



Clare County Council Scrutiny Report

NOAC Report No. 39 - 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 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 and 2020.

Clare County Council had their Stage 1 meeting in October 2019 and their Stage 2 meeting virtually due to COVID restrictions in June 2020. 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. NOAC acknowledged that the team effort was what contributed to Clare County Council winning the Best Local Authority award in 2018 and the positive impact this award had on the staff and its citizens.





Clare County Council Scrutiny Process

1.	Clare County Council Profile June 2020	7
2.	Stage 1 meeting October 2019 - Minutes	16
3.	Stage 2 Meeting June 2020- Minutes	20
4.	Stage 2 Presentation	23





1

NOAC Profile Clare County Council

June 2020

Contents

General Information	8
Council Mission Statement	8
Staffing	8
Budget	8
Collection rates	8
Homelessness	9
Housing Information	9
Economic Forum (CEF)	9
The Local Enterprise Office	9
Retail Incentives	9
Shared services	10
Regional Issues including new developments and initiatives	10
Chambers Ireland Award 2018	10
The Corporate Plan	10
NOAC Reports overview	11
NOAC Report no 22 - Performance Indicator Report 2018 - September 2019	11
NOAC Report No 21 - Local Authority Satisfaction Survey 2019- July 2019	12
NOAC Report No 19 - Performance Indicator Report 2017 - September 2018	12
NOAC Report No 17 - Internal Audit in Local Authorities - July 2018	12
NOAC Report No 16 - Review of 2015 Statutory Audit Reports to the Members of Local Authorities – June 2018	13
NOAC Report No 12 - A Review of the Management and Maintenance of Local Authority Housing - May 2017	13
NOAC Report No 10 - A Review of Local Authority Performance of Private Rented Houses Regulations Functions - October 2016	13
Performance Indicators 2014-2017 table	14





Clare County Council General Information

Population:	118,627 (2016 census)		
Area:	3,450km²		
Municipal Districts:	Four (Killaloe; Shannon; Ennis and West Clare)		

COUNCIL MISSION STATEMENT

Our mission is to enhance the quality of life in County Clare through leadership and Partnership.

Staffing

Number employed	@ 31/12/2018 WTE 778.75
WTE Staff per 1,000 population	2018 = 0.15

Percentage of paid working days lost to medically certified sick leave

2015	3.44%
2016	2.95%
2017	3.05%
2018	3.29%

Budget

2018	€111,271,182 (€938pp)	
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Collection Rates

	2018	2017	2016	2015	2014
Rate collection rates	87%	86%	84%	82%	75%
Rent collection rates	85%	84%	86%	87%	86%
Housing loan collection rates	69%	66%	60%	58%	61%





Clare's collection of commercial rates stands at 87%. It is positive when compared with the collection figure of 75% for 2014. Clare's collection rates over the years have been better than national average figures.

The collection of rents has remained fairly static over the period, at 86% in 2014 and at 85% in 2018.

Clare recorded a substantial increase in the collection of home loans (8%) over the period, from 61% in 2014 to 69% in 2018.

Homelessness

Number of adult Individuals classified as homeless and in emergency accommodation on 31/12/2018 was 62.

Housing Information at 31/12/18

Local Authority Stock number	2,486
HAP Tenancies	388
Vacant Stock	3.66%
Cost of re-letting stock	€27,235

Economic Forum (CEF)

The Clare Economic Advisory Group includes representatives of Clare County Council, LIT, UL, IDA Ireland, Enterprise Ireland, Shannon Group and private enterprise. The Chair is the Chief Executive of Clare County Council Pat Dowling. The key targets of the Group, is the expansion of the Clare campus of the University of Limerick, the development of a conference centre within the county, securing Shannon Airport as the designated airport for the Wild Atlantic Way, and promoting indigenous industry in rural areas. The Group will develop and implement an ambitious Economic Strategy that seeks to maximise the county's economic assets. In the area of Economic Development, Clare County Council, working in partnership with the University of Limerick, progressed a proposal to explore opportunities for a significant 'SDZ/Enterprise hub' development centred on a green field site adjacent to the planned Limerick Northern Distributor Road known as the "University Hinterland" in Clare. In addition, Clare County Council in 2018 began extensive consultations on the Ennis 2040 Economic and Spatial Strategy, a long-term plan aimed at informing and driving the economic, social and physical development of Ennis as an investment location and place to live.'

The Local Enterprise Office

Supports local enterprises through grant assistance, training programmes, seminars, workshops and mentoring. Current staff complement of six. 104 jobs were created in 2018, a reduction from the 117 in 2017. In 2018, LEO Clare paid out approximately €700,000 in grant aid to 44 businesses across the County. LEO Clare also grant aided 33 businesses for Trading Online Vouchers, facilitated businesses throughout the County through a comprehensive Training and Development Programme, and hosted the Student Enterprise Programme, the Clare stage of Ireland's Best Young Entrepreneur (IBYE) and the Clare Women in Business Network.

Retail Incentives

The Clare County Development Plan 2017-2023 has a specific objective (CDP6.15) "to favourably consider the redevelopment of brownfield sites and disused agricultural or commercial buildings in urban and rural areas for industrial, enterprise or cultural developments subject to normal planning considerations".

The Long Term Vacant Property Incentive Scheme seeks to encourage businesses to occupy long term vacant commercial premises that have been previously occupied for commercial rates purposes.

The purpose of the scheme is to give an incentive to business owners to occupy vacant premises by lowering entry costs through support and a grant related to the level of rates payable on the property.

Ennis Chamber & Clare County Council LEO office launched an Ennis Retail brochure in 2016 to give a sense of the opportunity Ennis presents as a location for a new or expanding business.



Shared services

Clare Co Co do not deliver any services on a Shared Service basis, but would have examples of working in collaboration with authorities in the region on a number of initiatives:

- Lough Derg Blueway Managed by a Steering Committee comprising the Lough Derg Marketing Group, Clare County Council, Tipperary County Council and Waterways Ireland, the Blueway aims to build on the existing tourism and recreational infrastructure as well as improve economic activity surrounding the Blueway on Lough Derg by working with communities in the towns and villages in its hinterland.
- Regional development of General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) Strategy & Policies (Limerick & Tipperary).
- Limerick City Council, as Lead Authority manage the Munster Regional Communications Centre (MRCC) on behalf of the Fire Authorities in Munster. MRCC provides emergency call-taking and mobilisation services for the local authority fire services (Clare, Limerick, Tipperary, Kerry, Waterford, Cork City & Cork County) in the Munster region.
- Clare Co Co has a Section 86 arrangement with Limerick City and County for the delivery of the Food Safety Service Agreement (This is a National agreement with the Food Safety Authority of Ireland.

Regional Issues including new developments and initiatives

Some examples of priority actions from Clare Co Co Management Team Plan 2018 to 2020:

- Development of Strategic Development Zone (SDZ) for the South Clare Economic Corridor to include a Masterplan for same including the re-opening of the Errina Canal.
- Engage and build relationships with key economic agencies, Government Departments, the IDA and Enterprise Ireland (IE) and all stakeholders to drive and maximize the economic activity in County Clare and along the Atlantic Economic Corridor (AEC).
- Ensure that Shannon Town and International Airport is a driver of regional prosperity by harnessing its strategic location and access on the Atlantic Corridor in addition to its employment base and other competitive advantages. This will include the development of a socio-economic plan for Shannon Town Centre.
- Prepare a Climate Change Adaptation Strategy for Clare in association with the Regional Climate Change Team (Atlantic Seaboard South).
- Facilitate the roll-out of the Government's National Broadband Plan in County Clare.
- Maintain, promote and continue to develop the hi-speed broadband enterprise hubs and provide free open WiFi access in public spaces in 5 towns across the County.
- Put in place an agreed Tourism Strategy by the end of June 2019.

Chambers Ireland Award 2018

Chambers Ireland, in association with the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government, naming Clare County Council as "local authority of the year" at its annual Excellence in Local Government Awards.

The Corporate Plan

The Corporate Plan 2019-2024 was adopted by Clare County Council at the December 2019 Council meeting. This is also available on the Council's website.



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 22 reports published to date matters relevant to Clare County Council are outlined in the points below.

NOAC REPORT NO 22

Performance Indicator Report 2018 – September 2019

Housing

Clare County Council owned 2,486 social housing dwellings at end of 2018 with 3.66% vacant, very similar to the 3.11% vacant in 2014. The average time for rehousing in vacant properties was 31.55 weeks, which has remained steady for several years (32.77 weeks in 2016). The 31.55 weeks compares to the national average time for rehousing in 2018 at 27.75 weeks.

Environment

98.69% of drinking water in private schemes were in compliance with statutory requirements. This was above the average of 97.06%. 21% of the County is unpolluted or litter-free, 72% is classified as slightly polluted and 7% moderately polluted.

Brown bins

Clare's brown bin uptake is 67.24%. This has been steadily rising since 2014, when the uptake was at 43.79%. The national average figure is 43.91% in 2018.

Green Flag status

At the end of 2018, 2,037 schools held a Green Flag, representing 51.41% of all schools nationally and in Clare 45.45% of schools in the county held a Green Flag.

Fire service

It took an average of 5:37 minutes to mobilise part time fire brigades for calls to fires and 5:25 minutes in respect of non-fire emergencies. Both figures have improved on their 2017 times of 5.53 and 5.83 respectively. The cost per capita for this service has increased in 2018 to €50.64 from €49.51 in 2017.

Library Service

In Clare there was an average of 3.38 visits per head of population and 405,736 items issued to library borrowers in 2018. This compares to of 3.35 visits in 2016, with 536,584 items borrowed in that year.

Staffing

Whole-time equivalent staff employed by CCC at the end of 2018 was 778.75, significantly below the mean for all local authorities at 913.16. Clare's wtes have been increasing over the years and have risen from 2014 where this figure was 712.81.

Sick leave

In Clare the average medically certified paid sick leave rate was 3.29%, meaning that it was one of the 11 local authorities which met the public sector sick leave target of 3.5%. The national average was 3.78%. The average self-certified paid sick leave was 0.27% in Clare. The national average was 0.35%.



■ Technology & Social media

The total page views of local authority websites in 2018 amounted to 77.21m. In 2017 the figure was 69.68m. Total social media users at end 2018 were 2.38m. This is an increase of 35.78% on the 2017 figure. The total page views of the CCC website in 2018 was 1,704,688. Total followers of CCC social media channels at end 2018 were 180,697. Local authorities showed an increase in the percentage of motor tax transactions dealt with online, ranging from 54.68% to 85.63%. The percentage of motor tax transactions dealt with online in Clare was 68.43%.

Creating Jobs.

The total number of jobs created nationally in 2018 with the assistance of the Local Enterprise Offices (LEOs) was 3,656, which is an increase of 12.44% on the number of jobs created with LEO assistance in 2017. In Clare 104 jobs were created in 2018, a reduction from the 117 in 2017.

NOAC REPORT NO 21

Customer Satisfaction Survey July 2019

In 2019, 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 are representative of the Local Authority population by age, gender and social class.

The second survey, conducted in 2019, surveyed 11 LAs including Clare County Council.

- 69% of respondents were satisfied with Clare County Council, far above the average level of satisfaction with Councils, which was 56%.
- Clare's satisfaction rating was highest in the category of local authority doing a good job, at 60% satisfaction compared to the average satisfaction rate of 51% among all Councils.
- 40% of people felt that Clare provides good value for money. This was much greater than the 28% average for all Councils.

NOAC REPORT NO 19

Performance Indicator Report 2017 – September 2018

- New House building inspections rose significantly from 12.94% in 2014 to 25.20% in 2017 but fell back considerably the following year (16.55% in 2018).
- Cost per capita of the planning service fell from €34.53 in 2014 to €30.63 in 2017 (€33.30 in 2018).
- The cost of the library service rose from €35.07 in 2014 to €36.21 in 2017 (€37.08 in 2018).
- Motor tax on line transactions have improved from 51.85% in 2014 to 65.44% in 2017. (68.43% in 2018). There has been a steady increase in the uptake for this service over the years and the performance compares closely to the national average of 65.95% in 2017 (69.15% in 2018).
- Complaints to local authorities relating to pollution rose by 4.57% in 2017. The cases relate to all pollution types, including air, noise, water, litter and waste. Complaints increased for 18 authorities with the most significant being a 27.41% increase in the number of pollution complaints made in Clare.

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

NOAC REPORT NO 17

Internal Audit in Local Authorities - July 2018

- It was noted from this report that Clare County Council Internal Audit unit was working well according to the local government audit report at that time.
- All Internal Audit staff have an on-going training plan in place.
- Local authorities were asked whether the audit committee had assessed the adequacy of Internal Audit resources, including staff skills, within the last 2 years. 17 authorities had done so and 14 had not done so. Clare County was one of the 14.





NOAC REPORT NO 16

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

Auditors drew specific attention concerning the reduction in housing loans and rent collections in 6 authorities and Clare County Council was one of these. The Council reported that many of the housing loans cases have secondary debt with judgement mortgages and other charges registered against the properties and that social issues exacerbate the problem. Collection yields had improved to 60% in 2016.

NOAC REPORT NO 12

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

Prioritising the refurbishment of housing in high demand areas was another method being used by local authorities to minimise vacancies. Dublin City Council, Clare, Donegal, Leitrim, Roscommon and Sligo County Councils all said that this was an approach that they employed.

Clare County Council has a tenants' handbook that outlined the Council's estate maintenance responsibilities. Clare advised that contractors carry out all maintenance work and a specific response time for contractors is set. This information about actual response times is made available to tenants generally. In Clare County Council the level of satisfaction is reviewed in the course of Clerk of Works inspections and also as part of the estate management role. It also reported preparing cost estimates for all jobs. There are also 95 estates in Clare.

NOAC REPORT NO 10

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

26 local authorities said that they 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. The average expenditure was €11.74 per tenancy. Average cost for inspection was €178 with the median of €203 and the cost in Clare was €254 per property.

In relation to compliance rates for Clare, 100% of all emergency inspections and 90% of planned inspections were non-compliant with standards regulations. It was noted that 9.9% of all rented properties in Clare were inspected and a non-compliance/failure rate of 69.6% was recorded. There are 4,400 registered tenancies in Clare and there is no written policy for undertaking inspections. Staff training is provided to Inspection staff.

	2014	2018
Number of Registered Tenancies	4,400	5,093
% Units inspected	9.9	10.60
Inspected Failed %	69.6	90.93

Data from report relates to 2014, data for 2018 taken from Performance Indicator Report



	Performance Indicators	2018		2017	
		Data	Median/	Data	Median/
			Average		Average
H1	Social Housing provided in year per 1,000 population	0.66	0.84	0.72	0.53
H2	% of directly provided dwellings vacant at 31/12	3.66	2.77	3.93	2.73
НЗа	Average time from vacation date to PI year re-letting date (weeks)	31.55	27.75	32.66	28.9
H3b	Average cost expended on getting re-tenanted units ready for re-letting	€27,234.55	€18,590.28	€24,657.69	€17,160.60
H4	Average repair and maintenance cost per unit	€952.54	€841.83	€954.87	€1,311.82
H5	Inspections (Dwellings inspected in 2016) carried out in year as $\%$ of registrations	10.60	7.39	9.76	4.96
R1a	% Regional Road KM that ever received a PSCI rating	100	99.36	86	96
R1b	% Total Regional Road KM with a PSCI rating of 9-10	34	37.58	20	28
R1c	% Total Primary Road KM with a PSCI rating of 9-10	16	23.39	12	20
R1d	% Total Secondary Road KM with a PSCI rating of 9-10	14	15.19	17	14
R1e	% Total Tertiary Road KM with a PSCI rating of 9-10	12	12.42	9	8
R2a	KM Regional Road strengthened using road improvement grants	13.6	13.4	10.90	10.3
R2b	KM Regional road resealed using road maintenance grants	17.7	15.3	19.00	11.9
R2/3	% Motor tax transactions performed online	68.43	69.15	65.44	65.95
W1	% private schemes with water quality in compliance	98.69	97.1	99.08	98.46
E1	% households availing of a 3-bin service	67.24	43.91	63.11	39.53
E2	Pollution cases on hand at year end as % of the cases that arose that year		11.00	14.01	9.79
E3	% area unpolluted or litter free	21	19.00	10	10
P1	New buildings inspected as % of new buildings notified	16.55	16.75	25.20	17
P2	% of determinations that confirmed the decision made by LA	80	75.92	90.00	79
P3	Ratio of planning cases being investigated at year end as to cases closed	4.90	3.03	5.85	2.41
P4	Cost per capita of the Planning Service	33.3	29.24	€30.63	28.31
F1	Cost per capita of Fire Service (based on 2011 Census for 2014 and 2015)	50.64	53.85	€49.51	57.74
F2	Average time to mobilise Brigade re Fire (Minutes) (FT)	N/A	1.42	N/A	1.45
F3	% of Fire Cases in which first attendance is within 10 minutes	32.27	52.92	40.45	40.45
L1a	No. of Library visits per head of population	3.38	3.50	3.33	3.56
L1b	No. of Items borrowed per head of population	3.41	3.00	3.41	2.92
L2	Cost of Library Service per capita	37.08	30.52	36.21	31.00
Y1	% of local schools involved in Comhairle na nÓg Scheme	78.95	80.00	78.95	69.04
C1	WTE staff per 1,000 population	6.55	5.99	6.26	5.75
C2a	% of paid working days lost to medically certified sick leave in year	3.29	3.74	3.05	3.74
C2b	% of paid working days lost to self-certified sick leave in year	0.27	0.35	0.27	0.33
C3	LA website page views per 1,000 population	14,347.17	16,210.00	14588	14,632
C4	Overall cost of ICT Provision per WTE	2882.10	2894.57	€2,864.44	€3,048.41
M2a	% Commercial Rates Collected in year	87.00	86.00	86.0	83
M2b	% Rent & Annuities Collected in year	85.00	89.00	84.0	89
M2c	% Housing Loans Collected in year	69.00	75.00	66.0	74
J1	LEO jobs output per 1,000 population	0.88	0.77	0.98	0.68

Per population based on census figures for 2016 (118,817 in 2016)



	Performance Indicators	20	16	20	15	20	14
		Data	Median/	Data	Median/	Data	Median/
			Average		Average		Average
H1	Social Housing provided in year per 1,000 population	n/a	3.43	3.16	1.91	0.84	0.80
H2	% of directly provided dwellings vacant at 31/12	3.84	3.43	4.34	3.5	3.11	3.8
H3a	Average time from vacation date to PI year re-letting	32.77	32.99	33.19	28.43	43.61	31.43
ПЗа	date (weeks)	32.77	32.77	33.17		43.01	31.43
H3b	Average cost expended on getting re-tenanted units ready for re-letting	17.862.12	€15,877	15,986.89	€13,378.40	9,095.54	€11,534.91
H4	Average repair and maintenance cost per unit	794.68	€1,500.23	672.48	€1,292.57	551.32	€1,272.30
H5	Inspections (Dwellings inspected in 2016) carried out in year as % of registrations	10.30	4.36	8.51	5.64	8.89	6.51
R1a	% Regional Road KM that ever received a PSCI rating	98.00	99	40.00	68	100.00	47.9
R1b	% Total Regional Road KM with a PSCI rating of 9-10	22.00	30	10.00	20	18.00	11.15
R1c	% Total Primary Road KM with a PSCI rating of 9-10	17.00	13	10.00	11	17.00	6.4
R1d	% Total Secondary Road KM with a PSCI rating of 9-10	13.00	10	7.00	8	6.00	4.61
R1e	% Total Tertiary Road KM with a PSCI rating of 9-10	7.00	7	3.00	5	8.00	3.63
R2a	KM Regional Road strengthened using road	13.40	10.8	9.00	10.2		
	improvement grants						
R2b	KM Regional road resealed using road maintenance grants	13.30	12.2	14.10	8.3		
R2/3	% Motor tax transactions performed online	63.24	64.05	57.14	56.6	51.85	54.7
W1	% private schemes with water quality in compliance	99.37	97.77	99.05	99.07	99.20	97.9
E1	% households availing of a 3-bin service	57.50	37.7	49.82	34.87	43.79	31.66
E2	Pollution cases on hand at year end as % of the cases that arose that year	6.21	9.91	8.60	8.49		
E3	% area unpolluted or litter free	14.00	13	15.00	14	10.00	9.5
P1	New buildings inspected as % of new buildings notified	20.40	19.42	27.27	24	8.89	17.71
P2	% of determinations that confirmed the decision made by LA	58.97	77.78	84.85	71.88	44.00	71.7
Р3	Ratio of planning cases being investigated at year end as to cases closed	3.58	2.87	6.30	2.61	2.67	2.88
P4	Cost per capita of the Planning Service	30.41	€26.96	30.53	€26.76	34.53	€25.27
F1	Cost per capita of Fire Service (based on 2011 Census for 2014 and 2015)	50.66	€56.07	44.14	€57.88	44.13	€55.9
F2	Average time to mobilise Brigade re Fire (Minutes) (FT)	n/a	1.5	N/A	1.6	N/A	1.66
F3	% of Fire Cases in which first attendance is within 10 minutes	44.86	57.79	40.42	56.98	44.70	58.6
L1a	No. of Library visits per head of population	3.35	3.61	3.92	3.68	3.93	3.71
L1b	No. of Items borrowed per head of population	4.52	3.82	4.73	3.82		
L2	Cost of Library Service per capita	34.39	€30.05	34.31	€30.02	35.07	€29.41
Y1	% of local schools involved in Comhairle na nÓg	84.21	68.07	77.78	67.59	66.67	51.86
C1	Scheme WTE staff per 1,000 population	6.05	5.64	6.14	5.58	6.08	5.63
C2a	% of paid working days lost to medically certified sick	2.95	3.76	3.44	3.52	2.98	3.34
	leave in year						
C2b	% of paid working days lost to self-certified sick leave in year	0.25	0.38	0.24	0.39	0.28	0.4
C3	LA website page views per 1,000 population	14,892.90	12,422	12,677.69	11,666	12,363.90	9,651
C4	Overall cost of ICT Provision per WTE	2,058.82	€2,675.69	2,261.37	€2,680.15	2,855.68	€2,646.8
M2a	% Commercial Rates Collected in year	84.00	82.3	82.00	83	75.00	77
M2b	% Rent & Annuities Collected in year	86.00	88.0	87.00	85	86.00	84
M2c	% Housing Loans Collected in year	60.00	70	58.00	68	61.00	67
J1	LEO jobs output per 1,000 population	1.10	0.7	0.87	0.66	1.84	0.73







Stage 1 meeting

NOAC profile meeting with Clare County Council

Date:	30 October 2019	
Venue:	Ennis County Clare	
Venue: Attendees:	 Clare County Council Pat Dowling, Chief Executive Liam Conneally, DOS Economic Development Carmel Kirby, Director of Services, Physical Development Anne Haugh, Director of Services, Social Development Noeleen Fitzgerald, Assistant Head of Finance Jason Murphy, Senior Executive Officer, Human Resources Niamh O'Connor, Administrative Officer, Corporate Service - meeting administrator 	NOAC Michael McCarthy, Chair Claire Gavin, Secretariat

Clare County Council profile information was issued by NOAC in advance of the meeting and this formed the basis for the discussion on the

Pat Dowling CE welcomed NOAC and gave an overview of the Council, outlining that there is a new structure in place where the political and executive structures are aligned. This allows for the corporate planning structure to be aligned with the management structure. Concentration for the Council is on the delivery of large-scale strategic objectives.

The new structure aligns with new and key objectives. The next phase in this process is to restructure the area offices and four SEOs will be assigned to the four municipal districts. Since the abolition of town Councils there is one system in the county, which allows for the streamlining of processes. The Council has 28 elected members. The CE's reports at the Council meetings are very detailed and this allows people to know exactly what is happening.





Matters discussed in detail were: -

PI Performance 2018

Housing

Clare is one of the only authorities that has a planned maintenance programme in place. A complete condition survey on all their stock was carried out and initial priority and statutory compliance works have been estimated to cost an average of €5,500 per unit with ongoing annual maintenance costs over a 30 year lifecycle estimated at €1,600 per unit. This project was funded through a €10m loan facility raised by Clare County Council. They are participating in a national working group of the CCMA and engaging with the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government on a proposal to transition to a planned maintenance approach across the sector. While the expectation is that it will have some impact on turnaround times, this work may not show improvements on the recorded figures for a number of years. All maintenance work is contracted out and allocations teams are notified to start the process once a house becomes vacant. All their stock will have Phase 1 and Phase 2 energy efficient works completed by early 2020. New housing will have new heating systems in place but existing stock will still use traditional heating methods which would have been upgraded as necessary to achieve the minimum BER rating required under the energy efficiency programme. The air to water systems in new stock will require higher maintenance costs and more training for tenants on the use of these more complex systems.

Economy/Jobs

The Council discussed the recent announcement of the loss of 500 jobs at Molex. It will have a big impact on the area. It is noteworthy that other firms are expanding and hiring in the mid-west region. There is a strong tradition of work collaboratively established in the region and the various bodies are looking at what skills are in the region and how they can be best used as well as identifying what skills are required.

Green Flags Status. 85% of schools in fact do have this award but the metrics used for the PI report did not reflect this fact. The Council reaffirmed the figure following the data in the PI 2018 report, which recorded 45.45% of schools having it. It felt that perhaps the metrics used or the information requested should be reviewed for the next PI report. It was agreed that this matter would be reported back to the PI Subgroup.

Social Media/Communications

The Council has a communications officer in place and the social media platforms are very active. The county has five digital hubs that are well used. They believe they still have work to do on branding, educating and creating awareness. For on-line motor tax a campaign was carried out, it showed people how to do it and explained it to them. It plans to grow its services at local level through the municipal district offices.



NOAC Customer Satisfaction Report 2019

Clare's performance at higher than average in 4 out of the 5 most important categories was noted and discussed. The performance overall was very positive and the Council acknowledged that this is important to them and that they continue to strive to achieve high performance.

Chambers Ireland Award 2018

The 2018 award of best local authority was very positive for the Council. The achievement was a great way of recognising and thanking staff for their contribution.

Retail Incentives

The Council had run a number of incentives to encourage the use of vacant units. There was a slow uptake initially, however this has improved. The incentive with rates is now linked in with LEO office for grants, advice and consultancy.

Rates

The commercial rates for the year are in the region of €43m with one business ESB Moneypoint making up approximately one quarter of this figure. There is concern going forward about this figure and other businesses, some of which are due to close next year. It leaves the county vulnerable and with revaluations it may give the impression that it is too expensive to do business in Clare. The closure of Moneypoint in 2025 has been on-going for the last 3 years, however with Government plans this could be sooner. The Council are eager to avoid a crisis and careful planning with the relevant Government Departments has commenced.

Rates revalution process due to be completed in 2020/2021 will need to take account of the potential loss of the €11m from Moneypoint and this cannot be borne by existing rate payers.

Wind farms/Solar farms/off shore planning

It was acknowledged that planning for all wind farms can be controversial. The Council have been proactive in identifying where farms would be suitable and have designated areas in their development plans. This proactive approach looks at factors such as wind speed, visual impact and the community value before designation. There is an excellent network grid in place due to Moneypoint. The Council are looking at marine planning and the expansion of the county area 5km into the sea. There is a submission with Government on this with the idea to harvest wind and wave energy. Clare feeds into super high power lines and this is an innovate approach and could provide options and assist in the reduction/elimination of fossil fuels in Moneypoint. The leglislation around rating of offshore wind farms needs to be revisited.

Transportation Strategy & Economic Strategies

There is a need to have proper transportation links with Limerick, Ennis and Shannon and strategies for links need to align with broader Government Strategies. The National Planning Framework 2018 and the Regional Strategies 2020 are not aligned. Once off planning is not allowed in the county, however the fast track planning applications granted can be out of line with the National Planning framework and regional policies. These might also in cases not feed into city and county development plans, creating a policy vacuum. It was suggested that this is an area that NOAC could review to reduce the significant disconnect that appears to exist. Clare CC suggest that the whole area of density and the metrics of measurement needs to be considered.



Water

Issues exist regarding some wastewater schemes that Irish Water, the CRU and the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government will not fund was raised by Clare CC. It is impacting on local development. There is a need to keep towns and villages alive but this cannot be done if the areas are not serviced. In order to see growth, these towns and villages need to be serviced. Funds need to be provided to ensure that there is proper sewers and public water systems in place. Under Water Legislation the local authority is not responsible but the reality is different.

Conclusion

NOAC Chair thanked the CE and the members of the team for the comprehensive and engaging discussion and invited Clare CC to present when attending the full NOAC meeting on 3rd of March or 7th of April 2020 at 11am in the Custom House. Mr Dowling accepted the invitation and agreed to confirm the date shortly.







Stage 2 meeting

National Oversight and Audit Commission Meeting with Clare County Council

Date:	23 June 2020
Venue:	Virtual meeting bt Webex
Attendees:	Chair: Michael McCarthy
Attendees:	 Chair: Michael McCarthy Members: David Holohan Martina Moloney Constance Hanniffy Sharon O'Connor Michael McGreal Tara Buckley Secretariat: John F McCarthy Claire Gavin Colin Flood John Goldrick
	 Darren Browne By Invite: Pat Dowling - Chief Executive Anne Haugh - Director of Service, Social Directorate Carmel Kirby - Director of Service, Physical Directorate Liam Conneally- Director of Service, Economic Directorate Leonard Cleary - Director of Service, Rural Directorate Tom Kirby - Chair of Audit Committee Noeleen Fitzgerald- Head of Finance, HR and Support Services Ann Reynolds - Acting Senior Executive Officer, Corporate Services





Meeting with Clare County Council

The Chair welcomed the Chief Executive and team to the meeting. In advance of the meeting, the CE sent in a presentation on Clare County Council, which was circulated to members. Although the presentation was not made on the day, it has been accepted for the record. However, an overview on its current position was given, particularly with reference to the impact of COVID on the Council, its citizens, businesses and employment in the area.

Following on from this, the NOAC board members put questions to the Council, the main areas of which are outlined below.

Performance Indicators

The Council was praised for its overall performance in the area of Performance Indicators, including the improved uptake in the 3-bin figures.

Green Flags Status - A discussion was held around the calculation of the Green Flag Status.

Housing

It was noted that at 31.55 weeks, the housing vacancy periods were quite high. The Council have discussed this issue with Monaghan County Council, who have the lowest vacancy rates. The initial aim was to reduce the vacancy periods by eight weeks. Unfortunately, the COVID situation has caused difficulties with this plan. However, Clare have managed to improve energy efficiency in all their homes and are ahead of the rest of authorities in the Dept of Housing Energy Efficiency Programme. The Council, when they get back a property, do a major refurbishment to future proof it and this also adds to the delay in the turnaround. A condition survey has also been completed of housing stock, which is vital in understanding what needs to be done to maintain that stock.

Shannon airport

The Council also explained that traffic at Shannon airport dropped by 97%. 150 of the 300 staff have been laid off temporarily. It will be 2023 before this recovers. This will have a huge impact on the local economy and on tourism in the region.

Commercial Rates

The status update on outstanding valuations of new or revised commercial properties was raised. This was discussed in the context of Clare's commercial property revaluation scheduled for 2021-2022, but has commenced and is in progress. The valuation office is outsourcing some of this work and their commitment to bringing all valuations up-to-date as part of this project was confirmed.

The Commercial rate base of Moneypoint power station may also be an issue for the Council, particularly with respect to employment and commercial rates. Moneypoint is a large employer in west Clare. The commercial rates for 2019 for the Council in total were in the region of €43m, with Moneypoint contributing approximately one quarter of that figure.

Level of non-mortgage debt

The level of non-mortgage debt on the balance sheet and the annual repayment thereof was discussed.

Plans in the COVID-19 era

The Council answered this topic by explaining that it still has the same objectives that it would have wished to achieve anyway for the future, including building up tourism. As part of the Council's response to COVID-19 and the reopening of business and society, an Ennis Mobility plan was rolled out to support both businesses and customers.

Financial deficit forecasted as a result of COVID-19

The Council acknowledged that it has a €19.7 million forecasted annualised financial deficit from its commercial rates income source as a result of COVID-19. This will be an issue countrywide for the local authority sector. This is due to the lost income in this area but also from loss of income from other goods and services and also additional expenditure incurred in responding to the pandemic.



Economic Forum

Clare County Council set up this forum as local authorities are natural civic leaders in this area. This forum has now been replaced by an Economic Task Force charged with responding to the economic challenges presented to the Council now. One of its goals is the development of a data centre for Ennis. This project is progressing in partnership with the IDA. This will be the largest data centre in the west of Ireland.

ENNIS 2040 and planning for our county town over the coming twenty years is another priority for this group.

The Wild Atlantic Way, which is a major tourist attraction for the region, will be impacted by those who would have previously visited it from abroad, with no flight access now available. The Council has completed a Tourism Strategy and will be launching this shortly.

Unfortunately, a certain number of businesses, and in particular those in the tourism industry, will not be in a position to re-open after the COVID situation.

Conclusion

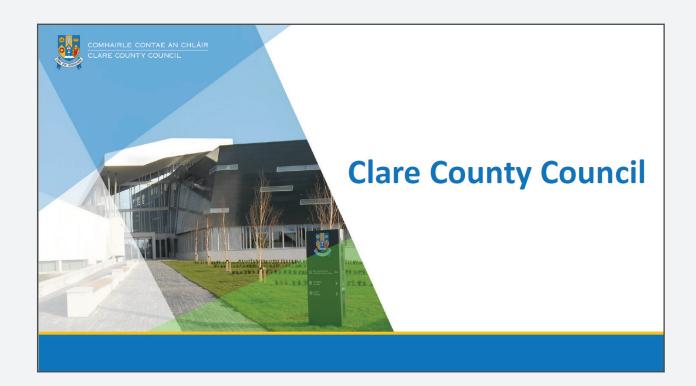
The NOAC Chair thanked the Chief Executive and Management Team for coming in to meet with NOAC and for providing valuable insight into its work.

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





Stage 2 presentation

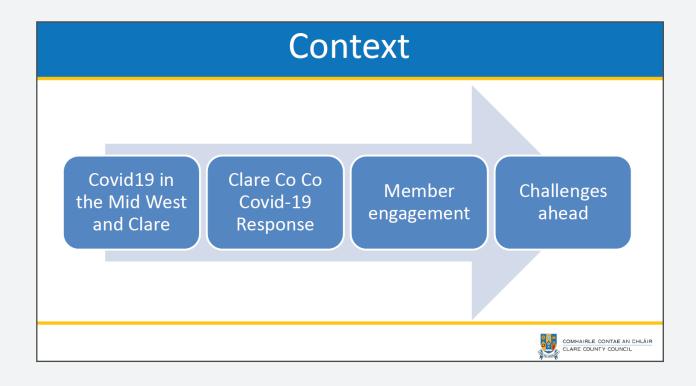


Introduction



"Advancing into an Uncertain Future"







Services Continued

Social

- •Housing- HAP, Homeless, Traveler Accommodation
- •Housing Loans
- •Library Delivery Service
- •Emergency Maintenance
- •Estate Management
- •Library Service (Click & Collect)
- •Active Ennis/Kilrush parks

Physical

- Water
- •Waste Management / Recycling Centers
- •Flood Defense
- •Civil Defense
- Fire Service
- Beach Life Guards
- Health and SafetyPMO Projects

LCOHOIIII

- Planning
- Facilities Management
- •Local Enterprise Office
- Strategic Economic Initiatives

Rural

- •Community response helpline and Call Back under Well-Being Initiative
- •Rural and Community Grants and Covid-19 Emergency Grant Fund.
- Mobilisation of Community/
- Voluntary Groups incl. PPE supply.

 Burial Ground Escalation Plan
- Progression of RRDF Projects
- •Extension to Burial Ground at Illaunamanagh
- •Information Systems ICT.
- Cliffs of Moher Visitor Experience Site security, Site upkeep, landscaping & maintenance

Finance and Support Services

- •Financial Monitoring
- Motor Tax
- •Accounts Payable
 •Accounts Receivable
- PAS Temporary
 Assignment Scheme
- Online Training
- •Online Interviews
- •Customer Service
- Communications • Procurement .



Roadmap to the reopening of Business and Society Phase 1— 18th May Phase 2— 8th June Phase 3— 29th June Phase 4— 20th July Remore Working Remore Working



Economic

- Local Enterprise Office Supports
- DBEI supports
- Clare Economic Taskforce
- Economic
- Ennis 2040 spatial and economic strategy
- Ennis Data Centre
- Shannon Town Centre Masterplan
- Future Mobility Campus Ireland
- IDA / CCC collaboration

Job Creation Capital Schemes						
	Estimated Project Value €'000	No. jobs created in Planning & Design	No. of jobs created in Construction			
Economic	€21,851	14	92			
Social	€113,088	92	735			
Rural	€30,153	75	189			
Physical	€385,127	130	678			
TOTAL	€550,220	311	1694			



Social

Social

- Housing services continue to be delivered in a changed environment.
- Housing capital delivery projects recommenced on site on 18.05.2020.
- Recreational spaces of Active Ennis & Kilrush are open in line with Government roadmap for reopening.
- Library service co-ordinated a cross-directorate Wellbeing response to support the public in physical and mental health during restrictions.
- Library and cultural service delivery has diversified in response to COVID-19 restrictions.
- Assessments for town mobility underway in Tulla, Scarriff and Killaloe.

Physical | Control | Cont

Physical

Physical

- Ennis Mobility Plan
- Parnell Street, Lanes & Bow-ways
- Barrack Street, Barrack Square and O'Connell Square -URDF
- Ennistymon Inner Relief Road (Blake's Corner)
- Flood Relief Schemes
- LED Retrofit
- PMO Road

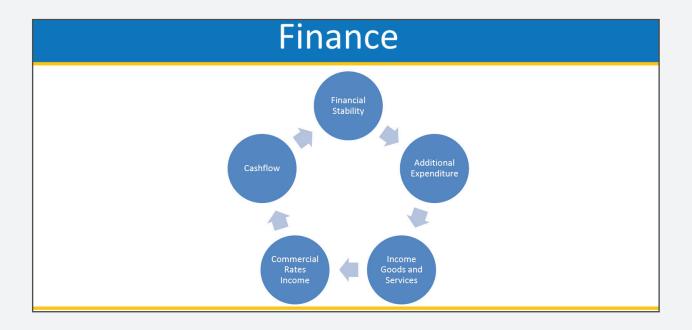
Rural, Tourism and ICT Clare Burst Development Strategy 2026 REALISING CLARES RIRAL POTENTIAL OUT Life, OUT Home Löugh Dere East Clare Bluevay Light Dere East Clare Bluevay Kilmstey Day Care Centre

Rural

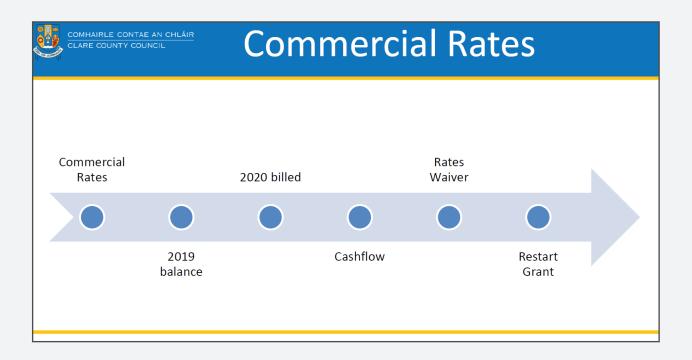
Rural Tourism ICT

- Draft Tourism Strategy
- 'Lets **Share Clare** with the World' which was launched with the 'Dream of Clare' video.
- Refresh your Spirits' in Co. Clare promotion to the domestic market.
- •In Production a virtual tour of Loophead Lighthouse with plans for one on Inis Cealtra also.
- Destination Preparedness Cliffs of Moher; RRDF projects at Loophead Lighthouse; Vandeleur Walled Gardens
- •Town & Village Renewal Scheme 2020, Clár 2020, ORIS 2020, Community Support Scheme
- •Town Mobility
 - •Re opening Digital hubs in line with Covid Guidelines
 - •Enabled remote working and online service enhancement
 - Developing the Broadband Connection Points throughout the county and developing facilities

CLARE COUNTY COUNCIL ADDPTED BUDGET 2020 CLARE COUNCIL ADDPTED BUDGET 2020 CLARE COUNCIL ADDPTED BUDGET 2020 CLARE COUNTY COUNCIL ADDPTED BUDGET 2020 CLARE COUNCIL ADDRTED BUDGET 2



Goods and Services	
Parking Charges/Fines	1,336,800
Road Opening Licences	165,400
Planning Receipts (Includes Planning Fees, Engineering Certs, Enforcement Proceedings, Commencement Notices, etc.)	426,000
Property Management	207,000
Civic Amenity Sites	818,000
Litter Fines	4,000
Fire Safety Control (Includes Fire Safety Certs, Disability Certs, etc.)	190,000
Leisure / Tourism Facilities	10,144,252
Casual Trading	40,000



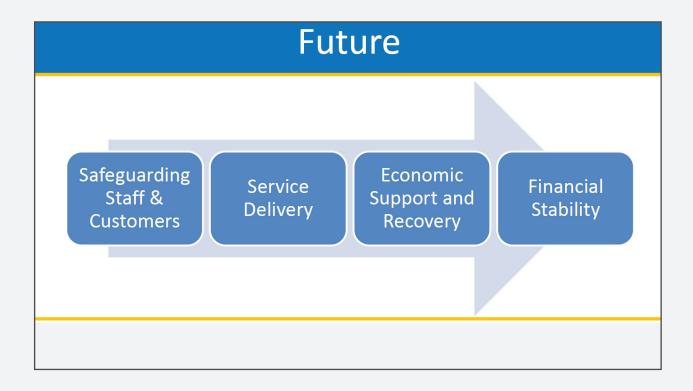
COMMAIRLE CONTAE AN CHLÁIR CLARE COUNTY COUNCIL COMMERCIAL RATES					
Sector	Properties	Rates Warrant 2020 €'000	Estimated impact Covid 19 €'000	% Estimated impact Covid 19	
HOSPITALITY	442	3,658	3,658	100%	
LEISURE	134	577	577	100%	
MINERALS	35	436	436	100%	
RETAIL	1,580	5,335	4,265	80%	
OFFICE	518	1,854	1,452	78%	
HEALTH	150	408	305	75%	
MISCELLANEOUS	121	518	373	72%	
SERVICE STATIONS	75	445	204	46%	
UTILITY	33	4,526	2,383	53%	
INDUSTRIAL USES	1,186	11,115	6,064	55%	
INDUSTRIAL USES GEN	2	12,743		0%	
CENTRAL VALUATION LIST	23	3,102	-	0	
	4,299	44,715	19,714	44%	

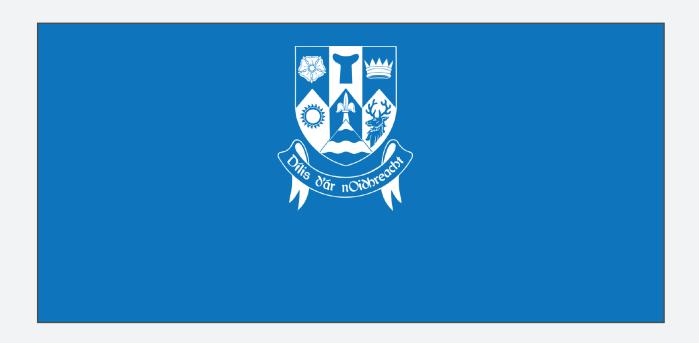
Future



Future Working Arrangements

- Remote Working
- Public Health Measures
- Services online
- Meetings by appointment, Virtual, Limitations
- Social interaction in and out of office
- Outdoor Work







National Oversight and Audit Commission (NOAC)

An Coimisiúin Náisiúnra Maoirseachta & Iniúchoóireachta

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