

NOAC – National Oversight and Audit Commission

Local Authorities – Report on Performance Indicators 2017

The National Oversight and Audit Commission (NOAC) today (28 September 2018) published its report on **Performance Indicators in Local Authorities 2017**.

This is the fourth annual performance indicators report published by NOAC and outlines the activity in 2017 of local authorities in respect of a set of 35 performance indicators prescribed by NOAC. The indicators cover a wide range of the functions carried out by local authorities in the areas of Housing (6), Roads (3), Water (1), Waste/ Environment (3), Planning (5), Fire Service (3), Library/Recreation (2), Youth/Community (2), Corporate (4), Finance (2) and Economic Development (4). The data for the report was collected from local authorities by the Local Government Management Agency on NOAC's behalf.

As well as the indicator details for each of the 31 local authorities, the report contains NOAC's analysis of the 2017 performance outcomes. It also sets out details of the quality assurance review NOAC undertook of six of the indicators by visiting six of the local authorities and highlights key messages and conclusions emerging from the data. The report is available here: <http://noac.ie/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/NOAC-Performance-Indicators-Report-2017.pdf>

Michael McCarthy, NOAC's Chairman, said: 'I'm delighted to have achieved earlier publication of this annual report this year. I hope all the local authorities will review their comparative data against other authorities of a similar profile to identify any opportunities for improving their performance in these functional areas.'

In terms of the overall national indicator data:

Housing

- local authorities had 133,394 dwellings in their ownership, an increase on the 131,375 dwellings of 2016.
- 2.72% of local authority houses were vacant at the year end of 2017 compared to 3% at the end of 2016, compared to 3.5% at end 2015 and 3.8% at end 2014, and 13 local authorities had a vacancy rate of less than 2%.
- in 2017 the average house re-letting time was 28.9 weeks.
- at the end of 2017, there were 5,263 homeless adults in emergency accommodation, an increase of 26% on the number at end 2016.

Roads

- Cork County Council had the highest proportion of regional roads in the county with structural distress (16%) and the lowest proportion with few or no defects (8%).
- 1,557km of local roads were strengthened in 2017 using €114m in Improvement Grants and 1,768km of local roads were resealed using €31.9m of Maintenance Grants.
- since 2013, the proportion of motor tax transactions conducted online has increased by 41.9%. In 2017 72.4% of all motor tax transactions were conducted online.

Water

- 19 local authorities improved their compliance rates with the remaining 12 having poorer results compared to 2016. 4 local authorities had 100% compliance on the samples tested.
- for the fourth year running, private drinking water supplies in Co. Westmeath achieved a 100% compliance rate with the Drinking Water Regulations.

- overall compliance of private drinking water supplies was 97.70%, a very slight dis-improvement on the previous year.

Waste / Environment

- complaints to local authorities relating to pollution rose by 4.57% in 2017.
- 15 authorities increased the litter free portion of their counties.

Planning

- there was a 34% increase in the number of new buildings notified to local authorities in 2017 and a quarter of these new buildings were inspected.
- the average per capita cost of the planning service rose fractionally to €28.31, with Cavan again having the lowest cost for the fourth year at €16.59.
- 1,423 planning decisions were appealed to An Bord Pleanála of which 79.5% of the decisions made by local authorities were confirmed by An Bord Pleanála.

Fire Service

- the cost per capita of providing the fire service was higher in 2017 than the previous year in 18 local authorities. The three authorities with the lowest costs per capita were Carlow (€30.07) Kildare (€30.48) and Westmeath (€31.36).
- 12 authorities have increased the number of fires in which the first fire tender reached the scene in less than 10 minutes.
- in the case of 16 authorities, the number of fires where first fire tender attendance took longer than 20 minutes increased.

Library Service

- there were 16.94m visits to libraries in 2017, a reduction of 1.4% over 2016.
- the average number of library visits per head of population was 3.56, a decline on the 2016 average of 3.61.

Youth / Community

- the number of organisations on the County Register for the Public Participation Network (PPN) at the end of 2017 was 11.87% (13,329 organisation) higher than in 2016.
- 5 authorities achieved 100% involvement of schools in the local youth council scheme in 2017.

Corporate

- total whole-time equivalent staff employed by the local authority sector at the end of 2017 was 27,380.22. This represents an increase of 1.94% or 521.77 staff since 2016.
- The overall medically certified paid sick leave rate for the sector in 2017 was 3.78% representing a slight increase on the 2016 rate of 3.76%.
- there were a total of 69.68m page views of local authority websites, an increase of 17.8% from 2016 and a 46.4% increase in followers of social media pages of local authorities to a total of 1.7m in 2017.

Finance

- The same 13 authorities as in 2016 had a deficit on the Revenue Account at the year-end 2017. Of these 13, Mayo and Monaghan increased their deficit balance from 2016 by €599,456 and €158,291 respectively.
- the average per capita expenditure was €897.89. The lowest was Meath at €534.19 and the highest was Limerick City and County at €1,813.78.
- Fingal had the highest collection performance at 96.10% of commercial rates collected and Donegal had the lowest collection performance at 74.30% collected.
- Across the authorities variations on the 2017 Housing Loan collection levels ranged from a decrease of 5 percentage points to an increase of 8 percentage points recorded by Dún Laoghaire Rathdown and Cork City

respectively. In all, 22 authorities either maintained or improved collection performance for this revenue source in 2017.

Economic Development

- The total number of jobs created nationally in 2017 with the assistance of the Local Enterprise Offices (LEOs) was 3,252 which is a decrease of 3.08% on the number of jobs created with LEO assistance in 2016.
- The total number of trading on -line voucher applications approved by LEOs increased from 1,141 in 2016 to 1,189 in 2017, however the number of vouchers that were actually drawn down decreased from 658 in 2016 to 546 in 2017.
- Galway City Council and Galway, Clare and Longford County Councils all confirmed there was no designated Tourism Officer in place in the council in 2017.

The detailed results for each indicator are provided in section 3 and appendix 2. The Local Government Management Agency commentary is at appendix 3.

NOTES FOR EDITORS

NOAC (the National Oversight and Audit Commission) was established under the Local Government Reform Act 2014 to provide independent scrutiny of local government performance in fulfilling national, regional and local mandates. One of its functions is to scrutinise performance of local government bodies against relevant indicators and this is the third annual performance indicator report published by NOAC in relation to that function.

Since its establishment, NOAC has examined a range of areas of local authority activity, resulting in the publication of 19 reports to date. For further information on NOAC, including all reports published to date, see www.noac.ie.

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