

National Oversight and Audit Commission (NOAC)

Final Minutes of the Meeting – Tuesday 19 January 2021 at 11:15am

Venue: Remote Meeting via WebEx Meeting Platform

Attended by:

Chairperson: Michael McCarthy

Members: Martina Moloney Constance Hanniffy
Brian Cawley Niall Quinn
Margaret Lane Mary Hurley (from 12.25pm)

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

Apologies: Neill Dalton

1. Minutes & actions of previous meeting;

The minutes of the following previous meetings were agreed:

- Minutes of meeting with the Local Government Audit Service – 16 December 2020;
- Minutes of main NOAC meeting – 16 December 2020;

The minutes of the meetings with the Local Government Audit Service 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). NOAC Membership:

A campaign for an additional Board Members is currently underway by the Public Appointments Service. Applicants are required to have a background with local authority experience. The Chair and Secretariat have also been involved in the process having attended the selection panel.

(b). NOAC SharePoint:

The NOAC SharePoint will be updated with new material 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 relationship between NOAC and the Department. This agreement has agreed by the Department, the Board and the Secretariat.

5. Working Group/Work Programme Review;

The Secretariat provided an update on the current make-up of the working groups. Attempts have been made to match the skill set of the Board Members to the corresponding working groups and to balance the work programme actions across them. Aside from WG2, the initial action for each working group will be to assign a Chair. WGs 1 and 3 will be led by Claire Gavin while WGs 2 and 4 will be led by Neill Dalton of the Secretariat. The Secretariat will engage with the Board to organise initial meetings for the working groups to be held by mid to late February. The aim will be to facilitate four meetings per working group per year. Following these meetings, further discussion could be had on the current state of the Multi-Annual Work Programme.

6. Work Programme;

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

The Secretariat will engage with the WG1 Members to organise a date for a meeting to progress their work programme. Decisions are required in progressing the review of local authority Corporate Plans. It was agreed that the Secretariat will circulate to the Board past material ahead of the next WG1 meeting. This will also be made available on the SharePoint site.

b) WG2 – Performance Indicators;

Following the release of the 2019 Performance Indicator in late 2020, the WG2 Chair thanked the NOAC Chair for his media work to help publicise the report. The Secretariat noted an increase in NOAC website activity at the time of release with 306 new users. The Department via its own Twitter account circulated tweets mentioning the report release. These garnered approximately twenty-four thousand ‘impressions’. The Secretariat will request the Department to re-tweet the report to help refresh interest.

A WG2 meeting was held on 14 January. Sean O'Riordain and Associates provided a presentation on their research into developing ‘economic development’ indicators for reporting. The WG Chair acknowledged the challenging nature of the assignment with clear cut recommendations difficult to produce. Following a discussion on their recommendations the WG decided to move forward with an indicator measuring the local authorities spend on economic development. A final iteration of the report is currently being prepared which will be circulated to the full NOAC Board ahead of the next NOAC meeting. The proposed indicator will not be available for this year’s Performance Indicator report. Another recommendation the WG will return to the Board with is a proposal to form a jointly produced report on local authority activities in economic development.

The Guidelines for this year’s report will be discussed further at the next WG2 meeting on 27 January. The WG is conscious that 2020 was impacted by Covid-19 and this will be reflected in the report with a dedicated report section. Indicators covering ‘Overheads’ and ‘Public Lighting’ are in development for this year’s report in association with the County and City Management Association (CCMA). The WG aim to circulate the Guidelines to the local authorities by the end of January with a workshop planned for mid-February. It is planned

to have a separate workshop covering the 'Housing' indicators at a later point. It was agreed that the WG will circulate the Guidelines to the full Board with approval communicated via email.

c) WG3 – Communications and Customer Service

A brief discussion was held with regards the future of the "Local Authority Satisfaction Survey". It was agreed that further discussion is required and that it will be made an Agenda item for the next NOAC meeting. Following this, a decision will be communicated with the LGMA.

The Secretariat provided an update on the developments with the NOAC website. Since September 2020 to January 2021 there has been 1122 users with the greatest peak in December at the time of the PI report launch. The website has now obtained the requisite security protocols (https) and has been updated with the latest meeting minutes. Going forward, latest publications will be highlighted and referenced on the 'Homepage'.

d) WG4 – Financial Management and Performance;

The 2019 Local Authority Public Spending Code Report was published before Christmas and is now available on the NOAC website. The Department did tweet the report via their Twitter account. For the 2020 PSC report there will be new guidance from Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (DPER) to be circulated.

e) Chair;

The Secretariat provided an update on the Scrutiny Programme. The Secretariat are preparing a draft overview report on previous profile meetings held as well as separate individual reports on each local authority. These will incorporate material from the Stage 1 and Stage 2 meetings with NOAC. As previously agreed, the draft reports will not make recommendations retrospectively on local authorities. A draft report will be issued to the Chair for consideration in the next week and be circulated ahead of the next NOAC meeting.

Limerick City and County meeting review;

The Members held a discussion on the earlier meeting with representatives of Limerick County Council. The topics discussed included the following:

- The move to an elected Mayor
- Limericks committed efforts in progressing economic development via a dedicated in-house unit, their marketing and communications strategy and the retail incentives they have employed.
- The use of the PI Report to help improve performance.
- Pension funding.
- The Valuation office and the decision making processes. The Secretariat will circulate previous material on this matter.
- Rates collection challenges

Sligo engagement process review

Following the Stage 1 and 2 meeting with representatives of Sligo County Council in 2020, the Members were invited to make comments or recommendations to be passed on to them. The Members will revert to the Secretariat on the circulated material.

7. Climate Change:

Correspondence has been received from the Minister regarding the new Climate Change Strategy. For WG2, climate action is part of their agenda with regards the Performance Indicators. Currently WG2 are engaging with the CCMA and the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI) to develop indicators on energy efficiency. The Members were invited to provide further comment with the aim completing a reply to the Minister office.

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

The Chair and Secretariat met with the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform, Michael McGrath, in December and discussed NOAC's activity and the impacts of Covid-19 on local authority finances. It was agreed that representatives of DPER will meet with the NOAC Board at the next meeting in February.

The Chair and Secretariat also met with the Tánaiste and Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment in early January with regards the work of the local enterprise offices.

9. Future Meetings;

The next NOAC meetings are currently scheduled for:

- 23 February 2021
- 23 March 2021

The Secretariat will engage with the Members to organise future working group meetings.

10. Any Other Business;

Following the circulation of the Value for Money study on the fire service it was agreed to assign this work to WG4 for further examination.

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 meeting with the LGAS will be circulated for their comment.
6 (a).	WG1	The Secretariat will circulate past material ahead of the next WG1 meeting.
6 (b).	WG2 – 2019 PI Report	The Secretariat will request the Department to re-tweet the report to help refresh interest.
6 (b).	WG2 – Economic Development Indicators	A final iteration of the SORA report is currently being prepared which will be circulated to the full NOAC Board ahead of the next NOAC meeting.
6 (b).	WG2 – 2020 PI Report	It was agreed that the WG will circulate the Guidelines to the full Board with approval communicated via email.
6 (c).	WG3 - Local Authority Satisfaction Survey	Agenda item for the next NOAC meeting in February.
6 (e).	Chair – Scrutiny Programme Report	A draft report will be issued to the Chair for consideration in the next week and be circulated ahead of the next NOAC meeting.
6 (e).	Chair – Sligo Engagement Process Review	The Members will revert to the Secretariat on the circulated material.
7.	Climate Change Correspondence	The Members were invited to provide further comment with the aim completing a reply to the Minister office

8.	Invite of DPER to NOAC Meeting	It was agreed that representatives of DPER will meet with the NOAC Board at the next meeting in February.
9.	WG Meetings	The Secretariat will engage with the Members to organise future working group meetings.
10.	AOB	Following the circulation of the Value for Money study on the fire service it was agreed to assign this work to WG4 for further examination.