



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Assembly and Executive Review Committee (AERC)

Minutes of Proceedings

Tuesday 24 March 2026 at 9.30 a.m.

Meeting Location: Room 21, Parliament Buildings

Present:

Jonathan Buckley MLA (Chairperson)
Pat Sheehan MLA (Deputy Chairperson)
Sinéad Ennis MLA
Michelle Guy MLA
Michelle McIlveen MLA
Carál Ní Chuilín MLA
Matthew O'Toole MLA

Apologies:

Gary Middleton MLA
John Stewart MLA

In Attendance:

Shane McAteer, Committee Clerk
Ashleigh Mitford, Senior Assistant Clerk



Northern Ireland Assembly

Elaine Farrell, Assistant Clerk

Laura Gourley, Clerical Supervisor

Alison Ferguson, Clerical Officer

Clare Maguire, Public Engagement Manager (agenda item 3)

Caroline Moore, Participation & Outreach Manager (agenda item 3)

Paul Gill, Clerk Assistant (agenda item 5)

Feargal McGuinness, EU & Interparliamentary Affairs Office (agenda item 5)

Agreed: The Committee agreed to commence the meeting in closed session to consider agenda items 3, 4 and 5.

The meeting commenced at 9.32 a.m. in closed 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 declarations were declared at this point in the meeting.



Northern Ireland
Assembly

3. Designing a Civic/Citizen engagement exercise – follow-up briefing by the Assembly Engagement Office

The Committee Clerk introduced this agenda item.

Michelle McIlveen joined the meeting at 9.34 a.m.

Sinead Ennis declared an interest that she is a member of the Assembly Commission.

Matthew O'Toole joined the meeting at 9.42 a.m.

The following officials from the Assembly Engagement Office joined the meeting at 9.42 a.m.

Clare Maguire, Public Engagement Manager

Caroline Moore, Participation and Outreach Manager

The Engagement Office staff briefed the Committee on the options for the design of a civic/citizen engagement exercise, as part of the Committee's Review into Assembly and Executive Reform. This was followed by a question and answer session.

The Chairperson thanked the Engagement Office staff for their briefing.

The Engagement Office staff left the meeting at 9.50 a.m.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that, due to timing and other considerations, Option A (involving a condensed, smaller scale, citizen engagement exercise before the end of the current mandate) is not a feasible option in the circumstances.

Noted: The Committee noted that a response from the Assembly Commission on the budgetary considerations for an engagement exercise, including in terms of the next mandate, is pending and will be considered in due course.



Northern Ireland
Assembly

4. Review of Assembly Committee engagement on cross-cutting Executive strategies

The Senior Assistant Clerk briefed the Committee on this agenda item.

Noted: The Committee noted the update on the Call for Evidence.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that it is content for Committee staff to assist the Northern Ireland Council for Voluntary Action (NICVA) in the facilitation of its evidence-gathering session for its response to the Review in May 2026.

Noted: The Committee noted the progress to date on the Consideration of Evidence document.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to schedule oral evidence sessions with various stakeholders, as suggested in the Committee Secretariat briefing paper, in addition to a panel session involving the Department of Education, the Department of Health, and the Department of Justice.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to commission updated research from RalSe on approaches to cross-cutting scrutiny in other legislatures.

5. Review of the arrangements for Assembly Members' participation in interparliamentary and international bodies – briefing by the Assembly's EU and Parliamentary Affairs Office.

Paul Gill, Clerk Assistant and Feargal McGuinness, Clerk of the EU and Interparliamentary Affairs Office joined the meeting at 10.05 a.m. and briefed the Committee. This was followed by a question and answer session.

Pat Sheehan left the meeting at 10.25 a.m.

Paul Gill and Feargal McGuinness left the meeting at 10.26 a.m.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to request the EU and Interparliamentary Affairs Office to provide a follow-up briefing on issues raised.



Northern Ireland Assembly

The meeting moved into open session at 10.29 a.m.

6. Draft minutes

Agreed: The Committee agreed the minutes of the meeting held on 24 February 2026.

7. Matters arising

Noted: The Committee noted the point made by Carál Ní Chuilín that, while the Chairpersons' Liaison Group had responded to the consultation on the Committee's Review of Assembly Committee Engagement on cross-cutting strategies, the group operates as a liaison body and is not on the same basis as a statutory committee.

8. Review into Assembly and Executive Reform – RaISe briefing on Public Performance Data

Agreed: The Committee agreed, due to time constraints, to note the RaISe briefing paper on Public Performance Data, which will be added to the evidence base for the review.

The Committee Clerk updated the Committee on the scheduling of oral evidence for the Review into Assembly and Executive Reform.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that any of the further oral evidence sessions with identified stakeholders, which cannot be covered in the agreed meeting dates up to summer recess, will be scheduled for meetings in September 2026.

Agreed: The Committee noted the correspondence, dated 9 February 2026, from Dr Katie Jackson, University of Liverpool and agreed to add it to the body of evidence for the Review.



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Agreed: The Committee noted the correspondence, dated 23 February 2026, from Peter Emerson, the de Borda Institute and agreed to add it to the body of evidence for the Review.

Agreed: The Committee noted the correspondence, dated 27 February 2026, from Dr Robin Wilson, University College London and agreed to add it to the body of evidence for the Review.

9. Correspondence

None.

10. Forward Work Programme

Noted: The Committee noted the Forward Work Programme.

11. AOB

None.

12. Date, Time and Place of the next meeting

The next meeting of the AERC will take place on Tuesday 21 April 2026 at 9.30 a.m. in Room 21.

The meeting was adjourned at 10.32 a.m.



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Pat Sheehan MLA
Deputy Chairperson, Assembly and Executive Review Committee

21 April 2026