

ASSEMBLY & EXECUTIVE REVIEW COMMITTEE

END OF SESSION REPORT

This is the end of session report of the Assembly & Executive Review Committee (AERC) of the Northern Ireland Assembly from 3 February 2024 to 31 August 2025.

Remit

The AERC is a Standing Committee established in accordance with Section 29A and 29B of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 and Standing Order 59.

Powers

The Committee may – (a) exercise the power in section 44(1) of the Northern Ireland Act 1998; (b) report from time to time to the Assembly and the Executive Committee.

The Committee shall consider – (a) such matters relating to the operation of the provisions of Parts 3 and 4 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 as enable it to make the report referred to in section 29A(3) of that Act; and (b) such other matters relating to the functioning of the Assembly and Executive Committee as may be referred to it by the Assembly.

Membership

The Committee membership at 31 August 2025 was as follows:

Mr Jonathan Buckley (Chairperson)¹

Mr Pat Sheehan (Deputy Chairperson)²

Mrs Michelle Guy³⁴

Miss Michelle McIlveen

Mr Gary Middleton

Mrs Sinead Ennis

Mrs Carál Ní Chuilín⁵

Mr Matthew O'Toole⁶

Mr John Stewart⁷

¹ With effect from 12 February 2024 Mr Jonathan Buckley replaced Mr Pádraig Delargy as Chairperson

² With effect from 3 February 2025 Mr Pat Sheehan replaced Mr Declan McAleer as Deputy Chairperson

³ With effect from 9 September 2024 Mrs Michelle Guy replaced Ms Kate Nicholl as a Member

⁴ With effect from 11 March 2024 Ms Kate Nicholl replaced Ms Sian Mullholland as a Member

⁵ With effect from 10 February 2025 Mrs Carál Ní Chuilín replaced Miss Áine Murphy as a Member

⁶ With effect from 27 September 2024 Mr Matthew O'Toole replaced Ms Cara Hunter as a Member

⁷ With effect from 21 October 2024 Mr John Stewart replaced Lord Tom Elliott of Ballinamallard as a Member

Key Activities, Outputs and Achievements

1. The Committee, in the process of developing its Forward Work Programme, consulted with The Executive Office, the political parties represented in the Assembly, independent Members, the Chairpersons' Liaison Group and the Committee on Procedures to seek views on potential review topics for the AERC to consider. The Committee also commissioned research on the work of similar institutional review committees in other legislatures to inform further consideration and decisions on topic selection and prioritisation.
2. Arising from the consultation, the Committee selected and prioritised the following review topics:
 - 1) Assembly and Executive Reform;
 - 2) Assembly Committee engagement on cross-cutting Executive strategies;
 - 3) The development of a formal process and guidance on the handling of Westminster Statutory Instruments which include a role for the Assembly; and
 - 4) Arrangements for Assembly Members' participation in inter-parliamentary and international bodies.

Assembly and Executive Reform

3. The Committee commissioned research to provide an up-to-date literature review and to identify additional expert witnesses and other stakeholders from which the Committee could receive supplementary evidence. An Oral evidence session was held with the Constitution Unit, University College London on its report "Reform of Stormont – Options for discussion". The Committee also used the Citizen Space platform for a public call for evidence and is in the process of analysing the 111 written submissions ahead of scheduling oral evidence sessions.

Assembly Committee engagement on cross-cutting Executive strategies

4. The Committee commissioned research to provide an up-to-date literature review and to identify additional expert witnesses and other stakeholders from which the Committee could receive supplementary evidence. The Committee also used the Citizen Space platform for a public call for evidence and is in the process of analysing the submissions.

The development of a formal process and guidance on the handling of Westminster Statutory Instruments which includes a role for the Assembly

5. The Committee commissioned research on comparative arrangements for the scrutiny of applicable Statutory Instruments in the other devolved legislatures. The Committee also used the Citizen Space platform for a public call for evidence and is in the process of analysing the submissions.

Committee meetings

6. The Committee held eight formal meetings during the period covered by this report. Out of the eight meetings, five were held in public session and three were held in part closed session. Part closed meetings were generally for the purpose of receiving legal advice.

Committee expenditure

7. The Committee expenditure for the period covered by this report is included as an Appendix.

APPENDIX

ASSEMBLY & EXECUTIVE REVIEW COMMITTEE

Expenditure for the period 3 February 2024 – 31 August 2025

Budget area	Details	Expenditure
Committee Travel - committee members and staff travel and subsistence in relation to visits and meetings outside Parliament Buildings	<p>Includes the cost of committee visits to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• [location] - to meet [name of key organisation/person] to discuss [issue]• [location] to consider [issue] <p>and x number of meetings held outside Parliament Buildings</p>	£0
Printing of committee reports	<p>Includes the cost of committee reports on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Inquiry into [name of inquiry]• [name of] Bill	£0
Advertising – the cost of public notices relating to committee inquiries, the committee stage of Bills and meetings held outside Parliament Buildings	<p>Includes the cost of public notices in relation to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• A review into Assembly and Executive Reform• A review into Assembly Committee engagement on cross-cutting Executive strategies• A review into the development of a formal process and guidance on the handling of Westminster Statutory Instruments which include a role for the Assembly.	£2645.71
Specialist Advice - the cost of specialist advisers appointed by the committee and commissioned research, also the cost of drafting Standing Orders	Specialist adviser to the Committee on [issue/inquiry to which the advice related]	£0

Refreshments & Hospitality	Includes the cost of all refreshments and hospitality provided by the committee; to include meetings, working lunches, seminars and any other such expenditure.	£406.30
General expenses	Includes the cost of seminars (excluding refreshments and hospitality); room hire; witness expenses; gifts provided by the committee during visits; and conference fees for members.	£0
Total Expenditure		£3052.01

Notes:

1. It is not necessary to break down costs for individual visits, reports etc. These should be described under "details", with only totals included in the "expenditure" column.
2. It is not necessary to include budget areas on which there has been no expenditure.