

ASSEMBLY AND EXECUTIVE REVIEW COMMITTEE

END OF SESSION REPORT

This is the end of session report of the Assembly and Executive Review Committee (AERC) of the Northern Ireland Assembly from 1 September 2025 to 31 August 2026.

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 2026 was as follows:

Mr Jonathan Buckley (Chairperson)

Mr Pat Sheehan (Deputy Chairperson)¹

Mrs Michelle Guy²

Miss Michelle McIlveen

Mrs Deborah Erskine³

Mrs Sinead Ennis

Mrs Carál Ní Chuilín⁴

Mr Matthew O'Toole⁵

Mr John Stewart⁶

¹ With effect from 3 February 2025 Mr Pat Sheehan replaced Mr Declan McAleer as Deputy Chairperson

² With effect from 9 September 2024 Mrs Michelle Guy replaced Ms Kate Nicholl as a Member

³ With effect from 26 May 2026 Mrs Deborah Erskine replaced Mr Gary Middleton as a Member

⁴ With effect from 10 February 2025 Mrs Carál Ní Chuilín replaced Miss Áine Murphy as a Member

⁵ With effect from 28 May 2024 Mr Matthew O'Toole replaced Ms Cara Hunter as a Member

⁶ 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 had previously 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.

Review into Assembly and Executive Reform

2. 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 evidence. Following analysis of the responses to its public call for evidence using the Citizen Space platform, the Committee selected and scheduled oral evidence sessions with a broad range of academics, former holders of the offices of First Minister and deputy First Minister, civic organisations and Assembly party representatives.
3. The Committee continues its evidence gathering process, which will inform its final report and recommendations, for completion before the end of the mandate.

Review of Assembly Committee engagement on cross-cutting Executive strategies

4. The Committee considered its commissioned research, which provided an overview of cross-cutting scrutiny in other legislatures. The Committee also considered the Citizen Space submissions following its public call for evidence and is in the process of analysing the submissions. It has commissioned further research based on those submissions and has agreed its oral evidence session timetable, seeking oral evidence from Head of the Civil Service, Departments and third sector stakeholders.

Review into 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 considered its 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. It has agreed its approach to further evidence gathering in the next session, which includes consideration of further research and correspondence with stakeholders.

Review of the arrangements for Assembly Members' participation in inter-parliamentary and international bodies

6. Having commissioned comparative research in the last session, the Committee received a number of briefings from Assembly officials on the review and, having considered the options presented, agreed the basis for its draft report on the review.

Committee meetings

7. The Committee held 11 formal meetings during the period covered by this report. Out of the 11 meetings, four were held in fully open session and seven were held in part closed session. Part closed meetings were generally for business planning purposes and for receiving legal/procedural advice from Assembly officials.

Committee expenditure

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

APPENDIX

ASSEMBLY AND EXECUTIVE REVIEW COMMITTEE

Expenditure for the period 1 September 2025- 31 August 2026

Budget area	Details	Expenditure
Committee Travel - committee members and staff travel and subsistence in relation to visits and meetings outside Parliament Buildings	Includes the cost of committee visits to: • [location] - to meet [name of key organisation/person] to discuss [issue] • [location] to consider [issue] and x number of meetings held outside Parliament Buildings	£0
Printing of committee reports	Includes the cost of committee reports on: • 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	Includes the cost of public notices in relation to: • 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.	£0
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.	£572.59
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.	£1420.61
Total Expenditure		£1993.20

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.