



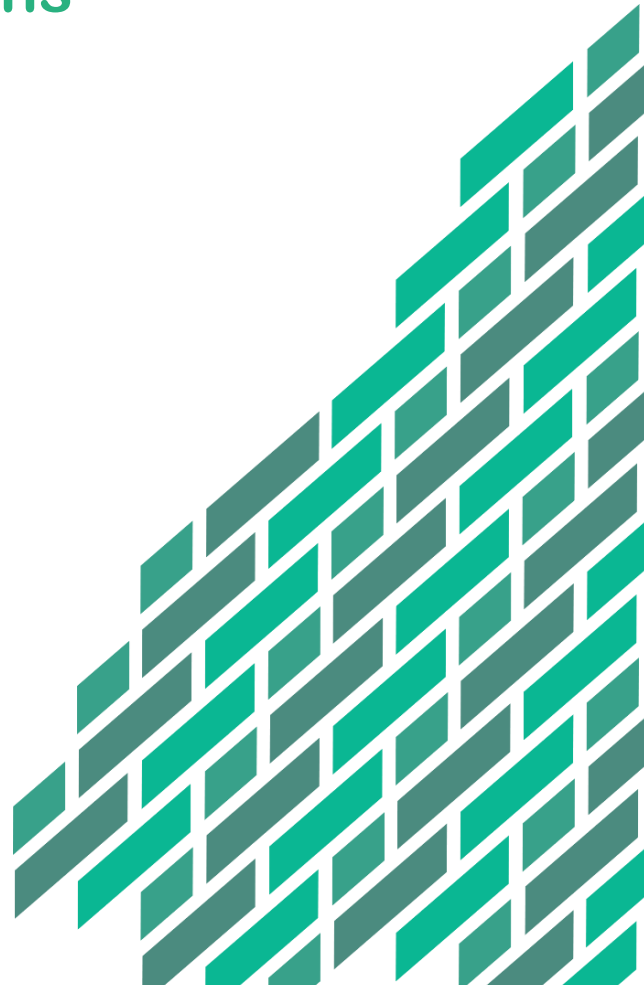
NOAC

National Oversight
and Audit Commission

Review of Corporate Plans 2015-2019

May 2021

Web: www.noac.ie Email: info@noac.ie



Review of Corporate Plans 2015-2019

Background

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's statutory functions are wide ranging and includes for the monitoring of the adequacy of corporate plans prepared by local authorities and to evaluate implementation of these plans. Preparation of multi-annual corporate plans and implementation of associated monitoring and review arrangements are long-standing features of management practice in local authorities in Ireland. The corporate plan is a central component of the local authority business architecture, linking key elements such as policy, organisation, operational activity, governance, and performance management.

NOAC previously reported on the corporate plans for the period 2015-2019 for local authorities and this report is available on www.NOAC.ie

Information requested

NOAC issued a questionnaire to the Chief Executives of the 31 local authorities in May 2020. The main focus of the questionnaire was to receive a summary for each objective/goal outlining progress in the delivery of objectives, highlighting areas of best practice and any underachievement, with explanation, together with any changes in priorities during the period.

Responses from local authorities

The nature and level of responses from local authorities differed greatly in terms of detail and priorities. The questionnaire issued during a time when significant numbers were in the first few months of remote working due to COVID restrictions and many co-ordinators cited difficulties at getting the requisite information, and the request for information was interpreted somewhat differently by different local authorities. In response to these challenges, NOAC tried to create greater standardisation, including by seeking a one to two page summary document from local authorities who had provided in-depth material initially.

Local authorities addressed a number of different areas in their replies to NOAC. These were presented in various formats, but can largely be broken down into two distinct types. The first type has been submitted from e.g. Cavan County Council. This lists the number of Strategic Goals which it had, followed by a bullet point list of achievements under the Corporate Plan. They incorporated areas such as housing, roads, libraries, fire services and economic plans.

The second type has been received from e.g. Leitrim County Council. This outlines the number of Strategic Goals which it has and then gives a more in-depth progress report under each heading. NOAC reverted to this and other Councils and agreed on a shortened version, with the remainder of the information being available on request.

A notable feature of the responses was the variation in the corporate plans, for example with some containing many objectives while others had fewer in number. It was evident that while significant progress was being made on implementation, that many of the objectives were still ongoing at the time of the submission. Many advised that the plans were devised and implemented at a time of unprecedented change brought about by the Local Government Reform Act 2014. Progress in reaching the Rebuilding Ireland targets in Social Housing was mentioned by many, as was progress in addressing climate action and ICT services development. Promotion of sustainable economic, social, cultural and community development was a core objective of many of the Corporate Plans and delivery in these areas was demonstrated in many of the responses.

Summary Data from Responses:

The following reflects some of the information received in a summary form:

- 1,278 Strategic objectives and goals.
- 827 of these are reported to have been substantially completed.
- 706 are on-going.
- 212 have been delayed or carried forward. The main reason cited for the delays was planning, finance or because they involved large capital projects.
- 5 local authorities responded by providing separate figures for Strategic Goals and Objectives whereas all others gave an overall figure for Goals and Objectives. Those who gave separate figures were- Cork City, Dublin City Council, Longford, South Dublin and Westmeath.
- Cavan, Fingal, Kerry, Longford and Wexford all indicated that they updated their Corporate Plan during the 4- year period.
- Cavan, Donegal, Fingal, Galway City, Kerry, Leitrim, Limerick and Roscommon reported that implementation of all their strategic objectives was on-going.
- In terms of **Housing**, Dublin City Council noted that improved homeless services were being provided through social housing allocations and the HAP scheme, and the promotion of independent living through housing adaptations.
- In relation to **Roads**, Kildare County Council outlined numerous projects underway, including the construction of the M7 project over 2018-2020 - one of the largest capital projects in Ireland in many years. Kildare is also working with the IDA on the development of 200 acres of land in Newbridge as a strategic regional location for future FDI.
- On **Customer Service**, Meath County Council implemented a new customer service programme with a dedicated customer service team. In Tipperary County Council there was development of a new integrated model for customer support, providing

for Customer Service Desks at the two Civic Offices in Clonmel and Nenagh. In Westmeath County Council a new Customer Service Action Plan and Customer Charter was adopted, while in Wexford County Council a new department called the Customer Services Unit was created.

- **Tourism** featured in many reviews includes the following: Offaly County Council appointed a Tourism Officer and launched Offaly – Ireland’s Hidden Gem tourism brand for the County. In Roscommon there was the development of a new Roscommon Tourism Brand and associated marketing and website. A new Tipperary Tourism Company was established and a new 3- year marketing plan was developed for Tipperary Tourism. Meanwhile “Visit Waterford” has developed successfully and is a co-ordinated approach between all stakeholders to promote Waterford’s tourist offering. In Galway County, it was awarded the first European Region of Gastronomy designation in Ireland for the year 2018 and was announced as the European Capital of Culture 2020.
- In relation to **Climate Action** the following Councils referred to their adoption of a plan to deal with this area: Cork City and County, Fingal, Kildare, Laois, Offaly, Roscommon, Sligo, South Dublin, Westmeath and Wicklow.

Information required for future Reviews of Corporate Plans

From an examination of the local authority responses, a large quantity of information was received. Despite the large amount of information provided, the responses did not always deal with every question. For example, the part of the question relating to “any changes in priorities during the period” was rarely addressed in any detail.

For future Corporate Plan reviews, NOAC will focus on a smaller number of thematic issues, which should facilitate a more focussed responses and a subsequent thematic analysis. Themes to be addressed for future Corporate Plan reviews could include barriers to the implementation of strategic goals, progress and achievements in relation to customer services, process for updating plans as well as content of updates.

It will also be beneficial from the outset to limit the volume of information provided to what is necessary, relevant and useful.

Please note that due to the large volume of material provided, not all details are included in this document. However this information will be available for each local authority on request from info@noac.ie