



National Oversight and Audit Commission (NOAC)

Minutes of the Meeting – Tuesday 5th April 2022 at 10 a.m.

Venue: Remote Meeting via WebEx Meeting Platform

Attended by:

Chairperson: Michael McCarthy

Members: Niall Quinn Ciarán Hayes
Brian Cawley Margaret Lane
Noel Harrington Philomena Poole
Declan Breathnach

Secretariat: Claire Gavin Nason Fallon
John Goldrick Darren Browne

Apologies: Mary Hurley

1. Minutes & actions of previous meeting

The minutes of the NOAC main meeting from 1st March 2022 were approved.

2. Declaration of conflict of interest

No conflicts of interest were raised.

3. Matters Arising

There were no matters arising.

4. Work Programme

Chair

The Chair congratulated Mary Hurley on her recent appointment to the grade of Secretary General in the Department of Rural and Community Development. A note of congratulations will be drawn up for this appointment by the Secretariat.

The issue of seeking clarification from the Department on NOAC's role on making potential recommendations of the monitoring report of the Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly was raised. The Secretariat explained that it had followed up with the Department on the matter and the Department was looking into this.

Scrutiny Reports

The Chair outlined that the scrutiny meetings with local authorities would continue now that finally the vacancies in the Secretariat had been filled.

WG3 - Communications and Customer Service (CCS)

This WG met on 22nd March and received a presentation from the LGMA on the Customer Survey. Some of the elements of the survey have to be benchmarked. This issue is under consideration at present.

The Communications Strategy tender document will be discussed with the Department, to seek its advice on input into the tender that will issue shortly.

Two further stakeholders to be included on the stakeholder map were proposed at that meeting. The Public Appointments Service (PAS) was mentioned due to the recent discussions with local authorities in relation to the impact the process was taken in filling positions in the sector. The other stakeholder proposed was the Office of the Planning Regulator (OPR). This stakeholder was initially included in NOAC's stakeholder matrix and should be put back into it, along with the PAS. These stakeholders will be discussed at the NOAC planning day on 4th May.

It was further mentioned in relation to PAS that there is currently a review underway on the recruitment of grades to the civil service as they do not always address the specific requirements of a job. There had been a recommendation of examining this again to try to get a better fit between a panel and the requirements of a job.

Finally it was suggested that in relation to the annual report which is currently being finalised, that in future it could be used as a set piece for Communication.

WG4 – Financial Management and Performance

The WG met on 16th March. The date of 25th May has been pencilled into the diary for the Chairs of the Audit Committee Workshop, which is to be held in a central location like Kilkenny or Portlaoise. The purpose of the event is to give an introduction to NOAC's work, deal with fleet management questionnaire, to consider other topics like climate change, risk management and the Public Spending Code.

Some amendments have been made to the fleet management questionnaire, which will be issued shortly. The deadline for receipt of responses will be the first week of May.

Service Level Agreements and climate action will be addressed after NOAC's planning day on 4th May. A meeting will be set up in the latter half of 2022 with the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform in relation to the Public Spending Code.

5. Annual Report 2021

The Chairs of the four Working Groups have given their feedback on the draft NOAC annual report 2021, which have been incorporated into the document. Further minor amendments were suggested, which the Secretariat will include into the document before it is forwarded to the desktop publisher. The board approved the draft annual report, subject to the amendments being incorporated into the report. Once published, it would be sent to the Minister and the JOC and for the first time this year it would be circulated to the Chief Executives of the local authorities.

6. Work Planning day

An agenda will be prepared for the day shortly. If the agenda is extensive then it can be dealt with over two days, but not consecutively. There won't be a board meeting on that day, as that would take away from the available time for the other business of the work planning day.

An e-mail will issue to the board regarding hotel accommodation for those intending to arrive the night before the event.

7. Dates of next meeting

For 2022, the board agreed the following meeting dates:

- 10am, 24 May 2022; and
- 10am, 5 July 2022

8. Any Other Business

Three items were dealt with under this heading. First, NOAC have been offered a stall at the Ploughing Championships. The board decided that it would not avail of this, due to the cost outlay, logistics and there being no real benefit to attending.

Secondly, one of the board members, Philomena Poole was congratulated for her nomination to the board of the Arts Council.

Finally, the board discussed the recent RTE investigates programme on local government. In the programme several cases were examined regarding specific local authorities. It was felt that some important details on specific cases had been left out by the programme. Some of those local authorities could be included in validation or scrutiny meetings, and may be asked about those issues raised during these meetings. One point noted in the programme was that there was a perception that the local government sector monitors itself and that there is no fully fledged oversight process of the local government sector. The board pointed out that this sector is actually highly regulated with parent departments, the ombudsman and many other organisations.

Some of the reports within the programme focused on audit reports where the recommendations had not been implemented. That is something for NOAC to consider with the LGAS. The board discussed the possibility of making a response to the programme but believed that it was not warranted.

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
4.	Work Programme	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• A note is to be drawn up by the Secretariat on Mary Hurley's promotion.
5.	Annual Report	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The Secretariat is to make the outlined amendments and have the draft annual report desktop published and submitted to the Minister, the JOC and the CEs.