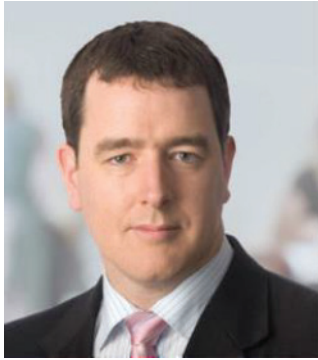




# Roscommon County Council Scrutiny Report

NOAC Report No. 28 - May 2021



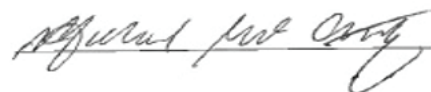
## Chair's Opening remarks

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.

Roscommon County Council had their Stage 1 meeting in November 2018 and their Stage 2 meeting in January 2019. 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. It was explained at the meeting how changes to work practices was difficult to make and gave rise to some unpopular decisions being made but has resulted in greater productivity and better value for the citizens that the local authority serves. Social media usage was also discussed and the Council explained how it uses twitter and Facebook and the target audience is mainly the younger population. There is a full time person dedicated to updating these. The greatest interaction took place during the bad weather. The county is in the middle of a digital transformation and that is a priority for the Council and it is planned to be completed within the year.



# Roscommon County Council Scrutiny Process

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# NOAC Profile Roscommon County Council Updated

November 2018

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# Roscommon County Council General Information

<b>Population:</b>	64,544
<b>Area:</b>	2,445km <sup>2</sup>
<b>Municipal Districts:</b>	3 (Roscommon, Athlone, Boyle)

## COUNCIL MISSION STATEMENT

### Vision

To ensure, through collaboration and the provision of strong leadership in partnership with the community, that County Roscommon is an attractive, inclusive, prosperous and vibrant place to live, invest, work and visit.

To serve the communities of Roscommon with enthusiasm, courtesy and absolute respect. To revitalise the social, economic, cultural and environmental fabric of our towns and villages and rural communities.

To provide supports and mechanisms to empower all of our communities to grow. To ensure that the Council's budget is effectively spent and accounted for.

## Staffing

Number employed	@ 31/12/2017 390.81 (W.T.E.)
WTE Staff per 1,000 population	6.05

### Percentage of paid working days lost to medically certified sick leave

2014	2.97%
2015	3.66%
2016	3.53%
2017	4.29%

In 2016, 21 authorities exceeded their 3.5% public sector sick leave target. Roscommon was included in this list. This further increased to 4.29% for 2017.

## Transparency International Ireland

Rank 11- overall score 15/30

- Transparency 6/10
- Accountability 6/10
- Ethics 3/10

## Budget

2018	€54,457,900 (€844 PP)
2017	€52,407,000 (€812 PP) 2016 Population

## Collection Rates

	2017	2016	2015
Rate collection rates	83%	91%	93%
Rent collection rates	91%	92%	89%
Housing loan collection rates	56%	58%	75%

## Housing Information at 31/12/17

Local Authority Stock number	1,405
Number currently on waiting list	446 net of transfers
HAP Tenancies	254

Number of adult Individuals classified as homeless and in emergency accommodation	0
The number out of those individuals who, on 31/12/2017, had been in emergency accommodation for 6 months continuously, or for 6 months cumulatively within the previous 12 months	0

## Homeless presentations

2015	63 presented
2016	45 presented
2017	57 presented

## Specific housing issues

- There is no housing crisis in Roscommon. Supply exceeds demand and most of the housing list is in private rented accommodation and they do not want to exit from it.
- Roscommon has a very large number of unfinished housing estates (not including vacant properties).
- Roscommon County Council attributed the decrease in its rent and annuity collection level to the addition of backdated rent to customer accounts following a 2015 rent review and the resignation of a member of the cash collection team (2015 Audit response).
- In the 2016 PI report there was a vacancy rate of 6% which is double the average rate and the re letting time is 64.82 weeks compared to average of 32.99 weeks. In 2017 this reduced to 53.69 weeks however the national average also decreased to 28.9 weeks.
- The average cost for reletting repairs is €11,355 compared to the national average cost of €17,161.

## Economic Forum (CEF)

- N/A.

## The Local Enterprise Office

Roscommon has a strong and successful Local Enterprise Office. On-going initiatives to promote local food businesses in Roscommon include:

- 'Going North' in partnership with LEO Longford and Mayo
- 'Ireland West Food Project' in partnership with Galway and Mayo LEO to facilitate distribution to UK.

## Retail Incentives

- Roscommon is moving to spread potential investment throughout the county away from Monksland area.
- Roscommon is aligned to Athlone.ie

## The Corporate Plan

**Adoption** Section 134 (subsections (1) and (2)) of the Local Government Act 2001 requires local authorities to prepare a Corporate Plan every 5 years. The Plans should be submitted to the elected members for approval within 6 months of the annual meeting that takes place 2 weeks after the day on which the local elections were held, which date in 2014 was 23 May. Roscommon was one of 9 Councils that did not comply with these statutory deadlines. The Plan has now been adopted.

## Shared services

- Payroll and element of Fire Services
- Roscommon Laboratory carries out Water testing and analysis on behalf of Irish Water for some adjacent counties

## Regional Issues including new developments and initiatives

With regard to The National Planning Framework 2040, Roscommon worked hard to support the inclusion of Athlone as a designated regional capital and have aligned themselves to support and benefit from the growth of Athlone. They also see potential for the development of towns like Boyle to benefit from the regeneration and development funds.

## Supporting Strategies

Roscommon County Council has become more involved in shared partnerships as follows:

- Partnership with Coillte in Lough Key Forest Park
- Stakeholder in Ireland West Airport, Knock
- Partner in Ireland West Trade Centre, Providence R.I. USA
- Included in the Atlantic Economic Corridor initiative
- Part of the Beara-Breifni Way Initiative

## Other relevant information

- Roscommon has suffered from a lack of political representation at Cabinet level with infrastructural deficits towards the north of the county in particular. They consider that they are a lost county in terms of exposure to investment.
- In terms of their geographical position, they are not positioned as part of the Wild Atlantic Way and their exposure to the tourism market was thus affected. They are now included in Failte Ireland tourism brand for the Midlands - 'Irelands Hidden Heartlands'.
- Roscommon town has no national primary route. The draw of Dublin to the East and Galway to the West has left them in what they consider to be a vulnerable position.
- Roscommon county has highest % population of older old in the 80+ year age category at 4.4% and in top three of age 65+
- The settlement pattern in the county is dispersed with over 60km of road per 1,000 population compared to the national average of 21km. It has the eighth highest length of regional and local roads in the country. This rural nature of the county leads to social exclusion areas with wellbeing for some of its citizens a concern.
- They have the third lowest rate base in the country and low local property tax valuation and therefore their dependence on the inadequate Local Government Fund is a concern.
- More recently the Boundary issue of Monksland and the alignment of Monksland with Athlone has complicated further with two Regional Assemblies involved.

## NOAC Reports Overview

NOAC was established in July 2014 as an independent statutory body to provide oversight of the local government sector in Ireland. NOAC's functions are wide ranging, involving the scrutiny of performance generally and financial performance specifically. NOAC also supports best practice, oversees the implementation of national local government policy, monitors and evaluates implementation of corporate plans, adherence to service level agreements and public service reform by local government bodies.

Since 2017 NOAC publishes annual local authority Performance Indicators and composite Public Spending Code Quality Assurance Reports. From the 20 reports published to date matters relevant to Roscommon County Council are outlined in the points below:

### NOAC REPORT NO 19

#### Performance Indicator Report 2017 – September 2018

The annual Performance Indicator Report published by NOAC is one of its key reports every year. NOAC has the function of scrutinising local authority performance against relevant indicators. NOAC believes that monitoring performance over time and against comparable authorities has the potential to encourage continuous improvement in local authority service provision.

#### Points to Note

##### Housing

Roscommon County Council recorded the highest proportion of the stock re-let during the year nationally at 7.3% (103 units).

In relation to the homeless figures it was stated that the only slight positive to be drawn from these statistics is that in 2017, as well as Leitrim and Roscommon County Councils, Cavan County Council had no adults in emergency accommodation at the end of the year; in 2016 it was only Leitrim and Roscommon.

##### Roads

In respect of PSCI rating 7–8 (surface defects) Roscommon County Council had the lowest percentage of regionals roads given this rating (at 27%) and Longford County Council had the highest percentage of its regional road given this rating (74%).

In respect of PSCI rating 9–10 (no defects or less than 10% defective) Cork County Council had the lowest percentage of regional roads in this category (8%) and Roscommon County Council had the highest percentage of its regional roads given this rating (49%).

##### Planning

The number of planning appeals to An Bord Pleanála decreased by 1.93%, bringing the total number of appealed decisions in 2017 to 1,423. The overall Bord Pleanála confirmed cases figure of 1,126 in 2016 increased slightly to 1,131 in 2017. The percentage of determinations that confirmed the decision made by the authority decreased for 15 authorities with Roscommon noting a substantial drop of 33.33% from 2016 to 2017. Roscommon was one of two local authorities with the lowest decision confirmation rates at 50% each.

##### Fire

Roscommon County Council had the longest average mobilisation time of 7.01 minutes for fires, although this was an improvement on mobilisation times in 2016

##### Finance

Roscommon had the largest reduction in rate collection performance from 91% in 2016 to 83% in 2017.

## NOAC REPORT NO 17

### Internal Audit in Local Authorities - July 2018

Roscommon county Council advised that they have an internal audit function and was one of the only authorities that opted for on-the-job training approach. Roscommon was again one of the only authorities to declare that the internal auditor had no stated formal qualification. Roscommon was one of four authorities where the head of Internal Audit reported to the Director of Finance. In relation to the frequency with which Internal Audit met with the Audit Committee in 2016 Roscommon indicated that it had had no meeting. The Internal Audit budget for 2017 was €57,300.

The Local Government Audit Service overview report stated that:

There was no effective internal audit function in place throughout 2016, which is a breach of the regulations referred to. As a consequence of the lack of an effective Internal Audit Unit (IAU), no reports were prepared in 2016 and this contributed to the absence of a functioning Audit Committee. Management need to ensure that an adequately resourced IAU is in place for future years.

Chief Executive's Response - An Internal Auditor was appointed in Q2 2016 however, due to exceptional circumstances the position was not taken up until Q1 2017. A number of policy documents have been developed, reports have been drafted and three Audit Committee meetings have taken place in 2017 with a further meeting scheduled for December 2017.

## NOAC REPORT NO 16

### Review of 2015 Statutory Audit Reports to the Members of Local Authorities - June 2018

Income collection dis-improvement -Auditors drew specific attention to a dis-improved housing loans or rents collection performance in Roscommon. Roscommon County Council attributed the decrease in its rent and annuity collection level to the addition of backdated rent to customer accounts following a 2015 rent review and the resignation of a member of the cash collection team.

#### Housing Rents

2014	93%
2015	89%

#### Housing Loans

2014	53%
2015	75%

## NOAC REPORT NO 12

### A Review of the Management and Maintenance of Local Authority Housing - May 2017

#### High Demand Housing Prioritised

Prioritising the refurbishment of housing in high demand is a method being used by Roscommon to minimise vacancies.

#### Rental Income and Local Property Tax

In terms of the proportion of cumulative rent owed that was collected by end 2014, Roscommon at 93% was one of the highest.

#### Establishing the Condition of Local Authority Housing Stock

Roscommon is one of 15 Local Authorities to have ever carried out a survey of condition of their Local Authority Housing Stock. Audit unit is working well.

	2017	2016	2015	2014
Average time from vacation date to PI year re-letting date (weeks)	53.69	64.82	74.40	56.39
Average cost expended on getting re-tenanted units ready for re-letting	€11,355.38	€10,275.12	€10,112.40	€7,167.18
Average repair and maintenance cost per unit	€829.86	€501.96	€425.51	€474.00

## NOAC REPORT NO 10

### Rented Houses Inspections - A Review of Local Authority Performance of Private Rented Houses Regulations Functions October 2016

26 local authorities set target numbers of inspections each year. This target appears to be resource driven in most cases. Eight said that they set a minimum cycle within which to inspect all properties, though this cycle varied from three to five years. Based on the levels of inspection actually achieved in 2014, it is likely that inspection intervals generally are quite long. Of those authorities that had set inspection intervals, only two – **Roscommon** and South Dublin – had set target inspection levels sufficient to meet the intervals that they had established.

The amount spent by local authorities when related to their registered tenancies varied substantially. In general, those with smaller numbers of tenancies had higher costs per registered tenancy. This may indicate that their fixed costs (the cost of maintaining an administrative and inspection capacity) contributed to higher unit costs. **Roscommon County Council had the highest expenditure per registered property of all the local authorities in 2014**, with a figure of €80.22 per registered tenancy being spent. The average expenditure was €11.74 per tenancy. 20% of all rented properties in Roscommon were inspected and a non-compliance/failure rate of 77% was recorded

	2014	2017
Number of Registered Tenancies	2,493	2,987
Expenditure on Private Rented Sector Functions in 2014	€200,000	not available
% Units inspected	20%	4.96%
Inspected Failed %	77%	89.47%

Data from report relates to 2014, data for 2017 taken from Performance Indicator Report

## NOAC REPORT NO 8

## Financial Performance of Local Authorities 2013-2015: Deficits, Audit Opinion and Financial Statements – April 2016

Revenue Balance – Roscommon			
	General Revenue Balance	Income	Balance as % Income
2013	149,312	61,777,620	0.24%
2014	166,848	57,896,036	0.29%
2015*	150,145	56,600,000	0.38%
2016*	172,692	61,111,000	0.47%

\*Updated data not included in Original report.

Roscommon was one of 8 Local Authorities deemed to be compliant with the submission of AFS by the deadline of 31st March each year. Roscommon have continued to comply with this requirement for 2015 and 2016. The 2017 AFS has not been published on the Council's website.



	Performance Indicators	2017		2016	
		Data	Median/ Average	Data	Median/ Average
H1	Social Housing provided in year per 1,000 population	0.59	0.53	n/a	3.43
H2	% of directly provided dwellings vacant at 31/12	3.49	2.73	6.07	3.02
H3a	Average time from vacation date to PI year re-letting date (weeks)	53.69	28.9	64.82	32.99
H3b	Average cost expended on getting re-tenanted units ready for re-letting	€11,355.38	€17,160.60	€10,275.12	€15,877
H4	Average repair and maintenance cost per unit	€829.86	€1,311.82	€501.96	€1,500.23
H5	Inspections (Dwellings inspected) carried out in year as % of registrations	6.99	4.96	5.43	4.36
R1a	% Regional Road KM that ever received a PSCI rating	98	96	100.00	99
R1b	% Total Regional Road KM with a PSCI rating of 9-10	49	28	42.00	30
R1c	% Total Primary Road KM with a PSCI rating of 9-10	17	20	11.00	13
R1d	% Total Secondary Road KM with a PSCI rating of 9-10	14	14	7.00	10
R1e	% Total Tertiary Road KM with a PSCI rating of 9-10	8	8	4.00	7
R2a	KM Regional Road strengthened using road improvement grants	8.10	10.3	9.70	10.8
R2b	KM Regional road resealed using road maintenance grants	0	11.9	0.10	12.2
R2/3	% Motor tax transactions performed online	51.26	65.95	50.07	64.05
W1	% private schemes with water quality in compliance	95.02	98.46	99.01	97.77
E1	% households availing of a 3-bin service	11.78	39.53	9.02	37.7
E2	Pollution cases on hand at year end as % of the cases that arose that year	14.82	9.79	7.59	9.91
E3	% area unpolluted or litter free	29	10	31.00	13
P1	New buildings inspected as % of new buildings notified	17.20	17	19.42	19.42
P2	% of determinations that confirmed the decision made by LA	50	79	83.33	77.78
P3	Ratio of planning cases being investigated at year end as to cases closed	1.98	2.41	1.98	2.87
P4	Cost per capita of the Planning Service	€32.77	€28.31	€35.16	€26.96
F1	Cost per capita of Fire Service (based on 2011 Census for 2014 and 2015)	€68.69	€57.74	€58.59	€56.07
F2	Average time to mobilise Brigade re Fire (Minutes) (FT)	n/a	1.45	n/a	1.5
F3	% of Fire Cases in which first attendance is within 10 minutes	20.17	40.45	16.30	57.79
L1a	No. of Library visits per head of population	2.09	3.56	2.07	3.61
L1b	No. of Items borrowed per head of population	3.26	2.92	2.65	3.82
L2	Cost of Library Service per capita	€28.28	€31.00	€25.94	€30.05
Y1	% of local schools involved in Comhairle na nÓg Scheme	87.50	69.04	100.00	68.07
C1	WTE staff per 1,000 population	6.05	5.75	5.96	5.64
C2a	% of paid working days lost to medically certified sick leave in year	4.29	3.74	3.53	3.76
C2b	% of paid working days lost to self-certified sick leave in year	0.25	0.33	0.23	0.38
C3	LA website page views per 1,000 population	12,079	14,632	7,350.54	12,422
C4	Overall cost of ICT Provision per WTE	€2,846.00	€3,048.41	2,935.00	€2,675.69
M2a	% Commercial Rates Collected in year	83	83	91.00	82.3
M2b	% Rent & Annuities Collected in year	91	89	92.00	88.0
M2c	% Housing Loans Collected in year	56.00	74	58.00	70
J1	LEO jobs output per 1,000 population	0.89	0.68	0.60	0.7

Per population based on census figures for 2011 and 2016 (64,065 in 2011 and 64,544 in 2016)

	Performance Indicators	2015		2014	
		Data	Median/ Average	Data	Median/ Average
H1	Social Housing provided in year per 1,000 population	1.03	1.91	1.11	0.80
H2	% of directly provided dwellings vacant at 31/12	9.31	3.5	8.75	3.8
H3a	Average time from vacation date to PI year re-letting date (weeks)	74.40	28.43	56.39	31.43
H3b	Average cost expended on getting re-tenanted units ready for re-letting	€10,112.40	€13,378.40	€7,167.18	€11,534.91
H4	Average repair and maintenance cost per unit	€425.51	€1,292.57	€474.00	€1,272.30
H5	Inspections (Dwellings inspected) carried out in year as % of registrations	25.49	5.64	30.00	6.51
R1a	% Regional Road KM that ever received a PSCI rating	97.00	68	100.00	47.9
R1b	% Total Regional Road KM with a PSCI rating of 9-10	43.00	20	32.16	11.15
R1c	% Total Primary Road KM with a PSCI rating of 9-10	6.00	11	0.00	6.4
R1d	% Total Secondary Road KM with a PSCI rating of 9-10	3.00	8	0.00	4.61
R1e	% Total Tertiary Road KM with a PSCI rating of 9-10	3.00	5	0.00	3.63
R2a	KM Regional Road strengthened using road improvement grants	16.90	10.2		
R2b	KM Regional road resealed using road maintenance grants	2.10	8.3		
R2/3	% Motor tax transactions performed online	44.12	56.6	39.81	54.7
W1	% private schemes with water quality in compliance	99.26	99.07	96.90	97.9
E1	% households availing of a 3-bin service	7.85	34.87	7.08	31.66
E2	Pollution cases on hand at year end as % of the cases that arose that year	33.09	8.49		
E3	% area unpolluted or litter free	21.00	14	12.00	9.5
P1	New buildings inspected as % of new buildings notified	24.00	24	30.00	17.71
P2	% of determinations that confirmed the decision made by LA	55.56	71.88	75.00	71.7
P3	Ratio of planning cases being investigated at year end as to cases closed	1.45	2.61	1.63	2.88
P4	Cost per capita of the Planning Service	€38.05	€26.76	€53.19	€25.27
F1	Cost per capita of Fire Service (based on 2011 Census for 2014 and 2015)	€69.91	€57.88	€58.60	€55.9
F2	Average time to mobilise Brigade re Fire (Minutes) (FT)	N/A	1.6	N/A	1.66
F3	% of Fire Cases in which first attendance is within 10 minutes	25.12	56.98	33.33	58.6
L1a	No. of Library visits per head of population	2.21	3.68	3.30	3.71
L1b	No. of Items borrowed per head of population	2.95	3.82		
L2	Cost of Library Service per capita	27.30	€30.02	22.09	€29.41
Y1	% of local schools involved in Comhairle na nÓg Scheme	100.00	67.59	48.44	51.86
C1	WTE staff per 1,000 population	6.31	5.58	6.37	5.63
C2a	% of paid working days lost to medically certified sick leave in year	3.66	3.52	2.97	3.34
C2b	% of paid working days lost to self-certified sick leave in year	0.23	0.39	0.28	0.4
C3	LA website page views per 1,000 population	6,544.48	11,666	2,107.23	9,651
C4	Overall cost of ICT Provision per WTE	3,658.36	€2,680.15	3,037.00	€2,646.8
M2a	% Commercial Rates Collected in year	93.00	83	80.00	77
M2b	% Rent & Annuities Collected in year	89.00	85	93.00	84
M2c	% Housing Loans Collected in year	75.00	68	53.00	67
J1	LEO jobs output per 1,000 population	0.57	0.66	0.17	0.73



# Stage 1 meeting

## National Oversight and Audit Commission Profile Meeting with Roscommon County Council

Date:	1 November 2018	
Venue:	Roscommon County Council	
Attendees:	<b>Roscommon County Council:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Eugene Cummins, Chief Executive</li> </ul>	<b>NOAC</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Michael McCarthy, Chairperson</li> <li>▪ Claire Gavin, Secretariat</li> </ul>

Roscommon profile information issued by NOAC in advance of the meeting to Roscommon County Council and this was the basis for the discussion on the day.

Eugene Cummins welcomed NOAC and gave an outline of the Council and the issues facing it. Matters discussed in detail were:

The use of human resources and the issue of flexi leave and how the abuse of the flexi systems can lead to a loss of vital resources and valuable hours. The CE would welcome NOAC taking this matter on board and to carry out possibly a national review of the misuse of resources by flexi time additional hours. He queried if an indicator for Performance Management could be developed to address this issue.

Online motor tax has seen a small increase in use but is still lagging behind many counties. This can be explained because the county has a large elderly population and it is difficult to get them to change. It is hoped that this will improve but it must be noted that it is not a rich county and would perhaps be described as a place that is somewhat lost in time due to the elderly population.

Housing is not an issue in Roscommon. Many vacant properties have been brought back to use and the issue with unfinished housing estates has been tackled somewhat but there still is a large surplus of unfinished estates. Many on their waiting list are now in private rented and are happy to stay where they are. Refusal rates of social properties can be in the region of 40%. Monksland is the area many want to live in now and refusals of other locations are common.

- There is not a homeless issue in Roscommon
- There is currently an estate to be developed as part of the next PPP bundle
- Refugees are a new cohort looking for accommodation in the county and this is going well.
- Unfinished houses - there is a team working with the banks, chasing up on bonds etc. Some of these houses the la buy and they work with the developer to complete the units in some cases.
- Despite the surplus of accommodation, Roscommon does not attract people from the city despite the fact that there is ample property for them. The large homeless population in Dublin would not take up the units either. Apart from a small development in Boyle there is no other building of social housing as there is a surplus of properties in the county.

Social media usage was discussed and it was advised that the Council use twitter and Facebook, the target audience is mainly the younger population. There is a full time person dedicated to updating it all the time. During the bad weather was the time when there was the biggest interaction. The county is in the middle of a digital transformation and that is a priority for the Council and it is planned to be completed within the year. The areas that will need particular attention will be the older and socially deprived citizens. The impact of GDPR has being considered and data management is a priority that the Council are working on.

Reference was made to the issue of unpaid VAT which saw the Council having to pay Revenue significant fines relative to the unpaid amount. This was reported in the media and discussed in the Council chamber at the October meeting. It was an oversight and the fines and outstanding VAT was paid.

The PI report was discussed and the issue regarding Roscommon's performance in the report around planning was correct but the figures referred to were only 2 cases so what was being discussed was very low numbers and did not warrant the narrative in the report. NOAC agreed that this was a valid point and agreed to refer it to the PI Subgroup. Other points to note are

- PRTB inspections were low as the priority was to get the voids back and resources were used for this first.
- Fire Stats are based on fire area and not the county and this skews the figures. The cost per capita is based on the fire ground not the county.
- Roads come out well in the report.
- IT overall cost appears high as there is a small number of staff.
- P4 cost per capita : structure of costs of planning is not always comparable, you are not always comparing like with like.
- P3 Long standing historic batches with on-going issues may not be a priority application and differentiations between current and historic applications would have merit. Often it is found that the agent uses the planning process as part of their correction process to avoid the agents doing the validation themselves.
- There is a difference between accountability and using the hard earned money for the people of Roscommon to grow the county.
- Housing Indicators are good as are the PRTB useful to track progress.
- Managing people's money is very important and the issue of turning a blind eye to misuse of time through the flexi process is a matter of great concern. In Roscommon now only authorised additional flexi hours can be worked up and it is based on a business and operational case being made and approved.
- In 2016 Roscommon was the worst performing in terms of fire and this was a big issue for the Council and this was reviewed arising from the NOAC report and it prompted management to take corrective action.
- Issues that could be considered for future PI is the matter of Refugees and resettlement of them
- The relevance of the inclusion of the Corporate Plan material in the profile material was mentioned. Given that there are significant changes since 2014 the merit of it was questioned

Mr Cummins accepted the invitation to attend the full NOAC meeting in January. Date for the meeting is Tuesday 15<sup>th</sup> of January 2019 attendance would be required for 11am.




# Stage 2 meeting January 2019 – Minutes

National Oversight and Audit Commission Meeting with  
Roscommon County Council

Date:	15 January 2019	
Venue:	Withdrawing Room, Custom House, Dublin 1	
Attendees:	<p><b>Chairman:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Michael McCarthy</li> </ul> <p><b>Members:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Tara Buckley</li> <li>▪ Martina Moloney</li> <li>▪ Dave Holohan</li> <li>▪ Connie Hanniffy</li> <li>▪ Sharon O'Connor</li> <li>▪ John Buckley</li> <li>▪ Michael McGreal</li> </ul> <p><b>Secretariat:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Lisa Clifford</li> <li>▪ Claire Gavin</li> <li>▪ Neill Dalton</li> <li>▪ Colin Flood</li> </ul> <p><b>Apologies</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Paul Lemass</li> <li>▪ Colleen Savage</li> </ul>	<p><b>Roscommon County Council:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Eugene Cummins, Chief Executive</li> <li>▪ Martin Lydon – Director of Services</li> <li>▪ Greg O'Donnell, A/Senior Executive Officer</li> </ul>

The Chair welcomed the Chief Executive and his team to the meeting. The Chief Executive provided an update to the group on matters concerning the Council and the challenges that they face.

The Chief Executive and his team then proceeded to answer questions from the NOAC members.

## Finance

The NOAC Board queried how a settlement the Council had to make with Revenue came about. Roscommon outlined that this was due to an administrative error, which has been resolved. Checks are now in place to avoid a reoccurrence of the error.

The Council's bad debt provision has reduced; development contributions gave rise to this calculation and the figures were reduced to a net figure to be realistic.

The NOAC Board also queried a drop, since 2015, in the collection level of commercial rates. In 2015 the collection rate was 93%, 91% in 2016 and down to 83% in 2017. The Roscommon Team advised that the figures for 2015 and 2016 were technically adjusted, giving a skewed baseline for the 2017 figure.

## Fire

The NOAC Board raised the fact that Roscommon County Council had the slowest turnout of their Fire Service of any of the 31 Local Authorities. The Chief Executive acknowledged this fact and advised that the figures had in fact improved on last year and would continue to improve.

## Flexi Leave

The NOAC Board queried the issues that led to strikes by staff in Roscommon County Council over flexi leave, noting that the system was highly valued by employees with families. The Chief Executive explained that flexible working arrangements are available to all grades and widely used within the Council. The Chief Executive advised that there was no issue with staff availing of flexi-time but flexi leave could be generated by all grades up to and including grade 7, once a business and operational need was identified and approved by the line manager.

## Internal Audit

The NOAC Board advised on the importance of having a robust internal audit function within local authorities. The Chief Executive agreed that the internal audit is important for local authorities and is an integral part of the governance of Roscommon County Council. He advised that Roscommon now have a good internal audit team in place with good processes and procedures that are continuously monitored and assessed.

## Performance Indicators

The NOAC Board congratulated Roscommon on having the best rated roads featured the Performance Indicators Report 2017. The NOAC Board raised the issue of re-letting times for social housing as it was high in Roscommon. The Council team advised that this issue was exacerbated by the Council bringing a number of voids back onto the system and into use which skewed the 2017 figure. However, there were no voids in 2018; the derelict funding programme has helped Roscommon to address this issue.

## Regeneration

The Council discussed the high level of dereliction in Boyle and Castlerea. To combat this, a Town Centre Regeneration Team was founded. Under the Urban and Rural Regeneration Schemes several projects are being assessed including the possible relocation of the Mart in Roscommon Town. Other projects are the Boyle 2040 programme as a result of the purchase of the Royal Hotel in Boyle, refreshing the town centre in Roscommon, and to provide new public realm improvements and enhancements for town centres so as to entice people back living into towns.

## Ghost Estates

The NOAC Board raised the issue of the high number of ghost estates in the county. The Council team advised that this issue is a particular issue in the north of the county where a Section 23 tax incentive grant was available. The issue does not occur in the south of the county where the grant was not available.

## LEOs

The NOAC Board and the Council discussed the Local Enterprise Office in Roscommon County Council. Job creation was listed in the 2017 Performance Indicator Report as 57.5 jobs, and 306 people were mentored under the program. The Council advised that they had one of the most successful LEO's nationwide and they have a great team who are often cited as an example of best practice.

## Infrastructure

While roads in the county are good order, IDA has had limited success in attracting FDI to the area. Monksland and Athlone have done well, but this is not the case for the rest of the county. This is a particular challenge for the local authority.

## Conclusion

The NOAC Chair thanked the Chief Executive and his team for coming in to meet with NOAC and for providing valuable insight into the work of the Council.



**National Oversight and Audit Commission (NOAC)**  
**An Coimisiún Náisiúnra Maoirseachta & Iniúchoóireachta**

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