

National Oversight and Audit Commission (NOAC)

Minutes of the Meeting – Tuesday 10 November 2020 at 12:00pm

Venue: Remote Meeting via WebEx Meeting Platform

Attended by:

Chairperson: Michael McCarthy

Members:	Martina Moloney	Constance Hanniffy
	Mary Hurley	Brian Cawley
	Margaret Lane	Niall Quinn

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

1. Minutes & actions of previous meeting;

The minutes of the last main meeting held on 6 October 2020 were agreed. The minutes of the Stage 2 meeting with Carlow held on 1 September 2020 were agreed subject to an edit. These will be circulated to the representatives of Carlow County Council for comment.

2. Declaration of conflict of interest;

No conflicts of interest were raised.

3. Matters Arising;

There were no matters arising.

4. NOAC Corporate Affairs;

(a). Remote working: As it stands, the Secretariat are still working remotely due to the ongoing Covid-19 situation.

(b). NOAC Membership: The Department is working with Public Appointments Service (PAS) to further the recruitment process in a timely manner.

(c). NOAC SharePoint: An email invite has issued to the NOAC board to sign up to the online cloud storage resource SharePoint. The Secretariat will help with any issues that may arise.

(d). NOAC/Department SLA/PDA: The Secretariat are progressing with the PDA and will have a version ready for the next NOAC meeting.

5. Covid-19 Impact on Local Authorities

The members held a discussion following the earlier meeting with the Departments Local Government Finance Section. They felt it was a useful meeting and highlighted the financial constraints facing local authorities with reduced income. The members agreed that this was an area that needs to be monitored. It was confirmed that the Department have held discussions with DPER and the CCMA on this matter.

6. Work Programme:

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

Corporate Plans

With regards the review of Corporate Plans (2015-2019), the Secretariat have been in contact with some local authorities seeking further summarised answers to the issued questionnaires. These questionnaires cover the changes that may have occurred to the original Corporate Plan developed at the beginning, the strategic goals achieved and those which needed to be carried forward into the new CPs. Twenty one local authorities have provided one-page summaries so far. Once received the Secretariat will prepare a draft report for the Working Group. The board acknowledged the difficulty of LAs judging how well their Corporate Plans have performed. With regards the review of the Corporate Plans (2020-2024), each local authority has now submitted their Corporate Plans. A scoping document for these new plans is in development and will be considered once the Working Group has been reformed.

Regional Assemblies

The Secretariat are continuing to engage with the Regional Assemblies.

LGMA ICT Strategy

A proposed letter to be issued was circulated to the Board. Following previous discussions between NOAC and the LGMA, the Secretariat confirmed that the LGMA are aware that the ICT review is of the Local Authorities ICT strategy and not of the LGMA's own ICT strategy. The Secretariat will seek clarification on a number of items in relation to the ICT Strategy.

b) WG2 – Performance Indicators;

The WG2 Chair provided an update. While the Performance Indicator 2019 report was not finalised in time for today's meeting, the WG is planning to release the report by the end of November. With this in mind it was agreed to hold a one item agenda meeting before the end of November to approve the report before publication. The expectation is to publish a couple of days after this approval meeting. The Secretariat will organise a date contingent on when the report is ready. Following a presentation to the WG from the Departments statistics unit, they will help to synthesise data into graphs, tables and into trends for the report. Outstanding at this stage are a number of queries in particular in relation to the 'Housing' indicators. It was noted the final version of the report may ecstasically look different as it will go to a Desktop Publisher but the final text will remain the same. The Secretariat is progressing communication arrangements for the release and is planning to produce accompanying videos and notifications of its release via social media. Board Member Niall Quinn offered to provide assistance if required on communication matters ahead of the release.

With regards the review of 'Economic Development Indicators', work with the tendered company is ongoing with report due in the near future.

c) WG3 – Communications and Customer Service

Good Practice Event 2020

The Secretariat provided an update following the holding of the Good Practice event 2020 on November the 4th. Three local authorities had their Chief Executives present at the event and there was good attendance at senior level from many of the local authorities. Videos and presentations from the event will be made available on the

NOAC website. The Members acknowledged the efforts made by the Secretariat and their appreciation in having the new NOAC branding available for the event.

d) WG4 – Financial Management and Performance;

Public Spending Code 2019 report

Work is progressing with the Public Spending Code 2019 report. The Secretariat are currently collating all the data and responses received so far from the local authorities. Efforts are ongoing with those yet to supply materials. The Secretariat aim to publish the report by the end of 2020 with a draft available by the 1 December NOAC meeting.

Engagement with IPA

The Secretariat have previously engaged with the local audit commissions and have contacted the IPA about assisting in holding a seminar with audit committees. There was no further update on the matter.

e) CHAIR;

Scrutiny Programme Reporting Options

The circulated draft '*Scrutiny Programme Reporting Options*' document was approved. The Members discussed the importance of and how to best to achieve findings/recommendations following both Stage 1 and 2 meetings, delivering and following through on these to the local authorities. . Although follow up would be required with local authorities, given the nature of the programme, they would be subject to further/repeat reviews in the years to come. The members can submit any recommendations that they have on the Sligo meeting and on Stage 2 meetings going forward and the Secretariat can draft the recommendations document based on the post meeting discussion and any recommendations received

The Secretariat are also preparing a draft overview report on previous profile meetings held as well as separate individual reports on each local authority. As previously agreed, the draft reports will not make recommendations retrospectively on local authorities. The meetings generate a high volume of content material which will require a workable approach to the report structure.

7. Working Groups – memberships and meetings

The Secretariat provided an outline to the current make-up of the working groups following the change of NOAC membership. The Secretariat will further circulate this outline in writing to the Board to consider. Although it was raised that this may provide an opportunity to find rationalisation across the working groups it was stated that previous rationalisation has already occurred in reducing the working groups down from 7 to 4 working groups. The Board agreed to revisit the topic as part of the meeting later in November and sought for a note to be prepared for members in advance.

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

Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland:

A meeting with the NOAC Chair had been organised earlier in the year but due to Covid-19 restrictions this was postponed. The Secretariat are still engaging with them and are looking to re-organise a meeting in the near future.

Local Government Audit Service:

An invite has issued to attend the December NOAC meeting and they have agreed to attend.

Department of Public Expenditure and Reform: An invite has issued to attend the December NOAC meeting and the Secretariat are still engaging.

Audit Scotland: A meeting has been held with Audit Scotland and the Secretariat are preparing a note of the meeting covering their operations, how they compare to NOAC and possible recommendations. Once finalised this will be shared with the Board.

9. Future Meetings;

As previously discussed, the Secretariat will organise a one item agenda meeting before the end of November to seek approval for the PI 2019 report. Future NOAC meeting dates include the following:

- 1 December 2020
- 19 January 2021

The Secretariat will organise engagements with the aforementioned bodies across these dates.

10. Any Other Business

The Secretariat are looking how Members can be better supported in term of IT requirements.

The meeting was brought to a close.

Agenda Item No:	Action	Decision
4 (d)	NOAC/Department SLA/PDA	The Secretariat will have a version ready for the next NOAC meeting.
6 (b).	Performance Indicator 2019 Report	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agreed to hold a short meeting to obtain board approval before publication. • PR arrangements for the release are progressing. • Accompanying videos will be produced.
6 (c).	Good Practice Event 2020	Videos and presentations from the events will be made available on the NOAC website.
6 (e).	LA Scrutiny Report	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The progress note was approved. • The Secretariat are preparing a draft report on previous Profile meetings held and will request the Board to provide any additional comments they may have. • Draft reports may be circulated ahead of the next NOAC meeting for review.
7.	Working Groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Secretariat will circulate an outline in writing to the Board to consider. • The Board agreed to revisit the topic as part of the meeting later in November.
8.	Engagement with other bodies/organisations.	The Secretariat will organise engagements with the LGAS and DPER bodies across its future meeting dates.