



# NOAC

National Oversight  
and Audit Commission



## Louth County Council Scrutiny Report

NOAC Report No. 80



# Chair's Opening remarks

**The National Oversight and Audit Commission (NOAC) is the national independent oversight body for the local government sector in Ireland and was established over a decade ago under the Local Government Reform Act 2014.**

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.

I began my tenure as Chair of NOAC in September 2018 and have continued the important work commenced by the previous NOAC Chair in reviewing the performance of the individual local authorities in Ireland.

These individual reviews, which are called the Scrutiny Process, allows NOAC to provide a comprehensive overview of the functioning of local authorities to the public, both positive and negative, and allows for exemplars of best practice to be identified and used to share with other local authorities.

The first cycle of the Scrutiny Process was completed in September 2024 with 32 reports being published over that period, which are freely available on the NOAC website.

Following the completion of the first round of the Scrutiny Process, the NOAC board and I decided to conduct a review of the system in place and build on the excellent and valuable work already undertaken.

This has resulted in a new Scrutiny Process, which I feel, allows for a more detailed analysis of the performance of local authorities, along with a more structured format similar to the Oireachtas Committees.

As part of laying the groundwork on the new process, NOAC prepared a protocol document of the new Scrutiny Process, which lays out how meetings and engagement with local authorities

would function and this was agreed to by the County and City Management Association. NOAC also conducted a data protection impact assessment of the new process to ensure that GDPR and personal data rights are respected.

With that in mind, NOAC has decided to record the meetings that are uploaded to the NOAC website, along with a transcript. This allows meetings to be as open as possible and gives the public an even greater insight into the performance of their local authorities.

In terms of those meetings, I have been very impressed with the engagement we have received from local authorities. The Scrutiny Process is an excellent arena for the public to see how the local government sector works for them, highlighting the excellent work being carried out, as well as the challenges being faced.

Further, the process allows local authorities to see how they are performing on a national level, as well as providing the opportunity to view areas of good practice that they might adopt in their own localities, allowing for a virtuous cycle of improvement.

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 the welcome extended to NOAC in this process.

A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read 'Michael McCarthy'. The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

**Michael McCarthy**  
NOAC Chair  
28th November 2025

## Background

A core function of NOAC is to review the individual performance of local authorities in accordance with its statutory functions under the Local Government Reform Act 2014. This key NOAC process began in February 2017 and NOAC completed its first cycle of this process with the publication of the last of its 32 reports in September 2024. This ended the first cycle of this process with all local authorities having been reviewed and those findings being published.

The first cycle involved a number of stages, which included a face-to-face meeting with the Chief Executive and some of the Management team of the local authority with the Chair of NOAC and the Secretariat, a meeting between the Chief Executive and some/all of the Management team of the local authority with the full NOAC board and the publication of a report (Scrutiny Report) on the NOAC website.

In preparation for the meetings and as part of these reports, NOAC drew up a comprehensive profile of that particular local authority. This profile presented an analysis of data obtained from the various reports that NOAC had undertaken and other available information. The data collected is used to look at trends as well as to compare how local authorities are doing nationally.

This process allowed NOAC to provide a comprehensive overview of the functioning of local authorities to the public, both positive and negative. It allowed for exemplars of best practice to be identified and shared with other local authorities, as well as possibly being highlighted in the NOAC Annual Good Practice in Local Government Seminar.

Following the completion of the first round of the Scrutiny Process, the NOAC board decided to review the process in place and build on the excellent work carried out thus far.

The result of this work is the new NOAC Scrutiny Process, which includes a more detailed analysis of the performance of each local authority and a more structured format similar to the Joint Oireachtas Committees.

Further, the NOAC board decided to allow for a more open platform to enable greater access to the meetings between the NOAC board and the local authorities. This includes the recording of all meetings in the Scrutiny Process that are uploaded to the NOAC website, along with a transcript of the meetings.

The board also decided that it would provide further information on the process via the preparation of a report on each individual review, which is provided herein.

## Recording and Transcript

The NOAC board met with the Chief Executive of Louth County Council, David Conway, along with a number of the Louth County Council Management Team on 30th October 2025 in the Custom House, Dublin.

A recording of the meeting, as well as a copy of the transcript, can be freely viewed by the public on the NOAC website at [www.noac.ie](http://www.noac.ie) with a copy of this report.



(L-R Back Row): Ger Murphy, Joanna Kelly, David Conway, Chief Executive, David Jones, Thomas McEvoy, David Hanratty and Bernie Woods, Louth County Council.

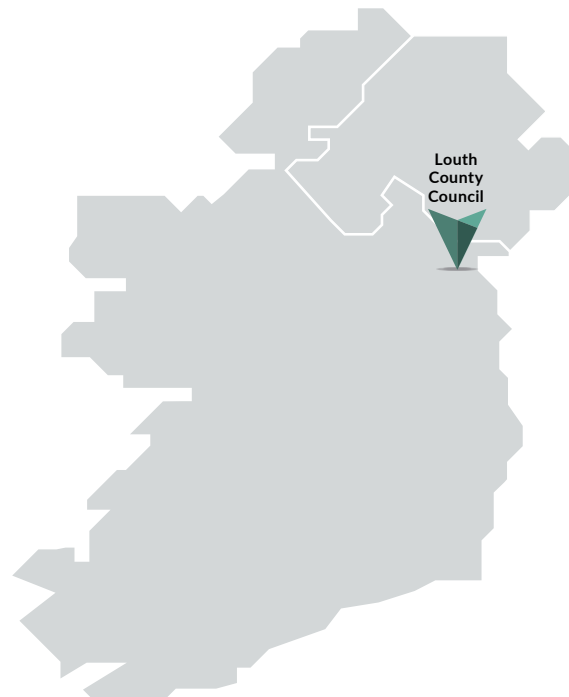
(L-R Front Row): Noel Harrington, Kathleen Holohan, Declan Breathnach, Miriam McDonald, Margaret Lane and John Byrne of the National Oversight and Audit Commission.

## Other information

As part of the Scrutiny Process, NOAC has provided the below information regarding the meeting between Louth County Council and the NOAC board.

This includes:

- ▲ A profile document prepared by NOAC for the meeting with Louth County Council that contains information from NOAC reports and further information provided by Louth County Council,
- ▲ A copy of the invitation letter sent to Louth County Council, and
- ▲ A copy of the Chief Executive's opening statement provided to NOAC as part of the meeting.





# Louth County Council Profile Report

## Background

The National Oversight and Audit Commission invited Louth County Council to attend a meeting in the Custom House, Dublin 1 on the 30 October 2025.

The purpose of the meeting is to review the individual performance of Louth County Council in accordance with NOAC's statutory functions.

As part of this process and as agreed with the NOAC board, the Secretariat has prepared this profile report using data collected from the NOAC Performance Indicator Reports and the past Scrutiny report of Louth County Council. It will use other sources of information such as NOAC's own reports including its Internal Audit report, Corporate Plan report and any other relevant available data.

The meeting is an opportunity to undertake a comprehensive review of the performance of Louth County Council. It also allows NOAC to compare Louth County Council's performance to that of other similar local authorities, as well as historical trends.

The meeting with NOAC will provide a picture to the public of where the local authority is performing well and where it may wish to improve its performance. By highlighting such issues, NOAC can encourage local authorities to strive to improve their performance or highlight to other local authorities where it is doing well, which in turn, can allow for collaboration on good practices.

## Summary Performance Indicator Data

Below is a list of Performance Indicator data, which highlights key national indicators and standout items from the NOAC Performance Indicator Report 2024, as well as comparing national and historical trends.

- ▲ **Housing.** Louth County Council owned 4,381 social housing dwellings (H1) at the end of 2024 with 2.12% vacant, compared to a national average of 2.75%. In 2023, the Council owned 4,254 social housing dwellings with 2.7% vacant, compared to a national average of 2.81%. Overall, Louth has shown improvement compared to its 2023 performance and nationally over both years.

Louth had the longest average re-letting times in 2024 of 113 weeks, almost double the number of the next highest local authority. The average national re-letting time was found to be 35.56 weeks.\*

A new indicator, H7 Social Housing Retrofit, was introduced in 2024 for the 2023 Report. This ensures that the social housing stock is upgraded and will assist in meeting the carbon target for 2030. Louth had 146 completions in 2024, compared to the national average figure of 84.97, though this was a fall from its 2023 figure of 205. It should be noted that Louth had capacity to carry out additional work. However, due to the lack of funding under the DHLGH programme, they were unable to include any additional units in their 2024 results.

Private rented sector inspections (H5). The number of private rental inspections carried out in Louth increased from 520 in 2023 to 1,718 in 2024. The national mean rose from 1,626.97 in 2023 to 2,002.74 in 2024. While Louth underperformed when compared to the average, it saw a significant improvement on its 2023 figure.

\*The 113 weeks issue was clarified at the scrutiny meeting by Louth County Council. Further details can be viewed in the "View follow up questions and answers" document on the noac.ie website.

▲ Homelessness. Louth's long term homeless adults' figures (H6 – number of adults in emergency accommodation that are long term homeless as a percentage of the total) dropped from 40.62% in 2023 to 39.23% in 2024. The national average figure for 2024 was 59.43% and 57.61% in 2023. This saw Louth bucking the national trend and continuing to perform better than the national average in terms of percentages. It should be noted that overall homeless figures for the county increased from 160 in 2023 to 209 in 2024.

▲ Planning. P1: Building Control Inspection or the percentage of buildings inspected as a percentage of new buildings notified in 2024.

Louth achieved a rate of 4.02% in 2024, with the national average figure in 2024 being 16.76%. This was a significant fall from 12.19% in 2023.

In terms of the Code of Practice for Inspecting and Certifying Buildings and Works in relation to inspections of new buildings, for which valid commencement notices have been received, the minimum requirement is 12 – 15%. Louth was the worst performing local authority and was one of seven local authorities that did not meet the minimum target.

▲ Roads. In terms of road condition, Louth had 16.71% of its local primary roads (R1b) having no defects or a rating of 9-10, which was the fifth poorest nationally. However, only seven local authorities performed better than Louth in terms of the worst rating for primary roads.

Regarding its local secondary roads (R1c), 12.07% had no defects, which was the fourth lowest nationally. In terms of the worst rating of secondary roads, 4.26% of roads in Louth had the lowest rating, which was the 12th best rating in the country.

In terms of tertiary roads (R1d), Louth had the eighth lowest percentage of tertiary roads that achieved the highest rating (13.93%) but performed well in terms of the lowest rating of tertiary roads nationally (3.67%) with only four other local authorities performing better in terms of the lowest rating for defects.

Louth had the third highest average unit cost of regional road strengthening in 2024 per m2 (R2a) of €80.60, after Dublin City and Cork City.

In terms of R4C (total number of licences that passed into the Guarantee Period by user action expressed as a percentage of the total number of licences that have passed into the Guarantee Period), NOAC noted that inspection targets are set by the DoT and have set a minimum target rate of 50% inspection rates for this indicator. Louth was the third worst performing local authority nationally with 35% of completions for this indicator and failed to meet the minimum target - 67.97% was the national average.

▲ Fire service. Louth was one of six local authorities to operate both a full time and part time fire service in Ireland.

In terms of mobilisation in 2024, it took an average of 1:09 minutes to mobilise the Louth full time fire service in respect of fire and 1:14 in terms of other emergencies. Of the six local authorities that operate a full time fire service, it had the fastest mobilisation time for fire and second fastest in terms of non-fire emergencies.

For its part time fire service, it took an average of 4:14 minutes to mobilise the in respect of fire and 4:28 in terms of other emergencies. Of the 26 local authorities that operate a part time service, Louth had the fastest response times for fire and the third fastest for non-fire emergencies.

Louth had a cost per capita for providing the fire service (F1) in 2024 of €86.21, the fifth highest among all local authorities. This compares to a national average of €74.85 in 2024.

▲ Libraries. In 2024, Louth had the second lowest visits per head of population (1.73) of all local authorities (L1), which was significantly below the national average of 3.

Louth also saw the third greatest reduction in cost for library services (0.36% reduction) in 2024 of the local authorities and had the second lowest spend per capita of the local authorities for the provision of its library service (L2) of €27.95.

- Job creation and Tourism. The total number of jobs created nationally in 2024, with assistance of the LEOs, when job losses are taken into account, was 2,459. This represented an increase of 328 jobs or 15.4% on 2023 when 2,131 jobs were created.

Louth created 17.9 jobs per 100,000 of population with the assistance of the LEO, which is a fall from 18.61 in 2023. This is significantly below the national average of 79.3 per 100,000 and the fifth lowest of the local authorities.

In terms of Trading Online Vouchers approved per 100,000 in 2024, Louth achieved 27.92 per 100,000, which was the lowest nationally - the average was 77. It also had the third lowest drawdown per 100,000 in TOVs at 9.31, where the national average was 24.

In terms of having a tourism strategy (J4) in place, Louth was one of five local authorities that did not have a strategy in place. It had noted that it was developing a strategy in 2025.

- Sick leave. Louth's medically certified sick leave rate as a percentage of paid days lost in 2024 was 4.21% (C2), the ninth highest level of medically certified sick leave of all local authorities - the average was 3.71%. It also had the second highest level of self-certified leave of all local authorities in 2024 of 0.45%, with the national average being 0.34%.

- Environment. In terms of cumulative percentage of energy savings achieved at the end of 2024, when compared to a baseline year of 2009, Louth performed admirably with the fifth biggest decrease in energy savings (52.42%) of all local authorities. The national average was a decrease of 40.76%.

Further, Louth's percentage of public lighting that was LED as a percentage of the total system was 62.08% and was the tenth lowest in the country in 2024. However, this could assist in allowing for scope for further energy savings in the future.

- Finance. Louth had a cumulative surplus at the end of 2024 of €4,338,577, which was the eighth highest in the country and a significant growth since the end of 2020 balance of €1,007,413 (M1). It also had the seventh lowest payroll cost as a percentage of revenue expenditure in the country at 31.72% (M4).

In terms of the per capita cost of settled claims in 2024, Louth had the fifth highest in the country at €19.78.

From records, it is evident that commercial rate collections have climbed steadily over the years. There was a steep drop in 2020, but rates climbed again, reaching 87% in 2023. This is, however, below the national collection rate of 90.4%.

Rent collections have also increased over the period, beginning at 76% in 2018. At a rate of 84% in 2024, this is still below the national average, which stands at 87.4% for 2024.

Finally, housing loans have also shown an improvement over the years, climbing from 76% in 2018 to 87% in 2024, in line with the national average of 87.5% in 2024.

## Collection Rates

	2024	2023	2022	2021	2020	2019	2018
<b>Commercial Rate collection rates</b>	87%	87%	83%	76%	63%	83%	80%
<b>Rent collection rates</b>	84%	83%	84%	84%	81%	80%	76%
<b>Housing loan collection rates</b>	87%	87%	86%	88%	85%	82%	76%

## Louth County Council General Information

Below is general information provided by Louth County Council covering a list of relevant topics and issues.

<b>Local Authority</b>	Louth County Council
<b>Population</b>	139,703
<b>Area</b>	827km <sup>2</sup>
<b>Municipal Districts</b>	3 (Dundalk, Drogheda and Ardee)
<b>2025 Budget</b>	Revenue Budget 183,994,384 Capital Budget 331,027,289
<b>Number employed @ 31/12/2024</b>	718.15 (Wholetime equivalent)
<b>WTE Staff per 1,000 population</b>	5.14 WTE staff per 1000 population (based on Census 2022 population of 139,703)
<b>% of paid working days lost to medically certified sick leave</b>	4.21%

### Housing Information @ 31/12/24

<b>Local Authority Stock number</b>	4,500
<b>Number currently on waiting list</b>	2,139
<b>HAP Tenancies</b>	2,885
<b>Homeless presentations</b>	267
<b>Any specific housing issues</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Social housing delivery target 2022 - 2026 = 1,376 units</li> <li>• Delivery at end 2024 = 1,046 units</li> <li>• Delivery target will be exceeded by end 2025</li> <li>• Areas of focus: sustaining future social housing delivery, enhancing affordable purchase and cost rental offering, delivering to meet demographic requirements e.g. older persons/age-friendly, sustaining the cost of maintaining a growing and aging housing stock, homelessness, rent/debt management.</li> </ul>

## Short Information Paragraph

<b>Council Mission Statement</b>	<p>“To create a vibrant, sustainable County, fostering economic growth and enhancing quality of life, through active engagement, civic leadership, and delivery of effective public services”</p>
<b>Economic Forum (CEF)</b>	<p>The Louth Economic Forum was formed in April 2009.</p> <p>Aim: Get collaboration of the State Development Agencies and the business community in Co Louth to take an active part in the ownership of the strategies through the forum.</p> <p>A recent workshop with members was hosted to review and refresh the Forum’s purpose, aims and actions.</p> <p>All members agreed on the need to continue with the Forum, noting that one of the key outputs was the ‘local relationships’ that were developed and that it provided an invaluable place to discuss challenges for economic growth.</p> <p>The following key areas were agreed by members to focus on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Branding:</b> What differentiates Louth as a place to do business (e.g. the M1 corridor/ Dublin Belfast Economic Corridor from a local, national and international perspective).</li> <li>• <b>Infrastructure:</b> Enable key infrastructure needs in terms of economic development: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Ardee Bypass</li> <li>- Facilities and Services – water (both source and waste), power, data, and roads</li> <li>- Accommodation, hotel and residential.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• <b>Learning and Education:</b> Advancing peer-to-peer skills. Review of talent in the area, Identify new initiatives within the third level institutions (Universities) and Advanced Manufacturing Training Centre of Excellence (AMTCE).</li> <li>• <b>Key Commercial Sites:</b> Identify key sites that specifically suit FDI and indigenous companies to locate or expand.</li> <li>• <b>Supports through LEO:</b> communicate services available that can be drawn on to enhance businesses.</li> <li>• <b>Communication:</b> ‘Louth open for Business’, innovation from the grassroots right way up into companies.</li> </ul>

<b>The Local Enterprise Office</b>	<p>Local Enterprise Office (LEO), part of Louth County Council, acts as a 'First-Stop-Shop' for anyone seeking information and support on starting or growing a business in the County.</p> <p>It promotes entrepreneurship, fosters sustainable business start-ups and develops existing micro and small businesses to drive job creation and to provide accessible high-quality supports for Business ideas. Entrepreneurs and Businesses are supported to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase exports</li> <li>• Build resilience</li> <li>• Increase productivity</li> <li>• Prepare for the low carbon sustainable economy</li> <li>• Embrace the digital economy</li> <li>• Innovate</li> <li>• Be managed by ambitious &amp; capable individuals</li> <li>• Fuel regional growth and job creation.</li> </ul> <p>The LEO delivers Louth County Council's Service Level Agreement to Enterprise Ireland.</p> <p>LEO output in 2024 and year to date 2025 is included below:</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="491 1016 1347 1861"> <thead> <tr> <th><u>Programme Name,</u></th> <th><u>Year End 2024,</u></th> <th><u>YTD 31/08/25</u></th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Measure 1 Funding</td> <td>20</td> <td>9</td> </tr> <tr> <td>RDI</td> <td>0</td> <td>1</td> </tr> <tr> <td>EEG</td> <td>2</td> <td>9</td> </tr> <tr> <td>IP Start</td> <td>0</td> <td>1</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Mentoring Participants</td> <td>626</td> <td>438</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Cumulative Training Participants</td> <td>1,213</td> <td>859</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Training Participants</td> <td>1,035</td> <td>699</td> </tr> <tr> <td>SYOB Training Participants</td> <td>145</td> <td>120</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Management Dev Training</td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Participants</td> <td>33</td> <td>40</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Lean for Business</td> <td>10</td> <td>6</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Green4Business</td> <td>31</td> <td>9</td> </tr> <tr> <td>MFI Applications Submitted</td> <td>21</td> <td>12</td> </tr> <tr> <td>TOV/Grow Digital</td> <td>38</td> <td>62</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Digital for Business</td> <td>3</td> <td>15</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Client Transfer to EI</td> <td>3</td> <td>4</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>Louth's supported LEO company 'Moneysherpa' won the national Innovation Award at National Enterprise Awards for 2025</p>	<u>Programme Name,</u>	<u>Year End 2024,</u>	<u>YTD 31/08/25</u>	Measure 1 Funding	20	9	RDI	0	1	EEG	2	9	IP Start	0	1	Mentoring Participants	626	438	Cumulative Training Participants	1,213	859	Training Participants	1,035	699	SYOB Training Participants	145	120	Management Dev Training			Participants	33	40	Lean for Business	10	6	Green4Business	31	9	MFI Applications Submitted	21	12	TOV/Grow Digital	38	62	Digital for Business	3	15	Client Transfer to EI	3	4
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<p><b>Retail Incentives</b></p>	<p>Louth County Council offers several incentives to retailers:</p> <p>Current Retail Incentive Schemes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Shopfront Improvement Grant Scheme 2025: This grant assists local retailers in improving the quality and character of their shopfronts to create more appealing retail streets.</li> <li>• New Business Incentive Scheme: This scheme encourages new businesses to occupy premises that have been vacant for over two years in key areas of Drogheda, Dundalk, and Ardee town centres. The goal is to promote diversity and enhance the vitality of these areas.</li> <li>• Small Business Support Scheme: This scheme provides support for businesses with a commercial rates demand of €5,000 or less.</li> </ul> <p>Additionally, the Council provides access to broader business support and training programs through the LEO.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• LEO Louth: training, workshops, and mentoring programs for Louth businesses.</li> <li>• Shopfront Design Guidelines: Published booklet to help businesses design high-quality shopfronts that integrate well with the streetscape.</li> <li>• 'Age Friendly' workshops and accreditation for retailers</li> </ul>
<p><b>The Corporate Plan</b></p>	<p>The corporate plan is a shared vision for the social and economic development of the County from 2024 to 2029.</p> <p>The vision is 'Louth...leading the way in sustainability, inclusivity, and quality of life for its citizens'. Six core values are identified within the plan:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Citizen Centric, Innovate,</li> <li>• Governance,</li> <li>• Sustainability,</li> <li>• Equality and inclusiveness,</li> <li>• Democratic.</li> </ul> <p>The Plan provides for nine strategic objectives:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Delivering customer focused solutions</li> <li>2. Enabling strategic economic development</li> <li>3. Providing and supporting housing delivery</li> <li>4. Strengthen our Communities through Empowerment and Inclusion</li> <li>5. Tackling Climate Change &amp; Promoting Sustainability</li> <li>6. Delivering on Key Infrastructure</li> <li>7. Supporting the Democratic Mandate</li> <li>8. Developing and Valuing our Staff</li> <li>9. Delivering Louth's place in Project Ireland 2040</li> </ol> <p>A six month update on the key performance areas and KPI's in the 'Service Delivery Plan 2025', which form part of the Corporate Plan, was presented to the Council at it's September 2025 meeting.</p>

<p><b>Shared services</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• NWCPO – Lead Offaly County Council</li> <li>• WERLA – Lead Dublin City Council</li> <li>• MEEU – Lead Wicklow County Council</li> <li>• LAWPRO – Lead Tipperary County Council</li> <li>• RMO – Lead Donegal County Council</li> <li>• CARO – Lead Kildare County Council</li> <li>• HAP – Limerick City &amp; County Council</li> </ul>
<p><b>Regional Issues including new developments and initiatives</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Louth is one of four counties (with Meath, Kildare, Wicklow) that make up the Mid-East (NUTS 3 level). The Mid-East plus the Midlands and Dublin areas make up the Midlands-East Region (Regional Assembly Area, NUTS 2 level). Louth is one of twelve local authorities in the Mid-East Regional Assembly.</li> <li>• Under the National Planning Framework and the Midlands-East Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy 2019-2031 (RSES), Louth has two designated Regional Growth Centres (Dundalk and Drogheda). Of the five Regional Growth Centres in Ireland. Dundalk and Drogheda are the two largest towns in Ireland and have a catchment population of 598,000 within 30 minutes commute (CSO Census 2022).</li> <li>• Of the twenty-six counties in the Rep of Ireland, Louth is the most densely populated, after County Dublin.</li> <li>• Louth is one of eight local authorities that forms the Dublin-Belfast Economic Corridor (DBEC) partnership. DBEC is a regional initiative to drive economic growth in the cross-border region, serving to promote a pro-business environment and investment destination in several high-growth sectors.</li> <li>• Regional Enterprise Plan – North-East</li> </ul> <p>Louth is one of three counties (with Cavan and Monaghan) that make up the NE Region. A Regional Enterprise Programme Manager reports to a Steering Group under the auspices of the Dept of Enterprise, Tourism and Employment. Regional emerging growth sectors identified include creative arts, digital health and offshore wind.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Regional Skills Forum – North-East</li> </ul> <p>Louth is also one of three counties that make up the NE Regional Skills Forum area that operates under the auspices of the Dept of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science.</p>

<p><b>Supporting Strategies (examples, not exhaustive list)</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Housing             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Various Approved Housing Bodies</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Statutory             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- County Development Plan 2021 – 2027 (as varied)</li> <li>- Louth Local Economic &amp; Community Plan 2023-2029</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Tourism             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Driving tourism development in Louth and Meath is the Failte Ireland ‘Ancient Destination Experience Development Plan’</li> <li>- The reimagined Boyne Valley Drive</li> <li>- The Tain Trail</li> <li>- Food Tourism opportunities built on the SeaLouth and Boyne Valley Flavours trails.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Cross Border Strategic Alliances</li> <li>• MOU between Louth and Newry Mourne and Down</li> </ul> <p>In 2011, Newry and Mourne District Council and Louth Local Authorities signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) creating a strategic cross-border alliance for mutual benefit.</p> <p>Four co-operation themes were agreed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Emergency Planning</li> <li>• Renewable energy and green technology</li> <li>• Tourism and recreation</li> <li>• Sustainable economic growth and job creation</li> <li>• Economic             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- DBEC – Dublin Belfast Economic Corridor</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p>DBEC is a partnership of eight local authorities from Dublin City to Belfast City. Louth is at the centre of this corridor</p>
<p><b>Any other relevant information</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Louth County Council in on target achieve the reduction of CO2 emissions by 50% by 2030.</li> <li>• Through the Shared Island Fund, Louth in PM and delivering the Narrow Water Bridge, linking between Omega and Warrenpoint in Carlingford.</li> <li>• Organizational change, a new directive has been established focusing on the delivery of Major Capital Projects &amp; Infrastructure.</li> <li>• Louth County Council have also established a central procurrent section to assist the directives in procuring services more effectively and efficiently as per public procurement guidelines.</li> <li>• In January Louth County Council has established a new communication section responsible for enhanced communications of council activities, initiatives and supports, this includes the use of social media.</li> <li>• Louth County Council have initiated a new CRM system that will go live on 1st October to assist the delivery of councillor’s representations and the community queries, currently LCC are dealing with 16,000 queries a month.</li> </ul>

## Summary of past Scrutiny Report(s)

### Louth County Council had its Stage 1 meeting during August 2017.

The information contained below is taken from the Scrutiny Report published following the abovementioned meeting and is a summary of the issues discussed, from that time.

- ▲ Housing – Louth has a large social housing need with inter-generational unemployment and social problems and the waiting period is now 8 to 10 years for a house.

Homelessness is a growing issue and the Council deals with about 150 homeless individuals on any given night.

Difficult mortgages - the Council explained that the HFA allowed them to offer Interest Only and Mortgage to Rent Schemes as a means to help residents in mortgage arrears. Now most of the loans were performing well.

It was noted that the application of choice based lettings has virtually eliminated refusals of accommodation offers.

- ▲ Collection rates - The Council's housing loan collection rate improved to 93% for Q1 of 2017 and the arrears cases were being dealt with mainly through the Mortgage to Rent scheme.
- ▲ Finance - Louth stated that it was unusual as a rural authority in having two large urban centres that accounted for more than half the population, so that the borough and district councils that existed prior to the 2014 reforms were responsible for more of the population than the County Council. The impact of the economic recession on the rates base had been compounded by the development of a resistance by some solvent businesses to paying any charges on foot of the national water charges protests.

Dundalk's businesses were vulnerable to sterling changes as it is a border town and the then drop in sterling could again increase the number of vacant properties. Vigorous pursuit of outstanding rates arrears from businesses that were experiencing difficulties was sometimes difficult to reconcile with the Council's growing economic development role whereby it was trying to help businesses to keep going. Prior to the recession, rate collection yields were at 90%.

### Louth had its Stage 2 scrutiny meeting in December 2017.

- ▲ Rates and Finance. The Council stated that its rates collection performance reflects the continuing fallout in Co. Louth from the recent recession. The CE explained that the drive to improve the Council's financial position had dominated her tenure as Chief Executive.
- ▲ Housing. In response to a query about the Council's impressive re-letting performance, Joe McGuinness indicated that considerable resources have been allocated to reducing the average re-letting time, which now stands at 10 weeks. This is however still not quick enough given the extent of the housing need in the county. Choice based lettings have also helped hugely by eliminating vacant periods associated with waiting for offers to be accepted.
- ▲ Libraries. The low level of library usage was also discussed and the Chief Executive outlined the many active initiatives being taken by the library service to promote usage, including a 5 for 1 library card allowing access to all the Council and Dundalk Institute of Technology libraries.

- ▲ Private rented sector inspections. Additional resources had been allocated to this function in 2016 in the form of two inspections staff and an administrator. The non-compliance rate is still 100% and all noncompliant cases are being issued Improvement Notices, with Prohibition Notices used in the more serious cases. Inspections of units owned by Approved Housing Bodies have now commenced and these are being carried out by outsourced staff. The current priority for Louth is to conduct inspections required under the Housing Assistance Payment scheme, followed by instances of complaints or where the Council has reason to believe a unit might not be compliant.
- ▲ Tourism. Louth and Meath County Councils jointly appointed a Boyne Valley Tourism Officer to promote the region, which is part of the Ireland's Ancient East initiative and it is intended to work with Newry Mourne and Down District Council on this initiative also.
- ▲ Grants. A shopfront grant was introduced because new businesses taking over vacant premises were having difficulty getting funding from the banks for the fit-out costs. A rates incentive is also available to new retail businesses occupying premises that have been vacant for two years of a 50% reduction on the first year and 25% reduction on the second year rates bills.
- ▲ Employment. Many of the current jobs in the county are lower skilled in areas such as call centres (over 2,000 jobs) and financial payments. The county has a high level of intergenerational unemployment and the Council's focus is on improving qualifications and skills, particularly of the long-term unemployed. The Chief Executive summarised her economic development vision for Louth as to maximise the number of jobs through inward investment and business start-ups, and to maximise the potential of the county's location on the Dublin – Belfast economic corridor.

## Other sources of data

The below information highlights other sources of data from NOAC reports and any other reports, including media, deemed worthwhile.

### **NOAC Reports No 46 & 67 – Local Authority and Regional Assembly Corporate Plan Cycle: 2019-2024**

#### [Review of Local Authority and Regional Assembly Corporate Plans 2019-2024 \(46\)](#)

In November 2021, NOAC published its review of the corporate plans of local authorities and regional assemblies for the period 2019 - 2024. The purpose of the report is to review the adequacy of the plans and to assist with the further development of good practice in corporate planning. In the report, examples of good practice in relation to both the process of developing the plans, and the content of the plans are highlighted.

Under the process, areas considered for review included:

- ▲ The pre-plan consultation, which looks at how local authorities formulated the Corporate Plan, consulted with stakeholders and engaged with elected members.
- ▲ Review of the Corporate Plans. This investigated how local authorities proposed to review the progress of their Corporate Plans.
- ▲ Integration of the Corporate Plan with other policies and strategies, which examined the extent to which local authorities consulted other policy reports and strategies when devising their Corporate Plans.
- ▲ Public Sector Equality and Human Rights Duty. Under this heading, it was examined as to how local authorities engaged with the issue of human rights.

Examining the contents of the Corporate Plans, the following were among the areas reviewed:

- ▲ Vision and Mission: Strategies and Objectives. This detailed local authorities' visions, mission statements and broad goals during the life of the plan. It focused on the setting of actions and goals to deliver these broad objectives and visions.
- ▲ Financial resourcing of the Corporate Plan and how risks to the delivery of the Corporate Plan can be examined, taking into account how Councils are dependent on voted capital funds from central government.
- ▲ Measuring and mitigating risk. This examines where local authorities depend on other external providers and other public bodies to successfully deliver certain services. This involves risk which can be mitigated through appropriate oversight, including service level agreements.

Within the report, Louth was identified as being a medium sized local authority, with membership of the Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly, which has 42 members.

#### [Review of Implementation of Local Authority and Regional Assembly Corporate Plans 2019-2024 \(67\)](#)

Following on from the above-mentioned review, NOAC's next step was to examine the implementation of those 2019-2024 corporate plans produced by the 31 local authorities and three regional assemblies. NOAC wished to evaluate how well local authorities and regional assemblies monitor the implementation of their corporate plans and how the process of monitoring and managing the implementation can be improved upon. The report was published in May 2024, with advance copies having issued to local authorities and regional assemblies.

The report is structured in three parts:

Part 1: Describes the methodologies used by the local authorities and regional assemblies to monitor implementation of the corporate plan.

Part 2: Assesses the progress reported on implementation of the measures contained in the plan.

Part 3: Considers two areas that were selected for more detailed analysis, namely social housing and human rights.

Under the heading of "Process for Monitoring and Reporting" the report explains that "responsibility for monitoring the implementation of the corporate plan may be devolved to the corporate affairs department within a local authority or regional assembly and, thereafter, to departmental managers and staff." "These mechanisms may be formal, for example as in Carlow, or more informal, such as in Louth."

Under "Case Study 1: Social Housing" it is outlined that "social housing is not a standalone policy area within local authorities and must be considered in the context of delivering other related strategies and plans, as noted by Louth."

### **NOAC Report 65 – Internal Audit in Local Authorities Report 2023**

This report reviewed the general governance of the internal audit function in local authorities, which included an in-depth survey as well as a review of the recommendations of NOAC's 2018 Report and how those recommendations were implemented. NOAC made 17 recommendations in this report to address the issues identified.

In terms of Louth County Council, the following are the relevant details:

- ▲ Louth is one of 10 identified in the category of medium local authorities.
- ▲ Internal Audit is outsourced.

#### [Relevant Recommendations](#)

**Recommendation 13** Applied to Louth and 24 other local authorities.

NOAC recommended that all local authorities establish multi-year plans as they can give an overall high level approach to internal audit, which could provide greater direction to local authorities and benefit Audit Committees in seeing overall longer term goals. A multi-year plan is useful to visualise the coverage of the audit universe over a desired timeframe. The approach allows progress to be monitored against an annual plan.

**Recommendation 16** Applied to Louth and all other local authorities except Clare.

The Institute of Internal Auditors recommends that an internal audit function must have an external assessment carried out at least every five years. All local authorities must address this as a matter of priority.

**Recommendation 17** Applied to Louth and all other local authorities except Cavan, Clare, South Dublin, Meath and Wexford.

All local authorities should conduct compliance tests to ensure that the operation of the internal audit function against its stated function.

It should be noted that the information for the Internal Audit report was compiled from information provided by the local authority from a survey conducted by NOAC in 2023.

## **NOAC Report 24 – Customer Satisfaction Survey 2018-2020**

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 second survey, completed in 2019, was conducted with what were considered the 11 medium sized local authorities. Louth County Council was included in this survey.

Louth County Council's results were somewhat below average across the areas outlined below:

- ▲ Overall satisfaction: Louth County Council – 52% v National Average – 56%.
- ▲ Value for Money: Louth County Council – 25% v National Average – 28%.
- ▲ Informed by local authority: Louth County Council – 28% v National Average – 40%.
- ▲ Local Council promotes economic activity: Louth County Council – 39% v National Average – 52%.

- ▲ Local Council is open and transparent: Louth County Council – 28% v national average – 34%.
- ▲ Doing a good job: Louth County Council – 48% v National Average – 51%.

## NOAC Report No 75 – Public Spending Code 2024

The Public Spending Code (PSC) was developed by the Department of Public Expenditure, Infrastructure, Public Service Reform and Digitisation (DPEIPSRD). The Code applies to both current and capital expenditure and to all public bodies in receipt of public funds. According to DPEIPSRD, the Code brings together, in one place, details of the obligations of those responsible for spending public money. As local authority funding derives from a number of sources, including grants from several Government Departments, it was decided that the Chief Executives of individual local authorities should be responsible for carrying out the quality assurance requirements and that their reports should be submitted to NOAC for incorporation in a composite report for the local government sector.

The Quality Assurance reporting requirements consists of the following five steps:

1. Local authorities should draw up an inventory of projects/programmes at the different stages of the Project Life Cycle, in respect of all capital and current expenditure projects to a value greater than €0.5m.
2. Confirm publication on the local authority's website of summary information on all procurements in excess of €10m related to projects in progress or completed in the year under review and provide a link to the relevant website location.
3. Complete the seven specified checklists. Only one of each type of checklist per local authority is required and not one per each project/programme. The completion of the checklists is to be based on an appropriate sample of the projects/areas of expenditure relevant to that checklist.

4. Carry out a more in-depth review of selected projects/programmes such that, over a 3-5 year period, every stage of the project life-cycle and every scale of project will be subject to a closer examination. Revenue projects selected for in-depth review must represent a minimum of 1% of the total value of all revenue projects in the inventory, while the requirement in respect of capital projects is 5% of the total value of all capital projects in the inventory.
5. Complete a short summary report consisting of the inventory, procurement reference and checklists referenced in steps 1 to 3 and the local authority's judgment as to the adequacy of the appraisal/planning, implementation or review work that it examined as part of step 4, the reasons why it formed that judgment and its proposals to remedy any inadequacies found during the entire quality assurance process.

In the case of Louth County Council it complied with all five steps as highlighted above including providing links to the online Publication of Summary Information of all Procurements in Excess of €10 million.

Particular points of note were:

- ▲ Louth County Council had one procurement in excess of €10m in 2024, totalling €102,962,053.00 excluding VAT.

Narrow Water Bridge Project. This is a cross-border infrastructure project connecting County Louth, Ireland, to County Down, Northern Ireland, with construction beginning in June 2024 and a projected completion in late 2027. Funded by Ireland's Shared Island Fund, the 195-meter cable-stayed bridge will link the Cooley Peninsula to the Mourne Mountains, enhancing tourism, active travel (pedestrian, cycle, and walking routes), and community connections across the border. It will feature a rolling bascule span to allow marine traffic to pass through the Newry River.

Expenditure being Considered - Greater than €0.5m (Capital and Current)				
Local Authority	Current Expenditure Amount in Reference Year	Capital Expenditure Amount in Reference Year (Non Grant)	Capital Expenditure Amount in Reference Year (Grant)	Projected Lifetime Expenditure
Louth County Council	€13,742,222	€20,416,500	€ -	€83,269,905

Expenditure being Incurred - Greater than €0.5m (Capital and Current)					
Local Authority	Current Expenditure Amount in Reference Year	Capital Expenditure Amount in Reference Year (Non Grant)	Capital Expenditure Amount in Reference Year (Grant)	Cumulative Expenditure to-date	Projected Lifetime Expenditure (Capital Only)
Louth County Council	€162,290,685	€174,907,780	€ -	€484,588,095	€1,035,984,79

Projects/Programmes Completed or discontinued in the reference year - Greater than €0.5m (Capital and Current)				
Local Authority	Current Expenditure Amount in Reference Year	Capital Expenditure Amount in Reference Year (Non Grant)	Capital Expenditure Amount in Reference Year (Grant)	Final Outturn Expenditure
Louth County Council	€338,788	€21,478,117	€ -	€64,860,509

		2024		2023		2022		2021		2020		2019		2018		2017		2016		2015	
		Data	Median/ Average	Data	Median/ Average	Data	Median/ Average	Data	Median/ Average	Data	Median/ Average	Data	Median/ Average	Data	Median/ Average	Data	Median/ Average	Data	Median/ Average	Data	Median/ Average
H1	Social Housing provided in year per 1,000 population	1.03	0.99	1.11	0.85	0.77	0.75	0.56	0.59	1.12	0.64	0.28	1.15	0.32	0.81	0.39	0.53	N/A	N/A	0.32	1.90
H2	% of directly provided dwellings vacant at 31/12	2.12	2.75	2.70	2.81	2.16	3.03	2.08	3.16	1.73	3.18	2.92	3.15	2.7	2.77	1.53	2.73	1.31	3.02	1.34	3.50
H3a	Average time from vacation date to PI year re-letting date (weeks)	112.98	35.56	34.51	33.72	37.71	35.22	42	34.44	39	32.69	39.00	28.17	16.42	27.75	17.12	28.90	16.63	20.90	22.56	22.56
H3b	Average cost expended on getting re-tenanted units ready for re-letting	€22,115.37	€31,136.29	€19,272.93	€28,347.05	€14,152.05	€21,886.04	€17,856.06	€19,653.39	€16,937.33	€19,065.30	€8,000.00	€18,336.85	€17,875.23	€18,590.28	€15,072.84	€17,160.60	€9,974.63	€12,551.65	€6,513.28	€10,521.94
H4	Average repair and maintenance cost per unit	€2,217.74	€1,824.17	€807.71	€1,493.19	€616.16	€1,297.48	€1,104.71	€1,150.13	€608.92	€1,119.82	€342.59	€1,168.99	€655.93	€1,147.45	€1,627.22	€1,311.82	€1,432.82	€969.12	€1,175.83	€732
H5	Inspections (Dwellings inspected) carried out in year as % of registrations	22.84	18.93	8.03	17.34	No data available	No data available	No data available	No data available	6.57	6.73	10.97	9.93	12.98	7.39	2.98	4.96	2.85	4.36	3.55	5.64
H6	Number of adults in emergency accommodation that are long-term homeless as a percentage of the total number of homeless adults in emergency accommodation at end of year	39.23	59.43	40.62	57.61	30.51	55.58	68.00	55.55	61.04	27.62	43.09	61.59	33.33	61.58	40.79	54.38	24.78	58.46	17.95	45.27
H7 A (1)	Total number of houses retrofitted in the year	146	84.97	205	78.87	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
H7 A (2)	The number of houses that achieved a BER rating of B2 or above in the year	145	79.39	205	74.68	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
H7 A (3)	The number of heat pumps installed in those houses in the year.	145	77.19	205	70.97	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
H7 B	Total annual energy savings in MWh from houses retrofitted in the year	2,034.3	1,216.51	2,545.8	1,150.43	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
H7 C	Total carbon emission reduction tCo2 from houses retrofitted in the year	522.3	334.20	629.1	334.72	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

		2024		2023		2022		2021		2020		2019		2018		2017		2016		2015	
		Data	Median/ Average	Data	Median/ Average	Data	Median/ Average	Data	Median/ Average	Data	Median/ Average	Data	Median/ Average	Data	Median/ Average	Data	Median/ Average	Data	Median/ Average	Data	Median/ Average
R1a	% Regional Road KM that ever received a PSCI rating	No Data available	No Data available	97.59	98	95	88.48	91	91	90.2	77	96.71	98	98	99	27	83	94	98	9	68
R1b	% Total Regional Road KM with a PSCI rating of 9-10	No Data available	No Data available	40.91	37.41	33.68	36.13	33.15	30.90	30.60	31.19	46.41	38.28	46	37.58	42	28	31	31	1.0	20
R1b	% Total Primary Road KM with a PSCI rating of 9-10	16.71	29.01	27.30	27.93	23.94	29.63	17.10	26.05	10.80	24	13.93	23.08	12	23.39	20	20	5	18	4.0	11
R1c	% Total Secondary Road KM with a PSCI rating of 9-10	12.07	22.86	25.33	23.14	22.13	23.65	15.35	21.40	7.90	17.66	14.47	17.67	6	15.19	16	14	4	12	3.0	8
R1d	% Total Tertiary Road KM with a PSCI rating of 9-10	13.93	21.11	7.82	19.38	45.51	18.85	16.07	15.38	15.40	13.93	13.84	14.23	13	12.42	3	8	1	13	0	5
R2a	KM Regional Road strengthened using road improvement grants	4.5	12.6	6.2	13.5	6.1	11.15	6.2	13.4	7.7	14.7	3.70	13.17	9.4	13.4	3.90	10.6	4.8	9.9	4.9	10.2
R2b	KM Regional road resealed using road maintenance grants	13.4	17.2	26.7	19.3	9.3	14.4	4.8	19.9	4.7	19.4	7.70	14.27	6.3	15.3	5.70	12.2	5.3	11.3	9.1	8.32
R3	% Motor tax transactions performed online	82.94	81.94	82.63	81.38	81.10	81.1	90.06	86.18	84.25	81.52	71.02	77.10	67.84	69.15	64.10	65.95	52.83	63.87	52.59	56.6
R4A	Total number of T2, T2,T3, T4 issued by the local authority	755	1,261	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
R4 B	Total number of T5 notifications received from licence holders	870	1,48	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
R4C	Percentage of licences that have been reviewed by the local authority prior to entering the Guarantee Period	35.00	68	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
R4D	Percentage of Licences that have been subject to an inspection prior to entering the Guarantee Period	4.00	20	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
W1	% private schemes with water quality in compliance	99.40	97.55	98.29	98.63	No data available	No data available	No data available	No data available	No data available	No data available	99.31	97.50	99.46	97.06	100.00	97.70	99.84	97.77	99.56	97.97
W2	% of registered schemes monitored	100.00	97.43	100.00	83.45	100.00	83.05	0.00	79.87	0.00	71.01	100.00	73.43	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

		2024		2023		2022		2021		2020		2019		2018		2017		2016		2015	
		Data	Median/ Average	Data	Median/ Average	Data	Median/ Average	Data	Median/ Average	Data	Median/ Average	Data	Median/ Average	Data	Median/ Average	Data	Median/ Average	Data	Median/ Average	Data	Median/ Average
E1	% households availing of a 3-bin service	66	70.16	81.63	94.13	77.65	87.91	78.01	89.36	76.39	89.73	47.98	48.36	44.40	43.91	36.49	39.43	31.59	37.71	29.93	22.50
E2	Pollution cases on hand at year end as % of the cases that arose that year	6.56	8.79	8.50	10.34	1.23	10.81	0.65	10.82	8.23	10.38	9.16	9.28	7.81	9.10	1.83	9.79	2.56	9.91	2.87	7.98
E3	% area unpolluted or litter free	6	19	2	16	4	20	7	22	8	22	1.00	15	2	19	0	10	0	13	0	14
E4	Percentage of schools that have been awarded/renewed green flag status	36	38.35	33	35.09	30.43	29.46	37	34.80	51	41.83	61.96	47.96	52.17	51.41	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
E5	Cumulative percentage energy savings achieved by year end	-52.42	-40.76	-56.80	-38.79	-45.78	-35.94	No data available	No data available	No data available	No data available	43.62	27.81	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
E6	Total billable wattage of the public lighting system	5,285	4,849	5,292	5,332	6,948	5,740	5,926	5,942	6,809	6,209	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
E71a	Does the local authority have designated (FTE) climate action Coordinator	yes	100%	YES	97%	YES	61%	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
E71b	Does the local authority have designated (FTE) Climate Action Officer	yes	97%	NO	81%	NO	29%	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
E7 2	Does the local authority have a climate action team	yes	100%	YES	77%	YES	87%	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
P1	New buildings inspected as % of new buildings notified	4.02	16.34	12.19	22.39	19.84	18.30	7.93	16.97	3.3	15.28	7.46	23.90	8.38	16.75	10.64	17.20	12.42	19.42	27.47	24
P2	% of determinations that confirmed the decision made by LA	83.10	74.36	88.89	75.72	84.09	73.16	75.00	71.17	73.53	73.13	40.66	73.07	68.63	76.94	60.71	77.72	74.19	77.60	53.57	74.34
P3	Ratio of planning cases being investigated at year end as to cases closed	1.44	3.43	3.06	3.27	0.85	3.13	0.74	3.60	1.07	3.74	1.03	2.74	0.81	3.03	0.95	2.41	0.97	2.87	0.86	2.61
P4	Cost per capita of the Planning Service	€33.50	€38.47	€32.79	€35.97	€29.72	€33.54	€32.24	€33.37	€30.33	€31.47	€32.83	€30.27	€25.81	€29.24	€25.12	€28.31	€25.12	€26.96	€26.86	€26.78
P5 A	The percentage of applications for fire safety certificates received in the year that were decided (granted or refused) within two months of their receipt	69.05	45.35	41.18	52.11	48.05	46.95	48.84	51.54	57.32	55.44	44.87	52.52	27.84	56.37	36.05	55.94	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

		2024		2023		2022		2021		2020		2019		2018		2017		2016		2015	
		Data	Median/ Average	Data	Median/ Average	Data	Median/ Average	Data	Median/ Average	Data	Median/ Average	Data	Median/ Average	Data	Median/ Average	Data	Median/ Average	Data	Median/ Average	Data	Median/ Average
P5 B	The percentage of applications for fire safety certificates received in the year that were decided (granted or refused) within an extended period agreed with the applicant	22.62	36.73	30.59	36.28	41.56	42.25	43.02	37.16	31.71	34.33	44.87	40.08	72.16	35.70	50.34	37.71	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
F1	Cost per capita of Fire Service	€86.21	€74.85	€80.06	€65.76	€71.38	€61.45	€59.19	€63.06	€60.05	€62.69	€55.45	€60.79	€54.20	€77.56	€55.05	€72.03	€52.61	€69.45	€51.84	€63.62
F2	Average time to mobilise Brigade re Fire (Minutes) (PT)	04:14	05:47	05:16	05:56	04:53	05:31	04:21	05:19	4:49	5:24	4:06	5:30	4:24	05:34	4:09	5:49	4:30	5:64	4:57	5:65
F2	Average time to mobilise Brigade re Fire (Minutes) (FT)	01:09	01:23	01:22	01:25	01:25	01:26	01:37	01:27	1:36	1:28	1:22	1:24	1:18	1:25	1:41	1:45	1:78	1:52	2:1	1:81
F3	% of Fire Cases in which first attendance is within 10 minutes	76.89	54.40	72.76	52.83	71.91	52.65	74.46	56.17	71.11	55.30	74.12	55.14	71.38	52.92	73.55	40.45	76.95	40.65	71.92	39.32
L1a	No. of Library visits per head of population	1.73	3.00	1.68	2.70	1.11	2.09	0.42	0.86	0.71	1.05	2.05	3.57	2.01	3.58	1.94	3.56	1.84	3.61	1.88	3.68
L1b	No. of Items borrowed per head of population	2.21	3.24	2.12	3.15	1.92	2.70	1.50	2.07	1.59	2.19	3.37	3.14	2.62	2.88	1.74	2.90	2.85	3.8275	2.79	3.82
L2	Cost of Library Service per capita	€27.95	€40.72	€28.05	€38.87	€25.71	€36.68	€25.45	€36.92	€21.87	€35.95	€22.99	€34.94	€23.31	€33.98	€21.55	€31.00	€22.58	€30.05	€25.24	€30.04
Y1	% of local schools involved in Comhairle na nÓg	94.74	65.47	94.74	68.16	94.44	64.70	94.44	63.25	89.47	63.29	89.47	68.30	89.47	80	94.74	69.04	66.67	68.07	88.89	88.46
Y2	Number of organisations included in the County Register at year end and the proportion of those organisations that opted to be part of the Social Inclusion College within the PPN	24.56	15.86	26.01	16.21	24.09	16.64	23.59	15.97	29.68	16.33	32.84	16.82	33.33	17.90	12.45	20	35.55	19	36.65	19.78
C1	WTE staff per 1,000 population	5.14	6.00	5.06	6.16	4.94	5.94	4.90	5.89	4.31	6.06	4.61	5.95	4.47	5.82	4.52	5.70	4.63	5.64	4.61	5.58
C2a	% of paid working days lost to medically certified sick leave in year	4.21	3.71	3.87	3.77	3.50	3.58	3.01	2.89	3.58	3.01	4.88	3.71	4.35	3.74	4.04	3.74	3.63	3.69	3.83	3.48
C2b	% of paid working days lost to self-certified sick leave in year	0.45	0.34	0.45	0.32	0.58	0.32	0.30	0.19	0.27	0.20	0.56	0.36	0.55	0.33	0.48	0.33	0.71	0.33	0.61	0.33
C3	LA website page views per 1,000 population (per capita from 2021)	8.67	12.65	8.63	13.36	6.90	13.65	3.29	13.60	8.17	15.56	8,007.54	16,572	8,874.08	15,520.46	8,019.09	14,495.46	7,809.25	12,422	3,189.42	11,666

		2024		2023		2022		2021		2020		2019		2018		2017		2016		2015	
		Data	Median/ Average	Data	Median/ Average	Data	Median/ Average	Data	Median/ Average	Data	Median/ Average	Data	Median/ Average	Data	Median/ Average	Data	Median/ Average	Data	Median/ Average	Data	Median/ Average
C4	Overall cost of ICT Provision per WTE	€4,511.79	€4,270.61	€4,972.30	€3,948.63	€4,643.51	€3,729.33	€4,287.35	€3,521.62	€3,656.76	€3,457.02	€2,181.67	€3,060.84	€3,340.96	€2,894.57	€2,962.45	€3,048.41	€2,935.61	€2,680.80	€2,584.51	€2,925
C5	Overall cost of ICT as a proportion of Revenue expenditure	€1.86	€1.80	€2.38	€1.86	€2.55	€1.71	€2.28	€1.71	€1.48	€1.52	€1.39	€1.78	€2.07	€1.75	N/A	N/a	N/A	N/a	N/A	N/a
M1	Revenue Expenditure per Capita in year	€1,245.96	€1,485.05	€1,058.16	€1,305.56	€903.79	€1,205.89	€999.97	€1,308.21	€1,546.98	€1,419.01	€785.76	€1,059.50	€783.52	€978.91	€749.32	€897.89	€716.54	€842.00	N/A	N/A
M2a	% Commercial Rates Collected in year	87.0	92.0	87.0	88.8	83.0	88.1	76.0	83.4	63.0	76	83.0	87.00	80.0	86	75.0	83.6	68.6	84.4	60.0	80.19
M2b	% Rent & Annuities Collected in year	84.0	88.0	83.0	87.2	84.0	88.1	84.0	88.8	81.0	88.3	80.0	89.80	76.0	89	69.0	89	71.0	88.0	73.0	88
M2c	% Housing Loans Collected in year	87.0	88.0	87.0	85.5	86.0	82.6	88.0	81.6	85.0	79.4	82.0	78.00	76.0	75	75.0	74	73.0	70.0	69.0	73
M3	Per capita total cost of settled claims	€19.78	13.74	€22.67	€12.21	€19.25	€11.31	€15.97	€11.05	€12.88	€12.21	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
M4	Total payroll costs as a % of revenue expenditure	€31.72	€31.93	€34.63	€33.30	€37.51	€32.35	€34.01	€31.83	€29.25	€26.75	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
J1	LEO jobs output per 1,000 population	0.13	0.46	0.13	0.41	0.31	0.67	0.28	0.59	-0.48	-0.30	0.52	0.64	0.70	0.75	0.69	0.68	0.83	0.70	0.50	0.66
J2A	The number of trading online voucher applications approved by the Local Enterprise Office in the year per 100,000 of population	0.20	0.44	0.18	0.33	0.23	0.36	0.60	0.87	1.87	2.64	0.24	0.25	0.15	0.23	0.39	0.25	0.30	0.24	N/A	N/A
J2B	The number of those trading online vouchers that were drawn down in the year per 100,000 of population	0.07	0.14	0.02	0.14	0.05	0.17	0.11	0.52	0.32	0.93	0.06	0.10	0.29	0.11	0.24	0.11	0.29	0.14	N/A	N/A
J3	The number of participants who received mentoring during the year per 100,000 of population	3.67	3.02	2.68	2.76	2.59	2.37	3.90	2.76	4.62	3.30	2.81	2.19	2.09	1.98	1.87	1.74	0.96	1.59	N/A	N/A
J4A	Does the local authority have a current tourism strategy	No	26	YES	28	YES	28	YES	29	YES	28	YES	28	YES	28	YES	29	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
J4B	Does the local authority have a designated Tourism Officer?	YES	30	YES	30	YES	29	YES	29	YES	30	YES	30	YES	28	YES	27	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
J5	The spend on local economic development by the local authority per head of population	€218.44	€254.01	€129.44	€163.41	€141.07	€141.21	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A



Mr. David Conway,  
Chief Executive,  
Louth County Council,  
County Hall,  
Millennium Centre,  
Dundalk,  
Co. Louth,  
A91 KFW6.

8th July 2025

Dear Mr. Conway,

The National Oversight and Audit Commission (NOAC) invites you to participate in a meeting to discuss the performance of your local authority as part of NOAC's individual review of each local authority, or Scrutiny Process.

The meeting will take place on Thursday, 30 October 2025 at 11.00 a.m. in the Custom House, North Wall Quay, Dublin 1, D01 W6X0.

At the meeting, you will be invited to make an opening statement of no more than five minutes in duration, and the opening statement will be followed by questions from the members of the NOAC board. You may bring your management team to the meeting, if you so wish.

Information and Material Requested:

Please –

- ▲ Forward the following, not later than 5.30 p.m. on 22 October 2025, by email to [info@noac.ie](mailto:info@noac.ie):
  - The name(s), title(s), email and mobile number contact details, of those attending at the Custom House, or virtually.
  - A copy of the opening statement (in MS word format)
- ▲ Confirm receipt of this letter and your availability to attend, by end of day 29 July 2025, by email to [info@noac.ie](mailto:info@noac.ie).

## Meeting proceedings

The below information provides an outline of the procedures of the Scrutiny Meetings as agreed with the County and City Managers Association (CCMA).

- ▲ The Chair will begin a formal introduction process of each NOAC member and local authority attendee.
- ▲ The Chair will provide a short background on NOAC, the Scrutiny Process and the order of the meeting.
- ▲ The Chief Executive will be asked by the Chair to give their opening statement as provided in advance of the meeting. A time limit for the delivery of the opening statement of five minutes will be strictly adhered to.

- ▲ The Chair will ask the Chief Executive if the local authority considers there are any issues NOAC should be made aware of.
- ▲ The Chair will direct each NOAC board member in attendance to ask questions and the Chief Executive and/or their team will be given time to respond.
- ▲ The Chair will open the floor to the NOAC board to ask any follow up or general questions they may have.
- ▲ If a local authority is unable to provide a complete response to a question, it will be noted and the local authority will subsequently be contacted via email to provide the response. The local authority will provide the response(s) within ten working days of the email from the Secretariat in a word document format.
- ▲ In the case that a meeting runs beyond two hours, the Chair will offer the local authority the option to take a short break of 15 minutes.
- ▲ The Chair will close the meeting.

## Information on NOAC and other arrangements

The National Oversight and Audit Commission (NOAC) is the national independent oversight body for the local government sector in Ireland. It was established in July 2014 under the Local Government Reform Act 2014 to provide independent oversight of the local government sector.

NOAC's functions are wide ranging, covering all local authority activities and involving the scrutiny of performance generally and financial performance specifically. NOAC also has a role in 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.

A core function of NOAC is to review the individual performance of local authorities in accordance with its statutory functions. This key process allows NOAC to provide a comprehensive overview of the functioning of local authorities to the public, both positive and negative, and can allow for exemplars of good practice to be identified and used to share with other local authorities.

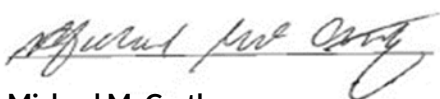
It should be noted that NOAC reserves the right to record and/or livestream Scrutiny Meetings and a record of the meeting may also be kept via a transcript and/or summary report.

Such information may be uploaded to the NOAC website, which is freely accessible to the public, and that attendance by local authority staff at the meeting will be deemed as consent for that content to be used by NOAC.

For further details on the process of the Scrutiny Meeting, a Protocol document, which was agreed between NOAC and the CCMA, is provided with this letter of invite.

For any further details on NOAC, please see the NOAC website ([www.noac.ie](http://www.noac.ie)) or contact the NOAC Secretariat at [info@noac.ie](mailto:info@noac.ie).

Yours sincerely,



**Michael McCarthy**  
Chair of the National Oversight and Audit Commission

# Chief Executive Louth County Council – Opening Statement

Good afternoon, Chair and Members of the National Oversight and Audit Commission.

I am joined today by my senior management team, each of whom leads a key directorate within Louth County Council:

- ▲ Thomas McEvoy – Director of Economic Delivery & Deputy Chief Executive

Responsible for economic development, tourism, local enterprise, and planning (including built heritage).
- ▲ Joanna Kelly – Director of HR, Corporate and Community Delivery

Oversees human resources, health & safety, corporate services, communications, and community activities.
- ▲ Ger Murphy – Director of Housing and Culture Delivery

Leads housing accommodation, arts, museum and archive services.
- ▲ David Hanratty – Director of Operations & Environment Delivery

Responsible for roads, public spaces, lighting, climate action, fleet and waste management, fire services, and building control.
- ▲ David Jones – Director of Major Capital Projects & Infrastructure Delivery

Manages council buildings, roads, public realm, greenways, active travel, flood defence schemes, and liaison with national utilities.
- ▲ Bernie Woods – Director of Finance and System Support

Oversees financial management, ICT systems, telecommunications, procurement, audit & risk, and asset management.

## Main Challenges Facing Louth County Council

Louth is Ireland’s most densely populated county outside Dublin, with rapid population growth placing pressure on housing, transport, and social infrastructure. Balancing service delivery with available funding and staff resources is an ongoing challenge, as is addressing legacy issues in housing and infrastructure. We also face ambitious targets for affordable and social housing, the need to adapt to climate change, and the complexities of cross-border collaboration.

The adopted LCCC Corporate Plan 2024-2029 and our Service Delivery Plan 2025 provides a comprehensive roadmap for delivering high-quality, accountable, and innovative public services in Louth. It aligns with broader strategic goals, prioritises digital transformation, and supports community, economic, and infrastructure development, all underpinned by robust governance and a commitment to continuous improvement.

The vision is underpinned by appropriate and strong core values.

- ▲ **Vision is:** For Louth to lead in sustainability, inclusivity, and quality of life for its citizens.

- ▲ **Six core values:** underpin the plan:

*Citizen Centricity, Innovation, Good Governance, Sustainability, Equality & Inclusiveness, and Democracy.*

A mid-year update on the Annual Service Delivery Plan was provided to Members at the September 2025 Council meeting. It provided the Management team with a status of where the executive was in relation to their performance in achieving its specific targets. The update highlighted that there was strong performance and delivery in all areas.

# Directorate Actions to Address Challenges

## ▲ Economic Delivery:

We make over 1,000 planning decisions annually, with 80% of applications now online. Louth was among the first to launch ePlanning and is progressing towards AI integration in planning.

The Local Enterprise Office delivered business training to over 1,200 participants and supported the transfer of several local businesses to Enterprise Ireland's portfolio. Economic spend per capita increased by 69% in 2024, reflecting strong support for local enterprise and job creation.

The county's first tourism strategy is underway, with a dedicated tourism officer appointed.

## ▲ HR, Corporate and Community Delivery:

Customer services handled over 15,000 queries per month, with 62% resolved at first contact. A new CRM system was launched for elected members, with plans for a public rollout.

The Health and Safety team is working towards ISO 45001 certification.

Community Safety Partnerships have been established, and local groups received €227,247 under the Local Enhancement Programme.

Staff turnover remains low, and 67% of posts were filled within two months of vacancy.

The new communications team increased social media engagement and issued 90 press releases in six months.

## ▲ Housing and Culture Delivery:

Louth is on track to exceed its Housing for All targets, with over 1,500 units delivered and a projected total of 2,042 homes by end of 2026. Six major direct-build projects are underway, complemented by strong partnerships with Approved Housing Bodies. Vacancy rates are low, and 535 units have been reactivated since 2020. The retrofit of 570 units was completed between 2021 and 2024.

While we acknowledge ongoing challenges, including the need to further reduce re-letting times and address the high demand on our housing list, we are committed to continuous improvement. Our focus remains on delivering high-quality, energy-efficient homes, maintaining low vacancy rates, and ensuring that our housing programmes meet the evolving needs of our communities.

Library services are being enhanced, including a new mobile library and redevelopment of the Dominican Church in Drogheda as a new library to enhance our visits per head.

## ▲ Operations & Environment Delivery:

The operations team manages the county's network and has improved performance indicators. Decisive enforcement action on brown bins is expected to have a national impact.

The Energy and Facilities teams are delivering projects to meet decarbonisation targets, including installing 700kW of solar power across 21 buildings and retrofitting offices. Louth County Council received an OPW award for reducing energy use at County Hall by 30%, with carbon emissions down 27% since 2016. This year 22 electric vehicles have been bought and development of 13 vehicles on HVO and remainder to be on HVO by year end.

The Fire Service provides vital training nationally and covers parts of County Meath.

The Climate Action Team secured European funding for major projects, including a county-wide climate risk assessment and cross-border habitat restoration.

## ▲ Major Capital Projects & Infrastructure Delivery:

Delivery of key infrastructure projects, including the Drogheda Port Access Northern Cross Route, greenways, flood relief, and cross-border initiatives like the Narrow Water Bridge.

Urban and rural regeneration projects are underway, supported by significant funding. The Omeath public realm scheme was completed in 2024, and St Nicholas Quarter Phase 1 is at substantial completion. €7 million was secured for the regeneration of West Gate House in Drogheda, with €3.8 million from council resources.

### ▲ Finance and System Support:

Robust financial management and transparent reporting, with 96% of payments processed within 15 days. The finance section collected €37.6 million in rates and €6 million in development contributions. A major upgrade of the Agresso financial system is underway.

The newly established centralised procurement section ensures compliance with public spending codes. The IT team supports over 800 staff and 100 software applications, with ongoing projects in GIS and digital strategy.

Cybersecurity is a priority, with mandatory staff training and system upgrades.

## Conclusion

Louth County Council is committed to delivering high-quality services, fostering economic growth, and supporting vibrant communities. We welcome NOAC's scrutiny and feedback as part of our ongoing journey of improvement and accountability.

Thank you for your attention. I look forward to your questions and to a constructive discussion.



National Oversight and Audit Commission (NOAC)  
**An Coimisiún Náisiúnta Maoirseachta & Iniúchóireachta**

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

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

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