



**National Oversight and Audit Commission (NOAC)**  
**Final Minutes**  
**Wednesday 15<sup>th</sup> November at 10.00am**

**Venue:** Via WebEx

**Attended by:**

Chairperson: Michael McCarthy

Members:	Declan Breathnach	Brian Cawley
	Noel Harrington	Ciarán Hayes
	Kathleen Holohan	Margaret Lane
	Miriam McDonald	Fiona Quinn

Secretariat:	Claire Gavin	Deirdre Byrne
	Joan Comiskey	John Goldrick
	Valerie Longmore	

**1. Minutes & actions of previous meeting**

The minutes of the previous meeting on 13 September 2023 were approved.

**2. Declaration of conflict of interest**

There was no declaration of any conflict of interest.

**3. Matters Arising**

There were no matters arising.

**4. Scrutiny Process - going forward**

Stage 2 meetings remain outstanding in respect of Kildare, Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown, Cork County, Wicklow and Kilkenny County Councils. The Kilkenny meeting was due to take place on 13 November, but it was postponed until next month, due to Storm Debi. In general, the stage 2 meetings are progressing well and it was agreed that one of the outstanding meetings would take place after the next in-person board meeting on 6 December in the Custom House, if one of the local authorities is available to attend. Early in 2024 the Board agreed to discuss how to progress the next round of scrutiny meetings so as to engage with local authorities more frequently and to be able to address matters pertaining to them in a timely and effective manner.

## **5. Work Programme**

### **Update from the Chair**

The Chair advised that the number of NOAC board members will increase by two shortly. The statutory instrument which will bring the change into effect is with the Seanad at present and this process takes some time. However, it is expected to be completed by early December and the skill sets of the new members can then be reviewed.

### **WG1 (LGGER) Update**

The Chair of Working Group noted that it last met on 20 September and will meet again on 22 November. The Working Group has engaged with the Office of the Planning Regulator (OPR), which has undertaken a high-level review of the three Regional Assemblies monitoring reports of the Regional Spatial and Economy Strategies. The OPR will attend the next WG1 meeting to discuss their findings. Thereafter, a decision will be made of the recommendations to be made to the Minister and on the publication of the report will be published.

A questionnaire as part of the review of the implementation of Local Authority and Regional Assembly Corporate Plans 2019-2024 was issued to all local authorities on 17<sup>th</sup> October and the closing date has now passed and a high proportion of responses have been received at this stage. This will give insight into how the local authorities implemented and reviewed their corporate plans. With the assistance of Peter Stafford, a draft report on the findings should be ready to be presented to the Working Group in Jan 2024 and the report should be published early in 2024.

Further to the presentation on ICT Strategy at the recent Good Practice event, WG1 will engage with those involved to review it further and determine the next steps to be taken on this in 2024.

### **WG2 (PI) Update**

Further to the publication of the NOAC Local Authority Performance Indicators Report 2022 at the end of September, the Chair of the Working Group expressed gratitude to everyone who contributed to the report and thanked two board members in particular for their assistance in proofreading the document. The changes made to the 2022 report enhanced it and made it more user-friendly, which has received a positive reaction from the local authority sector.

The Chairs of WG2 and WG1 had a working meeting with representatives from DECC in October. DECC agreed to next meet with NOAC and LGMA to progress PIs in relation to Climate Change, with dates to be confirmed by the LGMA.

Further meetings need to be arranged with the EPA and the Department of Transport also. The Secretariat is meeting with the OPR to discuss planning performance indicators.

The next meeting of WG2 will take place on Tuesday 28 November, when the agenda will focus on the performance indicators and future requirements in respect of Climate Action.

### **WG3 (CCS): Update**

The Chair of Working Group 3 advised that it last met in November. The LGMA National Customer Survey was discussed and how NOAC could best proceed with the findings of the survey. It was suggested that the WG would look more closely at the survey results related to customer service and progress this into a discussion with the LGMA. The Chair advised that it would be useful to carry out a short survey of how local authorities measure customer service and review the results before the WG meets the Chair of the Corporate Committee of the LGMA in January 2024.

The Chair of the WG thanked the Secretariat for their work in the planning and organisation of the Good Practice event in Kilkenny. The event was viewed as very interesting and a significant amount of positive feedback was received afterwards. It was suggested that best practice in customer service could be included at the 2024 event. The Chair advised that the WG was looking into drilling down into the Communications Strategy. It was noted that a Crisis Management Plan could be useful in the case of an emergency event. A Risk Register for NOAC could also be considered.

The Chair noted that WG3 could advise NOAC on communications more generally, particularly in relation to responding to public representatives and the general public. The communications aspects of NOAC's work were suggested as a sub item for future board meeting agendas and this was agreed by the board.

#### **WG4 (FMP) Update**

The Chair of Working Group 4 provided an update on the Audit Committee Workshop held in Portlaoise in October, with 23 local authorities in attendance. Presentations included an overview on the work of NOAC, the Performance Indicators, the Public Spending Code, the implementation of Corporate Plans, the Good Practice event and a presentation on internal audit from Longford County Council. Positive feedback was received by the WG Chair after the event and further engagement with NOAC sought, as a result. The Chair thanked the board members and the Secretariat who were involved in the event. The timing for next year's event is to be considered in the context of its proximity to the publication of the Performance Indicators Report.

The Chair of WG4 noted attendance by NOAC members at audit committee meetings held in both Cork County and Cork City Councils and the Departments Audit Committee. She also confirmed that members will attend an audit committee meeting in Louth County Council on 7 December to discuss the role of NOAC and build further on its relationship with the audit committees.

It was noted by one of the board members that the overview given by the Chair of WG1 on Service Level Agreements (SLAs) came to the attention of many attendees at the audit committee event and suggested that these be looked at in more detail. It was suggested that NOAC prepare a template for SLAs for leisure centres but it will need to look at the approach and skills needed to undertake such a task.

#### **6. NOAC Self-Assessment Questionnaire**

The Chair thanked all members who had engaged and advised that it was an internal document only. It was noted by the Secretariat that this is the first time that this document has

been completed and as it is a yearly exercise it can be improved on by examining any potential gaps that may have been highlighted. It was observed that the questionnaire had a lot of relevance in that it might serve as the foundation for the evaluation of the Work Plan for the year ahead. It can also be looked at in terms of performance, determining what worked well and what did not. It was discussed as to how NOAC can ensure that they are fully up to date with national policies and what systems can be put in place to ensure that NOAC fully understand their responsibilities as an oversight body. It was proposed that the Chairs of the working group meet yearly to discuss any potential overlaps and timelines for their work plans. In relation to national policies, it was also indicated that it would be beneficial to interact with the LGMA, as they would be informed of any updates as they happen. An additional useful source of information is the official government website [www.gov.ie](http://www.gov.ie). The Chair will take the comments on board and liaise with the Secretariat in advance of a further discussion at the January meeting.

## **7. Date of next meeting.**

The next board meeting will take place on Wednesday 6 December 2023 at 10am in the Custom House, and may be followed by a Stage 2 meeting. Lunch will be available after the meeting, if members are interested. The Secretariat will follow up with members in this regard and the start time of the meeting may be delayed to take account of it.

## **8. AOB:**

- A list of proposed meeting dates for 2024 was circulated in advance of the meeting. The April meeting date has been changed from Tuesday 23<sup>rd</sup> to Tuesday 30<sup>rd</sup> April.
- The Secretariat advised that an AILG seminar will be held in February 2024, details of which will be circulated to members when they are received.

**The meeting was brought to a close.**

<b>Agenda item no.</b>	<b>Subject</b>	<b>Action</b>
<b>1.</b>	Minutes and actions of the previous meeting.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Agreed, to be published on the website.</li> </ul>
<b>5.</b>	Meeting with DECC and the LGMA.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Secretariat will send the dates proposed by the LGMA to the WG2 Chair.</li> </ul>
<b>7.</b>	Lunch after the next board meeting on 6 December.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Secretariat will follow up with members and confirm numbers.</li> </ul>
<b>8.</b>	2024 meetings.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Secretariat will circulate a revised list of dates.</li> </ul>