



National Oversight and Audit Commission (NOAC)
Final Minutes of the Meeting – Tuesday 5th July 2022 at 10 a.m.

Venue: Remote Meeting via WebEx Meeting Platform

Attended by:

Chairperson: Michael McCarthy

Members:	Niall Quinn	Ciarán Hayes
	Declan Breathnach	Philomena Poole
	Margaret Lane	Fiona Quinn
Secretariat:	Claire Gavin	Alan McDermott
	John Goldrick	Deirdre Byrne
	Darren Browne	
Apologies:	Noel Harrington	Brian Cawley

1. Minutes & actions of previous meeting

The minutes of the NOAC main meeting from 24th May 2022 were approved.

2. Declaration of conflict of interest

No conflicts of interest were raised.

3. Matters Arising

There were no matters arising.

4. Work Programme Updates

Chair: Scrutiny Reports

Scrutiny visits took place with Leitrim County Council on 10th of June, Cavan County council on 23rd June and Dublin City Council on 28th June. These on line meetings were informative and covered many relevant topics. It was agreed that a board meeting would take place in October dedicated to carrying out formal Stage 2 meetings with a number of local authorities on the day. Currently there are 4 stage 1's completed. Options will be circulated to members regarding their availability and on the logistics, such as having these meetings in-person or online.

Local Government Governance, Efficiency and Reform Working Group (WG1)

Padraic McElwee, head of the Local Enterprise Office (LEO) network, gave a presentation at the WG1 meeting on 15th June, following on from a questionnaire which had been circulated to the LEOs. The presentation was an informative overview and highlighted to WG1 where there may be gaps for it to explore. It was noted that the head of the LEO network would revert on the accounting and governance framework.

It was advised that WG1 would be engaging with the elected members through separate meetings with the AILG and LAMA later in the year and the process of arranging meetings has begun.

SLAs are also an area under the remit of WG1 and the group are determining which ones will be reviewed in the coming months.

Discussion on the hosting of a mini best practice on Corporate Planning undertaken in conjunction with WG3 in September was raised and it was noted that an update wasn't presented by the Secretariat at the WG1 meeting of 15th June. The Secretariat suggested that, given other work commitments in September/October namely the Performance Indicator Report, the Public Spending Code, the Good Practice event in October, the Chairs of the Audit Committee Workshop on 31st of August, that there was a resource issue for the secretariat but that they have suggested a later date after the Good Practice event in October which was to be part of the DPER Innovation week.. The NOAC Chair agreed with this approach and suggested getting a consensus with the Board on dates. The Board agreed that it would be announced at the Good Practice seminar that there would be a later mini-event on Corporate Planning.

The Board has received documentation on the monitoring report on the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES). In August 2021, the Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly submitted its monitoring report to NOAC. It was highlighted that under legislation, there is an obligation for NOAC to consider the reports and it may make recommendations to the Minister. The NOAC Chair wrote to the Department in February 2022 to clarify NOAC's role in assessing this report. In the May 2022 WG1 meeting, the working group wished to progress the matter, considering that the other Regional Assemblies are due to present their reports this September. One suggested approach was to go out to tender to have the report assessed.

It was noted that the Department has responded to the Chair's letter and the WG1 chair prepared a comprehensive report for the Board prior to the meeting. The floor was opened to the Board for their views.

It was suggested that from an oversight perspective that NOAC would not wish to duplicate work undertaken by the Office of the Planning Regulator (OPR), who would be examining development plans, and the RSES. This view was endorsed by the Board though it was highlighted that there was an obligation to carry out work on the monitoring report and that progress could be made in the meantime, given NOAC's responsibility in this area. The Board agreed that the Secretariat would make contact with the OPR to set up a meeting to discuss these issues.

Performance Indicators Working Group (WG2)

It was noted that the validation process meetings are underway with three meetings completed and a further three remaining. It was highlighted that local authorities were not supplied with the questions in advance in order that the process would be seen to be robust and neutral.

The next priority for WG2 is around the framework, which is in the Work Programme. This involves gathering together all the places where local authorities are accountable to agencies, such as the EPA or the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage. It was noted that there needs to be engagement over the next twelve months.

The relevant board and secretariat members updated the meeting on particular validation visits and it was suggested that a letter of thanks should be sent to Council officials for their thorough preparedness for the process.

There was a debate on the merits of presenting local authorities with the validation questions in advance, on the day, versus presenting the questions at the meeting. It was highlighted that advance questions would allow local authorities to focus on what NOAC were seeking to have answered and this would assist in ensuring that information was available and prevent a situation which occurred,

whereby a local authority was unable to provide an answer to a validation question due to a possible GDPR issue. Additionally, another local authority noted that it was unable to validate a question regarding motor taxation and there was another issue surrounding data on Comhairle na nÓg. These areas may have to be examined to ensure that local authorities could stand over the information which they are presenting to NOAC.

However, it was emphasized that it did not seem appropriate to allow local authorities advance notice of questions in order for NOAC to stand over a more robust process. It was agreed that the process would remain the same for all local authorities to ensure fairness though some questions may be tweaked in order to allow them to be more user friendly.

The Communications and Customer Survey Working Group (WG3)

A tender was issued on the Communications Strategy and this was subsequently awarded to Walsh PR. A meeting took place between WG3, the Secretariat and Walsh PR on 29th June. Clarification was provided on some areas before the process was commenced.

At the next WG1 meeting on 14th September a proposal will be discussed to move the LGMA ICT strategy from WG3 to WG1.

WG3 discussed the recent engagement between NOAC and the LGMA on the Customer Survey. In particular, it was noted that there was some concern surrounding NOAC's role in the process given it does not have full ownership of that process. The LGMA gave a presentation to WG3 in March 2022 and attended a further WG3 meeting on 24th May. WG3 had a discussion surrounding questions it would wish to have included in the survey, the timelines surrounding the survey and the availability of the data. It was raised at the meeting that NOAC would write to the LGMA regarding the prior mentioned questions. Additionally, items such as NOAC's input to the process, climate change and further details surrounding the exclusion of Value for Money aspect were highlighted as items that could be discussed. It was agreed that the NOAC and WG3 Chairs would meet with the LGMA regarding the survey.

Furthermore, there was a discussion regarding the minutes of the WG3 May meeting and action points to be carried out by the Secretariat, particularly surrounding a letter to be sent to the LGMA, and the NOAC Chair advised if there is any issue with minutes the Chair could follow up with the Secretariat.

Financial Management and Performance Working Group (WG4)

As way of update, it was noted that a brief meeting was held on 30th May on the Audit Committee workshop scheduled for 31st August. It was highlighted that it was positive that the Local Government Audit Service (LGAS) would be part of the workshop. The workshop would be useful method of raising the profile of NOAC. Amongst other areas, the topics of risk management, climate change and fleet management could be raised as potential workshop themes at a pre-meeting scheduled for 19th July. It was noted that a Chair from the Audit Committee may also be asked to give an address at the workshop.

5. Work Planning Day Report of the 4th May next steps

A report was previously circulated by the Secretariat and discussed at the last NOAC board meeting. Some recommendations were added to the report on foot of that board meeting and it was noted that the current work plan will finish at the end of 2022. The board were asked by the Secretariat to advise what were the next steps that they wished to see arising from the report.

6. October Stage 2 meetings

This item was covered earlier in the meeting.

7. Date of next meeting

The next meeting will take place on 13th September, followed by meetings on 11th October and 22nd November. It was noted that the online meetings have worked well but the value of in-person meetings were recognized. It was suggested that meetings could begin in a hybrid format from September. It was highlighted that Tuesday and Thursday mornings were not suitable for all members for in-person meetings which could be considered if moving away from online meetings.

8. Any Other Business

The climate issue was raised as an item which needed to be examined seriously. In particular, it was highlighted that all sectors have targets to meet by 2030 but no organisation is looking at climate from an oversight perspective and that further debate needed to be had on the matter. In particular, issues such as housing refurbishment, the measurement of carbon, impacts on procurement processes and that local authorities could have issues in dealing with those challenges. Additionally, it was suggested that climate issues should become part of the remit of each of the NOAC working groups and there was a need to engage the local government sector.

The meeting was brought to a close.

Agenda Item No:	Subject	Action
1.	Minutes and actions of previous meeting.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agreed and will be published on the website.
4.	Work Programme – Chair.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Logistics of the Stage 2 scrutiny meetings with local authorities will be circulated to the members by the Secretariat.
4.	Work Programme – WG1: (LGGER)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The WG will engage with the elected members through separate meetings with the AILG and LAMA later in the year. • SLAs are an area under the remit of WG1 which will be reviewed in the coming months. • The NOAC Chair will liaise with the Secretariat on a date for a Corporate Planning mini-event which would take place after the Good Practice seminar. • The Secretariat will arrange with WG1 Chair a meeting with the OPR to discuss issues relating to the monitoring reports of the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES).
4.	Work Programme – WG2: (PI)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A letter of thanks should be sent to the various Council officials for their thorough preparedness for the validation process.
4.	Work Programme – WG3: (CCS)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The NOAC and WG3 chairs will meet with the LGMA to seek a clarifications for NOAC on its role and input into the annual LGMA Customer Survey.