

National Oversight and Audit Commission (NOAC)

Minutes of the Meeting – Wednesday 16 December 2020 at 11am

Venue: Remote Meeting via WebEx Meeting Platform

Attended by:

Chairperson: Michael McCarthy

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

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

Apologies: Margaret Lane

1. Minutes & actions of previous meeting:

The minutes of the following previous meetings were agreed:

- Minutes of Stage 2 meeting with Sligo County Council – 10 November 2020;
- Minutes of meeting with the Departments Local Government Finance Team – 10 November 2020;
- Minutes of main NOAC meeting – 10 November 2020;
- Minutes of main NOAC meeting – 27 November 2020;

The minutes of the meetings with the Local Government Finance Team and Sligo County Council will be circulated to them 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). Statutory Instruments 517 and 518:

With the onset of Covid-19, provisions were made for statutory bodies in the *Civil Law and Criminal Law (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2020* to allow for the conduct of business remotely. NOAC was included in the enabling SI's 517 and 518 of 2020.

(b). NOAC SharePoint:

The NOAC SharePoint site is now live and invitations to access it have been issued to the Members. New material is being uploaded as it becomes available. Any technical difficulties can be directed to the Secretariat.

(c). NOAC/Department SLA/PDA:

The NOAC/Department Performance Delivery Agreement has been circulated to the Board setting out the broad and key relationship between NOAC and the Department. This agreement would alter over time depending on the needs of NOAC. Going forward it was suggested that documents of this nature include highlighted updated sections.

A discussion was also held on the monitoring of the adequacy of local authority Corporate Plans as part of this Multi Annual Work Programme and the PDA. The Secretariat will examine this timeline and revert back to the Board.

5. Discussion on LGAS Meeting

The members held a discussion following the earlier meeting with the Departments Local Government Audit Service. They felt it was a valuable meeting as there are synergies between the work of NOAC and the LGAS such as 'Value for Money' audit examinations. The Secretariat agreed to re-circulate the material and request from the LGAS seeking topics for future 'Value for Money' studies. It was agreed to have this topic as part of an agenda item for the next NOAC meeting and to reflect on this

matter in light of the publication of the PI 2019 report. Furthermore, as the LGAS is examining Local Authority risk management it was suggested by the Members that this could inform NOAC's own terms of reference when examining of Local Authority risk management.

The Members also expressed an interest in inviting the LGAS again to a future NOAC meeting.

6. Working Group/Work Programme Review

The Secretariat presented an overview note of the current and past make-up and work of the Working Groups (WG). This includes for 4 WGs, which was reduced from 7 and with further work carried out by the Chair. Each WG requires new members from the Board with 3 WGs needing a new Chair. The board members indicated their WG membership preferences and the membership of the new working groups was agreed following discussion (see Table 1). The Secretariat will draft an updated note for review.

Table 1:

Title	Code	Members (Dec 2020)	Note
LG Governance, Efficiency and Reform	WG1: LGER	Connie Hanniffy Niall Quinn Brian Cawley	Includes Corporate Governance, PMO Projects, Local Enterprise Offices and Housing.
Performance Indicators	WG2: PI	Martina Moloney (C) Connie Hanniffy Brian Cawley	Similar to previous WG.
Communications and Customer Survey	WG3: CCS	Niall Quinn Margaret Lane Michael McCarthy	Similar to previous with added role of communications.
Financial Management and Performance	WG4: FMP	Martina Moloney Mary Hurley Margaret Lane	Includes Financial Performance and Public Spending Code.
Chair	CHAIR	Michael McCarthy	Includes Scrutiny Programme, Annual Reports, Review of Recommendations and Protocols with Stakeholders.

A discussion was held on the capacity of the Board and Secretariat to deliver on its work plan. The Secretariat has six members of staff with a whole time equivalent

available to NOAC of 4.5 (reducing to 4.2 in 2021). Other Department resources are also available such as in the areas of HR, IT or Communications.

Progressing with the work programme has also been challenging for the board due to a regular deficit in membership. It was stated that collaboration with other bodies and the use of external consultants or experts could provide additional support to the Board.

The Secretariat will look to progress WG meetings in late January 2021 with the initial tasks to adopt new Terms of Reference and to review and prioritise the work programme. As part of this it was agreed to balance the work load of WG1 (Local Government Governance, Efficiency and Reform), the Board agreed to reassign the review of local authority ICT strategy from WG1 to WG3 (Communications and Customer Service).

The Chair proposed that he would seek to meet with the new Secretary General in the New Year to discuss matters.

7. Work Programme:

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

Work is ongoing with the review of the Corporate Plans (2015-2019). In response to the questionnaire issued to the local authorities, 1165 strategic goals and objectives have been returned of which 728 have been completed, 517 are ongoing with 195 carried forward. The Secretariat are working through the information submitted and are preparing a report. In relation to the Corporate Plans (2020 to 2024) there has been no further progress.

The Secretariat acknowledged that it is well behind in progressing these and stated that it was its highest priority to complete this work as soon as possible in Q1 of 2021.

b) WG2 – Performance Indicators;

Since the approval of the Performance Indicator 2019 Report in November, the report has been desktop published. A discussion was held on the release date of the report but it was agreed that it would still publish on 17 December 2020 as PR preparations had already begun. Two videos have been developed to accompany its release. One is an address from the NOAC Chair and the other an animated short video covering some

key points. A national press release has been prepared along with a press release for each local authority. All this material will be available on the NOAC website alongside the material from the PI Workshop from earlier this year and the guidelines for report.

A provisional date for the next WG meeting has set for 14 January 2021.

c) WG3 – Communications and Customer Service

Developments to the new NOAC website is ongoing with the Secretariat looking to acquire the HTTPS security certificates for the site. Once the PI 2019 Report has been released, this will be progressed in January 2021. Updates to the membership details of the 'About NOAC' page will be made once new biographies have been received.

With regards the progress on the Customer Satisfaction Survey 2021, it was acknowledged that this is a priority work area for NOAC and it was agreed that this would be an agenda item for the January NOAC meeting.

d) WG4 – Financial Management and Performance;

The Secretariat provided an overview and update on the publication of the Public Spending Code 2019 report. Collation of the local authority data and preparing the executive summary of the report is nearly complete. This data includes the local authority quality assurance reports, inventories and checklists. Publication of the report has been delayed due to a 3 month extension granted to local authorities due to the onset of Covid-19. Furthermore, data from some local authorities was submitted in the incorrect format resulting in further delays. The Board approved the report in principle. A finalised report will be circulated and published before Christmas.

Meeting Close;

The Board agreed to suspend the remaining Agenda items until the January meeting. Ahead of the Christmas break, the Board and Secretariat exchanged Christmas well wishes.

The meeting was brought to a close.

Agenda Item No:	Action	Decision
1.	Meeting Minutes	The minutes of the previous meetings were agreed. The minutes of the meetings with the LGFS and Sligo County Council will be circulated to these organisations for their comment.
4(c).	NOAC/Department Performance Delivery Agreement	Circulated documents to include highlighted updated sections.
4(c).	Corporate Plan Review (2020-2024)	The Secretariat will examine if the timeline of monitoring the adequacy of local authority Corporate Plans within a year of their production can be altered without infringing those set by statute.
5.	LGAS Meeting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Secretariat will re-circulate the material and request from the LGAS seeking topics for future 'Value for Money' studies. • 'Value for Money' will be an agenda item for the next NOAC meeting. • The Members agreed to invite the LGAS again to a future NOAC meeting.

6.	Working Group/Work Programme Review	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The board members agreed the WG membership and the Secretariat will draft an updated summary for review. • The Board agreed to reassign the review of local authority ICT strategy from WG1 to WG3. • The Chair proposed that he could would with the new Secretary General in the New Year to discuss matters.
7(b).	WG2 – Performance Indicators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PI 2019 report to publish on 17 December 2020. • This material will be available on the NOAC website alongside the material from the PI Workshop from earlier this year and the guidelines for report.
7(c).	Update to NOAC website	Updates to the membership details of the 'About NOAC' page and will be made once new biographies have been received.
7(c).	Customer Satisfaction Survey 2021	It was agreed that this would be an agenda item for the January NOAC meeting.
7(d).	Public Spending Code 2019 Report.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Board approved the report in principle. • A finalised report will be circulated and published before Christmas.