



NOAC

National Oversight
and Audit Commission



Fingal County Council Scrutiny Report

NOAC Report No. 49 – June 2022

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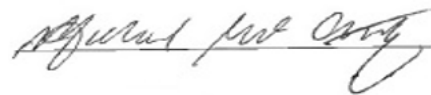
Chair's Opening remarks

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 have 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
30th June 2022



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 then NOAC Chair, 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 deferred.

The COVID restrictions presented 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 via 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 had a significant impact on local authorities, and in particular, for NOAC on the Scrutiny process. The Stage 1 meetings were all held in person, but restrictions curtailed their activities in 2021. Stage 1 meetings were held with Meath and South Dublin in July 2021 and Fingal in October 2021. The Stage 2 meetings progressed, as these were capable of being held remotely, with one held in January 2021 with Limerick City and County Council, another with Meath in September 2021 and a further meeting with South Dublin in December 2021.

Future meetings and reports

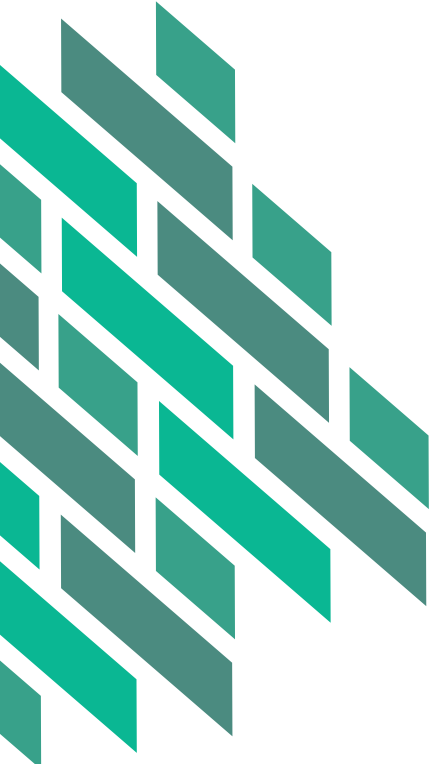
This report outlines the purpose and the procedures of such reports and, while the process may continue to evolve, it is not currently expected to produce another master report, similar to the master report produced in [May 2021](#). It is intended that once all stages in the scrutiny process have been 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. 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. However, in 2022, it is hoped that up to 6 Stage 1 and 6 Stage 2 meetings be held.

Conclusion

The process thus far allowed for the NOAC Chair 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, 2020 and 2021.

Fingal County Council had their Stage 1 meeting in October 2021 and their Stage 2 meeting in March 2022. 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 should be noted that the relevant information from Performance Indicator Report 2020 is included in this report, however information from the Review of Local Authority and Regional Assembly Corporate Plans 2019–2024 is not included here. The NOAC highlights the following points arising out of these meetings with Fingal County Council:

- NOAC was interested to hear about Our Balbriggan, for which €25.4m has been awarded under the Urban Regeneration Development Fund (URDF) for projects associated with the rejuvenation of Balbriggan.
- NOAC commends Fingal in prioritizing the €30 million payment of re-start grants, to ensure that these funds were paid as swiftly as possible, for businesses which were in need.
- NOAC appreciates the issues which staffing presents for the Council. It ran over 100 recruitment campaigns in 2021 and made over 300 appointments. However, due to staff departures within that period, there was only a net gain of 39 people.



Fingal County Council Scrutiny Process

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NOAC Profile Fingal County Council

October 2021

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Fingal County Council General Information

Local authority	Fingal County Council
Population:	296,214 (Census 2016)
Area:	c. 448 sq. km.
Municipal Districts:	N/A
2020 Budget	Expenditure €269,970,100 (Budget) Income €113,591,900 (Budget)
*2020 Revised Budget	Expenditure €375,078,900 (Revised Budget) Income €218,700,500 (Revised Budget)
Number employed @ 31/12/2020	WTE 1,382.84
WTE Staff per 1,000 population	4.67
% of paid working days lost to medically certified sick leave	2.81
Housing Information @ 31/12/20	
Local Authority Stock number	5,479
Number currently on waiting list	5,898
HAP Tenancies	3,212
Homeless presentations	505
Any specific housing issues	To accelerate Housing Supply to meet Social and Private Need.
Short Information Paragraph	
Council Mission Statement	To be a vibrant, outward looking, well run Council that shows leadership and embraces diversity and opportunity.
Economic Forum (CEF)	<p>The Council has several structures and sub-structures based around Economic Development that meet on a regular basis to structure and guide Economic Development within the County. They are the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Economic, Enterprise and Tourism Development SPC ■ Local Community Development Committee ■ Dublin Rural LEADER Local Action Group ■ Local Action Group Monitoring ■ Social Inclusion Community Activation Programme oversight
The Local Enterprise Office	Fingal LEO assists entrepreneurs, early stage promoters, small businesses and start-ups in establishing and expanding their business. Fingal LEO provides a wide range of financial, training, information and advice, including mentoring and networking, to support local business. It is worth noting that the activity of the LEO has been scaled up significantly to support businesses which have been impacted by Covid-19.

Retail Incentives	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Fingal In It Together Online business directory to support local businesses. 2. Shopfront & Main Street Residences Improvement Scheme. Scheme to financially assist & support business/home owners to improve properties located on Main Streets in towns & villages across Fingal. 3. Parklet Partners Initiative Scheme to support local businesses by transforming existing streetscape to accommodate dining & additional seating.
The Corporate Plan	Copy attached at this link
Shared services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Fire Service ■ Irish Water ■ Dublin Region Homeless Executive ■ Payroll - MyPay ■ Age Friendly ■ Waste Enforcement (WERLA) ■ HAP
Regional Issues including new developments and initiatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Dublin Enterprise Zone (DEZ) ■ Our Balbriggan Rejuvenation Plan ■ MetroLink ■ Royal Canal Greenway ■ Fingal Coastal Way ■ Dublin Airport LAP ■ Greater Dublin Drainage ■ Strategic Housing Developments - MUHDS ■ Sustainable Swords including Swords Cultural Quarter ■ Climate Change Action Plan ■ Active Travel/NTA Programme ■ Dublin Belfast Economic Corridor
Supporting Strategies	Included in the Corporate Plan
Any other relevant information	None provided by local authority.

* The original 2020 budget and the revised 2020 budget is included as there is a significant increase in both income and expenditure due to the re-start grant and the nine month rates waiver scheme.

Collection Rates

	2020	2019	2018	2017	2016	2015	2014
Rate collection rates	93%	97.9%	95.8%	96.1%	95.6%	96.1%	92%
Rent collection rates	79.6%	83.9%	86%	85.7%	89.8%	90.1%	91%
Housing loan collection rates	96.5%	97.7%	101.7%	101.2%	100.1%	97.9%	98%

From records, it is clear that there has been steady growth in rate collections over the years to 2019. Even though it dropped back again in 2020, at 93%, it had the highest collection figures of all local authorities. It is significantly ahead of the national average of 76%.

Rent collections have decreased over the years, dropping from 91% in 2014 to 79.6% in 2020. This is well below the national average of 88.3% for 2020. The 4.3% decrease from 2019 to 2020 was the largest decrease across all local authorities over that period.

Housing loans have remained quite steady since 2014, now standing at 96.5%. That is well above the national average, which is at 79.4% for 2020.

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.

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. From the reports published to date matters relevant to Fingal County Council are outlined in the points below.

NOAC REPORT NOS 44 AND 26

Performance Indicator Reports 2020 and 2019

- **Housing.** Fingal owned 5,479 social housing dwellings at the end of 2020 with 3.38% vacant, compared to a national average of 3.18%. In 2019 Fingal owned 5,375 social houses and had a vacancy rate of 3.07% compared to a national average of 3.15%. Re-letting time and vacancy rates have declined from the 2019 position. In 2020, the average time for rehousing in vacant properties in Fingal was 35.43 weeks, which is higher than the national average of 32.69 weeks. In 2019, the average time for rehousing in vacant properties in Fingal was 32.34 weeks, which was higher than the national average of 28.17 weeks.
- **Environment.** 27% of the County is unpolluted or litter-free (17% in 2019). 47% of the area was slightly polluted (50% in 2019) and 26% was moderately polluted (32% in 2019). The national average figures for being unpolluted or litter-free in 2020 was 22% and 17% for moderately polluted.
- **Green Flag status.** At the end of 2020, 41% of schools in the county held a Green Flag, a decrease from the 48.51% in 2019. The national average in 2020 was 41.83% and 47.96% in 2019.
- **Fire service.** Dublin Fire Brigade provides services for Fingal County Council. It took an average of 1:28 minutes to mobilise fire brigades for calls to fires, a slight improvement over the 1:25 minutes of 2019. It took 1:26 minutes to mobilise in respect of non-fire emergencies, which was the same as 2019.
- **Libraries.** There were an average of 0.85 visits per head of population and 646,138 items issued to library borrowers in 2020. For 2019 the figures were 3.41 visits and 1,067,112 items borrowed. The lower figures for 2020 reflect library closures during that year, owing to COVID.
- **Staff total.** Whole-time equivalent staff employed by Fingal County Council at the end of 2020 was 1,382.84. This compares to 1,354.62 for the end of 2019.
- **Sick leave.** Fingal's medically certified sick leave rate is 2.81% (compared to 3.37% in 2019), making it one of the local authorities which met the public sector sick leave target of 3.5%. Fingal's self-certified sick leave rate was 0.17% in 2020. The national average was 0.20%.
- **Technology & Social media.** In the 2020 Performance indicators, this heading was amended to represent the results as per capita. Previously, this indicator was represented as the total visitors to the local authority website and followers on social media. The per capita total page views of Fingal's websites in 2020 was 5.67, which compares to an average of 15.56 across all local authorities. The per capita total number of followers at the end 2020 of its social media accounts was 0.87, as opposed to an average of 0.81 across all local authorities.

NOAC REPORT NO 22

Performance Indicator Report 2018 – September 2019

- New House building inspections rose from 11.02% in 2014 to 19.97% in 2018. They were 19.51% in 2019 but declined significantly to 12.38% in 2020.
- Cost per capita of the planning service dropped marginally from €36.10 in 2014 to €35.87 in 2018. They were €35.24 in 2019 and €38.09 in 2020.
- The cost of the library service rose from €44.42 in 2014 to €53.08 in 2018. They were €48.16 in 2019 and €52.49 in 2020. This compares to a national average cost of €35.95 across all local authorities in 2020.
- The % of households availing of a 3 bin service increased from 77.87% in 2014 to 80.56% in 2018. It continues to increase to 86.03% in 2019 and 91.90% in 2020.

Full figures for all Performance Indicator reports are included in a table below.

NOAC REPORT NO 18

Customer Satisfaction Survey July 2018

- In 2018, Ipsos MRBI was commissioned by NOAC to conduct a survey among the general public to establish their satisfaction with their local authority. A face-to-face in-home CAPI (Computer Aided Personal Interviewing) methodology is utilised and quota controls ensured that participants were representative of the local authority population by age, gender and social class.
- The first survey, conducted in 2018, surveyed the 10 largest local authorities. The second survey, completed in March 2019, was conducted with the 10 medium sized local authorities and Galway City. The remaining 10 local authorities were surveyed in 2020. Fingal was included in the 2018 survey.

- 58% of respondents were satisfied with Fingal County Council, which was above the average level of satisfaction with all Councils of 53%.
- Fingal's satisfaction rating was highest among these 10 local authorities in the area of playgrounds/parks at a 71% satisfaction rate compared to the average satisfaction rate of 62%.
- Regarding Fingal, 90% of respondents stated that they knew at least a little about their Council, compared to the average of 84%.
- 30% of people felt that Fingal provides good value for money, where the average was 27% across all local authorities.
- 49% of people believe that Fingal is doing a good job, compared to the overall satisfaction rating of 47%.

NOAC REPORT NO 17

Internal Audit in Local Authorities - July 2018

- Local authorities were asked whether the audit committee had conducted an assessment of the adequacy of Internal Audit resources, including staff skills, within the last 2 years. Fingal was one of 17 authorities which had done so.
- The Head of Internal Audit reports directly to the Chief Executive, Audit Committee and Director of Corporate in two local authorities, one of which was Fingal.
- In response to the question as to whether any External Quality Assurance review of Internal Audit has been undertaken, only six local authorities, including Fingal, confirmed that this was the case.

NOAC REPORT NO 12

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

Number of Housing Estates managed by each Local Authority

The local authority with the largest number of dwellings in an estate was South Dublin County Council followed by Dublin City Council and then Fingal with an estate of 304 dwelling units.

Maintenance Provision and Procurement

Local authorities were asked who carried out maintenance work and Fingal (along with Clare and Westmeath County Councils) responded that contractors carry out all maintenance work, while the other authorities all said that it was a mixture of local authority and contract staff.

NOAC REPORT NO 10

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

	2014	2020
Number of Registered Tenancies	19,652	20,801
% Units inspected	2.1	14.1
Inspected Failed %	26.7	95.52

Data from report relates to 2014, data for 2020 taken from Performance Indicator Report.

Performance Indicators	2020		2019		2018		2017		2016		2015		2014	
	Data	Median/Average	Data	Median/Average	Data	Median/Average	Data	Median/Average	Data	Median/Average	Data	Median/Average	Data	Median/Average
H1 Social Housing provided in year per 1,000 population	0.42	0.64	1	1.15	0.96	0.84	0.38	0.53	n/a	3.43	0.64	1.91	0.53	0.80
H2 % of directly provided dwellings vacant at 31/12	3.38	3.18	3.07	3.15	3.63	2.77	1.76	2.73	1.76	3.02	2.39	3.5	2.10	3.8
H3a Average time from vacation date to PI year re-letting date (weeks)	35.43	32.69	32.34	28.17	25.59	27.75	57.77	28.9	20.90	32.99	16.00	28.43	15.00	31.43
H3b Average cost expended on getting re-tenanted units ready for re-letting	€18,543.20	€19,065.30	€14,994.21	€18,336.85	€30,312.50	€18,590.28	€28,878.05	€17,160.60	30,258.26	€15,877	16,382.00	€13,378.40	19,999.00	€11,534.91
H4 Average repair and maintenance cost per unit	€703.95	€1,119.82	€686.81	€1,168.99	€943.04	€841.83	€770.21	€1,311.82	908.28	€1,500.23	948.62	€1,292.57	801.00	€1,272.30
H5 Inspections (Dwellings inspected in 2020) carried out in year as % of registrations	14.1	6.73	16.52	9.93	5.17	7.39	3.84	4.96	1.48	4.36	1.78	5.64	1.76	6.51
R1a % Regional Road KM that ever received a PSCI rating	91.2	77	90.89	99	100	99.36	22	96	99.00	99	98.00	68	0.00	47.9
R1b % Total Regional Road KM with a PSCI rating of 9-10	16.2	31.19	50.44	38.28	47	37.58	46	28	40.00	30	32.00	20	N/A	11.15
R1c % Total Primary Road KM with a PSCI rating of 9-10	10.6	24.00	43.18	23.08	27	23.39	41	20	22.00	13	13.00	11	N/A	6.4



Performance Indicators	2020		2019		2018		2017		2016		2015		2014	
	Data	Median/Average	Data	Median/Average	Data	Median/Average	Data	Median/Average	Data	Median/Average	Data	Median/Average	Data	Median/Average
R1d % Total Secondary Road KM with a PSCI rating of 9-10	12.6	17.66	30.04	17.67	23	15.19	26	14	15.00	10	10.00	8	N/A	4.61
R1e % Total Tertiary Road KM with a PSCI rating of 9-10	10.9	13.93	34.56	14.23	11	12.42	18	8	14.00	7	8.00	5	N/A	3.63
R2a KM Regional Road strengthened using road improvement grants	8.1	14.7	8.8	13.17	19.8	13.4	11.30	10.3	8.40	10.8	18.50	10.2		
R2b KM Regional road resealed using road maintenance grants	0.8	19.4	23.3	14.27	15.8	15.3	19.60	11.9	17.90	12.2	13.70	8.3		
R2/3 % Motor tax transactions performed online	0	81.52		70.21	84.24	69.15	81.17	65.95	78.88	64.05	71.00	56.6	66.31	54.7
W1 % private schemes with water quality in compliance	No data available	No data available	96.05	97.50	97.29	97.1	98.43	98.46	98.65	97.77	96.89	99.07	95.80	97.9
E1 % households availing of a 3-bin service	91.90	89.73	86.03	48.36	39.44	43.91	34.84	39.53	27.53	37.7	21.93	34.87	12.96	31.66
E2 Pollution cases on hand at year end as % of the cases that arose that year	1.35	10.38	8.12	9.28	3.92	11.00	3.47	9.79	19.19	9.91	8.49	8.49		
E3 % area unpolluted or litter free	27	22	17	15.00	15	19.00	4	10	0.00	13	4.00	14	1.00	9.5
P1 New buildings inspected as % of new buildings notified	12.38	15.28	19.51	23.90	43.87	16.75	63.86	17	48.55	19.42	30.46	24	1.76	17.71

Performance Indicators	2020		2019		2018		2017		2016		2015		2014	
	Data	Median/Average	Data	Median/Average	Data	Median/Average	Data	Median/Average	Data	Median/Average	Data	Median/Average	Data	Median/Average
P2 % of determinations that confirmed the decision made by LA	60.42	73.17	79.83	73.07	54.35	75.92	83.72	79	76.47	77.78	73.17	71.88	61.29	71.7
P3 Ratio of planning cases being investigated at year end as to cases closed	9.86	3.74	5.55	2.74	3.07	3.03	2.62	2.41	1.88	2.87	1.78	2.61	2.68	2.88
P4 Cost per capita of the Planning Service	38.09	31.47	35.24	€30.27	27.24	29.24	€26.88	28.31	25.51	€26.96	23.71	€26.76	22.09	€25.27
F1 Cost per capita of Fire Service (based on 2016 Census)	87.21	79.93	84.84	€60.79	31.56	53.85	€36.71	57.74	26.47	€56.07	30.56	€57.88	30.40	€55.9
F2 Average time to mobilise Brigade re Fire (Minutes) (FT)	N/A	1:28	N/A	1:24	N/A	1:42	N/A	1:45	n/a	1.5	N/A	1.6	N/A	1.66
F3 % of Fire Cases in which first attendance is within 10 minutes	73.44	55.30	75.25	55.14	30.25	52.92	41.12	40.45	34.84	57.79	36.72	56.98	38.92	58.6
L1a No. of Library visits per head of population	0.85	1.05	3.41	3.57	3.16	3.50	3.25	3.56	4.01	3.61	4.07	3.68	3.67	3.71
L1b No. of Items borrowed per head of population	2.18	2.19	3.6	3.14	2.12	3.00	1.97	2.92	2.70	3.82	3.02	3.82		
L2 Cost of Library Service per capita	52.49	35.95	48.16	€34.94	21.21	30.52	28.92	31.00	30.43	€30.05	27.64	€30.02	27.00	€29.41
Y1 % of local schools involved in Comhairle na nÓg Scheme	48.57	63.29	42.86	68.30	61.90	80.00	66.67	69.04	48.28	68.07	37.93	67.59	21.57	51.86



Performance Indicators	2020		2019		2018		2017		2016		2015		2014	
	Data	Median/Average	Data	Median/Average	Data	Median/Average	Data	Median/Average	Data	Median/Average	Data	Median/Average	Data	Median/Average
C1 WTE staff per 1,000 population	4.67	6.06	4.57	5.95	3.57	5.99	5.67	5.75	5.48	5.64	5.39	5.58	5.26	5.63
C2a % of paid working days lost to medically certified sick leave in year	2.81	3.01	3.37	3.71	2.98	3.74	4.15	3.74	3.54	3.76	3.28	3.52	3.19	3.34
C2b % of paid working days lost to self-certified sick leave in year	0.17	0.20	0.36	0.36	0.38	0.35	0.40	0.33	0.33	0.38	0.33	0.39	0.34	0.4
C3 LA website page views per 1,000 population	N/A	N/A	7,891.83	16,572	10,820.92	16,210.00	18,187	14,632	17,125.69	12,422	17,857.41	11,666	12,254.81	9,651
C4 Overall cost of ICT Provision per WTE	4,407.98	3,457.02	3,772.85	3,060.84	3,597.68	2,894.57	€2,713.01	€3,048.41	2,685.63	€2,675.69	3,060.96	€2,680.15	3,078.06	€2,646.8
M2a % Commercial Rates Collected in year	93	76	97.9	87	93	86.00	82.0	83	77.00	82.3	75.00	83	65.00	77
M2b % Rent & Annuities Collected in year	79.6	88.3	83.9	89.80	89	89.00	96.0	89	94.00	88.0	89.00	85	87.00	84
M2c % Housing Loans Collected in year	96.5	79.4	97.7	78	73	75.00	78.0	74	74.00	70	78.00	68	77.00	67
J1 LEO jobs output per 1,000 population	-0.7	-0.30	0.37	0.64	0.73	0.77	0.47	0.68	0.62	0.7	0.87	0.66	0.82	0.73



Stage 1 meeting

National Oversight and Audit Commission (NOAC) Meeting with Fingal County Council

Date:	Wednesday 20th October 2021 at 11:00 a.m.	
Attended by:	<p>Alternate Chair</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Declan Breathnach (standing in for NOAC Chair) <p>Secretariat</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Claire Gavin ■ John Goldrick 	<p>By Invite:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ AnnMarie Farrelly, Chief Executive, Fingal County Council ■ John Quinlivan, Director of Services for Corporate Affairs and Governance

NOAC’s profile for Fingal County Council was circulated in advance of the meeting and this formed the basis for the discussion on the day. The NOAC alternate Chair outlined the format of the meetings and invited the CE to give an outline of the Council and the issues facing it. Matters discussed in detail were:

Council area overview

Fingal has forty councillors in its Council and has a large number of younger people in the area. It is close to having many of the characteristics of a city. It has a rural, urban and coastal locations. There are challenges with congestion and housing. Development land is still available in order to deliver economic housing. The staff numbers compares well in the cost per capita but there is a challenge in getting the right skill set for some roles. 77 separate recent recruitment campaigns delivered only 29 staff.

Finance

The nearby Dublin airport is a key benefit to Fingal, and drives economic development, including being a major contributor to the rates base. The rates base was shored up by the rates waiver while the airport was practically closed during the Covid pandemic. Some businesses have been performing well, others poorly in recent times. Rates collection levels will probably be around 80% during that period if you take the waiver out. The Council does not wish to see over-development, which would lead to congestion, amongst other issues.

Tourism

Tourism is important for Fingal, home tourism particularly so during the Covid situation. The parks in the area have been busy during this time. The Council have therefore had to invest additional funds to maintain those parks. Between €3 million - €4 million was spent during recent times on parks and coastal routes.

Re-start grants

Fingal have paid out approximately €30 million in re-start grants. The Council invested heavily in prioritising this area, to ensure that these funds were paid as swiftly as possible, for businesses which were in need. They also provided business supports including additional toilet facilities, bins, cleansing stations and additional outdoor seating areas.

Housing

The government's "Housing for All" housing plan to 2030 will be an important issue for Fingal. The target for social housing delivery will double in 2023. The Council also will work closely with AHBs to deliver units.

Turnaround Times

The turnaround times for bringing vacant units back into the housing stock are slower than the Council had wished for. Over the last three to five years there has been approximately 65 units in this category, which is a small number in the overall picture. A greater focus has been put on completing new stock. Fingal relies on contractors to complete works on the vacant units. At present there are a limited number of contractors who tender for this work, as there is more lucrative work to be found. Getting the utilities in order can add several weeks or months to the process. The Council feels that the 2020 re-housing in vacant properties average time of 35.43 weeks will reduce incrementally. This will be aided by the Council in June 2021 moving to a Choice Based Letting system.

New programmes

Fingal Local Enterprise Office has launched its new 3 year strategic plan 2021 – 2024, for supporting enterprise in the region, during a visit by Minister of State for Business, Employment and Retail, Damien English T.D. Many more businesses have linked in with Fingal County Council online during the Covid pandemic. The mentoring programme is very popular and being able to deliver it online increased the uptake 12 fold. Enterprise Ireland are in discussions on digitisation and climate actions as potential opportunities.

New business

Previously a group of pilots established Simtech Aviation for pilot training. LEO provided supports to this company who went on to win the National Enterprise Award.

Recently the Council were also involved in supporting the work of another company which set up an online business to provide a platform for other smaller businesses who wished to sell products online, but did not have their own online presence.

Greenway initiatives

The Sutton to Malahide Greenway will bring benefits to the villages in the area and be a boon for tourism. Construction work has been completed on the Baldoyle to Portmarnock section of the Greenway and the scheme was opened in June 2020 and has already been a success. Broadmeadow Greenway is at pre construction works stage and the Council hope to be onsite next year to construct this. When completed it will connect Donabate and Malahide with a walkway and cycleway across Broadmeadow Estuary. A challenge with the Greenways is providing services for users along these routes.

Our Balbriggan

€25.4m has been awarded under the Urban Regeneration Development Fund (URDF) for projects associated with the rejuvenation of Balbriggan. The funding will assist with eight projects under the Our Balbriggan Rejuvenation Plan by 2027. Demolition of a large vacant building is due to be completed in 12 weeks.

Rates collections

The Council have a high level of rates collections. This is partially due to having some large rate payers in the area. The well-functioning economy assists in such collection rates. Fingal also has four rate collectors, which is higher than several other Councils, and has the reputation of enforcing its rates collections. Dealing early with issues and providing flexible paying options when necessary also assist.

Staff absenteeism

Fingal pays continued attention to staff sickness rates. There is an occupational consultant within the Council. The 3% absentee rate target hasn't always been adhered to but has largely been achieved. Working remotely has assisted in keeping the sickness rate to a lower level. The Council will continue with its working from home model for the future. Last June Fingal moved to digitalisation in response to the need to work from home and this was largely undertaken during a six to eight week period.

Comhairle na nÓg

The Council has had only a 48.57% participation rate in this area for 2020. This is something which it will prioritise, in the hope of increasing participation rates. Amongst other initiatives, Fingal would like to get inclusion from new communities in this scheme.

Website

Fingal developed a new website, which had an issue with analytics. User numbers could not be tracked for a temporary period, which gave the impression of a lower number of users to the site. This has now been resolved.

Library costs

The library costs have increased steadily and Fingal has one of the highest costs of providing a library service across all local authority areas. The Fingal community places significant value on the library system and so investment in the sector has been strong. The Council invests more in its books than many local authorities. It has thirteen libraries in a relatively small area, which also requires adequate staffing levels. There was an overview of the libraries undertaken seven years ago and the Council is satisfied that its libraries are a vital service for the area, which is efficient and a lean service.

Customer Satisfaction Survey

The Customer Satisfaction Survey 2018 results were favourable overall to the Council. Fingal use these findings to gauge the reaction of the public to what it is doing and to use them for future planning. They do comprehensive surveys themselves to keep an eye on this area.

Homelessness

The DRHE and Fingal works directly with homeless families and through homeless charities. Homeless prevention is a key priority. The homeless charities work well with vulnerable families to try ensure that they don't become homeless. The number of homeless families have gone from approximately 150 to 15 in June 2021. The Council is working on increasing housing supply to ameliorate the situation from that angle with one bed homes being a key priority.

The NOAC alternate Chair thanked the CE for the comprehensive discussion and invited Fingal to present and to attend virtually at a future NOAC meeting, probably in January or February 2023. It was noted that Fingal would be presenting at the NOAC Good Practice Event in November and they also sought clarification regarding the review of the Corporate Plans. They advised that they had put in new measures to improve their plan for 2019-2024. It was advised that the minutes of both meetings would be circulated and agreed and together with any presentation would be published at a future date on the NOAC website.



Stage 2 meeting

National Oversight and Audit Commission (NOAC) Meeting with Fingal County Council

Date:	Tuesday 1st March 2022 at 11:00 a.m.	
Venue:	Virtual meeting using the WebEx platform	
Attended by:	<p>Alternate Chair</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Brian Cawley (standing in for Michael McCarthy, NOAC Chair) <p>Members</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Niall Quinn ▪ Ciarán Hayes ▪ Philomena Poole ▪ Margaret Lane ▪ Noel Harrington <p>Apologies</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Michael McCarthy ▪ Declan Breathnach ▪ Mary Hurley <p>Secretariat</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Claire Gavin ▪ John Goldrick ▪ Darren Browne 	<p>By Invite:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ AnnMarie Farrelly, Chief Executive, Fingal County Council ▪ John Quinlivan, Director of Services for Corporate Affairs and Governance ▪ Nikki Halleran, Administrative Officer

Meeting with Fingal County Council

The alternate Chair, Brian Cawley, explained that as Michael McCarthy, the NOAC Chair, was unable to attend, he would be chairing the meeting in his absence. The alternate Chair welcomed the Chief Executive and her team to the meeting. The Fingal and NOAC teams introduced themselves and following that, the Fingal Chief Executive presented an overview of her Council.

Overview

Fingal has the youngest population in the country and is also in a strong financial position with an impressive rates base. Dublin airport is of great importance, as it contributes heavily to this rates base. The Council has a pressure on it to keep up with the housing demands of this young population. There is a strong focus on land activation from infrastructure at present. The revenue budget for 2022 is was €300 million while the capital programme for 2022 – 2024 is €784 million.

Transport

On the transport side Fingal is very car dependent. However, work on the metro and Bus Connect Dublin projects and an enhanced DART service are continuing with specific town and village plans. Such plans are necessary given the growth in the Fingal area. For instance, Swords will grow to 100,000 people and the Council wishes for this growth to be sustainable. The Council's workforce have had staff increases in the department dealing with the environmental and active travel programme, and to focus on climate action.

Performance Indicators

In the area of Performance Indicators (PIs), Fingal wishes to excel and to communicate well on the work which it has undertaken. The Local Enterprise Offices (LEOs) have proven their importance in recent years. Fingal worked with the CCMA Business Committee on developing the new Economic PI which will be included as a test indicator in the PI 2021 report. The Council ensured that business grants were paid to businesses, both when they were open and closed during the Covid pandemic.

In order to encourage people back into town centres, the Council invested to ensure that these areas were properly managed, for instance to have appropriate Covid signage in place and to actively manage litter.

Fingal's projects

The Fingal Coastal Way is a project which the Council wants to see progressed. This will be from Newbridge Demesne in Donabate to the Fingal County boundary, north of Balbriggan, around 32 kilometres long. Part of its benefit will be to enhance the local tourist economy. €25.4m has been awarded under the Urban Regeneration Development Fund (URDF) for projects associated with the rejuvenation of Balbriggan. The funding will assist with eight projects under the Our Balbriggan Rejuvenation Plan by 2027. Planning will take place in the autumn on recreational amenities including a regional park in Balbriggan similar to the Malahide Park.

In Dublin 15 a €12 million project, the Hole in the Wall Road extension, was completed in December 2021 linking housing and economic quarters. This will help to significantly enhance the local transportation network and ease congestion in the area.

Fingal County Council has commissioned a project to create a Swords Cultural Quarter Masterplan for the area around Swords castle, to be known as Swords Cultural Quarter. This will include a new major central public and civic space, a new Library/Civic Centre building, new landscape interventions in the park and the town and the creation of a Hub or Cultural quarter on North Street/Main Street.

Fingal draft Development Plan 2023 – 2029

Fingal's draft Development Plan 2023 – 2029 was passed in February 2022 and now a phase of public consultation takes place between the 24th of February and 12th May 2022. The Planning Authority envisages that the final Plan will be adopted in February 2023 and will come into effect six weeks later.

The Climate Change Action Plan 2019-2024

The Climate Change Action Plan 2019-2024 (CCAP) was developed in collaboration with the Dublin Local Authorities in partnership with the City of Dublin Energy Management Agency (Codema) and Dublin's Climate Action Regional Office (CARO); and launched in September 2019. Fingal is also very active in working with businesses on the circular economy. Fingal look at what they have and what others are doing to link in with the plan. The Council also works with private home owners also.

Staffing

Staffing is a difficult situation for the Council. It ran over 100 recruitment campaigns in 2021 and made over 300 appointments following on from this. However, due to staff departures within that period, there was only a net gain of 39 people. Around 35% of people refuse the offer of a job, such as architects' roles and likewise on the clerical administrative side. There is a global skills shortage at present and the Council is competing with other local authorities to attract people.

Following on from this overview, the NOAC board members had an opportunity to put questions to the Chief Executive, the main areas of which are outlined below.

Risk

The Council outlined its major risks. Rates collections was an area of concern. There had been a rates waiver and now there is the issue of ensuring that this gets back on track. The Council has collected 92% of its rates in recent times, which is very positive. Another risk includes the rates valuation, which is currently going through the valuations tribunal.

The staffing issue, outlined earlier, is also a risk. The Council is carrying vacancies at present. It is particularly difficult to obtain sufficient staff for specific professional and technical grades. PAS competitions have been run for the past ten years but the process is cumbersome and due to the length of time to offer jobs from them, many of the candidates are no longer available. There is also the staff age profile risk. Many staff were appointed in the 1970s/1980s and there will be a significant number of retirements in the forthcoming years. Again, in staffing, with the return to the office for a minimum of three days per week, there is an issue with a lack of office space. Other risks include trying to ensure that there is sufficient housing for the growing population of the Council area.

Inspections

The Council has increased its numbers of housing inspections, though now has a high failure rate of 95%. This is due to a new method of undertaking inspections using a private firm to carry out the work. Most of the issues are minor, which are then rectified, and the units then pass the inspections. The Council has nearly 5,500 housing units. It also has 3,000 households on HAP and 6,000 on the housing waiting list. The housing stock in some cases require retrofitting. The Council ensures that it covers this thoroughly, to avoid having to do further work shortly afterwards. It dealt with 65 houses last year and has a target of 130 units this year. 70% of the cost is covered by the Department and the balance funded from their own resources. Fingal tries to get the programme done in 9-12 weeks and carefully plans the work to be undertaken. NOAC would consider the innovations in relation to housing delivery initiatives from Fingal as a potential project to showcase at future Good Practice seminars. Fingal has established a cross departmental approach to housing, making sure that infrastructural issues do not delay the launching of new housing units.

Coastal Erosion

Fingal has a long coastline and coastal erosion is a major issue specifically in Portrane where there is authorised and unauthorised development very close to the coastline. Deterioration has been slowed down by some interim emergency measures. The Council is working to ensure all departments and agencies with responsibility in this area work together to establish what's needed in terms of a strategy to manage this serious issue. The Council is pursuing a planning application for permanent coastal erosion prevention works in Portrane. Works already carried out have bought approximately 10 years and no houses are in imminent danger. The Council has also established a new SPC from a strategy point of view to look at a marine strategy in line with the national framework.

Retro-fitting

The Council are completely reliant on the private sector for retro-fitting schemes, given their own staff shortages. Due to construction inflation, and the slow response of companies, it is taking longer and costing the Council more to have this work completed.

Out-sourcing of work

The Council works with the Unions and with the elected members in relation to out-sourcing particular areas of work. Housing maintenance work and bin collections were out-sourced in the past. Water services could potentially give rise to IR issues and the Council would like to see this matter resolved.

Conclusion

The NOAC alternate Chair complemented the Fingal Chief Executive for Fingal's positive PI performance, also outlining that their staff are working in challenging circumstances. He further thanked the Chief Executive for coming in to meet with NOAC and for providing valuable insight into its work.

The minutes of the meeting will be published on the NOAC website at a future date.

The meeting was brought to a close.



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