



NOAC

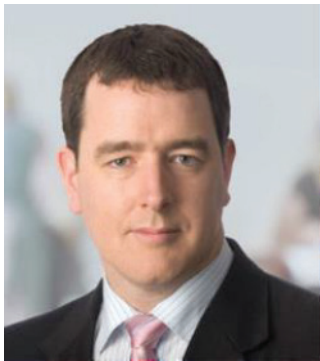
National Oversight
and Audit Commission



Offaly County Council Scrutiny Report

NOAC Report No. 31 - May 2021

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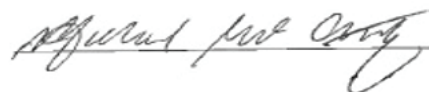
Chair's Opening remarks

The Local Government Reform Act 2014 introduced significant changes to a wide range of aspects of the local government system, including in relation to matters of accountability and oversight. In that regard, the Act provided for the establishment of the National Oversight and Audit Commission (NOAC) as the statutory body overseeing the local government sector. NOAC was established in July 2014 under the 2014 Act to provide independent oversight of the local government sector. NOAC's functions are wide ranging, involving the scrutiny of performance generally and financial performance specifically, supporting best practice, overseeing implementation of national local government policy and monitoring and evaluating implementation of corporate plans, adherence to service level agreements and public service reform by local government bodies.

Since I became Chair of NOAC in September 2018, I continued the good work that had been started by the previous NOAC Chair in meeting with the Chief Executives of the local authorities and their Management teams. As outlined below this process has evolved over time and continues to evolve.

The preparation of the profile report also identifies the performance of local authorities in relevant NOAC reports and provides for further examination of the results of these reports. The Scrutiny Process requires time and resources from NOAC and the local authorities in preparation of the profile report and for the Stage 1 and Stage 2 meetings. NOAC considers to date that the investment of time and resources has been worthwhile and necessary.

I have been struck by the welcome and sharing of information that has taken place at the meetings. It has provided an opportunity to learn, to listen to how the particular local authority operates, the challenges they face, the plans and ideas that have been developed and gives an opportunity to reflect on what is working well and areas that need to be addressed. It has identified areas of good practice and many of these ideas have been showcased at the NOAC Good Practice Seminars over the years. I look forward to continuing to work closely and collaboratively with all the local authorities and want to use this opportunity to thank all the Chief Executives and their teams for the time and courtesy and welcome extended to NOAC in this process.



Michael McCarthy, Chair
20 May 2021



Background to Profiles and Scrutiny Programme

In February 2017, NOAC, in accordance with its statutory functions, began to review the performance of individual local authorities. The starting point was getting an overall picture derived from the performance indicator report results, the Local Government Audit Service (LGAS) audit reports, the financial position and revenue collection performance. Information on private rented sector inspections, housing stock management and maintenance data and Customer Satisfaction was all considered by using the relevant data contained in the NOAC reports published to date.

At the outset the importance of the meetings was emphasised over and above the data which NOAC had regarding local authorities. There was also an objective to broaden the NOAC members' understanding of the work of the local authorities and the individual priorities and pressures they faced and to put the information in context. Therefore, NOAC wanted to get the background perspective from the authorities and any other datasets that the Councils consider should be taken into account. Significant work is required to bring this part together and the work of the NOAC Secretariat and the local authority NOAC Coordinators must be acknowledged.

Following an initial face to face meeting, which is called a Stage 1 meeting, local authorities were invited to a Stage 2 meeting where more detailed questions would be carried out in the areas of interest to NOAC, including customer service and IT investment, collection rates, the quality of information provision to the public etc. These meetings would take place after or latterly before the main NOAC board meeting with all the board members present.

The purpose

The process gives NOAC the opportunity to have oversight of all the local authorities and considers the factors that facilitates them in performing well, along with the barriers that may exist relevant to the individual local authority. The meetings enable the local authorities to outline their strong and weak performing areas. It allows for further examination of the results of the performance indicators and shows the results in context. It must be emphasised that these meetings differ from the Performance Indicator (PI) Validation meetings which are carried out by the Performance Indicator Working Group to interrogate the results reported in relation to selected performance indicators. These meetings, while very informative, are specific to the performance indicator process and do not consider other areas of performance that NOAC have oversight of, including Customer Service, Internal Audit, Corporate Plans etc.

During the meeting NOAC can see areas where consistent under-performance is highlighted and which can be examined further. It also allows for exemplars of best practice to be identified and used to share with other local authorities. The process as outlined, is not a follow up to the PI reports, but does enable consideration of issues that may warrant further clarification or investigation in the PI process. Local authorities have all indicated in the meetings thus far that they compare their performance and results in relation to what they deem as similar local authorities. This grouping could be reviewed further by NOAC and adopted for the results of some of its reports. Groupings are not only on size but, on levels of finances, urban and rural, staff numbers and other factors.

The Scrutiny Process

The process has evolved over time, allowing it to become more structured, formal and documented. Given the importance of the work, it is led by the Chair of NOAC (or a delegated alternate, if required) with support from NOAC members and the Executive. The formal process agreed by the Board is termed as a constructive dialogue and is laid out below.

1

Stage 1 (NOAC Scrutiny Visit)

Meeting held with NOAC Chair (or alternate) and/or one additional NOAC member and member(s) of the NOAC Executive. The Chief Executive and members of the management team, as invited by the Chief Executive shall attend.

- Stage 1 notice issued to Chief Executive of the local authority.
- Profile report prepared by NOAC Executive with input from the local authority. This is circulated along with an agenda to the local authority and NOAC attendees in advance of the visit. The report is based on general and specific information from NOAC reports relating to the local authority in question.
- Local authority to present on issues arising and take questions from attending NOAC members.
- Meeting minutes prepared and issued for comment.

2

Stage 2 (NOAC Scrutiny Meeting)

Appearance at full NOAC meeting. The Chief Executive and members of the management team, as invited by the Chief Executive shall attend.

- Stage 2 notice to attend NOAC meeting issued to Chief Executive of local authority.
- Profile report updated as required and circulated along with an agenda to local authority and NOAC members in advance of the meeting.
- Local authority to present on issues arising and take questions from full NOAC board.
- Meeting minutes prepared for circulation to local authority for its comment.

3

Stage 3 (NOAC Sign off and Publication)

Following completion of Stages 1 and 2 the Executive shall collate the material and present it to the NOAC Board as follows: -

- Final sign off on minutes / documents / reports.
- Comments / Findings / Recommendations to be made as required.
- Approval for completed records to be published.

Progress to date

2017

To commence the process, profiles were prepared in respect of Cork City Council, Louth and Offaly County Councils and these were forwarded to the Chief Executives of the authorities concerned. The NOAC Chair at the time, Pat McLoughlin, began this process with a meeting with the Chief Executive of Louth County Council for a general discussion on the profile in August 2017. This Stage 1 meeting was followed by a similar meeting with the Chief Executive of Cork City Council in September 2017. The final Stage 1 meeting to take place in 2017 was held with the Chief Executive of Offaly County Council in October 2017. In December 2017 Louth County Council attended a meeting with NOAC after the main NOAC Board meeting. This was the first Stage 2 meeting, which formed an important part of the overall process. These meetings served a particularly important function which allowed the Council to give an overview of their work and also gave an opportunity to the full NOAC Board to put questions to the Council and understand their situation in more depth.

2018

In 2018 the schedule consisted of eight meetings with local authorities, four each for Stage 1 and Stage 2. A Stage 2 meeting was held with Offaly County Council in January 2018. This was followed by another Stage 2 meeting with Cork City Council in March 2018.

A new Chair, Michael McCarthy, was appointed on 24 September 2018. The process continued with Westmeath County Council in October 2018 and Kerry County Council in December 2018. These were Stage 2 meetings with the full NOAC board as in these cases, the 2018 Performance Indicator validation meetings for these authorities were deemed sufficient as Stage 1 meetings. Further Stage 1 meetings were held with Roscommon County Council and Tipperary County Council.

2019

The format continued with 8 meetings with local authorities during the year. Five Stage 1 meetings and three Stage 2 meetings. The Stage 1 meetings were with Donegal County Council, Laois County Council, Clare County Council, Waterford City and County Council and Carlow County Council. Stage 2 meetings took place with Roscommon County Council, Tipperary County Council and Donegal County Council.

2020

A meetings list was scheduled for 2020 to cover 6 additional local authorities. The year commenced with a Stage 1 meeting with Monaghan County Council in February, along with two Stage 2 meetings with Laois County Council and Waterford City and County Council. Further meetings were scheduled for April, however due to the COVID crisis these meetings were required to be deferred.

The COVID restrictions presented some challenges to the meetings but it was decided to continue the Stage 2 meetings virtually and meetings were held with Clare, Monaghan, Waterford City and County, Carlow and Sligo. These were carried out by the WebEx platform.

A socially distanced Stage 1 meeting was held in person with Limerick City and County Council in August and with Sligo County Council in September 2020.

2021

COVID has had a huge impact on local authorities, and in particular, for NOAC on the Scrutiny process. The Stage 1 meetings have all been held in person thus far and restrictions have allowed for no Stage 1 meetings to be held yet in 2021. The Stage 2 meetings have progressed as these were capable of being held remotely, with one held in January 2021 with Limerick City and County Council. It is hoped to make up for lost time as the restrictions are relaxed and plans are in place to commence Stage 1 meetings as soon as it is possible to do so.

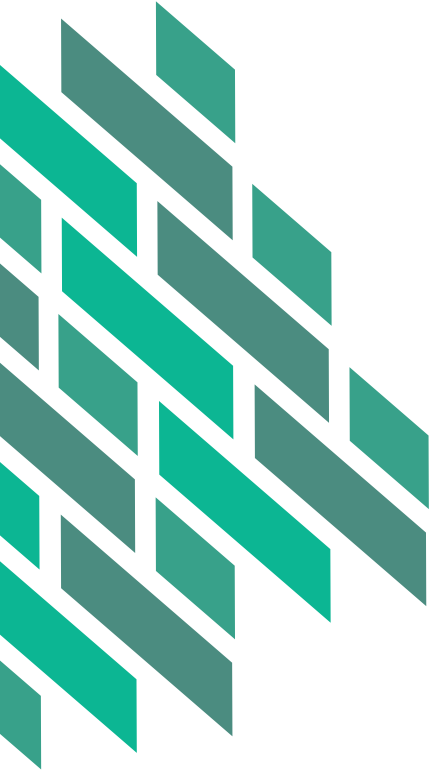
Future meetings and reports

This report outlines the purpose and the procedures and while the process may continue to evolve it would not be expected at this time to produce another master report, similar to this one. This report takes into account the first 13 local authorities which have completed the process. It would be intended that once all stages in the scrutiny process has been fully completed with the relevant other local authorities that the report would be published on that basis and would form part of the suite of reports under the umbrella of the Scrutiny Report Process. Later in quarter 2, 2021, Sligo County Council and Limerick City and County Council reports will be published. It is anticipated that progress will continue to be made with further Stage 1 and Stage 2 meetings so that each local authority will have participated in the process. It must be outlined that significant changes and delays have been experienced due to the restrictions imposed by COVID in 2020 and 2021.

Conclusion

The process thus far allowed for the NOAC chairman and members to get a greater understanding and insight into the challenges that face each of the local authorities. Also, issues such as collection rates, staff numbers, inspection rates, finances that are included in reports in some cases benefit from the explanation and discussion as to the reason behind these figures. The meetings also enabled NOAC to see the various priorities that each local authority considered relevant to their citizens and how they overcame various challenges and how they work collaboratively with other local authorities, state bodies and stakeholders. Areas of Good Practice have been identified along the way and these have contributed to presentations of these projects at the NOAC Good Practice Seminars in 2017, 2019 and 2020.

Offaly County Council had its Stage 1 meeting in October 2017. Offaly attended for the Stage 2 meeting and this was held in January 2018. It is important to note that the material in this report is reflective of the position at that time. Therefore any changes to the profile from later NOAC reports are not included in this report. NOAC was very impressed with the wellness approach that the council had introduced for its staff and in particular enjoyed hearing about the staff choir. The Open Library Project was recognized as innovative and progressive and was chosen by NOAC as a project to present at the Good Practice Event in 2020.



Offaly County Council Scrutiny Process

1. Offaly County Council Profile	7
2. Stage 1 meeting October 2017- Minutes	13
3. Stage 2 Meeting January 2018- Minutes	15



Offaly County Council Profile

Population:	77,961
Area:	2,001km ²
Municipal Districts:	3 (Birr, Edenderry, Tullamore)
Regional Assembly:	Eastern & Midlands
WTE:	378.4
Budget 2016:	€53.6m

COUNCIL MISSION STATEMENT

To make Offaly the best place possible to Live, Work, Visit & Invest

The Council hosts MidlandsIreland.ie – a joint initiative of the four midland LAs (Laois, Longford and Westmeath) aimed at coordinating agency efforts at regional level promoting the region under the headings Enterprise, Tourism, Living and Learning.

Offaly County Council was one of the early implementers of MyPay and is the lead authority for the National Waste Collection Permit Office (NWCPO), a centralised office for issuing waste permits. NWCPO currently holds 2,236 waste permits and in July 2014 it was awarded ISO certification. In 2015 the Waste Enforcement Regional Local Authority (WERLA) shared service was established to enhance local authority waste enforcement performance by providing clear guidance, structures and support. WERLA offices were established in the Southern, Connaught/Ulster and Eastern/Midlands Regions.

At the 2016 Chambers Ireland Excellence in Local Government Awards, Offaly County Council's 'My Open Library' (making Banagher and Tullamore libraries accessible to the public for 98 hours a week) won Best Library Service and The Junction Business Innovation Centre was shortlisted for the Promoting Economic Development award.

Corporate Plan

Compliance with the Corporate Planning requirements was good. The 11 key strategic priorities identified relate to Infrastructure, Economic Development, Tourism, Primary Urban Centres, Heritage & Culture, Environment, People & Community, LA Services, Finances, Communications and Accountability. Initiatives highlighted in the Plan include; supporting the development of peatlands for appropriate alternative uses, promoting the county for the hosting of national events and actively tackling derelict sites.

The Chief Executive's response of 10th April 2017 to NOAC's query regarding the implementation of the Corporate Plan indicated that no changes were required following the adoption of the LECP in December 2015 and that the 2017 Service Delivery Plan (not supplied and not published) was consistent with the 2017 Budget, which in turn was consistent with the Corporate Plan objectives and strategies. The Council confirmed that the areas reported on in the monthly management reports demonstrate how the Council is addressing the Corporate Plan objectives on a daily basis and that the 2015 Annual Report advised how the Council had continued to advance the Corporate Plan strategic priorities (although the report does not actually reference the Corporate Plan or annual progress report). In relation to the statutory annual progress report requirement, the Council advised that it reports on the Corporate Plan progress via Supplementary Directorate Reports that are provided with the Draft Budget to the members (and published in 2017) each year. While the 2017 report highlights the projects undertaken and completed during the previous year and priorities for the following year, it makes no explicit reference to the Corporate Plan and progress implementing it.

In her letter, the Chief Executive supplied a summary of progress with programmes relating to many of the Corporate Plan strategies while highlighting that planned initiatives that require matching funding from the Council pose significant challenges for a small county like Offaly with a limited discretionary budget, which has impeded progress on the following initiatives:

- Greenway development
- Maintenance of local roads
- Housing provision
- Derelict buildings and unused shops
- Fly tipping and dumping

The Council also advised that revised rateable valuations may result in appeals by large ratepayers and financial uncertainty over the coming months and that the elected members question the Council's continued involvement in financing the coroner service.

Finances

The Council's 2015 AFS was received on time but the 2013, 2014 and 2016 AFSs were all late, though only marginally in 2016.

Offaly County Council had a cumulative deficit at end 2013 of nearly €5m representing 9.3% of the revenue in that year. In response to NOAC's query, the Council provided background information on the development in the accumulated deficit over a period of 6 years from €0.33m at end 2007 to €4.96m at end 2013. The key factors identified were:

- exceptional vacancy of property and uncollectable rates of €1.74m,
- one-off costs of €0.74m associated with the closure of 3 fire stations,
- exceptional retirement gratuity payments amounting to €1.8m to staff availing of incentivised early retirement,
- €0.3m attributable to a reduction in planning fee income, and
- loss of net income from a landfill closed in 2011.

The Council informed NOAC that it took a decision in 2013 to amortise the accumulated deficit over a period of about 10 years. Subsequently, NOAC asked the Council to outline the analysis that led it to consider 10 years to be an appropriate timeframe to eliminate the deficit and not involve excessive funding costs or exposure to undue financial risks. The Chief Executive responded that amortisation of the deficit over a period of about 7.5 years by budgeting for a surplus of income over expenditure of €660,000 annually had been recommended by the Management Team in 2012.

The elected members decided that this would have too harsh an impact on local services and set the target reduction at €550,000 per annum. The context for the decision was a 21.4% reduction in the Local Government Fund allocation to the Council between 2008 and 2013 and a reduction in staff numbers over that period of 27%. The Council also decided in 2012 to continue to fund the deficit through overdraft finance at a then rate of 2.72% on the basis that interest savings could be made, taking account of the timing of income and cash flows. The effect of these cash flows would mean that the overdraft would not always be at the full extent of the deficit.

While the surplus achieved in 2013 was 11% short of the targeted €550,000, the 2014 surplus achieved was €558,335. The inclusion of the relevant outturns and balances relating to the dissolved Birr and Tullamore Town Councils in the 2014 Annual Financial Statement (AFS) added a further €329,988 to the opening deficit. Based on the Council's unaudited accounts for 2015, a surplus of €586,237 was achieved in that year, but adjustments at the audit reduced the surplus to €580,746. The cumulative revenue deficit had been reduced to €4.154m by the end of 2015, representing 7.2% of that year's revenue. The target surplus budgeted for 2016 remains €550,000. However, the unaudited AFS for 2016, received on 4/4/2017, shows a surplus after transfers of €542,438, somewhat short of the target, with the cumulative deficit at year end representing 6.07% of 2016 income. The LGAS Auditor's Report on the 2014 accounts commended Offaly County Council on the surplus generated in 2014, which had reduced the accumulated deficit and stated that it was essential that the elimination of the significant deficit continue as planned. In the report on the 2015 accounts, the Auditor said that it is essential that the elimination of this significant accumulated deficit continues.

Income Collection

Rates –

2013

Collected 82% of the total due and 78% of the 2013 levied amount when the figures are re-stated to include the dissolved Town Councils; write-offs and waivers were €3.24m

2014

Collected 82% of the total due and 75% of the 2014 levied amount; write-offs and waivers were €3.9m

2015

Collected 85% of the total due and 79% of the levied amount; write-off and waivers were €3.41m and specific doubtful arrears were €76k

In 2014 the national rates collection average was 77.1% of the total due and the median was 72%. While Offaly County Council's performance compares well with the average that year, write-offs and waivers (in excess of the start year arrears) of 22%, 16% and 23% of the levied amount in 2013, 2014 and 2015 respectively, are sustaining an apparently high collection performance. In 2014, write-offs and waivers nationally amounted to only 13.25% of the levied amount. The amount actually collected in 2014 was less than the re-stated collection figure for 2013, and while the amount collected in 2015 was €302,000 greater than in 2014, a Valuation Office review will result in approximately €487,000 less income in 2016. The unaudited 2016 collection yield was 87%.

Housing loans collection was at 61% in 2015 and 62% in 2014. While this performance is not good, the 2014 national average was 67.4% and the median was 66% and only 6 authorities had a collection yield of 80% or more in 2014. The unaudited figure for 2016 is only 59%.

Housing rents collection was at 86% in 2014 and 2015 and again in 2016 (unaudited).

The Valuation Office are carrying out a revaluation this year of all rateable properties in Offaly, along with nine other counties, that is expected to become effective in 2018.

Performance Indicators

Overall indicator comparative performance was good in 2014 and 2015.

2014

Performance was poor relative to other LAs for confirmation of planning decisions, access to a brown bin service, average social housing re-letting time and inspections of rented dwellings. It was good relative to other authorities for planning inspections, rates collection, vacant social housing units, roads with a good condition rating, participation in Comhairle na nÓg, LEO job creation and fire service costs.

2015

In the case of the indicators relating to average re-letting cost, private rented inspections, households availing of a brown bin service, housing loans collection and cost of the planning service and of ICT provision, performance was poor relative to other LAs. Performance was good relative to other LAs on the indicators relating to social housing vacancies and maintenance costs, road surface of a good condition, planning inspections, cost of the fire service and attendance at fires within 10 minutes, participation in Comhairle na nÓg and self-certified sick leave. The attached appendix contains the Offaly results and the overall average or median for 38 of the 2015 indicator outcomes.

The Council's response to NOAC's follow-up letter on the 2014 report indicated that the report was considered by the Council's management team and included in the Chief Executive's monthly management report to the elected members. It was also referred to the Audit Committee and the Council's indicator results were included in its Annual Report.

Housing

Private Rented Report

There were 3,220 registered tenancies at end 2015. Only 1.5% of registered tenancies were inspected in 2014 (the 6th lowest inspection rate) and 100% of the dwellings inspected were not compliant with the Standards Regulations. The Council employs the least staff per 1,000 tenancies at 0.007 of a whole-time equivalent with the work accounting for just 0.02% of one staff member's time. The report pointed, however, that this WTE (equal to 4.5 days) would not have enabled the reported 50 inspections (at 2 hours per inspection) to be carried out in 2014. Notwithstanding the negligible staffing cost, the Council's cost per inspection was the 4th highest at €415, which is also inconsistent data. On a positive note, the website information was good and 40 Improvement Notices were issued to landlords (although the figure notified by the Council to the Department was 0).

Management and Maintenance Report

In 2014 the Council had 1,822 dwellings located in 158 housing estates and 65 units were in single rural locations. It had a 2.6% vacancy rate at end 2014 and it had the median unit re-letting cost of €8,375. There are 87 dwellings per WTE on the housing management function. The Council has never conducted a condition survey, it does not use a budget control system and it supplied no data on the energy efficiency of its dwellings. It also did not supply a breakdown of its units by age or bedrooms.

Tenant Survey

12 tenants of Offaly County Council were included in the survey. 11 of them were satisfied with their neighbourhood and with the structural condition of their houses and agreed with the statement that 'my estate is a pleasant place to live'. 7 thought that the Council's services had improved over the last 5 years and most attributed this to issues being dealt with straightaway. 9 tenants said contacting the Council regarding non-emergency repairs was easy, 6 said non-emergency repairs are always carried out quickly and 7 that the repair work is good, while 4 said it is sometimes inspected. 10 tenants said that they were aware which repairs are their own responsibility. 1 tenant described the level of anti-social behaviour incidents as high and 8 have never complained about any aspect of their estate management and maintenance. 10 of the tenants agreed with the statement that they would be likely to praise the Council's housing service to family and friends.

Public Spending Code

2014

acknowledged that in-depth checks may not have been sufficiently detailed

2015

again referred to a training need to ensure in-depth checks are sufficiently detailed. Cumulative value of inventory covered by the in-depth checks: 11.1%, which is on target to meet the required 15% by end year 3.

APPENDIX

	Performance Indicators	2016		2015		2014	
		Louth Data	Median/Average	Louth Data	Median/Average	Louth Data	Median/Average
H1	Social Housing provided in year per 1,000 population	4.14	3.43	1.67	1.91	0.63	0.80
H2	% of directly provided dwellings vacant at 31/12	1.56	3.02	1.65	3.5	2.39	3.8
H3a	Average time from vacation date to PI year re-letting date (weeks)	22.31	32.99	33	28.43	37.4	31.43
H3b	Average cost expended on getting re-tenanted units ready for re-letting	€17,274	€15,877	€16,436	€13,378.40	€8,375	€11,534.91
H4	Average repair and maintenance cost per unit	€461	€1,500.23	€554.51	€1,292.57	€535	€1,272.30
H5	Inspections carried out in year (Dwellings inspected in 2016) as % of registrations	0.79	4.36	0.93	5.64	1.66	6.51
R1a	% Regional Road KM that ever received a PSCI rating	99	99	68	68	64	47.9
R1b	% Total Regional Road KM with a PSCI rating of 9-10	36	30	28	20	44.51	11.15
R1c	% Total Primary Road KM with a PSCI rating of 9-10	13	13	13	11	16.89	6.4
R1d	% Total Secondary Road KM with a PSCI rating of 9-10	17	10	17	8	22.53	4.61
R1e	% Total Tertiary Road KM with a PSCI rating of 9-10	18	7	17	5	20.77	3.63
R2a	KM Regional Road strengthened using road Improvement Grants	8.8	10.8	10.1	10.2		
R2b	KM regional road resealed using road Maintenance Grants	5.9	12.2	8.3	8.3		
R2/3	% Motor tax transactions performed online	60.46	64.05	51.49	56.6	47.24	54.7
W1	% private schemes with water quality in compliance	98.93	98.62	99.07	99.07	98	97.9
E1	% households availing of a 3-bin service	12.75	37.7	13.34	34.87	12.21	31.66
E2	Pollution cases on hand at year end as % of the cases that arose that year	9.11	9.91	6.7	8.49		
E3	% area unpolluted or litter free	13	13	11	14	13	9.5
P1	New buildings inspected as % of new buildings notified	38.46	19.42	35.9	24	36.89	17.71
P2	% of determinations that confirmed the decision made by LA	88.24	77.78	60	71.88	33.33	71.7
P3	Ratio of planning cases being investigated at year end as to cases closed	2.34	2.87	1.12	2.61	0.93	2.88
P4	Cost per capita of the Planning Service	€29.13	€26.96	€32.74	€26.76	€29.07	€25.27
F1	Cost per capita of Fire Service (based on 2011 Census for 2014 and 2015)	€41.50	€56.07	€41.31	€57.88	€38.30	€55.9
F2	Average time to mobilise Brigade re Fire (Minutes) (PT)	5.19	5.64	5.13	5.45	5.07	5.53
F3	% of Fire Cases in which first attendance is within 10 minutes	46.36	57.79	56.85	56.98	56.61	58.6
L1a	No. of Library visits per head of population	3.34	3.61	3.21	3.67	3.3	3.71
L1b	No. of Items borrowed per head of population	3.07	3.82	3.33	3.82		
L2	Cost of Library Service per capita	€28.05	€30.05	€27.78	€30.02	€27.21	€29.41
Y1	% of local schools involved in Comhairle na nÓg Scheme	100	68.07	100	67.59	92.86	51.86
C1	WTE staff per 1,000 population	4.85	5.64	4.79	5.58	4.81	5.63
C2a	% of paid working days lost to medically certified sick leave in year	3.62	3.76	3.4	3.52	3.12	3.34
C2b	% of paid working days lost to self-certified sick leave in year	0.23	0.38	0.24	0.39	0.3	0.4
C3	LA website page views per 1,000 population	7,389	12,422	9,507	11,666	9,933	9,651
C4	Overall cost of ICT Provision per WTE	€2,695.96	€2,675.69	€2,562.93	€2,680.15	€3,026	€2,646.8
M2a	% Commercial Rates Collected in year	87.1		84.3	83	82	77
M2b	% Rent & Annuities Collected in year	86		85.4	85	85	84
M2c	% Housing Loans Collected in year	59		61.1	68	62	67
J1	LEO jobs output per 1,000 population	0.92	0.7	0.92	0.66	1.26	0.73




Stage 1 meeting

NOAC profile meeting with Offaly County Council

Date:	13 October 2017	
Venue:	Offaly County Council Tullamore	
Attendees:	Offaly County Council <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Anna Marie Delaney, Chief Executive ■ Declan Conlon, Director of Finance 	NOAC <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Pat McLoughlin, Chairperson ■ Claire Gavin, Secretariat

Purpose

Pat McLoughlin referred to the data accumulated for the purpose of NOAC reports and to put the information in context, NOAC wanted to get the background context from the authorities and any other datasets that the council consider should also be taken into account. NOAC is open as to how to present the information, for example, grouping a number of authorities together. The overall objective is to work to improve performance and to share what might help to achieve that.

Points raised/ outlined by Offaly County Council

- Annual Service Plan - a new one was brought in Feb 2017.
- Rates - long standing deficit on rates has redress plan in place since 2013. Rate arrears collection plan in place and is working well. Recent rate revaluation has concluded. Risk of loss of income due to decreased rates has been accepted but rate increases being potentially appealed.
- Local property tax was not increased despite plan to ring-fence increase for local area works.
- Amalgamation of town councils impact was biggest on housing due to different rents, loans, debts and systems, condition etc. Debt collection has now been standardised and new housing officer has recently been appointed
- Waste licence - this has been very positive for the council. The model is working well, there is a good team in place and it brings the council into national focus. The council have confirmed they would be interested in taking on the new pay by weight licence.
- Housing - it was outlined a significant reduction in vacant social units and an increase in energy works being carried out on social units. Inspection rates were low but new technician now in place. There is a new planned maintenance budget and a stock condition survey is planned.
- External Audit team - the membership is varied and it is working well.
- Roads - budget for county roads very low and this is challenging with road conditions poor due to 50% being built on bogs. Recent meeting with the Minister for Transport and Roads was positive.
- Library - Offaly has the only open library in the country and it is working very well.

Anna Maria Delaney inquired as to the format of the presentation and it was agreed that the picture should give an understanding of the county and also include the positives such as the effort being put into tourism development, the LEADER projects, the Internet Hub Proposal for Science and Astrophysics students in Birr, the Urban Regeneration plans in place and the issues from the Infrastructural challenges and the challenges arising from unfunded capital balances.

Conclusion

Pat McLoughlin advised that the format and details of the NOAC report has to be decided. He outlined the areas of interest to the NOAC members, including customer service, IT investment, AFS, and quality of information provision to the public etc. that could be examined with the Chief Executive when she meets with NOAC. Comparison with similar authorities may be shown but comment provided by the local authority will only be included in the report. NOAC will not provide comment. Report will be published on the NOAC website. It is a matter for Offaly County Council to determine who will be in attendance but it was outlined that it would be a private session and the format would be a question and answer session.




Stage 2 meeting

Minutes of the National Oversight and Audit Commission (NOAC)

Date:	31 st January 2018	
Venue:	Conference Room, Custom House, Dublin 1	
Attendees:	<p>Chairman:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Pat McLoughlin <p>Members:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Tara Buckley ▪ Paul Lemass ▪ Martina Moloney ▪ Colleen Savage ▪ Connie Hanniffy ▪ Sharon O'Connor <p>Secretariat:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Sheila McMahon ▪ Claire Gavin ▪ Diarmuid O'Leary ▪ Jason Kennedy <p>Apologies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ John Buckley ▪ Dave Holohan ▪ Michael McGreal 	<p>Guests</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Anna Marie Delaney, Chief Executive, ▪ Declan Conlan, Head of Finance, ▪ Tom Shanahan, Director of Services, Offaly County Council.

Connie Hanniffy indicated that she would not participate directly in the meeting with the Offaly County Council Chief Executive and management team due to her membership of that Council's Audit Committee.



Meeting with Offaly County Council's Chief Executive, Head of Finance A/ Director of Services

The Chairman welcomed the Chief Executive and her management team to the meeting. The Chief Executive circulated an overview briefing document about the Council, its programmes and priorities. A property management team to address the property register, a housing inspection team to increase the level of inspection of private rented accommodation and a Rebuilding Ireland team have been put in place.

The Offaly County Council team answered questions from the NOAC members on progress in eliminating the revenue deficit and commercial rates issues, customer service, corporate planning, housing issues, performance indicators, tourism initiatives, employment within the county and economic and community development.

The Chairman thanked the Chief Executive and her team for coming in to meet with NOAC and for providing valuable insight into the work of the Council. A separate note on this engagement will be prepared and provided to Offaly County Council in the context of NOAC's Local Authority profiling exercise.

Performance Indicators for the 2017 report

Martina Moloney, chair of the Performance Indicators Sub-Group, referred to the publication of the 2016 report the previous week and the circulated note regarding the sub-group's recommendations for changes to the 2017 indicators. She advised that the review of the housing stock indicators was on-going and that a meeting was scheduled to take place later with the nominated Departmental official on the housing data. As the 2017 indicator guidelines need to issue to local authorities within the next few weeks, any other proposed changes that come out of the review will be circulated to the members by email. The members indicated their agreement to this approach.



National Oversight and Audit Commission (NOAC)
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