

**National Oversight and Audit Commission (NOAC)**  
**Minutes of the Meeting – Tuesday 6 October 2020 at 11:00 am**

Venue: Remote Meeting via WebEx Meeting Platform

Attended by:

Chairperson: Michael McCarthy

Members:	Sharon O'Connor	Martina Moloney
	Constance Hanniffy	Michael McGreal
	David Holohan	Brian Cawley
	Margaret Lane	Niall Quinn

Secretariat:	John McCarthy	Claire Gavin
	Colin Flood	John Goldrick
	Darren Browne	

Apologies:	Mary Hurley	Neill Dalton
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**1. Member Introductions;**

The Chair welcomed the newest board members, Margaret Lane, Brian Cawley and Niall Quinn, to the NOAC board. The new members each gave a brief introduction to their backgrounds.

**2. Minutes & actions of previous meeting;**

The minutes of the last main meeting held on 1 September 2020 were agreed.

**3. Declaration of conflict of interest;**

No conflicts of interest were raised.

**4. Matters Arising;**

A Board Member raised the previously discussed topic of local authority audit committee's publishing their meeting minutes. The Secretariat did not have an update on the matter but will seek clarification.

#### **5. NOAC Corporate Affairs;**

- An update was provided by the Secretariat. As it stands, the Secretariat are still working remotely due to the ongoing Covid-19 situation.
- The Secretariat are working with Public Appointments Service and the Departments State Boards team to further the recruitment process in a timely manner.
- A NOAC – Department Performance Delivery Agreement (PDA) is in preparation to succeed the previous agreement. It is expected that it will be finalised in advance of the next meeting.
- A cloud based online resource has been developed for use by the Secretariat and the Board to view and edit documents. The members will receive in due course an email detailing their enrolment procedure and access web links.

#### **6. Covid-19 Impact on Local Authorities**

The Board discussed the earlier meeting with the representatives of the CCMA and expressed their appreciation to the Secretariat for organising the meeting. The following points were noted: -

- Impact on: -
  - collection of rates
  - corporate Plans
  - financial performance
  - obligation to adopt a balanced budget
  - accounts recording risks and impact of COVID
- What specific initiatives are being taken?
- What permanent learning will be embed into the system and not just revert to business as usual post COVID?
- How the state is responding to support local authorities?

Members expressed a desire to hear the Departments view on the matter. An invite has been issued to the Departments CCMA representative to attend a future NOAC meeting. The Members also requested an invite to a future NOAC meeting for representatives of the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (DPER).

The Board discussed NOACs remit and work in the context of Covid-19s effect on Local Authorities. This would involve the board continuing to look retrospectively at performance while proactively engaging with key stakeholders to discuss current matters. Local authorities could be invited back to attend future NOAC meetings to discuss their ongoing efforts for 2021.

## **7. Work Programme:**

### **a) WG1 – Local Government Governance, Efficiency & Reform (LGGER);**

A meeting was held on the 14 September with the Directors of each of the three Regional Assemblies. The Secretariat have prepared a scoping document which has been circulated to the Board. This sets out how NOAC would provide oversight of the Regional Assemblies, their background and functions. These include managing EU programmes, their regional and economic spatial strategies and managing themselves in terms of corporate governance. This would broadly align with and not duplicate what is currently being carried out with local authorities. The WG Chair has received a letter from the Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly (EMRA) and await further feedback from the Regional Assembly Directors. The Board expressed their satisfaction in the progress of this area and noted that duplication of work by the Departments needs to be avoided.

### **Corporate Plans**

With regards the review of Corporate Plans (2015-2019), the Secretariat have been in contact with some local authorities seeking further summarised questionnaires. With regards the review of the Corporate Plans (2020-2024), one local authority is outstanding in their return. A scoping document for these new plans is in development. The Secretariat acknowledged that this work will need to be prioritised.

The term of the WG Chair, Sharon O'Connor, is due to expire on the 19 October meaning a new WG Chair will be required and a reply issued to the EMRA.

**b) WG2 – Performance Indicators;**

The WG Chair provided an update. Work is progressing on the Performance Indicator Report 2019 but has been impacted due to Secretariat staff on sick leave. The Chair expressed her thanks to the remaining Secretariat staff in progressing the report. The Chair also expressed her thanks and appreciation to the other WG members and Secretariat for their efforts in carrying out the virtual validation meetings. Overall the data collected for these were correct with some inaccuracies raised with the local authorities who will reply to the Secretariat. The impact of Covid-19 on both the local authorities and the work of NOAC will form part of the report. A draft of the report is due for the November NOAC meeting.

A further meeting of the Chair and Secretariat with the LGMA on a data proposal will follow this meeting.

With regards the review of 'Economic Development Indicators', a report is due by the tendered company by the end of October on their recommendations. They recently carried out workshops with representatives of the local authorities.

**c) WG3 – Communications and Customer Service**

Local Authority Satisfaction Reports

The Secretariat provided an update and presentation. With the last remaining WG board member finishing his term before the next NOAC meeting, further board members are required for this WG along with a new Chair. The '*Local Satisfaction Survey 2020*' report and the '*Local Authority Satisfaction Survey 2018 – 2020 – Infographic Report*' were released at the end of August. Two accompanying videos were produced by the Department's communications team. The level of media coverage received was positive. The Department issued tweets from its own Twitter account which received a good level of interest. The Secretariat is also engaging with the Departments communications section as to further assistance in future. Michael

McGreal expressed his appreciation to the NOAC Secretariat for their efforts and to the NOAC Chair for his media work.

#### NOAC Website and SharePoint

The new NOAC website is now live. The Secretariat presented the different pages found on the site, its search functionality and its bi-lingual features. A board member raised the query of NOAC employing a communications strategy. In response it was confirmed that a communications strategy has been identified as a task in the NOAC Strategy 2020 – 2022 and while no formal progress has been made yet, progress has been made by updating the NOAC website and towards the beginning use of Social Media. Formal progress on a communication strategy will be made in due course.

With the new development of a SharePoint site for the board, it was queried as to whether the documents saved to the SharePoint would be subject to the Freedom of Information requests. All final documents would be subject to this request with those marked 'Deliberative' exempt.

#### Good Practice Event 2020

The Good Practice event is scheduled for the 4 November 2020 with invites issued to the NOAC Board and the local authority Chief Executives. Minister O'Brien has accepted an invite to provide the welcoming address. Areas to be discussed include local authority efforts in best practice and the impact of Covid-19 on local authorities and their response will be discussed. The event will be held virtually with the LGMA organising the video conferencing via Microsoft Teams. Once speakers have been confirmed a timetable for the event will be circulated thereafter.

#### **d) WG4 – Financial Management and Performance;**

The Secretariat have engaged with the Local Government Audit Service regards meeting and engagement and have separately contacted the IPA about assisting in holding a seminar with audit committees. A new Chair is needed for this WG.

#### **e) CHAIR;**

##### Scrutiny Programme

A Stage One meeting was held with Sligo County Council in September. A Stage Two invite to attend a NOAC meeting before the end of the year will be issue to Sligo or Limerick.

A draft '*Scrutiny Programme Reporting Options*' document has been circulated amongst the board for their consideration and comment.

#### **8. Update on engagements and meetings with other bodies/organisations;**

##### Department Statement of Strategy

The NOAC Chair and Secretariat have received correspondence from the Department on its Statement of Strategy. Similar correspondence has been issued to other Department agencies. This has now been circulated to the Board. Any comments can be communicated with the Secretariat.

##### Audit Scotland

Following a meeting with Audit Scotland in the summer, the Secretariat are preparing a note of the meeting. Once finalised this will be shared with the Board.

#### **9. Future Meetings;**

The next 3 meeting dates were discussed and agreed. These currently include the following:

- 10 November 2020
- 1 December 2020
- 19 January 2021

#### **10. Any Other Business**

##### Performance Delivery Agreement

The Secretariat are preparing a draft PDA with the Department which will be circulated in the next few days.

##### Document Control Sheet

The Secretariat will bring a proposal at the next meeting on bringing in a proposed document control sheet covering how NOAC signs off on its reports.

### WG Vacancies

Ahead of the next NOAC meeting, the Secretariat will inform the NOAC Chair of which vacancies need to be filled with the Chair then discussing these vacancies with the members. A table of contacts of both the NOAC Members and Secretariat will be circulated.

### Work Priorities

The Secretariat are currently down a member of staff and will be for the next few weeks. Efforts are also ongoing in catching up on historical work.

It was proposed that going forward, NOAC may consider strengthening its capacity in the area of managing statistics and data in relation to NOACs work such as the performance indicators, the customer satisfaction survey and communication.

### Departing Members

The Board Members and Secretariat expressed their sincere appreciation and thanks to the departing Board Members of Sharon O'Connor, David Holohan and Michael McGreal for their contribution to the work of NOAC. This was in turn echoed by the departing Board Members.

**The meeting was brought to a close.**

<b>Agenda Item No:</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Decision</b>
4.	LA Audit Committee Meeting Minutes publication.	The Secretariat will seek clarification on their publication.
5.	NOAC Corporate Affairs	It is expected that it will be finalised in advance of the next meeting.
6.	Covid-19 Impact on Local Authorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• An invite has been issued to the Departments CCMA representative to attend a future NOAC meeting.</li> <li>• The Members also requested an invite to a future NOAC meeting for representatives of the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (DPER).</li> </ul>
7(a).	WG1: Regional Assembly Scoping Document	The Secretariat have prepared a scoping document which has been circulated to the Board for their consideration and comment.
7(a).	WG1 New Chair	The term of the WG Chair, Sharon O'Connor, is due to expire on the 19 October meaning a new WG Chair will be required and a reply issued to the EMRA.
7(b).	WG2: Performance Indicator Report 2019	A draft of the report is due for the November NOAC meeting.
8.	Department Statement of Strategy	This has now been circulated to the Board. Any comments can be communicated with the Secretariat.
8.	Audit Scotland meeting note	Once finalised this will be shared with the Board.

10.	Document Control Sheet	The Secretariat will bring a proposal at the next meeting on bringing in a proposed document control sheet covering how NOAC signs off on its reports.
10.	WG Vancancies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li data-bbox="826 461 1442 667">• The Secretariat will inform the NOAC Chair of which vacancies need to be filled with the Chair then discussing these vacancies with the members.</li><li data-bbox="826 696 1442 842">• A table of contacts of both the NOAC Members and Secretariat will be circulated.</li></ul>