



# Meath County Council Scrutiny Report

NOAC Report No. 47 – December 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**  
**15th December 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, but restrictions have curtailed their activities in 2021. Stage 1 meetings were held with Meath and South Dublin in July 2021 and Fingal in October 2021. The Stage 2 meetings have progressed, as these were capable of being held remotely, with one held in January 2021 with Limerick City and County Council, another with Meath in September 2021 and a further meeting with South Dublin in December 2021.

## Future meetings and reports

This report outlines the purpose and the procedures 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 16 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. 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.

Meath County Council had their Stage 1 meeting in July 2021 and their Stage 2 meeting in September 2021. 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 highlights the following points arising out of these meetings with Meath County Council:

- It was impressive that the Council has succeeded in meeting and exceeding its housing targets in the last number of years.
- Useful work was undertaken by the Council in its hosting and delivery of the Age Friendly National Shared Service.
- The fast tracking of investment within the Council area has led to success, particularly regarding creating an Advanced Technology Building on IDA lands in Navan.



# Meath County Council Scrutiny Process

1.	Meath County Council Profile	7
2.	Stage 1 meeting July 2021 – Minutes	17
3.	Stage 2 meeting September 2021 – Minutes	21
4.	Stage 3 presentation	25



# Meath County Council

March 2020

## Contents

General Information	8
Staffing	8
Budget	8
Housing Information	8
Council Mission Statement	8
The Local Enterprise Office	8
Retail Incentives	9
The Corporate Plan	9
Shared services	9
Regional Issues including new developments and initiatives	9
Supporting Strategies	10
Any Other Relevant Information	10
Collection Rates	11
NOAC Reports overview	12
<b>NOAC Report Nos 26</b> – Performance Indicator Report 2019 – December 2020	12
<b>NOAC Report No 22</b> – Performance Indicator Report 2018 – September 2019	13
<b>NOAC Report No 18</b> – Customer Satisfaction Survey – July 2019	13
<b>NOAC Report No 17</b> – Internal Audit in Local Authorities - July 2018	13
<b>NOAC Report No 12</b> – A Review of the Management and Maintenance of Local Authority Housing - May 2017	14
<b>NOAC Report No 10</b> – Rented Houses Inspections A Review of Local authority	14
Performance Indicator tables 2014-2019	15



# Meath County Council General Information

<b>Local authority</b>	Meath County Council
<b>Population:</b>	195,044 (2016)
<b>Area:</b>	c.234,000 hectares (c.2340km <sup>2</sup> )
<b>Municipal Districts:</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Ashbourne Municipal District</li> <li>2. Kells Municipal District</li> <li>3. Laytown-Bettystown Municipal District</li> <li>4. Navan Municipal District</li> <li>5. Ratoath Municipal District</li> <li>6. Trim Municipal District</li> </ol>
<b>2021 Budget</b>	€154,685,723
<b>Number employed @ 30/11/2020</b>	779 (headcount)
<b>WTE Staff per 1,000 population</b>	0.378 (as per WTE 737.56 & 2016 CSO population for Meath i.e. 195,044)
<b>% of paid working days lost to medically certified sick leave</b>	2015: 3.56 2016: 3.25 2017: 3.74 2018: 2.98 2019: 2.59
<b>Housing Information @ 27/11/2020</b>	
<b>Local Authority Stock number</b>	3,474 (excludes 30 Halting Site bays and 97 special lettings)
<b>Number currently on waiting list</b>	4,095
<b>HAP Tenancies</b>	2,260
<b>Homeless presentations</b>	2018 – 343 households 2019 – 513 households 2020 to date – 471 households
<b>Any specific housing issues</b>	None identified by local authority
<b>Short Information</b>	
<b>Council Mission Statement</b>	To drive the economic, social, cultural and environmental growth of our county in a balanced manner, which is inclusive of all our citizens.
<b>The Local Enterprise Office</b>	Is a first-stop-shop for micro entrepreneurs in Co. Meath, providing a range of supports i.e. financial assistance, training, mentoring, business advice and planning for micro-enterprises in Co. Meath. Also acts to promote an enterprise culture in the county.

<b>Retail Incentives</b>	<p>Working with Retail Excellence Ireland to provide training and development for retail businesses in the county.</p> <p>Meath County Council's shop front scheme was launched recently and is still open to applicants. There has been great interest to date with lots of ambitious plans and small changes approved. We encourage retailers to consider an application if your shop front requires any attention. This is a direct support to retailers who may have been closed throughout the pandemic and we are here to help.</p>
<b>The Corporate Plan</b>	<p><b>Meath County Council Corporate Plan 2019 – 2024</b></p> <p><b>Strategic Objectives:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <i>Strategic Objective 1:</i> Deliver Excellent Public Services to our Citizens.</li> <li>2. <i>Strategic Objective 2:</i> Lead Economic Development, Support Enterprise and Employment Creation.</li> <li>3. <i>Strategic Objective 3:</i> Provide a blend of solutions to the complex Housing challenges at local level.</li> <li>4. <i>Strategic Objective 4:</i> Support the transition to a Low Carbon Economy and lead on Climate Change.</li> <li>5. <i>Strategic Objective 5:</i> Engage the wider community, increase participation and work to make Meath an Age Friendly County.</li> <li>6. <i>Strategic Objective 6:</i> Build strong, influential partnerships to maximise the county's potential.</li> <li>7. <i>Strategic Objective 7:</i> Develop organisational capability through innovation and staff excellence.</li> </ol>
<b>Shared services</b>	<p>Meath County Council is host to the Age Friendly Ireland shared service which runs the national Age Friendly Programme aligned to the World Health Organization's Age Friendly Cities and Communities Framework. Age Friendly Ireland is advised by a National Advisory Group comprising senior representatives from Government Departments and agencies, and from the local authority and business sectors. The shared service provides oversight of the national programme, guidance and technical support to each of the 31 local authority led multi-agency local Age Friendly Programmes. The shared service is currently staffed by 5 full time personnel, 6 part time regional staff and two principal advisors.</p>
<b>Regional Issues including new developments and initiatives</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Boyne Valley Tourism</li> <li>■ Boyne Valley Food Strategy</li> <li>■ Louth-Meath Migrant Integration Strategy</li> <li>■ Also at regional level there is the North East Major Emergency Management Steering Group (Louth, Cavan, Meath)</li> </ul>

Supporting Strategies	<p><b>Strategic Objective 1: Deliver Excellent Public Services to our Citizens:</b>  <i>Supporting Strategy:</i> Meath County Council will focus on providing essential services to improve the quality of life and well-being of people and the prosperity of businesses in the county.</p> <p><b>Strategic Objective 2: Lead Economic Development, Support Enterprise and Employment Creation:</b>  <i>Supporting Strategy:</i> Meath County Council will be the lead agency in developing the local economy, with a focus on attracting investment and the creation and retention of jobs in the county.</p> <p><b>Strategic Objective 3: Provide a blend of solutions to the complex Housing challenges at local level.</b>  <i>Supporting Strategy:</i> Meath County Council will support the delivery of a range of solutions to meet the various housing needs, including private, social, affordable, right-size and accessible housing.</p> <p><b>Strategic Objective 4: Support the transition to a Low Carbon Economy and lead on Climate Change:</b>  <i>Supporting Strategy:</i> Meath County Council will effect positive change at local level on the national transition objective to a low carbon future and on climate resilience.</p> <p><b>Strategic Objective 5: Engage the wider community, increase participation and work to make Meath an Age Friendly County:</b>  <i>Supporting Strategy:</i> Meath County Council will be available to listen, inform and engage with the citizens of Meath. The Council will work to increase community engagement and social inclusion and future-proof what we do to enable the development of sustainable communities.</p> <p><b>Strategic Objective 6: Build strong, influential partnerships to maximise the county's potential.</b>  <i>Supporting Strategy:</i> Meath County Council will build strong influential partnerships with key stakeholders, to protect and enhance the reputation of the Council and support the delivery of its strategic objectives.</p> <p><b>Strategic Objective 7: Develop organisational capability through innovation and staff excellence.</b>  <i>Supporting Strategy:</i> Meath County Council will innovate to seek improvements in how it delivers services, including digital services and nurture a culture to make it an employer of choice in the region, where staff are proud to work in its progressive environment.</p>
Any other relevant information	<p>HR: Aging workforce with only a small percentage of staff under the age of 30 – therefore risk of working days lost due to medically certified sick leave increases.</p>

### Collection Rates

	2019	2018	2016	2015	2014	2014
<b>Rate collection rates</b>	93.00%	93.00%	92.00%	89.00%	85.00%	81.00%
<b>Rent collection rates</b>	89.00%	89.00%	89.00%	87.00%	86.00%	84.00%
<b>Housing loan collection rates</b>	81.00%	73.00%	67.00%	67.00%	66.00%	63.00%

From records, it is clear that there has been steady growth in rate collections over the years, improving year on year to 93% in 2019. It is significantly ahead of the national average of 86.49% and has shown a marked improvement since 2014 when its collection rate was 81%.

Rent collections have increased from earlier years and have remained consistent over the past 3 years. It is performing in line with the national average, which was at 88.22% for 2019.

Housing loans have increased well since 2014, now standing at 81%. It is ahead of the national average, which is at 77.94% for 2019.

# NOAC Reports Overview

NOAC was established in July 2014 as an independent statutory body to provide oversight of the local government sector in Ireland. NOAC's functions are wide ranging, involving the scrutiny of performance generally and financial performance specifically. NOAC also supports best practice, oversees the implementation of national local government policy, monitors and evaluates implementation of corporate plans, adherence to service level agreements and public service reform by local government bodies.

The annual Performance Indicator Report published by NOAC is one of its key reports every year. NOAC has the function of scrutinising local authority performance against relevant indicators. NOAC believes that monitoring performance over time and against comparable authorities has the potential to encourage continuous improvement in local authority service provision. From the reports published to date matters relevant to Meath County Council are outlined in the points below.

## NOAC REPORT NO 26

### Performance Indicator Report 2019 – December 2020

- **Housing.** Meath owned 3,402 social housing dwellings at the end of 2019 with 6.32% vacant. This is an increase in the vacancy rate of 3.63% in 2018. In 2014 Meath's vacancy rate was only 2.1%.

In 2019 Meath's average time for rehousing in vacant properties was 28.69 weeks, which is very similar to the national average of 28.17 weeks. Meath's re-letting rate was 25.59 weeks in 2018.

- **Environment.** 98.92% of drinking water in private schemes were in compliance with statutory requirements. 7% of the County is unpolluted or litter-free. 3% is grossly polluted, up from 1% in 2014

- **Brown bins.** Meath's brown bin uptake was 44.68%, a little below the national average figure of 48.36%. In 2014 the figures for brown bin uptake was only 12.96% in Meath, which increased to 34.84% in 2017 and to 39.44% in 2018.
- **Green Flag status.** At the end of 2019, 51.08% of schools in the county held a Green Flag. The national average is 47.96%. In 2018 44.93% of schools in Meath held a Green Flag.
- **Fire service.** It took an average of 5:06 minutes to mobilise fire brigades for calls to fires, an improvement on the 5:15 minutes for the previous year. It took 5:13 minutes to mobilise in respect of non-fire emergencies, which compares with 5:28 minutes the year previously.
- **Libraries.** There was an average of 3.1 visits per head of population and 480,142 items issued to library borrowers in 2019 (average of 3.57 visits and 496,906 items issued countrywide). For 2018 the figures were 3.16 visits and 414,428 items borrowed (average of 3.58 visits and 451,596 items issued countrywide).
- **Staff total.** Whole-time equivalent staff employed by Meath County Council at the end of 2019 was 728.23, an increase on the 696.35 in 2018. The average whole-time equivalent staff across all local authorities in 2019 was 940.73 and 913.16 in 2018.
- **Sick leave.** Meath's medically certified sick leave rate is 2.59%, (2.98% in 2018) making it one of the local authorities which met the public sector sick leave target of 3.5%. The national average was 3.71%. Meath's self-certified paid sick leave was 0.42% (0.38% in 2018). The national average is 0.36%.
- **Technology & Social media.** The total page views of the Meath County Council website in 2019 was 1,708,490, a large decrease on the 2,110,556 views of the page in 2018. Total followers of its social media channels at end 2019 were 56,013, down very significantly from 82,974 in 2018.

## NOAC REPORT NO 22

### Performance Indicator Report 2018 – September 2019

- New House building inspections rose from 39.56% in 2014 to 43.87% in 2018 (57.71% in 2019).
- Cost per capita of the planning service rose from €22.09 in 2014 to €27.24 in 2018 (€24.21 in 2019).
- The cost of the library service rose from €19.18 in 2014 to €21.21 in 2018 (€21.73 in 2019).
- Motor tax online transactions have also improved from 66.31% in 2014 to 84.24% in 2018. (85.86% in 2019).
- The % area unpolluted or litter free was 1% in 2014 and 15% in 2018. (7% in 2019).

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

## NOAC REPORT NO 18

### Customer Satisfaction Survey July 2018

- In 2018, Ipsos MRBI was commissioned by NOAC to conduct a survey among the general public to establish their satisfaction with their local authority. A face-to-face in-home CAPI (Computer Aided Personal Interviewing) methodology is utilised and quota controls ensured that participants are representative of the local authority population by age, gender and social class.
- The first survey, conducted in 2018, surveyed the 10 largest local authorities. The second survey, completed in March 2019, was conducted with the 10 medium sized local authorities and Galway City. The remaining 10 local authorities were surveyed in 2020. Meath was included in the 2018 survey.
- 44% of respondents were satisfied with Meath County Council, which was below the average level of satisfaction with all Councils, which was 53%.

- Meath's satisfaction rating was highest among these 10 local authorities in the area of affordable housing at a 38% satisfaction rate compared to the average satisfaction rate of 25%.
- 93% of respondents stated that they knew at least a little about their Council. This was the highest among these 10 local authorities, where the average was 84%.
- 28% of people felt that Meath provides good value for money, slightly higher than the 27% of all Councils.
- 50% of people believe that Meath is doing a good job, compared to the overall satisfaction rating of 47%.

## NOAC REPORT NO 17

### Internal Audit in Local Authorities – July 2018

- All 31 local authorities have an internal audit function, with 22 authorities, including Meath, operating this function in-house.
- 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. Meath was one of 14 authorities which had not done so.
- The Head of Internal Audit reports directly to the CE in nine authorities, one of which is Meath.
- The staff compliment in the Council's internal audit function continues to be cause for concern, as it consists solely of one member of staff.



## NOAC REPORT NO 12

## A Review of the Management and Maintenance of Local authority Housing – May 2017

Local authorities' best estimate of the percentage of dwellings vacated by the tenants that were notified to the local authority in advance of vacation varied considerably. Estimates ranged from a low of 5% in Meath and Kildare to 99% in Longford.

### Challenges and Opportunities

Meath County Council pointed out that the increase in capital housing programmes presents a challenge to the ramp up of output in the context of the reduced staff levels.

### Housing Stock Management

Some local authorities have carried out full audits of their housing stock and Meath County Council said it was going to follow the example of some other local authorities and outsource this work.

Meath County Council is developing an Estate Management Policy and a Service Level Agreement.

### Shared Services

Local authority housing stock is a significant resource, the management and maintenance of which requires a variety of skill sets. There may be merit, therefore, in the LGMA carrying out an examination of the efficiencies that could be gained from greater sharing of skills across the sector. The LGMA should also consider including in its shared services projects programme an examination of whether there is scope for a shared services approach to this function, particularly in the case of the four Dublin local authorities and those of the surrounding commuter belt – Kildare, Meath and Wicklow County Councils.

## NOAC REPORT NO 10

## Rented Houses Inspections – A Review of Local authority Performance of Private Rented Houses Regulations Functions October 2016

	2014	2019
<b>Number of Registered Tenancies</b>	6,929	8,219
<b>% Units inspected</b>	1.3	13.46
<b>Inspected Failed %</b>	72.5	93.92

Data from report relates to 2014, data for 2019 taken from Performance Indicator Report.



	Performance Indicators	2019	2018	2017	2016	2015	2014	Median/ Average
		Data	Data	Data	Data	Data	Data	Average
H1	Social Housing provided in year per 1,000 population	1.36	0.96	0.38	n/a	0.64	0.53	0.80
H2	% of directly provided dwellings vacant at 31/12	6.32	3.63	1.76	1.76	2.39	2.10	3.8
H3a	Average time from vacation date to PI year re-letting date (weeks)	28.69	25.59	57.77	20.90	16.00	15.00	31.43
H3b	Average cost expended on getting re-tenanted units ready for re-letting	€30,282.27	€30,312.50	€28,878.05	30,258.26	16,382.00	19,999.00	€11,534.91
H4	Average repair and maintenance cost per unit	€768.77	€943.04	€770.21	908.28	948.62	801.00	€1,272.30
H5	Inspections (Dwellings inspected in 2018) carried out in year as % of registrations	13.46	5.17	3.84	1.48	1.78	1.76	6.51
R1a	% Regional Road KM that ever received a PSCI rating	99.57	100	22	99.00	98.00	0.00	47.9
R1b	% Total Regional Road KM with a PSCI rating of 9-10	50.67	47	46	40.00	32.00	N/A	11.15
R1c	% Total Primary Road KM with a PSCI rating of 9-10	34.76	27	41	22.00	13.00	N/A	6.4
R1d	% Total Secondary Road KM with a PSCI rating of 9-10	29.27	23	26	15.00	10.00	N/A	4.61
R1e	% Total Tertiary Road KM with a PSCI rating of 9-10	14.72	11	18	14.00	8.00	N/A	3.63
R2a	KM Regional Road strengthened using road improvement grants	19.6	19.8	11.30	8.40	18.50		
R2b	KM Regional road resealed using road maintenance grants	15.8	15.8	19.60	17.90	13.70		
R2/3	% Motor tax transactions performed online	85.86	84.24	81.17	78.88	71.00	66.31	54.7
W1	% private schemes with water quality in compliance	98.92	97.29	98.43	98.65	96.89	95.80	97.9
E1	% households availing of a 3-bin service	44.68	39.44	34.84	27.53	21.93	12.96	31.66
E2	Pollution cases on hand at year end as % of the cases that arose that year	3.22	3.92	3.47	19.19	8.49		
E3	% area unpolluted or litter free	7	15	4	0.00	4.00	1.00	9.5



Performance Indicators		2019		2018		2017		2016		2015		2014	
		Data	Median/ Average	Data	Median/ Average	Data	Median/ Average	Data	Median/ Average	Data	Median/ Average	Data	Median/ Average
P1	New buildings inspected as % of new buildings notified	57.71	23.90	43.87	16.75	63.86	17	48.55	19.42	30.46	24	1.76	17.71
P2	% of determinations that confirmed the decision made by LA	67.92	73.07	54.35	75.92	83.72	79	76.47	77.78	73.17	71.88	61.29	71.7
P3	Ratio of planning cases being investigated at year end as to cases closed	4.93	2.74	3.07	3.03	2.62	2.41	1.88	2.87	1.78	2.61	2.68	2.88
P4	Cost per capita of the Planning Service	24.21	€30.27	27.24	29.24	€26.88	28.31	25.51	€26.96	23.71	€26.76	22.09	€25.27
F1	Cost per capita of Fire Service (based on 2016 Census)	31.40	€60.79	31.56	53.85	€36.71	57.74	26.47	€56.07	30.56	€57.88	30.40	€55.9
F2	Average time to mobilise Brigade re Fire (Minutes) (FT)	N/A	1:24	N/A	1.42	N/A	1.45	n/a	1.5	N/A	1.6	N/A	1.66
F3	% of Fire Cases in which first attendance is within 10 minutes	35.68	55.14	30.25	52.92	41.12	40.45	34.84	57.79	36.72	56.98	38.92	58.6
L1a	No. of Library visits per head of population	3.10	3.57	3.16	3.50	3.25	3.56	4.01	3.61	4.07	3.68	3.67	3.71
L1b	No. of Items borrowed per head of population	2.46	3.14	2.12	3.00	1.97	2.92	2.70	3.82	3.02	3.82		
L2	Cost of Library Service per capita	21.73	€34.94	21.21	30.52	28.92	31.00	30.43	€30.05	27.64	€30.02	27.00	€29.41
Y1	% of local schools involved in Comhairle na nOg Scheme	52.38	68.30	61.90	80.00	66.67	69.04	48.28	68.07	37.93	67.59	21.57	51.86
C1	WTE staff per 1,000 population	3.73	5.95	3.57	5.99	5.67	5.75	5.48	5.64	5.39	5.58	5.26	5.63
C2a	% of paid working days lost to medically certified sick leave in year	2.59	3.71	2.98	3.74	4.15	3.74	3.54	3.76	3.28	3.52	3.19	3.34
C2b	% of paid working days lost to self-certified sick leave in year	0.42	0.36	0.38	0.35	0.40	0.33	0.33	0.38	0.33	0.39	0.34	0.4
C3	LA website page views per 1,000 population	8,759.51	16,572	10,820.92	16,210.00	18187	14,632	17,125.69	12,422	17,857.41	11,666	12,254.81	9,651
C4	Overall cost of ICT Provision per WTE	€3,663.68	€3,060.84	€3,597.68	€2,894.57	€2,713.01	€3,048.41	2,685.63	€2,675.69	3,060.96	€2,680.15	3,078.06	€2,646.8
M2a	% Commercial Rates Collected in year	93	87	93	86.00	82.0	83	77.00	82.3	75.00	83	65.00	77
M2b	% Rent & Annuities Collected in year	89	89.80	89	89.00	96.0	89	94.00	88.0	89.00	85	87.00	84
M2c	% Housing Loans Collected in year	81	78	73	75.00	78.0	74	74.00	70	78.00	68	77.00	67
J1	LEO jobs output per 1,000 population	0.63	0.64	0.73	0.77	0.47	0.68	0.62	0.7	0.87	0.66	0.82	0.73



# Stage 1 meeting

## NOAC Scrutiny Meeting Meath County Council

Date:	6 July 2021	
Venue:	Meath County Council Offices, Navan	
Attendees:	<b>Meath County Council</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>■ Jackie Maguire, Chief Executive</li><li>■ Fiona Lawless, Head of Finance and Director of Services for Finance, Information Systems and Water</li><li>■ Dara McGowan, Director of Service for Corporate Affairs and Governance, Climate Action and Emergency Services</li><li>■ Robert Collins, Senior Executive Officer, Corporate Affairs and Governance</li></ul>	<b>NOAC</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>■ Michael McCarthy, Chair</li><li>■ Claire Gavin, NOAC Executive</li></ul>

NOAC's profile for Meath County Council was issued in advance of the meeting and formed the basis for the discussion on the day. The NOAC Chair outlined the format of the meetings and explained that every visit to a local authority enriched its understanding of the context within which it worked and allowed it to get a fuller picture of the situation behind some of the statistics which were compiled on local authorities. There have been several examples throughout the country where statistics which pointed to outliers were based on extremely small sets of data. This is where part of the value of such meetings with local authorities comes to the fore.

The NOAC Chair invited the Chief Executive to give an overview of the Council and the issues facing it. Matters discussed in detail were:

### Background to Meath County Council

The Chief Executive set the scene and outlined that as a local authority Meath is doing well and it has come from a low-income base. Meath has 40 Elected Members, which is a significant increase from 29 in 2014. The Chief Executive explained that in 2014, there were 3 Town Councils and the county is now divided over 6 Municipal Districts (MD) which are working well. The aim of the MD is to deal with local items, so that these items are not being dealt with at full Council meetings, facilitating more efficient decision-making in the Council meetings. The former Town Council areas are better developed and established and therefore some balancing of services/infrastructure is required.

## Development Plan Review

The review of the County Development Plan has been underway for two and a half years and is now at material amendment stage. It has been a difficult and lengthy process that was affected by specific legislative changes, and the final round of meetings to discuss the Chief Executive recommendations are to commence on the 20th of September 2021.

Meath has 4 Strategic Policy Committees that are working well and an Audit Committee which consists of 2 Elected Representatives and 3 independent members, one of which is the chairperson.

## Human Resources

Meath County Council has the lowest number of staff per capita of any local authority in the country and there are 5 Directors including the Head of Finance. The increasing demands of Housing, Climate Action and Transportation have added to the workload significantly.

While at one stage there was generally one Government Department dealing with local authorities, now there are several Departments with competing priorities and it is often difficult to deliver for individual Departments in a timely manner, especially when the Council has limited resources. There is a danger of damaging the perception of local government if the Council cannot deliver on some programmes.

FOI and AIE numbers have grown exponentially and it is believed that some of these requests are not in the spirit of the legislation and that huge time commitments from staff are required to deal with the level of requests.

In relation to recruitment, the Council has been trying new ways of attracting new staff to work for the organisation but this is an ongoing challenge with the Council experiencing difficulty attracting specific grades and skills, mainly technical and IT related vacancies. The Council also noted an increasing turnover of staff, particularly in the technical grades such as engineers/planners.

## Finances and the Economic Strategy


Even though Meath County Council has the lowest spend per capita in the country, a huge amount of work has been undertaken by the Finance Department in recent years, resulting in the revenue deficit being reduced from €14m to its current level of €0.5m and the capital deficit which has written down over €43m in unfunded balances over the past 15 years. The discretionary LPT of €3.5 million was used for repair and upgrade of Class 3 roads, housing maintenance and €1m was used for land aggregation loan repayments, with a further amount used to draw up an economic strategy for the county. The NPPR was also another good source of income, but the residual benefit of that is now gone. The Council has undertaken significant work in terms of economic development to expand its rates base. The income from commercial rates has increased by €22m to approx. €43/€44m in 2021. The proximity to Dublin Airport helps to attract investors and some of the significant businesses recently attracted include a number of data centres for Facebook and Amazon and a pharmaceutical facility for Merc Pharma.

The Economic Strategy that the Council developed with the NUI Maynooth, identified suitable sites and the strategically important transport links required to promote economic activity. Meath County Council also further developed new relationships with the IDA and Enterprise Ireland to assist in the delivery of new projects to the County.

## Housing

Development in Meath is producing house numbers that are exceeding the Rebuilding Ireland targets. Due to the shortage of available public land, this development will slow after 2023. The Council has not been able to acquire any further land due to the fact that current market value exceeds the Department's upper limits on purchasing land. The Department is currently reviewing these limits which may result in the Council being able to secure additional land for housing developments beyond 2023.

There is a large demand for 1 and 2 bed units and the Council will aim to increase the delivery of these units in the future.



Home loans under Rebuilding Ireland have a strong uptake in the county. In 2018, Meath County Council provided more loans than the rest of the country, with the average loan value increasing from €65,000 to €130,000 at present. However, these loans carry a high risk to the finances of the Council, as the Council underwrites the loans. Currently the Council is dealing with the backlog of applicants for these loans. The risk to the Council is beginning to become very high and it is also difficult to assess how these loans are currently performing due to the Covid break that was offered to the holders of these loans.

### Rates Base and Businesses

The commercial rate revaluation process led to a number of appeals which are currently underway. During the revaluation process 28% of the rate payers that had their rates revised upward have appealed this decision. The appeals process can take in excess of 2 years to complete, which will affect the Council's finances. Some of the commercial rates that were revised upwards were in the hospitality industry and these businesses have been hit the hardest by Covid related restrictions.

Meath County Council acknowledged the huge supports given to businesses and the local authorities with the rates waiver scheme for 2020 and 2021.

The Council's revenue budget was affected by Covid, by reduced parking income as well as the additional costs associated with the response to Covid related restrictions. The Council acknowledges and appreciates the small business support schemes introduced by the Government to assist local businesses to deal with the Covid related restrictions.

The Council has put a lot of effort into its rates collections and offered incentives such as discounts to those who had paid in full and those who had signed up to direct debit. The Council is continuing to work with businesses to support the rates base. It acknowledged that the 2 sets of Restart Grants were a big support to the sustainability of these businesses.

### IT

The Council advised that it has a very secure system with a number of layers of security to provide protection from ransomware attacks.

### Climate Change

This is a huge growth area and will need much attention in the coming years. The Council has signed up to promoting the Sustainable Development Goals and is working with the community in this area. The Council is currently seeking a €10m loan for the retrofit of public lighting throughout the county. They are looking at a number of areas including energy and are intending to appoint an energy officer. There are a number of planning applications for renewable energy generation schemes currently being progressed in the county.

### County Town

Navan is the county town and the Council is currently working on the design for 4 separate road projects within the town to improve traffic flows and open up large tracts of land for development.

The NTA are currently undertaking a feasibility study to develop a rail line from Dunboyne to Navan.

### Littering/ Waste Disposal

In the case of people who are not signed up for a brown bin waste disposal service, Meath County Council has bye laws whereby it can investigate how the household waste is being disposed of. The Council do not spot check, but if it suspects there is an issue or receives a complaint, will call to the household and investigate. The Council has 3 wardens and will investigate illegal dumping whenever it occurs. The Council has also been proactive in promoting and working in collaboration with others on preventive policies and initiatives.

### Communications

Meath County Council employs a Communications Officer, which has helped to improve the Council's engagement with citizens and stakeholders and to promote a positive image of the Council (and local government) through better communication on the services provided, with related good news stories.



## Age Friendly Programme

Meath County Council hosts the Age Friendly Ireland Programme, the national shared service for the sector. The programme is funded jointly by the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage, the Department of Health and the HSE. The Programme works with a range of organisations and across sectors to ensure the interests and needs of older people are being well served. It has made huge traction and has influenced a range of national policy initiatives. The Programme is currently establishing the Healthy Age Friendly Homes Programme, funded by Sláinte Care with €2m over 2 years. The overall aim is to provide a range of wrap-around supports to enable older people to continue living in their homes or in a home more suited to their needs, with a sense of independence and autonomy, avoiding early or premature admission to long term residential care. The programme is being rolled out nationally and it is aimed at all, both private and social tenants.

The NOAC Chair thanked the Chief Executive for the comprehensive discussion and invited Meath County Council to attend for a Stage 2 meeting with the full NOAC board on the 7th of September 2021 at 10 am.

The minutes of this meeting and the future Stage 2 NOAC meeting will be circulated by the NOAC Executive to Meath County Council. Once the process has been completed and the minutes/ presentations approved, these will be published in a report format on the NOAC website.



# 3

## Stage 2 meeting

### Minutes of the National Oversight and Audit Commission (NOAC) Meeting with Meath County Council

Date:	Tuesday 7th September 2021 at 10:00 a.m.	
Venue:	Virtual meeting using the Webex platform	
Attendees:	<b>Chair</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Michael McCarthy</li> </ul> <b>Members</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Brian Cawley</li> <li>Margaret Lane</li> <li>Ciáran Hayes</li> <li>Mary Hurley</li> <li>Niall Quinn</li> <li>Declan Breathnach</li> <li>Philomena Poole</li> <li>Noel Harrington</li> </ul> <b>Apologies</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Margaret Lane</li> </ul> <b>Secretariat</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Claire Gavin</li> <li>Darren Browne</li> <li>Neill Dalton</li> <li>John Goldrick</li> </ul>	<b>By Invite:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Jackie Maguire, Chief Executive, Meath County Council</li> <li>Fiona Lawless, Head of Finance and Director of Services for Finance, Information Systems and Water</li> <li>Dara McGowan, Director of Service for Corporate Affairs and Governance, Climate Action and Emergency Services</li> <li>Robert Collins, Senior Executive Officer, Corporate Affairs and Governance</li> </ul>

#### Meeting with Meath County Council

The Chair welcomed the Chief Executive and Management team to the meeting. In advance of the meeting, a presentation to be made by Meath County Council was circulated to NOAC and the Chief Executive delivered this presentation at the beginning of the meeting.

It was outlined that the Council, due to its location, is part of the Greater Dublin Area, which has a number of advantages, but there are some disadvantages to this also. There has been significant growth in the county and outside of Fingal it is the fastest growing local authority area in the country. This brings with it the challenge of providing services for its growing number of citizens.

Housing is a key issue and the Council is currently waiting for the new housing delivery targets to be set under “Housing for All”. The Council has succeeded in meeting and exceeding its housing targets in the last number of years. There is a strong pipeline of schemes between now and 2023 but the Council needs to replenish its landbank rapidly in order to continue the construction programme. The cost of zoned land on the open market is prohibitive, in particular in the settlements close to Dublin. 70% of demand on the social housing list is for 1 and 2 bed units. However, the supply available from the market on a turnkey basis for both the Council and Approved Housing Bodies has been primarily three bed family homes. The Council seeks to address the need for 1 and 2 bed accommodation in its own construction projects, but this segment of the list takes longer to resolve.

URDF (Urban Regeneration and Development Fund) and RRDF (Rural Regeneration and Development Fund) investment has been important in the revitalisation and regeneration of towns within Meath, with a number of successful applications for funding progressing through the design and construction stages.

The Council are engaging with the NTA on the proposed Navan rail line, with regards to having it extended from Dunboyne to Navan. It is hoped that this project will be included in the revised NTA Transport Strategy to be published in the coming weeks and the delivery of this project will assist in reducing the infrastructural deficit of the county.

There are a number of legacy challenges facing the county. One such example is a serious under investment in road infrastructure in Navan, the county town and the fifth largest town in Ireland.

There has been a huge increase in the volume and complexity of planning applications. Applications are increasing year on year, with a 43% increase so far in 2021. In addition to the increase in quantity, there is also an increase in the complexity of planning applications due to the scale of developments (i.e. SHDs) and complying with relevant environmental requirements.

The Council has adopted the Sustainable Development Goals under its Local Climate Action Strategy and the Council will work to deliver the identified targets when the new Climate Action Plan is published by the

Department. However, it will need additional resources to carry out the works associated with these targets.

Meath County Council hosts the Age Friendly National Shared Service, a key part of which is listening to the voice of older people. The Shared Service works with a range of organisations to influence national policy and ensure the interests and needs of older people are being well served.

The Council’s presentation also covered items under the headings of Community Development, Economic Development, Finance, Corporate Affairs and Governance.

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

## Housing targets

The NOAC Board enquired as to how the Council was able to exceed its housing targets. The Council explained that there was a number of strategic sites available in 2014/2015 that could be developed by the Council in the last number of years, but as these landbanks have been developed, it will be difficult to maintain this momentum going forward. The Council has also improved supply from private acquisitions, turnkeys, AHBs and private developers.

## Staffing and government initiatives

The Council was asked for its views on staff retention and whether it would need to get more staff into the housing sector, due to its low staff numbers. The Council responded by mentioning that it needed to attract and retain the best people to drive and deliver all of their services. The Council must position the organisation as an ‘employer of choice’ in a very competitive employment market particularly in relation to roles which require professional qualifications and specialist skills which are necessary for an increasing number of positions due to new services and so as to maintain best practice in other more traditional areas of responsibility. As with much of the rest of the public sector the Council is experiencing a ‘churn’ of staff particularly within the engineering and technical staff which shows no sign of slowing down. Employee turnover in these skilled roles can have a negative impact on the organisation’s performance, business continuity and ability to maximise on

the investment in these staff. Over two-thirds of staff resignations from posts in the past 24 months were engineering and technical staff.

There are multiple demands on the Council as many varied government initiatives need to be implemented. Regarding funding for projects, this can sometimes take the form of part funding from Departments for capital works, resulting in the Council having long term commitments with a limited amount of funding and more specifically staff resourcing in place to service these commitments.

### Future strategic challenges

The issue of what the future strategic challenges are for the Council was also raised. The Council outlined that it had development land to allow for building up to 2023 but that beyond this there could be issues acquiring affordable land. In certain areas unzoned land is also being sold at a significant premium to agricultural value. The impact of this is that the existing benchmark unit land cost of €20K to 30K per unit can no longer be achieved. Meath County Council believe that it will be necessary for the Department to increase its unit construction costs to reflect market realities in the Greater Dublin Area.

### Age Friendly National Share Service

The Council was asked about further details regarding the Age Friendly National Shared Service. Meath County Council was awarded the role of hosting the National Shared Service in 2018. In December 2019, Ireland became the first country to achieve accreditation from the World Health Organisation for its Age Friendly Programmes. Apart from its role of providing information and advice to each Local Age Friendly programme the Shared Service has been a key player in policy development at national level. In particular, the Shared Service has played a significant role in the Implementation Group for the "Housing Options for our Ageing Population" policy document and has developed a number of resources and tools as part of the implementation including the agefriendlyhomes.ie website. More recently the Shared Service was awarded over €2 million to host the Sláintecare

Healthy Age Friendly Homes Programme which is designed to enable older people to stay in their own homes as long as possible with significant savings for the healthcare system.

### Fast tracking investment

The Council was asked for further details on how its fast tracking approach to investment operated. One initiative employed was to work with the IDA on securing a planning permission for an Advanced Technology Building on IDA lands in Navan. The brief involved designing a building that was flexible and could be used as one unit or subdivided into smaller units, depending on the client's needs.

It involved:

- Liaising with the IDA to identify the types of buildings potential clients would have the need for.
- Tendering for an architect to design the brief.
- Assessing the planning application.
- The IDA marketing the site.

The initiative was successful and has resulted in a food manufacturing company taking on the planning permission and completing the actual build. The major incentive for them in selecting this site was not having to go through the planning process for a new build.

### Rebuilding Ireland home loans

The NOAC Board queried how the potential risk from Rebuilding Ireland home loans were being mitigated. The Council set out the approval process for new home loan applications in Meath. It was also mentioned that the Council has the highest number of loan applications in the country. In the period 2018 to 2021 the Council's loan book increased from €16 million to €44.8 million due to the implementation of the Rebuilding Ireland Home Loan scheme. In addition to the loans currently granted, there are another €10 million of loan requests in the system. The Council is constantly reviewing the implementation of this scheme as the Council's financial risk exposure is increasing.

## Local authority Climate Action Training

The Council was asked about Climate Action training and explained that many of its staff had received this training and many would be attending further training sessions in this area in the near future.

## Online activity

It was put to the Council that it seemed contradictory that on the one hand there has been a growth in motor tax online activity, while simultaneously there has been a reduction in the number of social media followers. The Council stated that the KPI figures for social media were low in 2019 but there may have been some underreporting of these figures, as there were 112,000 followers in 2020, which is up substantially from 2019.

Motor tax online figures are high as the Council pro-actively engaged with the public. People making payments by post were targeted with an awareness campaign to promote online payments. In addition to this awareness campaign, prior to the COVID restrictions, the council staff offered assistance to members of the public who attended the motor tax office to renew their tax online at a terminal in the public area of the building.

## 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.

The meeting was brought to a close.

## 4

# Stage 3 Presentation

## Meeting with NOAC Board September 7, 2021

Ms. Jackie Maguire  
Chief Executive



comhairle chontae na mí  
*meath county council*

### Introduction and Overview

#### Overview - Council

- 40 Elected Members (up from 29 members in 2014)
- 6 Municipal Districts (3 Town Councils previously)
- Political Composition: 12 FF; 12 FG; 10 Ind; 3 SF; 1 Lab; 1 SD; 1 Aon

#### Overview - County

- Part of the Greater Dublin area
- Population of 200,000 - 3<sup>rd</sup> youngest population in the state
- Over 34,000 commute out of the county daily
- Heritage county, but mix of urban/suburban/rural/coastal



comhairle chontae na mí  
*meath county council*



## Housing Services

### Delivery of Targets

- MCC has exceeded its targets under Rebuilding Ireland
- Target (2018-2021) = 1,190; Delivered = 1,500 units
- Strong pipeline up to 2023 = 688 units
- Pre-lets – focus on extensive works (future-proof social units)

### Challenges

- Covid – impact on delivery and costs
- Availability of affordable land for social housing construction
- Growing demand – Housing List
- Supply-Demand – mismatch in housing type



comhairle chontae na mí  
meath county council

## Housing Services



Direct Construction –  
Bettystown



Age Friendly units,  
Navan



LIIAF schemes, Navan & Ratoath



Turnkey units, Navan



Direct Construction –  
Carlanstown



comhairle chontae na mí  
meath county council

## Infrastructure

### Delivery Results

- Good collaboration with TII, NTA and Departments
- Delivery of strategic projects and key initiatives
- Strong drawdown under URDF and RRDF
- Responding to Covid requirements – outdoor dining, etc

### Challenges

- Funding – commitment to progress/implement projects
- Capital infrastructural deficit (roads, community facilities, parks)
- Increasing population – increasing demand
- Increasing costs – project delivery constraints



comhairle chontae na mí  
meath county council

## Infrastructure



Navan 2030 – active travel improvements



Working with NTA on the Navan Rail Line project



Installation of Parklets



New local road infrastructure - Laytown



comhairle chontae na mí  
meath county council

## Planning

### Delivery Results

- Dealing with increasing volume (and complexity) of applications
- 1621 planning applications (Jan-Aug) (43% increase y-o-y)
- Development Contributions - resilient
- Preparing for e-Planning

### Challenges

- Implementation of NPF and RSES
- Review of County Development Plan (plus LAPs, JUAPs, etc)
- Quantity and Quality of Planning Applications
- SHD process (and proposed changes)



comhairle chontae na mí  
meath county council

## Climate Action and Environment

### Delivery Results

- Local Climate Action Strategy and Climate Action Forum
- Embedding of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)
- Local anti-littering campaigns – community-stakeholder engagement

### Challenges

- Climate – resource requirements and knowledge base
- Climate – local leadership and community engagement
- Environment – littering/dumping and legacy landfills



comhairle chontae na mí  
meath county council

## Community Development

### Delivery Results

- Providing range of community infrastructure
- Implementing range of programmes (T+V, Clar, ORIS, etc)
- Libraries and Creative Ireland - outreach
- Host the Age-Friendly NSS – expanding role/influence

### Challenges

- Supporting a culture of collaboration with other agencies
- LCDC – strategic and operational



comhairle chontae na mí  
meath county council

## Community Infrastructure



New Park and Playground – Ashbourne



Refurbished swimming pool – Kells



New Civil Defence Headquarters



Network of libraries – across the county



New Communication Boards – all Council playgrounds



Trim September 1920 book launch - Decade of Centenaries



Refurbished fire station – Dunshaughlin



comhairle chontae na mí  
meath county council



## Economic Development

### Delivery Results

- Economic Development Strategy - collaboration
- Apply 'can-do' and fast-track approach to investment
- LEO – tailor local business supports
- Boyne Valley Tourism – joint initiative with Louth County Council

### Challenges

- Post Covid – impact on certain local sectors
- Job creation and retention – counter commuting
- Broadband – establishing remote working hubs



comhairle chontae na mí  
meath county council

## Economic Development



Promoting and supporting  
local businesses



Supporting local businesses –  
the Mí Meath card



Rolling out broadband –  
WiFi4EU in Navan



comhairle chontae na mí  
meath county council

## Finance

### Delivery Results

- Effectively addressed the Revenue and Capital deficits
- High collection of Housing Rents and Commercial Rates
- Continue to support and grow the Commercial Rates base
- Effective roll-out Rates support measures (Covid)

### Challenges

- Uncertainty with Commercial Rates base – impact of Covid
- Building Ireland Home Loans – carrying significant risk
- Lowest per capita spend in the country



comhairle chontae na mí  
meath county council

## Human Resources

### Delivery Results

- Implementation of the 'People Strategy'
- Staff Response to the Covid Emergency
- Continued focus on H+S and Learning and Development
- Improved internal Communications

### Challenges

- Staff numbers – lowest per capita of any local authority
- Retention of Staff
- Recruitment of staff – certain skill sets in particular
- Remote working – ongoing and future challenges



comhairle chontae na mí  
meath county council



## Corporate Affairs and Governance

### Delivery Results

- Customer Service – dedicated team and CRM system
- Communications Strategy and dedicated team
- Supporting and facilitating Elected Members
- Strengthening Governance systems (audit, risk management, etc)

### Challenges

- Maintaining Compliance (FOI, AIE, Data Protection, etc)
- On-going support to Elected Members (training, new expenses regime, ethics and codes of conduct)



comhairle chontae na mí  
meath county council

## Responding to the Challenges of Covid



Local Response - Community Call



Changing how we do business – adapting to public health restrictions



Community Forum – working with key agencies at local level



Changing how we communicate – internally and externally



comhairle chontae na mí  
meath county council

## Concluding Remarks

### Sectoral Challenges:

- **Multiple Government Departments/Agencies – coping with competing demands and similar timelines;**
- **Resource Constraints – compliance challenges;**
- **Rapidly changing Policy Direction and Objectives;**
- **Managing and implementing through Shared Services;**



comhairle chontae na mí  
meath county council



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

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

**Website: [www.noac.ie](http://www.noac.ie)**

**Email: [info@noac.ie](mailto:info@noac.ie)**