



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Assembly and Executive Review Committee (AERC)

Minutes of Proceedings

Tuesday 4 February 2025 at 9.30 a.m.

Meeting Location: Room 21, Parliament Buildings

Present:

Jonathan Buckley MLA (Chairperson)
Pat Sheehan MLA (Deputy Chairperson)
Michelle Guy MLA
Michelle McIlveen MLA
Matthew O'Toole MLA

Present by Video or Teleconference:

Gary Middleton MLA
Aíne Murphy MLA

Apologies: John Stewart MLA



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In Attendance:

Shane McAteer, Committee Clerk

Nick Mitford, Senior Assistant Clerk

Elaine Farrell, Assistant Clerk

Laura Gourley, Clerical Supervisor

Alison Ferguson, Clerical Officer

The meeting commenced at 9.35 a.m. in open session

1. Apologies

As above.

2. Declaration of Interests

The Chairperson advised Members of the ongoing requirement to declare relevant financial or other interests as and when they arise and before taking part in any Assembly proceedings, including Committee proceedings, relating to that matter.

No interests were declared at this point in the meeting.

3. Draft minutes

Agreed: The Committee agreed the minutes of the meeting held on 3 December 2024.



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4. Matters arising

The Chairperson advised the Committee that Pat Sheehan has replaced Declan McAleer as Deputy Chairperson and that Mr McAleer has stepped down from the Committee. The Chairperson thanked Mr McAleer for his work during his time on the Committee.

5. Arrangements for Assembly Members' participation in inter-parliamentary and international bodies – briefing on scoping paper

The Clerk briefed the Committee on a scoping paper on the arrangements for Assembly Members' participation in inter-parliamentary and international bodies.

Mr O'Toole joined the meeting at 9.40 a.m.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to undertake a review of the arrangements for Assembly Members' participation in inter-parliamentary and international bodies and agreed the draft Terms of Reference for the review.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to seek further advice on whether an Assembly resolution referring the matter to the Committee would be required before commencing the review.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that the secretariat would prepare a draft implementation plan for the review, for consideration by the Committee.

6. Selection and prioritisation of topics for the AERC work programme

The Senior Assistant Clerk briefed the Committee on the meeting which took place on 3 February 2025 between the Chairperson, Deputy Chairperson and the First Minister and deputy First Minister (FM and dFM) regarding the suggestions received from The Executive Office (TEO) for potential work topics for the Committee's forward work programme.



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Noted: The Committee noted that FM and dFM had indicated that: they regarded the suggested topic on how the Assembly engages on cross-cutting Executive strategies (topic 17) as an important and high priority; with the suggested topic on the handling of Westminster Statutory Instruments which include a role for the Assembly (topic 19) as another important topic, albeit of a more technical nature.

The Committee discussed the updated list of potential topics for the AERC work programme, which incorporates the suggestions made by TEO.

Noted: The Committee noted that Michelle Guy intends to bring forward a proposal to rescind the decisions made by the Committee at the meeting on 3 December 2024 to not select the suggested topics on designations and the appointment of the FM and dFM (topic 2) and to build on the existing AERC work carried out in relation to Member designations and cross-community voting (topic 7).

Noted: The Committee noted the merit of undertaking initial scoping work of topics being considered for review before making final decisions to undertake full reviews of given topics.

Matthew O'Toole proposed that scoping work be undertaken on the topic suggestion "That the AERC investigates Assembly reform, as per the various suggestions made by parties in the Assembly Opposition Day debate on 4 March 2024" (topic 10).

The Chairperson put the question on Mr O'Toole's proposal.

The Committee divided: Ayes:4; Noes 3; Abstain 0.

AYES

Michelle Guy

Aíne Murphy

Matthew O'Toole



Pat Sheehan

NOES

Jonathan Buckley

Michelle McIlveen

Gary Middleton

The proposal was carried.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that scoping work will be undertaken on the following two additional topics, which had been suggested by TEO: an examination of how the Assembly engages on cross-cutting Executive strategies (topic 17); and the development of a formal process and guidance on the handling of Westminster Statutory Instruments which include a role for the Assembly (topic 19).

7. Correspondence

None.

8. AOB

None.



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9. Date, Time and Place of the next meeting

The next meeting of the AERC will take place on Tuesday 11 March 2025 at 9.30 a.m. in Room 21, Parliament Buildings.

The meeting was adjourned at 10.12 a.m.

Pat Sheehan MLA

Deputy Chairperson, Assembly and Executive Review Committee

11 March 2025