

NOAC

National Oversight and Audit Commission

Meeting note

Meeting with the Local Government Finance Team from the Department of Housing, Local

Government & Heritage (DHLGH)

10 November 2020 at 11:00 am

Venue: Remote (VC) Meeting

Attendees:

Chairperson: Michael McCarthy

Members: Martina Moloney

Constance Hanniffy

David Holohan

Niall Quinn

Mary Hurley

Margaret Lane

Brian Cawley

Secretariat: John McCarthy

Colin Flood

Darren Browne

Claire Gavin

John Goldrick

Neill Dalton

DHLGH Local Government Finance Team:

Lorraine O'Donoghue

Deborah Byrne

The Local Government Finance team from the Department of Housing, Local Government & Heritage gave a presentation to the board entitled: *"The general impact and financial impact of Covid-19 on local authorities in 2020 and beyond"*.

It highlighted the emergency costs associated with Covid-19 in 2020 and the impact on income from goods and services Income impacted by Covid-19 for 2020. The team explained how they engaged with the local authorities. They also advised NOAC of the action the Department of Housing, Local Government & Heritage has taken, its work with the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform and the Rates Waiver Scheme.

If further supports prove necessary in 2021, such supports, NOAC were advised, will likely be more targeted than has been the case in 2020.

The NOAC members advised that it had been a difficult year for local authorities, and that NOAC thank the Local Government Finance and the local authority finance officers for their hard work. The €900 million rates waiver was a life support for business and local authorities. Local Government Finance will continue to work with local authorities into the next difficult budgetary year.

In NOAC's role in corporate plans and performance review scrutiny, its members advised that they understand the importance that local authorities have the resources to implement their services.

The CCMA presentation given to NOAC at its last meeting where they identify not only the commercial rates, but the other incomes streams that were impacted, They projected a very large deficit, over several years, due to the economic impact of Covid-19, more demand for social services, reduction in rents and unemployment. NOAC were pleased to hear about the relationship between Local Government Finance, DPER, CCMA and local authorities.

A question was asked as to what is the budgetary process for the next year and how does Local Government Finance engage with Local Authorities. In response Local Government Finance have had some meetings with local authorities on financial issues, before Local Authorities finalise their budget decisions. They are also in contact with Heads of Finance representatives.. It is recognised that the process is ultimately about the Democratic process of the Councillors adopting the budget for each local authority.

Finally NOAC thanked the Local Government Finance team for attending the meeting and for their presentation.

Meeting ends