



National Oversight and Audit Commission (NOAC)

Minutes of the Meeting – Tuesday 2 November 2021 at 10am

Venue: Remote Meeting via WebEx Meeting Platform

Attended by:

Chairperson: Michael McCarthy

Members:	Niall Quinn	Margaret Lane
	Philomena Poole	Ciarán Hayes
	Declan Breathnach	Noel Harrington
Secretariat:	Claire Gavin	Neill Dalton
	John Goldrick	Colin Flood
	Darren Browne	
Apologies:	Brian Cawley	Mary Hurley

1. Minutes & actions of previous meeting;

The minutes of the NOAC main meeting from 7 September 2021 were approved and they will be published on the website.

2. Declaration of conflict of interest;

No conflicts of interest were raised.

3. Matters Arising;

There were no matters arising.

4. Work Programme:

a) Chair;

The minutes of the Stage 2 Scrutiny meeting with Meath County Council from 7 September 2021 were agreed. The Chairperson thanked Declan Breathnach for attending the Stage 1 meeting with Fingal County Council in his absence on 19 October. Despite the difficulties posed by Covid-19 and staff turnover within local authorities, scrutiny meetings have been progressed albeit with some delays. The Stage 2 meeting with South Dublin County Council will be held on 7 December with a further Stage 1 meeting due to take place with another local authorities before the end of the year.

b) WG1 – Local Government Governance, Efficiency & Reform (LGGER);

An external contractor has reviewed the current local authority and regional assembly corporate plans and has presented their report to the working group. Following this, the working group agreed some amendments and have circulated the report to the full NOAC Board. A few points were raised from the review by the Board including the timelines provided for local authorities to produce their corporate plans; the evaluation of council values in the report; the inclusion of hyperlinks to relevant Government Acts; the comparisons to be made between local authorities; and increases of funding for future corporate plans and any subsequent actions that NOAC may need to adopt. These topics have been discussed by the working group with acknowledgements made in the report that local authorities have produced corporate plans based on guidelines from the Department. The Secretariat will continue to engage with those responsible within the Department for setting these guidelines. Individual local authority findings will be raised directly with the local authority through meetings. The topic of increased funding for local authorities as part of future corporate plans did not feature in this report as its aim was to review current corporate plans. The report was agreed by the Board.

Further work is planned in respect of a review of Local Enterprise Office's which will be communicated to the Board in due course.

c) WG2 – Performance Indicators;

The Local Authority Performance Indicator Report for 2020 was published in September and received significant media coverage from both national and local outlets. The response of local authorities to Covid-19 was a welcome inclusion. For next year's 2021 Performance Indicator report release,

further discussion will be held with regards what is required from the public relations company. The guidelines for the 2021 report will be discussed at the next WG2 meeting scheduled for 17 November. Approval by the full NOAC Board will be sought before being circulated to the local authorities. The WG2 work programme will also be discussed at this meeting.

d) WG3 – Communications and Customer Service;

Stakeholder mapping exercise:

The Stakeholder mapping exercise took place on the 14 October. The draft outputs from the session have been circulated with the deadline for comments by close of business 2 November. These will then contribute to the final report. The Board Members found it to be a useful exercise which illustrated the reach of NOAC.

Good Practice event 2021:

Work is progressing in preparation of the Good Practice Event on 9 November. With Covid-19 in mind, in person attendance has been restricted to one attendee per local authority with further invites issued to the Boards of NOAC and the Local Government Management Agency (LGMA). A live stream will be made available for those looking to attend remotely. It is intended to maintain a gender balance between those presenting at the event. Minister Peter Burke will also attend and open the event with an address. Also in attendance will be Councillor Fidelis Doherty, Cathaoirleach of Kilkenny County Council. Chief Executive of Galway City Council & Chair of the County and City Management Association Brendan McGrath will close the event. Attendees will arrive for 9:30am for registration and photos before the event from 10am. The event will also feature as part of the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform's Innovation Week. The Chairperson acknowledged the effort of all those involved in organising the event in challenging times during Covid-19.

e) WG4 – Financial Management and Performance;

2020 Local Authority Public Spending Code Report:

The 2020 Local Authority Public Spending Code Report has been circulated to the Board prior to the meeting. The Board approved the report and will be published on the NOAC website.

My Pay report:

The WG have received information requested from the LGMA which found that two local authorities are still not part of the My Pay system. This was of concern to the WG4 along with thirteen local authorities not being part of the share services for pensions and superannuation. Those local authorities who are part of the system are finding it to be working well. There have been examples of good practice achieved such as:

- Allowing local authorities to confirm to new revenue requirements;
- Advancing on the latest version of the Core Portal;
- Taking on the single pension scheme;

The projected cost was €11.8 million and although this has increased to €12.8 million, the original business case did not include the scope of the single pension scheme. It was agreed that a meeting invite will issue to the author of the report from the LGMA to discuss and seek clarification of the WG's concerns.

Engagement with the Local Government Audit Service (LGAS) and Audit Committees:

The WG are proposing to arrange a workshop in January 2022 and in person depending on Covid-19 restrictions at the time. This would be with the aim of introducing the work of NOAC to the Chairs of the Audit Committees and listen to their concerns and issues they may wish NOAC to focus on. The Secretariat have contacted local authority Chief Executives for the contact details of the Audit Committee Chairs. Invites have been issued to the Audit Committees to remotely attend the Good Practice Event on 9 November. The WG4 Chairperson met with the head of the LGAS and discussed areas that arise from their audits. This was a welcome connection and it was communicated that NOAC would be collaborate were possible.

With regards other areas the WG could review, it was agreed at the WG4 meeting that they will explore the topic of local government fleet management.

Terms of Reference:

The Secretariat is currently reviewing the Multi Annual Work Programme and it was agreed to defer this review until this work is complete.

Value for Money (VFM) Reports:

NOAC are represented on the Board of the VFM LGAS working group. The LGAS have attended previous NOAC meetings and have provided updates on the VFM reports. The role NOAC can play will be discussed at the next meeting of the LGAS.

The next WG4 meeting is scheduled for 30 November.

5. Dates of next meeting and for the remainder of the year;

The next NOAC meeting is currently scheduled for 10am, 7 December 2021. South Dublin County Council are also expected to attend. For 2022, the Board agreed the following meeting dates:

- 10am, 11 January 2022;
- 10am, 1 March 2022; and
- 10am, 5 April 2020

These meetings are scheduled to take place remotely. Calendar 'Save the Dates' will issue following this meeting.

6. Any Other Business:

Good Practice Event:

The NOAC Chair noted that it will be a great opportunity for the Board to meet and discuss the value that NOAC brings to the local government sector in terms of good practice. This is alongside the buy in shown by local authorities and the LGMA.

Staffing:

The Secretariat outlined the current staffing shortages facing the Secretariat with a further vacancy expected in the coming weeks. This is on top of an existing vacancy since April. The Department have indicated that these positions will be permanently filled, with the use of temporary mobility staff a possibility in the short-term. The Chair intends to raise these issues with the Head of the Business Unit and the Departments Assistant Secretary.

Board Self-Assessment Evaluation Questionnaire:

The Board agreed that each Board member will complete the self-assessment questionnaire independently and return the completed questionnaire to the Secretariat where they will then collate the responses. The questionnaire comes in the form of an excel document with instructions which will be circulated following the meeting.

The meeting was brought to a close.

Agenda Item No:	Subject	Action
1.	Minutes & actions of previous meeting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Agreed and will be published on website
4a.	Scrutiny Programme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Stage 2 meeting with South Dublin County Council will be held on 7 December. A further Stage 1 meeting due is to take place with another local authorities before the end of the year.
4b.	WG1 – Corporate Plans 2020-2024 Review	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The report was agreed by the Board. The Secretariat will continue to engage with those responsible within the Department for setting these guidelines. Individual local authority findings will be raised directly with the local authority through meetings.
4c.	WG2 – 2021 Performance Indicators Report;	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Further discussion will be held with regards what is required from the public relations company. The guidelines for the 2021 report will be discussed at the next WG2 meeting with approval by the full NOAC Board to be sought before being circulated to the local authorities.
4d.	WG3 – Stakeholder mapping exercise;	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The draft outputs from the session have been circulated with the deadline for comments by close of business 2 November. These will then contribute to the final report.
4d.	WG3 – Good Practice Event;	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work is progressing in preparation of the Good Practice Event on 9 November.
4e.	WG4 – Public Spending Code Report 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Board approved the report and will be published on the NOAC website.

4e.	WG4 – My Pay report	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> It was agreed that a meeting invite will issue to the author of the report from the LGMA to discuss and seek clarification of the WG’s concerns.
4e.	WG4 – Engagement with the Local Government Audit Service (LGAS):	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work progressing to arrange a workshop in January 2022
4e.	WG4 – Terms of Reference	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Secretariat is currently reviewing the Multi Annual Work Programme and it was agreed to defer this review until this work is complete.
4e.	WG4 – Value for Money	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The role NOAC can play will be discussed at the next meeting of the LGAS.
5.	Future Meetings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Board agreed new meeting dates for early 2022.
6.	AOB - Staffing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Chair intends to raise these issues with the Head of the Business Unit and the Departments Assistant Secretary.
6.	AOB - Board Self-Assessment Evaluation Questionnaire:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Board agreed that each Board member will complete the self-assessment questionnaire independently and return the completed questionnaire to the Secretariat where they will then collate the responses.