



Waterford City and County Council Scrutiny Report

NOAC Report No. 38 - May 2021



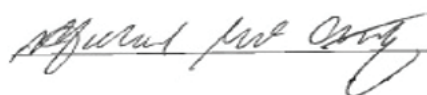
Chair's Opening remarks

The Local Government Reform Act 2014 introduced significant changes to a wide range of aspects of the local government system, including in relation to matters of accountability and oversight. In that regard, the Act provided for the establishment of the National Oversight and Audit Commission (NOAC) as the statutory body overseeing the local government sector. NOAC was established in July 2014 under the 2014 Act to provide independent oversight of the local government sector. NOAC's functions are wide ranging, involving the scrutiny of performance generally and financial performance specifically, supporting best practice, overseeing implementation of national local government policy and monitoring and evaluating implementation of corporate plans, adherence to service level agreements and public service reform by local government bodies.

Since I became Chair of NOAC in September 2018, I continued the good work that had been started by the previous NOAC Chair in meeting with the Chief Executives of the local authorities and their Management teams. As outlined below this process has evolved over time and continues to evolve.

The preparation of the profile report also identifies the performance of local authorities in relevant NOAC reports and provides for further examination of the results of these reports. The Scrutiny Process requires time and resources from NOAC and the local authorities in preparation of the profile report and for the Stage 1 and Stage 2 meetings. NOAC considers to date that the investment of time and resources has been worthwhile and necessary.

I have been struck by the welcome and sharing of information that has taken place at the meetings. It has provided an opportunity to learn, to listen to how the particular local authority operates, the challenges they face, the plans and ideas that have been developed and gives an opportunity to reflect on what is working well and areas that need to be addressed. It has identified areas of good practice and many of these ideas have been showcased at the NOAC Good Practice Seminars over the years. I look forward to continuing to work closely and collaboratively with all the local authorities and want to use this opportunity to thank all the Chief Executives and their teams for the time and courtesy and welcome extended to NOAC in this process.



Michael McCarthy, Chair
20 May 2021

Background to Profiles and Scrutiny Programme

In February 2017, NOAC, in accordance with its statutory functions, began to review the performance of individual local authorities. The starting point was getting an overall picture derived from the performance indicator report results, the Local Government Audit Service (LGAS) audit reports, the financial position and revenue collection performance. Information on private rented sector inspections, housing stock management and maintenance data and Customer Satisfaction was all considered by using the relevant data contained in the NOAC reports published to date.

At the outset the importance of the meetings was emphasised over and above the data which NOAC had regarding local authorities. There was also an objective to broaden the NOAC members' understanding of the work of the local authorities and the individual priorities and pressures they faced and to put the information in context. Therefore, NOAC wanted to get the background perspective from the authorities and any other datasets that the Councils consider should be taken into account. Significant work is required to bring this part together and the work of the NOAC Secretariat and the local authority NOAC Coordinators must be acknowledged.

Following an initial face to face meeting, which is called a Stage 1 meeting, local authorities were invited to a Stage 2 meeting where more detailed questions would be carried out in the areas of interest to NOAC, including customer service and IT investment, collection rates, the quality of information provision to the public etc. These meetings would take place after or latterly before the main NOAC board meeting with all the board members present.

The purpose

The process gives NOAC the opportunity to have oversight of all the local authorities and considers the factors that facilitates them in performing well, along with the barriers that may exist relevant to the individual local authority. The meetings enable the local authorities to outline their strong and weak performing areas. It allows for further examination of the results of the performance indicators and shows the results in context. It must be emphasised that these meetings differ from the Performance Indicator (PI) Validation meetings which are carried out by the Performance Indicator Working Group to interrogate the results reported in relation to selected performance indicators. These meetings, while very informative, are specific to the performance indicator process and do not consider other areas of performance that NOAC have oversight of, including Customer Service, Internal Audit, Corporate Plans etc.

During the meeting NOAC can see areas where consistent under-performance is highlighted and which can be examined further. It also allows for exemplars of best practice to be identified and used to share with other local authorities. The process as outlined, is not a follow up to the PI reports, but does enable consideration of issues that may warrant further clarification or investigation in the PI process. Local authorities have all indicated in the meetings thus far that they compare their performance and results in relation to what they deem as similar local authorities. This grouping could be reviewed further by NOAC and adopted for the results of some of its reports. Groupings are not only on size but, on levels of finances, urban and rural, staff numbers and other factors.

The Scrutiny Process

The process has evolved over time, allowing it to become more structured, formal and documented. Given the importance of the work, it is led by the Chair of NOAC (or a delegated alternate, if required) with support from NOAC members and the Executive. The formal process agreed by the Board is termed as a constructive dialogue and is laid out below.

1

Stage 1 (NOAC Scrutiny Visit)

Meeting held with NOAC Chair (or alternate) and/or one additional NOAC member and member(s) of the NOAC Executive. The Chief Executive and members of the management team, as invited by the Chief Executive shall attend.

- Stage 1 notice issued to Chief Executive of the local authority.
- Profile report prepared by NOAC Executive with input from the local authority. This is circulated along with an agenda to the local authority and NOAC attendees in advance of the visit. The report is based on general and specific information from NOAC reports relating to the local authority in question.
- Local authority to present on issues arising and take questions from attending NOAC members.
- Meeting minutes prepared and issued for comment.

2

Stage 2 (NOAC Scrutiny Meeting)

Appearance at full NOAC meeting. The Chief Executive and members of the management team, as invited by the Chief Executive shall attend.

- Stage 2 notice to attend NOAC meeting issued to Chief Executive of local authority.
- Profile report updated as required and circulated along with an agenda to local authority and NOAC members in advance of the meeting.
- Local authority to present on issues arising and take questions from full NOAC board.
- Meeting minutes prepared for circulation to local authority for its comment.

3

Stage 3 (NOAC Sign off and Publication)

Following completion of Stages 1 and 2 the Executive shall collate the material and present it to the NOAC Board as follows: -

- Final sign off on minutes / documents / reports.
- Comments / Findings / Recommendations to be made as required.
- Approval for completed records to be published.

Progress to date

2017

To commence the process, profiles were prepared in respect of Cork City Council, Louth and Offaly County Councils and these were forwarded to the Chief Executives of the authorities concerned. The NOAC Chair at the time, Pat McLoughlin, began this process with a meeting with the Chief Executive of Louth County Council for a general discussion on the profile in August 2017. This Stage 1 meeting was followed by a similar meeting with the Chief Executive of Cork City Council in September 2017. The final Stage 1 meeting to take place in 2017 was held with the Chief Executive of Offaly County Council in October 2017. In December 2017 Louth County Council attended a meeting with NOAC after the main NOAC Board meeting. This was the first Stage 2 meeting, which formed an important part of the overall process. These meetings served a particularly important function which allowed the Council to give an overview of their work and also gave an opportunity to the full NOAC Board to put questions to the Council and understand their situation in more depth.

2018

In 2018 the schedule consisted of eight meetings with local authorities, four each for Stage 1 and Stage 2. A Stage 2 meeting was held with Offaly County Council in January 2018. This was followed by another Stage 2 meeting with Cork City Council in March 2018.

A new Chair, Michael McCarthy, was appointed on 24 September 2018. The process continued with Westmeath County Council in October 2018 and Kerry County Council in December 2018. These were Stage 2 meetings with the full NOAC board as in these cases, the 2018 Performance Indicator validation meetings for these authorities were deemed sufficient as Stage 1 meetings. Further Stage 1 meetings were held with Roscommon County Council and Tipperary County Council.

2019

The format continued with 8 meetings with local authorities during the year. Five Stage 1 meetings and three Stage 2 meetings. The Stage 1 meetings were with Donegal County Council, Laois County Council, Clare County Council, Waterford City and County Council and Carlow County Council. Stage 2 meetings took place with Roscommon County Council, Tipperary County Council and Donegal County Council.

2020

A meetings list was scheduled for 2020 to cover 6 additional local authorities. The year commenced with a Stage 1 meeting with Monaghan County Council in February, along with two Stage 2 meetings with Laois County Council and Waterford City and County Council. Further meetings were scheduled for April, however due to the COVID crisis these meetings were required to be deferred.

The COVID restrictions presented some challenges to the meetings but it was decided to continue the Stage 2 meetings virtually and meetings were held with Clare, Monaghan, Waterford City and County, Carlow and Sligo. These were carried out by the WebEx platform.

A socially distanced Stage 1 meeting was held in person with Limerick City and County Council in August and with Sligo County Council in September 2020.

2021

COVID has had a huge impact on local authorities, and in particular, for NOAC on the Scrutiny process. The Stage 1 meetings have all been held in person thus far and restrictions have allowed for no Stage 1 meetings to be held yet in 2021. The Stage 2 meetings have progressed as these were capable of being held remotely, with one held in January 2021 with Limerick City and County Council. It is hoped to make up for lost time as the restrictions are relaxed and plans are in place to commence Stage 1 meetings as soon as it is possible to do so.

Future meetings and reports

This report outlines the purpose and the procedures and while the process may continue to evolve it would not be expected at this time to produce another master report, similar to this one. This report takes into account the first 13 local authorities which have completed the process. It would be intended that once all stages in the scrutiny process has been fully completed with the relevant other local authorities that the report would be published on that basis and would form part of the suite of reports under the umbrella of the Scrutiny Report Process. Later in quarter 2, 2021, Sligo County Council and Limerick City and County Council reports will be published. It is anticipated that progress will continue to be made with further Stage 1 and Stage 2 meetings so that each local authority will have participated in the process. It must be outlined that significant changes and delays have been experienced due to the restrictions imposed by COVID in 2020 and 2021.

Conclusion

The process thus far allowed for the NOAC chairman and members to get a greater understanding and insight into the challenges that face each of the local authorities. Also, issues such as collection rates, staff numbers, inspection rates, finances that are included in reports in some cases benefit from the explanation and discussion as to the reason behind these figures. The meetings also enabled NOAC to see the various priorities that each local authority considered relevant to their citizens and how they overcame various challenges and how they work collaboratively with other local authorities, state bodies and stakeholders. Areas of Good Practice have been identified along the way and these have contributed to presentations of these projects at the NOAC Good Practice Seminars in 2017, 2019 and 2020.

Waterford City and County Council had their Stage 1 meeting in October 2019 and their Stage 2 meeting in March 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. The challenges Waterford faced in the merger of the City and County Council while significant at the time, gave rise to an opportunity to focus on matters such as Customer Service and processes and has given rise to a more efficient service then ranked very well in the NOAC Satisfaction Survey 2019. NOAC was very interested in the focus on and results delivered in dealing with vacant social housing stock.



Waterford City County Council Scrutiny Process

1. Waterford City County Council Profile October 2019	7
2. Stage 1 Meeting October 2019- Minutes	18
3. Stage 2 Meeting March 2020- Minutes	20
4. Stage 2 Presentation	24



NOAC Profile Waterford City and County Council

October 2019

Contents

General Information	8
Council Mission Statement	8
Staffing	9
Budget	9
Collection rates	9
Housing Information	9
Economic Forum (CEF)	10
The Local Enterprise Office	10
Retail Incentives	10
The Corporate Plan	10
Adoption	10
Shared services	10
Regional Issues including new developments and initiatives	10
Supporting Strategies	11
Other Relevant Information	11
NOAC Reports overview	12
NOAC Report No 22 - Performance Indicator Report 2018 – September 2019	12
NOAC Report No 21 - Local Authority Satisfaction Survey 2019- July 2019	13
NOAC Report No 19 - Performance Indicator Report 2017 – September 2018	13
NOAC Report No 17 – Internal Audit in Local Authorities - July 2018	14
NOAC Report No 16 - Review of 2015 Statutory Audit Reports to the Members of Local Authorities – June 2018	14
NOAC Report No 12 - A Review of the Management and Maintenance of Local Authority Housing - May 2017	15
Performance Indicator Tables 2014-2017	16

Waterford City County Council General Information

Waterford, a seaport in southeast Ireland, is the country's oldest city. Vikings founded it in 914 A.D. and parts of its ancient walled core remain.

Population:	116,176
Area:	1,857 km ²
Municipal Districts:	3 (Metropolitan District of Waterford, Dungarvan and Lismore District, Comeragh District)

COUNCIL MISSION STATEMENT

Our mission is to make Waterford the best possible place for all its people and for those that wish to live, visit, work or invest here.

Staffing

Number employed	@ 31/12/2017
WTE Staff per 1,000 population	764.48

Percentage of paid working days lost to medically certified sick leave

2014	2.77
2015	2.99
2016	3.51
2017	3.63

Budget

2018	€125,883,687 (€1,084pp)
2017	€118,430,299 (€1,019pp) based on CSO 2016 figures

Collection Rates

	2018	2017	2016	2015
Commercial Rates	€29.6m	€28.6m		
Local Property Tax	€18.9m	€18.7m		
Rate collection rates	80%	79%	81%	79%
Rent collection rates	78%	77%	79%	79%
Housing loan collection rates	66%	61%	58%	56%

Housing Information

Local Authority Stock	5,096 at end 2018
Vacant Stock	1.81% in 2018, down from 2.59% in 2017
Cost of re-letting stock in 2018	€7,163.17, increased from €5,316.11 in 2017
Number currently on waiting list	1,117 households (2018)

Number of adult Individuals classified as homeless and in emergency accommodation:	111 Adults classified as Homeless 2018 PI report. This increased from 101 in the 2017 report.
The number out of those individuals who, on 31/12/2018, had been in emergency accommodation for 6 months continuously, or for 6 months cumulatively within the previous 12 months	68

Economic Forum (CEF)

The Local Enterprise Office

In 2018, LEO Waterford supported entrepreneurship, business start-ups and enterprise growth through the following:

- €619,883 Approved in Financial Grants
- 25 Businesses who received grants
- 105 Training Programs with 1,188 participants
- 17 Young Entrepreneurs participated in the IBYE
- 258 Entrepreneurs availed of mentoring
- 30 Trading Online Vouchers Scheme totalling €60,132
- 14 Events during Local Enterprise Week with 212 Attendees
- 1,023 Students participated in the student enterprise program

Retail Incentives

While there were no specific retail incentives noted in the annual report it is noted that there is the Purple Flag, which is a Gold Standard accreditation, which recognises Waterford as being a safe, welcoming and friendly destination to socialise, live and work in. One of Purple Flag's key philosophies is collaboration and this sees all the main stakeholder groups working closely together.

There were 27 festivals and events supported by Waterford City and County Council through the economic development department to the value of €1,064,308.

The Corporate Plan

<https://www.waterfordcouncil.ie/media/plans-strategies/corporate-plan/Waterford%20City%20and%20County%20Council%20Corporate%20Plan%202014%20-%202019.pdf>

Adoption

Section 134 (subsections (1) and (2)) of the Local Government Act 2001 requires local authorities to prepare a Corporate Plan every 5 years. The Plans should be submitted to the elected members for approval within 6 months of the annual meeting that takes place 2 weeks after the day on which the local elections were held, the date of which in 2014 was 23 May. Where this deadline is not met, there is provision for the Cathaoirleach to convene a special meeting of the Council within the following fortnight, at which the Cathaoirleach and Chief Executive make a joint submission to the members outlining the steps to be taken to ensure the Corporate Plan's completion and when it is proposed to submit it to the elected Council. Waterford City and County complied with these statutory deadlines.

Shared services

None noted

Regional Issues including new developments and initiatives

- Junior Achievement programmes - foster a culture of enterprise. Its aim is to help local students prepare for the world of work, giving them skills in communications and preparing them for interviews.
- Community and Sports Grants Scheme whereby local sports clubs, residents associations and community & voluntary groups are financially assisted to ensure sustainability. 365 applicants were eligible and €173,485 was allocated in 2018 for this initiative.
- Communities Enhancement Programme for disadvantaged areas whereby €394,081 was allocated to various projects across city and county.
- Men's Shed Enhancement Programme was initiated to assist capital projects for Men's Sheds registered with The Irish Men's Shed Association. €8,696 was allocated in total to the six registered groups.
- The Community Department continued to support community festivals. Nineteen festivals benefited from a total spend of €61,700.

Supporting Strategies

- The Waterford Local Community Development Committee (LCDC), established by the Council, continued to meet and deliver on the Community element of the Local Economic and Community Plan (LECP). This provides the basis for a more coherent, streamlined and co-ordinated approach to local and community development programmes. The Skills Enhancement sub-group met on a number of occasions to consider initiatives to address the existing skills gaps and issued a report on its findings/progress. In 2018, the Health and Well-being LCDC subgroup continued the work of the Healthy Waterford initiative. The LCDC has primary responsibility for planning and oversight of local development spends. Public and non-public bodies from local government, state agencies, local communities, development, social, and economic interests are represented on the LCDC.
- The Social Inclusion Community Activation Fund (SICAP), worth €1,098,446 to the City and County in 2018, continued to have a major impact on disadvantaged communities and individuals. 66 local community groups and 964 individuals were assisted.
- Rural Development Programme 2014 – 2020. During 2018, the LCDC, acting as the Local Action Group (LAG), advanced the delivery of the local development actions approved in the Local Development Strategy for the rural community. The investment created economic, environmental and community benefits including the creation of additional new jobs, through new initiatives and business expansion.

- Tourism. The Visit Waterford, Waterford Greenway team and businesses have been in attendance at a number of trade shows and expos promoting Waterford Greenway and all that Waterford has to offer. In 2018 Waterford Greenway was promoted at:
 - Holiday World
 - The Outdoor Revolution Show
 - The Active Retired Show
 - The Over 50's Show
 - Entente Florale Showcase
 - Altogether Now Festival

The Council also supported Tramore and Dungarvan tourist offices.

Other relevant information

Statement of Comprehensive Income

The Council recorded a surplus of €505k for the year after transfers to reserves of €3.6m, reducing the Council's General Revenue Reserve deficit to €7.1m. A significant one-off contributory factor in the reduction was the transfer of the €495k surplus from the Specific Revenue Reserve. The outturn continued the trend of small annual reductions in the deficit in accordance with the Council's 2014 loan drawdown and refinancing plan, which aims to reduce the deficit over thirty years.

NOAC Reports Overview

NOAC REPORT NO 22

Performance Indicator Report 2018 – September 2019

Water

The data was provided by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) from water testing results supplied by the local authorities. The compliance rate is calculated as the number of tests that complied with all microbiological chemical and indicator parameter values as a percentage of the total number of tests carried out on these supplies. The 2018 results show 8 local authorities improved their compliance rates, however Waterford had the lowest compliance rate of 92.55%.

Environment

Since 1 July 2016, the Household Food Waste and Bio-Waste Regulations has required all agglomerations greater than 500 households to have access to brown bin collection service. In 2018, 43.91% of households (based on the 2016 Census) were situated in an area covered by a 3 bin service, which was a small increase on the equivalent outturn for 2017 of 39.43%. The highest uptake was in Waterford City and County at 84.89% with an additional 11,423 households accessing brown bin service.

Fire

Waterford had the quickest response time for full time services of 1 minute 12 seconds.

Some other interesting areas of note

Waterford had above average library visits per head of population at 4.9%, this was the 3rd highest nationally.

Housing vacancies reduced to 1.81% from 2.59% in 2017

Average re-letting times was 15.6 weeks down from 21.13 weeks in 2017

The number of private rented inspections remained similar at 829 in 2018 and 836 in 2017

69.86% of motor tax transactions were dealt with online in 2018 and increase from 66.45 on the previous year.

Waterford had no area grossly polluted with 5% significantly polluted (down from 8% in 2017). 19% was area noted as unpolluted or litter free, an improvement from 11% in 2017.

Waterford recorded 63.4% of buildings inspected as a percentage of new buildings notified which is the 2nd highest nationally and a significant increase from the 17.49% in 2017. The cost per capita of planning service rose from €21.47 in 2017 to €23.18 in 2018.

NOAC REPORT NO 21

Local Authority Satisfaction Survey 2019- July 2019

Of the local authorities surveyed in 2018 and 2019 Waterford City and County achieved the highest scores in three categories; with 67% saying that they are doing a good job (overall average 51%) 59% satisfied with its openness and transparency (overall average 34%) and 41% rated it best for value for money (average 28%). Waterford CCC also scored above average with 65% satisfied with the Council (overall average 56%), 73% believe the Council promotes economic activity (overall average 52%) and 59% felt informed (overall average 40%).

In the 2019 local authorities surveyed WCCC performed above average in relation to the most important services

Road Maintenance	74%	(overall average 59%)
Road Safety	78%	(overall average 69%)
Affordable Housing	65%	(overall average 37%)
Playground and Parks	80%	(overall average 76%)
Protecting the Environment	75%	(overall average 60%)

NOAC REPORT NO 19

Performance Indicator Report 2017 – September 2018

Points to Note

- The proportion of the stock vacant at end 2017 was less than the national average in Waterford City and County Council.
- Average re-letting decreases in costs were noted for Waterford City and County Council recording the lowest average cost (€5,316.11).
- As indicated in Table C1, total whole-time equivalent staff employed by the local authority sector indicated an overall increase of 1.94% staff since 2016. Notwithstanding the overall increase in numbers nationally, staff numbers reduced in 7 authorities over the course of 2017 including Waterford City and County Council.
- Total social media users increased nationally and at end 2017 were 1.7m which, if unique users, would equate to 35.78% of the population. Waterford City and County Council, as with 2016, reported the greatest number of social media followers relative to its population.
- The cumulative deficits and surpluses as a percentage of total income in 2017 shows that all but four of the deficits represent less than 5% of the total income of the respective Council. Donegal and Offaly County and Waterford City and County Council's deficits are between 5% and 7% of total income.
- It was noted that there was a reduction in the collection level in 2017 of the commercial rates on their 2016 collection levels.

NOAC REPORT NO 17**Internal Audit in Local Authorities – July 2018**

It was noted from this report that

- All authorities with Internal Audit staff have an on-going training plan in place, with the exception of Waterford, which has ad-hoc training.
- In relation to the Internal Audit Charter A formal Internal Audit terms of reference, approved by the Audit Committee, is in place in all but 2 authorities, Waterford City and County being one of the two.
- 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. 17 authorities had done so including Waterford City and County.
- In the Overview of the work of the Local Government Audit Service 2016 report it noted that in many cases the internal audit function was under-resourced due to a number of posts being left vacant for extended periods, a reduction in staff numbers during the year or insufficient resources being allocated to this function. Auditors identified difficulties in this regard in twelve local authorities. In WCCC, the staffing resources issues within the Council's Internal Audit (IA) unit was highlighted and it was considered that the IA function needs to be properly resourced, with suitably qualified persons. Shortcomings in the resourcing of the unit have been highlighted for a number of years and at the time of the report in 2018 remained to be addressed.

NOAC REPORT NO. 16**Review of 2015 Statutory Audit Reports to the Members of Local Authorities – June 2018**

In relation to non-compliance with public procurement guidelines and procurement processing shortcomings, Waterford City and County Council informed NOAC that they developed a draft Corporate Procurement Plan and a Smart Data Online system for Purchase Cards and allocated additional staffing resources to this area.

There were several issues raised generally with local authorities and the specific ones relating to Waterford in Audit Reports 2015 were in relation to

- Internal Audit (resourcing, reporting, output)
- Ethics Register
- AFS omissions or corrections/ adjustments needed, budgetary process
- Procurement or purchasing (incl. retrospective approval)
- Interaction with AHBs
- Unfunded balances
- Interest only loans
- Cumulative deficit at year-end

NOAC REPORT NO 12

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

Local authorities provided the average number of dwellings in an estate in 2014. Outside of South Dublin, Dublin City and Fingal, the largest estates in the other urban authorities are 227 dwellings in Waterford.

It was noted in relation to the tenant's handbook that tenants can meet with Waterford City and County Council's Housing Supervisor or Housing Engineer by appointment.

Waterford was one of only 15 local authorities to have ever carried out condition surveys and they reported conducting such surveys at regular intervals. They have not carried out a comprehensive survey of all stock at specified periods but rather used a rolling survey basis over a 5-year cycle.

Waterford CCC stated that they had a published maintenance policy statement. When queried about response times and job controls it was noted that compliance with target times is monitored by local authorities by using a computerised system (iHouse), and most would have monitoring/supervision carried out by housing technical staff (Engineers/ Area Maintenance Officers/Clerk of Works). Waterford City and County Council said it carries out follow-up calls to tenants. It stated that they make information about actual response times available to tenants generally. It also confirmed that they charged tenants a maintenance fee.

	Performance Indicators	2017		2016	
		Data	Median/ Average	Data	Median/ Average
H1	Social Housing provided in year per 1,000 population	0.39	0.53	n/a	3.43
H2	% of directly provided dwellings vacant at 31/12	2.59	2.73	2.40	3.02
H3a	Average time from vacation date to PI year re-letting date (weeks)	21.13	28.9	21.00	32.99
H3b	Average cost expended on getting re-tenanted units ready for re-letting	€5,316.11	€17,160.60	9,374.42	€15,877
H4	Average repair and maintenance cost per unit	€754.44	€1,311.82	969.12	€1,500.23
H5	Inspections (Dwellings inspected in 2016) carried out in year as % of registrations	9.07	4.96	11.17	4.36
R1a	% Regional Road KM that ever received a PSCI rating	96	96	94.00	99
R1b	% Total Regional Road KM with a PSCI rating of 9-10	46	28	28.00	30
R1c	% Total Primary Road KM with a PSCI rating of 9-10	20	20	12.00	13
R1d	% Total Secondary Road KM with a PSCI rating of 9-10	11	14	4.00	10
R1e	% Total Tertiary Road KM with a PSCI rating of 9-10	11	8	10.00	7
R2a	KM Regional Road strengthened using road improvement grants	9.10	10.3	3.70	10.8
R2b	KM Regional road resealed using road maintenance grants	14.20	11.9	13.00	12.2
R2/3	% Motor tax transactions performed online	66.45	65.95	64.50	64.05
W1	% private schemes with water quality in compliance	94.87	98.46	94.45	97.77
E1	% households availing of a 3-bin service	58.60	39.53	56.70	37.7
E2	Pollution cases on hand at year end as % of the cases that arose that year	2.67	9.79	24.77	9.91
E3	% area unpolluted or litter free	11	10	0.00	13
P1	New buildings inspected as % of new buildings notified	17.49	17	29.87	19.42
P2	% of determinations that confirmed the decision made by LA	76.92	79	80.00	77.78
P3	Ratio of planning cases being investigated at year end as to cases closed	2.99	2.41	2.66	2.87
P4	Cost per capita of the Planning Service	€21.47	28.31	22.63	€26.96
F1	Cost per capita of Fire Service (based on 2011 Census for 2014 and 2015)	€67.32	57.74	66.72	€56.07
F2	Average time to mobilise Brigade re Fire (Minutes) (FT)	1.40	1.45	1.47	1.5
F3	% of Fire Cases in which first attendance is within 10 minutes	64.15	40.45	66.88	57.79
L1a	No. of Library visits per head of population	4.58	3.56	4.44	3.61
L1b	No. of Items borrowed per head of population	3.10	2.92	4.07	3.82
L2	Cost of Library Service per capita	38.08	31.00	37.55	€30.05
Y1	% of local schools involved in Comhairle na nÓg Scheme	83.33	69.04	94.44	68.07
C1	WTE staff per 1,000 population	6.58	5.75	6.62	5.64
C2a	% of paid working days lost to medically certified sick leave in year	3.63	3.74	3.51	3.76
C2b	% of paid working days lost to self-certified sick leave in year	0.34	0.33	0.34	0.38
C3	LA website page views per 1,000 population	21219	14,632	15,232.78	12,422
C4	Overall cost of ICT Provision per WTE	€2,837.68	€3,048.41	2,829.40	€2,675.69
M2a	% Commercial Rates Collected in year	79.0	83	81.00	82.3
M2b	% Rent & Annuities Collected in year	77.0	89	79.00	88.0
M2c	% Housing Loans Collected in year	61.0	74	58.00	70
J1	LEO jobs output per 1,000 population	0.96	0.68	0.86	0.7

Per population based on census figures for 2011 and 2016 (113,795 in 2011 and 116,176 in 2016)

	Performance Indicators	2015		2014	
		Data	Median/ Average	Data	Median/ Average
H1	Social Housing provided in year per 1,000 population	5.70	1.91	0.68	0.80
H2	% of directly provided dwellings vacant at 31/12	2.22	3.5	2.59	3.8
H3a	Average time from vacation date to PI year re-letting date (weeks)	21.00	28.43	21.00	31.43
H3b	Average cost expended on getting re-tenanted units ready for re-letting	12,385.62	€13,378.40	12,712.00	€11,534.91
H4	Average repair and maintenance cost per unit	636.52	€1,292.57	477.00	€1,272.30
H5	Inspections (Dwellings inspected in 2016) carried out in year as % of registrations	11.12	5.64	11.68	6.51
R1a	% Regional Road KM that ever received a PSCI rating	94.00	68	92.00	47.9
R1b	% Total Regional Road KM with a PSCI rating of 9-10	27.00	20	28.00	11.15
R1c	% Total Primary Road KM with a PSCI rating of 9-10	6.00	11	7.00	6.4
R1d	% Total Secondary Road KM with a PSCI rating of 9-10	3.00	8	4.00	4.61
R1e	% Total Tertiary Road KM with a PSCI rating of 9-10	10.00	5	18.00	3.63
R2a	KM Regional Road strengthened using road improvement grants	11.20	10.2		
R2b	KM Regional road resealed using road maintenance grants	18.00	8.3		
R2/3	% Motor tax transactions performed online	58.69	56.6	55.25	54.7
W1	% private schemes with water quality in compliance	94.43	99.07	93.00	97.9
E1	% households availing of a 3-bin service	56.68	34.87	59.29	31.66
E2	Pollution cases on hand at year end as % of the cases that arose that year	8.07	8.49		
E3	% area unpolluted or litter free	23.00	14	5.00	9.5
P1	New buildings inspected as % of new buildings notified	0.00	24	11.68	17.71
P2	% of determinations that confirmed the decision made by LA	76.47	71.88	79.17	71.7
P3	Ratio of planning cases being investigated at year end as to cases closed	1.29	2.61	0.98	2.88
P4	Cost per capita of the Planning Service	22.75	€26.76	16.81	€25.27
F1	Cost per capita of Fire Service (based on 2011 Census for 2014 and 2015)	68.75	€57.88	59.26	€55.9
F2	Average time to mobilise Brigade re Fire (Minutes) (FT)	1.50	1.6	1.60	1.66
F3	% of Fire Cases in which first attendance is within 10 minutes	75.03	56.98	68.67	58.6
L1a	No. of Library visits per head of population	4.34	3.68	4.40	3.71
L1b	No. of Items borrowed per head of population	4.52	3.82		
L2	Cost of Library Service per capita	33.15	€30.02	35.63	€29.41
Y1	% of local schools involved in Comhairle na nÓg Scheme	89.47	67.59	81.56	51.86
C1	WTE staff per 1,000 population	6.90	5.58	6.79	5.63
C2a	% of paid working days lost to medically certified sick leave in year	2.99	3.52	2.77	3.34
C2b	% of paid working days lost to self-certified sick leave in year	0.36	0.39	0.41	0.4
C3	LA website page views per 1,000 population	7,511.64	11,666	10,291.35	9,651
C4	Overall cost of ICT Provision per WTE	2,706.86	€2,680.15	3,424.00	€2,646.8
M2a	% Commercial Rates Collected in year	79.00	83	72.00	77
M2b	% Rent & Annuities Collected in year	79.00	85	78.00	84
M2c	% Housing Loans Collected in year	56.00	68	53.00	67
J1	LEO jobs output per 1,000 population	1.45	0.66	0.80	0.73



Stage 1 meeting

NOAC profile meeting with Waterford City and County Council

Date:	11 October 2019	
Venue:	Dungarvan Co Waterford	
Attendees:	Waterford City and County Council: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Michael Walsh, Chief Executive Ivan Grimes, Director of Services (Housing) Bernard Pollard, Head of Finance 	NOAC: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Michael McCarthy, Chairperson John McCarthy, Secretariat Claire Gavin, Secretariat

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

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

Merger of City and County in 2014

This required major changes to be implemented. A lot of organisational changes took place, which impacted different divisions at different levels. The whole process, while less than seamless, as expected has resulted in an overall positive outcome. Staff numbers recently increased having reduced them by 30/40 people following the merger. Age profile of the staff was noticeable but new recruits should address this as younger staff join. The Council inherited capital deficits from the city and revenue deficits from the county. The revenue deficit is being reduced on a planned basis of €500,000 per annum so as not to affect services. The capital deficit has been cleared. Last year the Council operated on an overdraft but this facility has not yet been used in 2019. The Council is in receipt of low development contributions, which does challenge the Council for schemes where matched funding is required.

Capital Projects and Tourism

ERDF funding is being used to deliver some of the major capital projects. The Greenway is an example of a significant investment as it cost in the region of €14/€15m of which the state provided just €5m, which was less than expected. However, the Council has managed this and the Greenway has become a major tourism attraction. Waterford is unique in its linear location with the sea and mountains being so close and this helps many of the towns and villages. There is no end of capital works that could be carried out including works to the North Quays in the city and rural regeneration including works in Tramore, which is badly needed, and plans are in place for the works to be carried out. Other towns and villages could benefit from rural regeneration programmes.

Scale of the City

Waterford City has added attraction of being a city but with lower cost of living than other cities. However it is competing with Dublin and Cork for investment and infrastructure. The National Planning Framework has been positive and if it is transposed it will have a great impact on the city. Investment in infrastructure is necessary.

Services delivery

Waterford City and Council believe they are reasonably effective in the delivery of their services. They have performed well in the Performance Indicator reports over the years and it is important for them to see improvements and to acknowledge the results in context. They would have a similar population as Clare but the costs associated with the city status impact on costs and spend of services especially in the areas like housing and homeless services.

Housing and Homeless

The homeless presentations put pressure on housing but the Council believe that they have good control over this area and it is well managed within the Southeast region. The first response is for the homeless action team to see if the reason for the homeless presentation can be resolved and only after that will homeless services be given. HAP is the first housing option for homeless persons. The housing market is quiet, with little happening in the private sector. They have granted many permissions but activity is slow.

Economy/Jobs

The recession affected WCC especially around 2010 with significant job losses in areas in very well paid jobs. However, since then the jobs have been replaced by improved jobs including expansions in the pharma and technology industries. Significant capital investment helped however, this does need to be maintained. The recession only finished there 3 years ago and now the area is in growth. The plan is to drive on brand 'Waterford'.

Location of services

The local authority presence is mainly in two centres, the city and Dungarvan. More back office services are delivered from Dungarvan including HR and Finance. The Council has a good Customer Service operation that the merger afforded it the opportunity to robustly improve. Council meetings are rotated in both chambers and this works well. Some staff are required to move between centres but this does not present any major challenges or costs. There are 32 Council members reduced from 39 prior to the merger.

PI Performance 2018

■ Fire response time.

Quickest for full time service. It was outlined how the service operated and the costs involved and how the retained service was used to support the full time service.

■ Relet times.

It was explained how a single framework for maintenance of vacant houses had been adopted and new targets for quicker turnarounds were set. Changes to the allocations with the introduction of choice based lettings and identifying the tenants and preparing for the allocation while maintenance work was underway all serve to reduce the relet times. Any long-term vacancies arise not due to the condition of the house but due to other circumstances, which make the unit difficult to let. Refusal rates have reduced significantly with Choice Based Lettings being introduced but refusals are still at 20%. People on HAP often are happy to stay in their property rather than accepting a social house. Refusals give rise to 12-month suspension on the housing list.

■ NOAC Customer Satisfaction Report 2019.

The NOAC report in which Waterford CCC performed well above average was discussed. It was explained that the Council had a lot of interface with its citizens on a daily basis, a lot of people drop into the offices for different reasons. The Greenway has had a positive impact both for use and for tourism. The Council try to take a flexible and adaptable approach to service delivery and are aware of the need to be able to respond to changes.

■ Future focus for WCC;

Climate action, rural regeneration, roads and infrastructure and ensuring that the Council has the necessary competencies to deliver.

NOAC Chair thanked the CE for the comprehensive discussion and invited WCC to present at the NOAC Customer Service Workshop on 12th of November and to attend the full NOAC meeting on 10th December 2019 at 11am in the Custom House. Mr Walsh accepted both invitations.



Stage 2 meeting

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

Date:	3rd March 2020	
Venue:	Main Conference Room, Custom House, Dublin 1	
Attendees:	Chairperson: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Michael McCarthy Members: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Barry Quinlan Martina Moloney Constance Hanniffy Michael McGreal David Holohan Tara Buckley Apologies: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sharon O'Connor NOAC Secretariat: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> John F McCarthy Claire Gavin Neill Dalton Colin Flood John Goldrick Darren Browne 	Waterford City Council: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Michael Walsh, Chief Executive Kieran Kehoe, Director of Services, Corporate, Culture, HR & IS Ivan Grimes, Director of Services, Housing, Community & Emergency Bernard Pollard, Head of Finance Fergus Galvin, Director of Services, Roads and Environment

Meeting with Waterford City and County Council

The Chair welcomed the Chief Executive and his team to the meeting. The Council gave a presentation on Waterford City and County, including details on their financial and performance position in comparison to their local authority peers from 2018 – 20.

The following areas were covered in the presentation:

Housing

The Council outlined how the publication of the PI report allowed it to compare itself to its peer local authorities. Its peers include Louth, Clare, Tipperary and Wicklow. The Council can see that it is strong in the areas of the provision of new build houses, having completed 119 in 2018. Its other positive points are a good Part V provision, having few voids and low housing maintenance costs. Overall, the Council is exceeding its Rebuilding Ireland housing output targets. In 2018 1,001 units went into the leasing initiative nationally. Waterford did very well in accounting for 100 of those units. They have a team in place tackling the issue of homelessness in the South East region. This has given rise to a one stop shop in the city and this has seen a reduction of 40% in the numbers of single homeless and 60% in family thanks to the resources invested in this initiative.

Roads

An update was given on the PSCI rating, which stated that the PSCI ratings of its regional roads were reasonable, compared with its peers. There are a proportion of the roads which have a PSCI rating of 1 -4, which will require immediate action. Some of the roads in the county need restorative works which with lack of investment could cause issues in the future.

Waste

Waterford has the highest proportion of 3-bin take-up in the country at 85%.

Planning

Over 63% of its new buildings were inspected, well above the 12-15% of the requirement and also well above most other local authorities.

Fire

The Council has a large rural area, which makes mobilisation times in respect of fire more of a challenge. However, its response time of 1:12 minutes and 5:01 minutes respectively for full time and retained fire service are at the top of all response times compared to other local authorities.

Library

The MyOpenLibrary in Dungarvan has one of the highest usages in the country. It is hoped that this can be extended to Lismore in the near future having secured funding to do so. The success of the libraries is driven mainly by the community and schools.

Staffing

In comparison to other local authorities, Waterford has the lowest WTEs per revenue budget expenditure. Within the next ten to fifteen years Waterford will also have a workforce with a high age profile. Currently there are relatively few employees under thirty-five years of age.

Corporate Plan

A full day workshop was held recently on the Corporate Plan with the members of the local authority. Six Corporate aims were set out alongside the mission, vision and values. The new Plan had received good feedback arising from a recent survey that they had undertaken in relation to it.

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

Development Plan

Waterford has been identified as a centre for growth region which will absorb an increase in the country's population. A discussion ensued on the Council's plans to achieve this. Provision has been made for this in its Development Plan. There will need to be a significant development on the North Quays. Currently it lacks infrastructure which will be required to attract investment.

Finance

The Council are carrying €13 million in arrears at present. In the housing area, there are 100 housing loan accounts which are in arrears. There are efforts being undertaken to put these people onto a payment plan. Things are improving with employment figures increasing and negative equity being eliminated. In relation to rent arrears there are only about 150 tenants who are paying little or no rent, a small proportion of the overall number of housing tenants. However, that group of people owe in the region of €2.5 million. There are some housing evictions which are going through the courts, which is a lengthy process. The Council also outlined that it resists writing off arrears and they have significant bad debt provisions made. Further deficits exist from the city and county amalgamation but they have written off some of these arrears and plans are in place to continue to do so. The Council are reviewing every line of expenditure in its budget. There are few, if any, areas where reductions can be made in spending. There is a revenue account deficit at present, which the Council expects to cut by €400,000 in the 2019 figures. A capital programme is currently being prepared. This will be a significant commitment which could take up to €10 - €20 million.

Amalgamation of Councils

Waterford City and County Council maintains two offices since the merger. The office in Dungarvan has basic services and back office functions are maintained there while the headquarters are in Waterford City. The Council meetings are rotated between these locations. There are customer service centres in both offices.

Procurement

Land banks

A discussion arose on what land banks the Council had and how they were being managed and funded. The Council advised that a number of them have pipeline housing plans and that in those cases they can recoup the cost of the loans from the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage. They do not foresee any of this land remaining idle, and expect some of the projects will proceed to construction in the next 12 months.

Rates

Waterford were asked about its non-collection of €8.3 million. It has done a lot in the area of rates and they have new structures in place and expect to collect in the region of 82 – 83% this year, and higher again in the years to come. Maintenance servicing has been curtailed for those not paying their rates but they find the vast majority do comply.

Procurement Procedures and Internal Audit

The issue of proper procurement procedures appears in the Local Government Audit Service's report and it was queried as to why there was legacy issues there and what was being done to address it. It was outlined that a Procurement Officer was in place and that the Council now had very high compliance rates. It was confirmed that the Internal Audit position had been filled and that there was a good strong Audit Committee in place.

Customer Satisfaction Survey

It was noted that Waterford City and Council had performed extremely well in the 2019 Customer Satisfaction Survey.

Water schemes

Questions were asked on the compliance rates in Water. There are 114 public water schemes, which is a large number. The Council can offer grants for these schemes if needed, but there is a limited amount which can be done in this area. Following the amalgamation and also changes in Irish Water it was noted that the Council received a special payment of €2 million from the Department. It was queried how this finance gap would impact their revenue budget going forward. It was outlined that, if necessary, budget cuts would have to be made but that the Council hoped this would not be the case. Savings in some areas might be achieved.

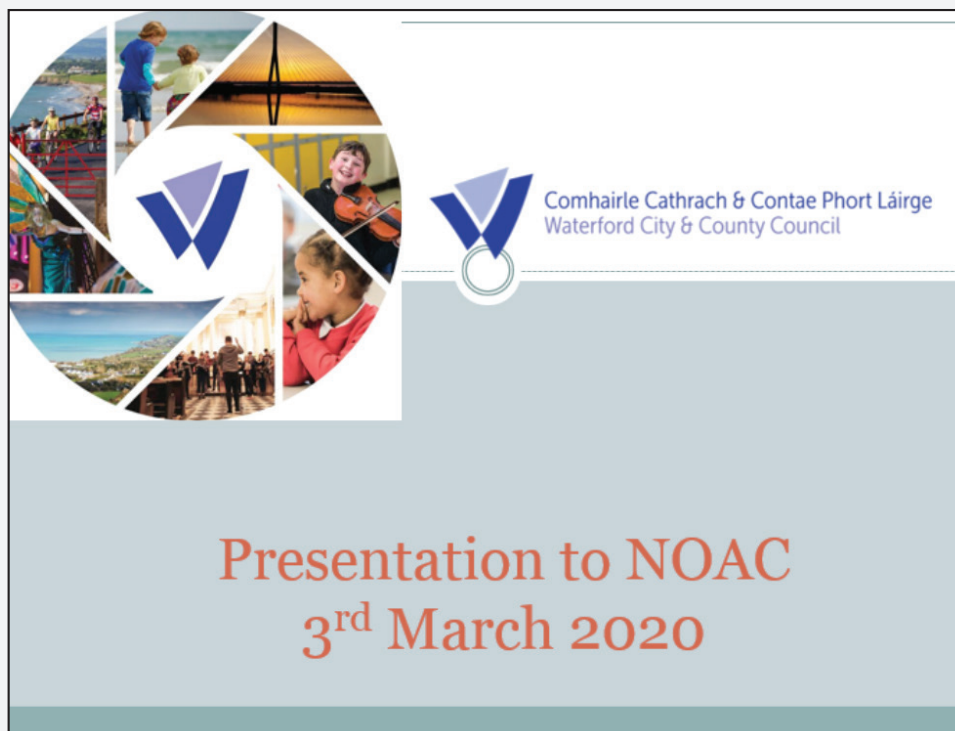
Conclusion

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

It was noted that the minutes of the meeting and presentation will be published on the NOAC website at a future date.

4

Stage 2 presentation



CONTENT

- Introductions
- NOAC Summary Table
- Waterford CCC Data Vs Peer LA Data
- Corporate Plan
- Discussion

NOAC SUMMARY TABLE

- See Attached Handout

HOUSING

Local Authority	LA New Build 2018	PART V	DHPLG Funded Voids	% of stock Vacant end 2018	Cost to Re-Tenant	Mtce Cost per Unit
Waterford CCC	119	30	149	1.81	€7,163.17	€482.14
Limerick CCC	60	12	112	3.97	€18,664.27	€800.71
Louth CC	23	18	171	2.7	€17,875.23	€655.93
Clare CC	2	0	43	3.66	€27,234.55	€952.54
Tipperary CC	20	5	34	3.2	€8,613.90	€592.70
Wicklow CC	32	45	83	2.31	€29,504.50	€1,235.93
Mean				2.77	€18,590.28	€1,147.45

ROADS



Local Authority	% Regional Roads PSCI Rating 1-4	% Local Primary Roads PSCI Rating 1- 4	% Local Secondary Roads PSCI Rating 1- 4	% Local Tertiary Roads PSCI Rating 1- 4
Waterford CCC	8	18	28	25
Limerick CCC	10	5	7	15
Louth CC	6	14	22	26
Clare CC	7	3	6	28
Tipperary CC	7	14	23	26
Wicklow CC	10	8	10	8
Mean	7.16	9.26	15	19.55

WASTE



Local Authority	% Households within area covered by a 3-bin Service
Waterford CCC	84.89
Limerick CCC	64.11
Louth CC	44.4
Clare CC	67.24
Tipperary CC	45.59
Wicklow CC	34.86
Mean	43.91

PLANNING



Local Authority	% New Buildings Inspected	% of Determinations confirmed by ABP	% Fire Safety Certs received in 2018 and decided with 2 months
Waterford CCC	63.45	65.52	63.64
Limerick CCC	12.71	84.75	46.48
Louth CC	8.38	68.63	27.84
Clare CC	16.55	80	65.57
Tipperary CC	11.78	83.33	40.45
Wicklow CC	24.86	81.18	92.86
Mean	23.47	76.94	56.37

FIRE



Local Authority	Cost per Capita (FT)	Average time taken in minutes to mobilise in respect of fire (FT)	Average time taken in minutes to mobilise in respect of fire (Retained)
Waterford CCC	€75.85	01:12	05:01
Limerick CCC	€84.63	01:22	05:25
Louth CC	€54.20	01:18	04:24
Clare CC	-	80	05:37
Tipperary CC	-	83.33	05:49
Wicklow CC	-	81.18	05:16
Mean	€94.08	76.94	05:34

Library & Community

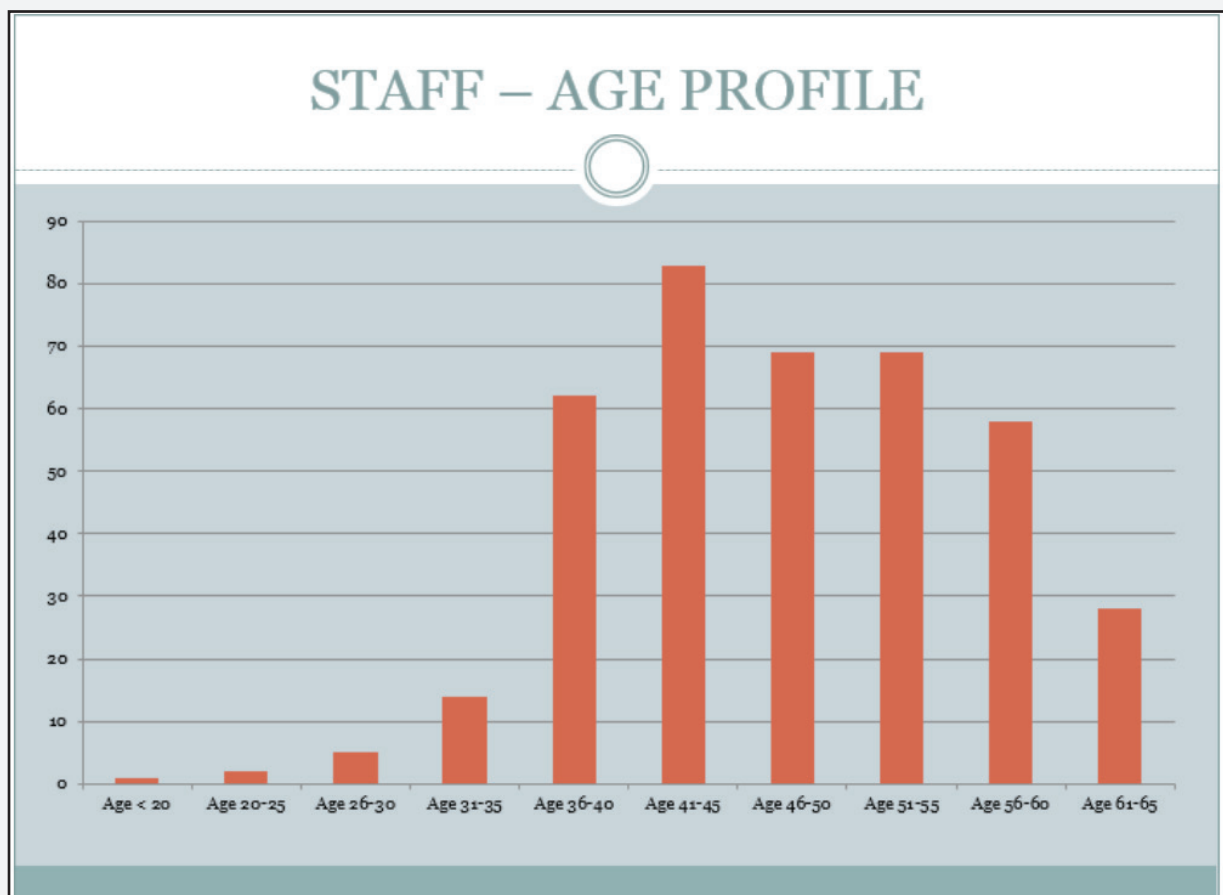
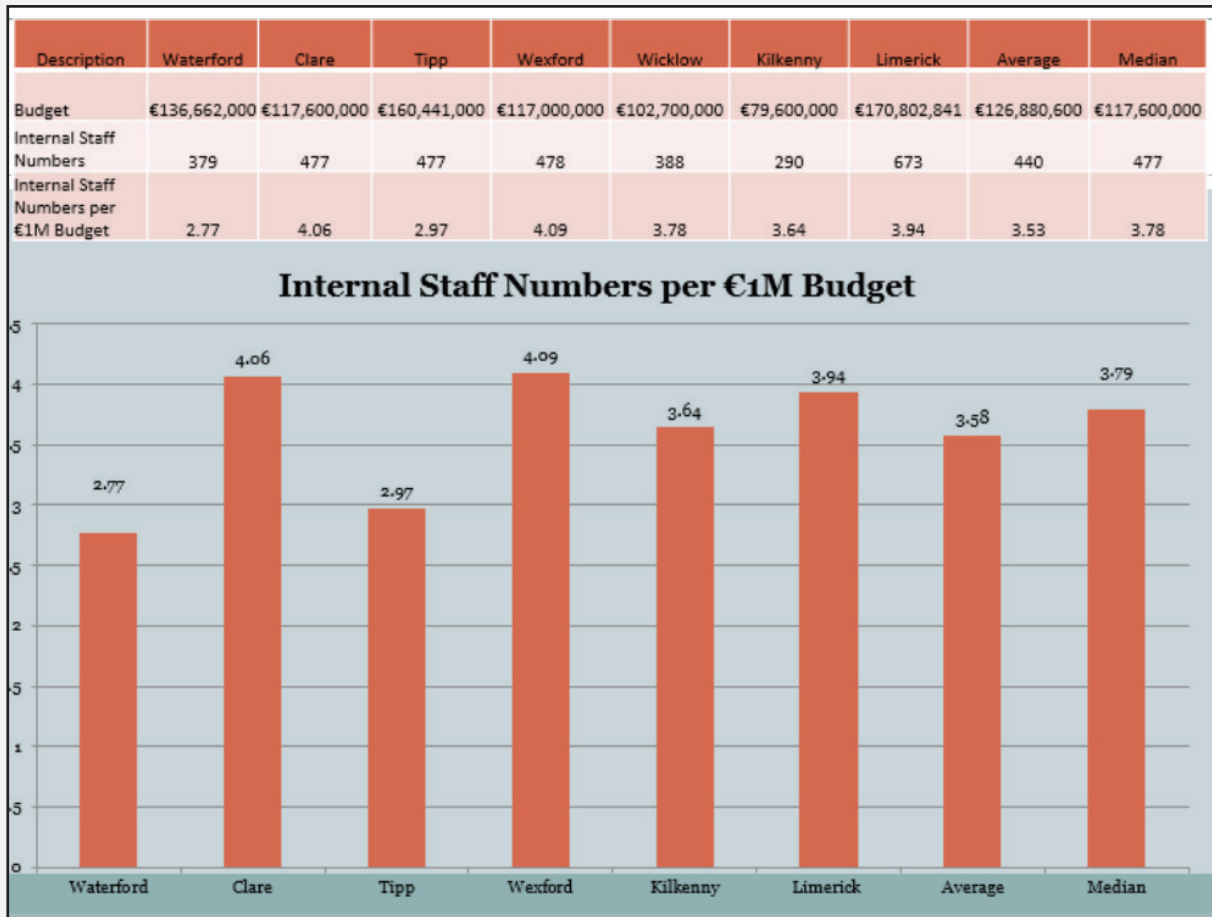


Local Authority	No. Of Library Visits per Head of Population	% Schools in Comhairle na nOg
Waterford CCC	4.9	94.44
Limerick CCC	3.19	56
Louth CC	2.01	89.47
Clare CC	3.38	78.95
Tipperary CC	3.09	78.79
Wicklow CC	4.1	60.87
Mean	3.58	9.26

STAFF



Local Authority	WTE as at 31/12/2108	WTE per €1M Revenue Budget Expenditure
Waterford CCC	768.19	5.62
Limerick CCC	1174.25	6.87
Louth CC	625.15	5.89
Clare CC	778.75	6.62
Tipperary CC	1034.06	6.45
Wicklow CC	715.35	6.97
Mean	-	-



FINANCE

Local Authority	% Commercial Rates Collected 2018	% Rent & Annuities Collected 2018	% Housing Loan Collected 2018
Waterford CCC	80	78.00	66.00
Limerick CCC	85	95.00	75.00
Louth CC	80	76.00	76.00
Clare CC	87	85.00	69.00
Tipperary CC	82.5	93.30	85.00
Wicklow CC	85	90.00	76.00
Mean	85.5	87.8	74

CORPORATE PLAN



DISCUSSION



- Q&A



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

Postal Address: Custom House, Dublin 1, D01 W6X0.

Website: www.noac.ie

Email: info@noac.ie