) Report	End Q3 annually	Reports complete and published																Reporting improvements being considered in conjunction with Desktop Publishers and Statistical/GIS unit. Due to COVID 19, publication will be delayed from what achieved in previous years. Target month is Oct 20. LA validation meetings using VC is progressing, with work delayed from intended month of May to August / September.	
	15	Prepare in depth reports on specific areas of Local Authority activity arising from the Reform of Local Government and Public Service Reform including: Review of performance in the area of economic and Community development, Town Regeneration and Renewal and Climate Change	End Q4, 2020	Reports complete and published																Consultant hired in relation to Economic and Community Development. Progressing with workshops, questionnaire and drafting of report. Progress in the other two identified areas to progress in 2021 and 2022.	
	17	Improve Data gathering, building on the work and publications of other organizations where possible to avoid duplication and overload.	End Q2, 2020	Agreed framework for data sharing in place																Secretariat drafting scoping document for WG to consider. Issues being considered relate to consistency and quality of data as well as improving the way data is being presented. To possibly progress as part of Action 18.	

WG	No	Principal Action	Timeframe	Key Performance Indicator	2019		2020			2021			2022			Progress 1.9.20
					Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	
WG3: Communications and customer Service	4	Implement 3rd phase of the customer satisfaction survey and then migrate same to the LGMA so meet LGMA to agree NOAC expectation of service delivery from LGMA	By end Q2, 2020 and annually thereafter	Publication of Report												2020 Report and Infographic complete. To progress to publication and launch in Q3. Launch to include videos as well as press release and interviews. In June Board decided to retain role, look at data trends and deep dives in specific areas with Secretariat looking at proposals to advance in light of that.
	24	Organisation of Customer Service Workshop	By end Q4 2019 and annually thereafter	Publish presentations												Secretariat liaising with LGMA about organising an online workshop for November 2020.
	6	Organisation of best practice workshops	By end Q2, 2020 and annually thereafter	Publication of Report												Workshop organised for end of April 2020, however postponed due to COVID 19. Secretariat liaising with LGMA about organising an online workshop for November 2020.
	7	Preparation of Communications strategy including : branding/logo	By end Q1, 2020 and annually thereafter	Publication of Communications Strategy												Branding / Logo has been agreed. Website development is near completion. Strategy yet to progress - to outsource.

WG	No	Principal Action	Timeframe	Key Performance Indicator	2020					2021					2022					Progress 1.9.20
					2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030				
Financial Management and Performance	16	Review Financial Performance including: - Management of the payroll shared service, - Review of Procurement in Local Authorities - Review of Non-mortgage loans	End Q4, 2022	Reports complete and published															Agreed to progress in following order: - - Management of the payroll shared services (MyPay); - Non-mortgage loans; - Procurement in Local Authorities. For MyPay much previous work was carried out in 2019. Secretariat is reviewing material. For non-mortgage loans a briefing/scoping note has been prepared by a Board member. Resourcing options being considered including - Contact made with LGAS on potential areas of engagement and collaboration. - LGAS VFM Unit has approached NOAC as to potential topics. - LGAS expected to attend NOAC meeting in the Autumn.	
	3	Develop annual strategy to deal with the LGAS Reports and Input to the work programme of the LGAS to support the work of NOAC e.g. in relation to Audit , Value for money and SLA Performance	By end Q4, 2020	Publication of Report																
	10	Engagement with the Audit Committees	End Q3, 2020 and annually thereafter	1 event per year																Correspondence issued and subsequent discussion held with the IPA about potential for joint workshop. Initial response positive with a view to holding a workshop in Autumn / Winter subject to diaries.
	20	Public Spending Code	Q4 Annually	Publication of report																Extended response deadline for submissions from LAs by 31st August 2020. Aim for early publication in 2020 in September / October.
	A1	Review of overview of the LG audit findings	Q3 Annually	Publication of report																Contact made with LGAS on Audit findings. 2018 LGAS report circulated that includes findings from that year. Further collation of findings over a 3-year period to follow.

WG	No	Principal Action	Timeframe	Key Performance Indicator	2019				2020				2021				2022				Progress 1.9.20
					Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	
Chair	8	Agree and deliver annual inter-action programme with the CEAs/local authorities site visits	By end Q4, 2019 and per annual programme thereafter	Deliver programme to include 6 site visits and 2 annual engagements with Chief Executives																Site meeting held with Monaghan in February with a further meeting held with Limerick in August. Full meetings held between NOAC Board and Laois, Waterford, Clare, Monaghan and Carlow of which the last three were held by VC. Progress made in preparing and finalising material for reports including preparation of a progress and reporting options note as well as sample reports. Intended to progress finalisation of reports in Autumn. 10 to 16 reports expected.	
	21	NOAC Annual Reports	Q1 Annually	Publication of report																Report delayed due to COVID-19 but published in late July/early August. Irish version also.	
	13	Review implementation of recommendations contained in NOAC Reports	End Q3, 2019 and annually thereafter	Review complete and published																Collation of recommendations complete and to engage with WGs and LGMA. Initial discussion held with LGMA on shared services.	
	11	Agree protocols with other government bodies and agencies	End Q3, 2019 and annually thereafter	1 event per year																Progress on this action may occur in conjunction or following on from Action 18. Similar framework in Scotland in place.	
	A2	Engagement with bodies such as Audit Scotland on research regarding work and future direction of NOAC	End of Q1 2021	Publication of report																Meetings held with Audit Scotland in February and July. Further engagement expected with other stakeholders.	

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