OUTSTANDING EXAMPLES OF LOCAL AUTHORITY INNOVATION ON SHOW AT NOAC GOOD PRACTICE IN LOCAL GOVERNMENT SEMINAR

- **Projects from Cork, Dublin, Galway, Kerry, Longford and Wicklow local authorities, as well as the LGMA, were showcased by the National Oversight and Audit Commission and commended by Minister O'Brien.**

- **Use of solar power, innovative recruitment initiatives, developing tourism and education, ensuring effective cross-sector collaboration, assisting those with accommodation needs and showing good practice in the roll out of a digital strategy all featured in an outstanding showcase of local authority innovation.**

A number of highly impressive projects to improve local authority services were presented today at a seminar hosted by the National Oversight and Audit Commission (NOAC), the independent body which provides oversight of the local government sector.

The 6th annual *Good Practice in Local Government Seminar*, organised by NOAC, in collaboration with the Local Government Management Agency and the County and City Management Association, presented a wide range of local authority innovations across numerous areas such as renewable technology, building on crisis management, recruitment, education, tourism, strategy development and accommodation assistance for vulnerable persons.

Opening the event, Minister for Housing, Local Government and Heritage, Darragh O'Brien TD, recognised the **"initiative, innovation and hard work of local authorities"** while addressing attendees. He also praised the **"significant work carried out by the NOAC Board and the vital role it has in providing independent oversight of the local government sector"**.

Minister O'Brien further commented,

"The variety and calibre of projects showcased today really brings the work of our local authorities to life and shows the positive impact being made across the country through our local government colleagues. The projects also show the importance of local action and coordination on topics as diverse as

housing, education and climate change and the leadership of our local authorities as the driving force behind so much good work. I commend the great projects discussed this morning and NOAC for creating the opportunity for local authorities to learn from each other at this annual best practice event."

The hybrid event, held both in-person and virtually in Kilkenny Castle, took place as part of the Department of Public Expenditure, NDP Delivery and Reform's Public Service Transformation Week 2023 and was attended by Chief Executives and senior officials from the local authorities within Ireland. The showcase provided an opportunity for local government to demonstrate good practice within the sector and gave a platform to share innovative projects that could be replicated across Ireland.

Seven projects from local authorities throughout the country were recognised at today's seminar:

Solar Car Port – Wicklow County Council

Wicklow County Council has installed a large solar panel car port on its premises in Wicklow town, powering 40% of the County Building's baseload demand. The project is a great example of using existing sites, such as car parks, to generate renewable energy and assist in achieving Climate Change targets. This project is the largest of its kind in Ireland.

Dublin City Council's Innovative Recruitment Drive

Dublin City Council has spent 18 months running two distinct recruitment drives focused on increasing opportunities for citizens living in socioeconomically challenged areas. They did this by working with a variety of stakeholders and creating a specific traineeship programme to attract workers.

Kerry Community Response Forum – Kerry County Council

Local authorities have provided significant support in responding to the accommodation and other needs of those arriving from Ukraine, where in Kerry, under the stewardship of Kerry County Council, the Community Response Forum was repurposed as part of a high-level governance framework, to ensure effective cross-sector collaboration. This has resulted in the establishment of proactive governance structures, responding consistently to real-life situations, and promoting integration through the development of response initiatives to over 8,000 beneficiaries of temporary protection (BOTP) across the County.

Housing Disability Steering Group (HDSG): Mental Health Sub Group – Galway County Council

The Galway County Council Housing Disability Steering Group mental health sub group uses a partnership approach between the local authority and HSE to progress mutual clients with mental health diagnoses. It offers a communication pathway and, for clients with additional needs, to progress to having their own tenancies,

supporting vulnerable applicants in a way that is person-centred, allows for case discussion and progression of complex cases and vulnerable clients.

Computer Science in Every Secondary School in Longford: Creating the Demand – Shaping Our County's Future – Longford County Council

Longford County Council, in partnership with schools and industry, hopes to shape Longford's future through technology and its introduction to primary and secondary schools. The Council's ambition and the actions of this programme aims to see Computer Science a Leaving Cert option in all secondary schools in the county, driving the local economy in years to come.

Explore Cork Tourism Application – Cork County Council

In response to challenges facing the tourism sector following Covid-19, Cork County Council endeavoured to create a GIS tourism map in 2020 using in-house resources. The success of the map led to development by CCC in 2021 of the 'Explore Cork' app, a one-stop shop tourism app featuring over 850 places to see and things to do: the first of its kind to be developed by any Local Authority in Ireland.

Digital Local Government: Working for Everyone– Local Government Management Agency

Digital Local Government: Working for Everyone is Ireland's new Local Government Digital and ICT Strategy. The strategy aims to use digital and ICT to improve the way we work and deliver services in local government.

Pointing to the above projects, Minister O'Brien highlighted the **"excellent exemplars of good practice in local government"** and encouraged attendees to **"to share information and experiences to continually bring about improvements to the delivery of services to the public"**.

For further information regarding the individual projects, please contact noac@housing.gov.ie

Ends.

Notes to the Editor

Seven projects and innovations discussed at today's seminar included:

Solar Car Port – Wicklow County Council

The installation of the solar panel car ports at County Buildings in Wicklow is a great example of using existing sites, such as car parks, to generate renewable energy and assist in achieving Climate Change targets. One of the main barriers to delivering large scale energy efficiency and renewable projects is finance. To overcome this issue Wicklow Council tendered for an innovative design, build, finance, maintain and operate contract to provide a 300kW solar PV array to meet 40% of County Building's baseload demand. This ensured there was no capital cost to the local authority and, in return, the Council agreed to pay a fixed unit rate for all energy produced by the solar array for a 20 year period. Currently, this rate is about a third of the cost of electricity from the grid. This project is the largest solar car port installation in Ireland.

Innovative Recruitment Initiative – Dublin City Council

Dublin City Council has over 18 months commenced two distinct recruitment initiatives attracting new employees into its operational workforce. These have focused on increasing opportunities for citizens living in areas faced with socio-economic challenges through the development of targeted recruitment campaigns and a traineeship programme. A collaborative and cooperative approach was undertaken between Dublin City Council Human Resources and operational departments and a range of local stakeholders leading to delivering successful local recruitment campaigns and a local authority specific traineeship programme. These initiatives have allowed Dublin City Council to foster positive relationships with local education and employment services and strengthen existing partnerships with local communities. The outcome of the initiative has been the successful recruitment of more than 100 new employees into Dublin City Councils operational workforce and the establishment of a distinct traineeship programme providing a new pathway for employment into the Local Authority sector.

Kerry Community Response Forum – Kerry County Council

Local authorities have provided significant support in responding to the accommodation and other needs of those arriving from Ukraine, where in Kerry, under the stewardship of Kerry County Council, the Community Response Forum was repurposed as part of a high-level governance framework, to ensure effective cross-sector collaboration. This has resulted in the establishment of proactive governance structures, responding consistently to real-life situations, and promoting integration through the development of response initiatives to over 8,000 beneficiaries of temporary protection (BOTP) across the County. The collaborative approach and the current structures supporting the Community Response Forum in Kerry are enabling dynamic cross-sector teams to deliver on the ground. The local area response teams, for example, have been a crucial link to front-line services and

the county coordination team has developed innovative solutions in response to elevated concerns raised at a local level such as the development of a Step-by-Step Guide for Ukrainian Refugees, an Independent Living Guide and an information guide to inform Ukrainians about the systems and supports that exist when needed.

Housing Disability Steering Group (HDSG): Mental Health Sub Group – Galway County Council

The Galway County Council Housing Disability Steering Group was set up as part of their Strategic Plan for Housing People with a Disability 2021- 2026. Within that, a number of subgroups to specifically look at cases under each category of disability were established. The Mental Health subgroup is person-centred, allows for case discussion and progression of complex cases and vulnerable clients. It is a partnership approach between the local authority and HSE to progress mutual clients. It offers a communication pathway and, for clients with additional needs, to progress to having their own tenancies.

The work of the Mental Health subgroup is 'Equality & Human Rights in the Public Service' in practice.

Computer Science in Every Secondary School in Longford: Creating the Demand – Shaping Our County's Future – Longford County Council

Longford County Council, in partnership with schools and industry, hopes to shape Longford's future through technology and its introduction to primary and secondary schools. Through the Council's digital strategy, Longford County Council hopes to create the platform that will see Computer Science a Leaving Cert option in all secondary schools in the county. The project will help prepare Longford for the jobs and opportunities and the lives we could all lead in years to come. The Longford children that will benefit from this project will help drive the local economy in years to come and by working with primary and post primary schools, in partnership with industry, Longford County Council can help develop the digital potential in children for future jobs, challenges, and the opportunities that will come in a county eager to realise the benefits of the National Broadband Plan.

Explore Cork Tourism Application – Cork County Council

In response to challenges facing the tourism sector following Covid-19, Cork County Council endeavoured to create a marketing tool that would assist this sector of the economy. Cognisant of the importance of furthering the digitisation of the sector, a GIS tourism map was developed in 2020 using in-house resources. The success of the map led to development by CCC in 2021 of the 'Explore Cork' app, a one-stop shop tourism app featuring over 850 places to see and things to do: the first of its kind to be developed by any Local Authority in Ireland. The project was an in-house collaborative initiative between relevant Directorates, exemplifying best-practices. Cork County Council worked with the successful tenderer, in developing the app, as well as liaising with relevant stakeholders. The app won the LAMA award for 'Best Tourism Initiative' in 2023.

Digital Local Government: Working for Everyone – Local Government Management Agency

Digital Local Government: Working for Everyone is Ireland's new Local Government Digital and ICT Strategy. The strategy aims to use digital and ICT to improve the way we work and deliver services in local government. An extensive engagement process was undertaken during the development of the strategy. Stakeholders consulted included members of the public, staff, persons with disabilities, older persons, people from minority communities, Councillors, and technology vendors. The strategy includes four core themes – Digital Systems, Digital Communities, Digital Workforce and Digital Systems. These consist of statements of intent which present the LGMAs aspirations and what will be achieved over the course of the strategy. A strategy implementation plan has been developed which sets out 73 actions that will enable delivery of the strategy. This plan will be reviewed on an annual basis to ensure that it remains relevant and is delivering as required.