



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Assembly and Executive Review Committee (AERC)

Minutes of Proceedings

Tuesday 12 May 2026 at 9.30 a.m.

Meeting Location: Room 21, Parliament Buildings

Present:

Jonathan Buckley MLA (Chairperson)

Sinéad Ennis MLA

Michelle Guy MLA

Michelle McIlveen MLA

Carál Ní Chuilín MLA

Matthew O'Toole MLA

John Stewart MLA

Apologies:

Pat Sheehan MLA (Deputy Chairperson)

In Attendance:

Shane McAteer, Committee Clerk



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Ashleigh Mitford, Senior Assistant Clerk

Elaine Farrell, Assistant Clerk

Laura Gourley, Clerical Supervisor

Alison Ferguson, Clerical Officer

Paul Gill, Clerk Assistant (agenda item 3)

Feargal McGuinness, Clerk of EU Affairs and
Interparliamentary Affairs (agenda item 3)

Marie Austin, Committee Clerk (agenda item 6 & 7)

Agreed: The Committee agreed to commence the meeting in closed session to consider agenda item 3

The meeting commenced at 9.33 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.



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3. Review of the arrangements for Assembly Members' participation in interparliamentary and international bodies: follow up briefing by EU and Interparliamentary Affairs Office

Paul Gill, Clerk Assistant and Feargal McGuinness, Clerk to the EU and Interparliamentary Affairs Office, joined the meeting at 9.35 a.m. and briefed the Committee. This was followed by a question and answer session.

Matthew O'Toole joined the meeting at 9.41 a.m.

Carál Ní Chuilín left the meeting at 9.41 a.m.

John Stewart joined the meeting at 9.46 a.m.

Michelle McIlveen left the meeting at 9.48 a.m.

Michelle McIlveen rejoined the meeting at 9.51 a.m.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that the recommendations, as outlined in the previous briefing paper from the EU and Interparliamentary Affairs Office, are reflected in a draft report to the Assembly on the review, for Committee consideration and agreement at a future meeting.

Paul Gill and Feargal McGuinness left the meeting at 9.51 a.m.

The meeting moved into open session at 9.51 a.m.

4. Draft minutes

Agreed: The Committee agreed the minutes of the meeting held on 21 April 2026.

5. Matters arising

None.



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6. Review into Assembly and Executive Reform – oral evidence session with Mr Eóin Tennyson MLA

Agreed: The Committee agreed for the oral evidence session to be recorded by Hansard.

Eóin Tennyson MLA joined the meeting at 9.52 a.m.

Mr Tennyson briefed the Committee on the Alliance position on reform options and this was followed by a question and answer session.

Matthew O'Toole left the meeting at 10.27 a.m.

Matthew O'Toole rejoined the meeting at 10.32 a.m.

John Stewart left the meeting at 10.41 a.m.

John Stewart rejoined the meeting at 10.44 a.m.

Sinéad Ennis left the meeting at 10.53 a.m.

The Chairperson thanked Mr Tennyson for his briefing.

Mr Tennyson left the meeting at 11.01 a.m.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to add the written submission from Mr Tennyson to the evidence base for the review.

7. Review into Assembly and Executive Reform – oral evidence session with Mr Jon Burrows MLA

Agreed: The Committee agreed for the oral evidence session to be recorded by Hansard.

Jon Burrows MLA joined the meeting at 11.01 a.m.

Mr Burrows briefed the Committee on the Ulster Unionist Party position on reform options and this was followed by a question and answer session.

The Chairperson thanked Mr Burrows for his attendance.



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Mr Burrows left the meeting at 11.47 a.m.

The Committee Clerk briefed the Committee on the evidence gathering process for the review.

Noted: The Committee noted that Claire Hanna MP (SDLP) and Gerry Carroll MLA (People Before Profit) have both confirmed their attendance at oral evidence sessions scheduled for 8 September 2026.

Agreed: The Committee noted an item of correspondence from Alan Whysall, the Constitution Unit at University College London (UCL), advising that his report on 'Improving Government in Northern Ireland – towards a programme for reform' has been published on the UCL website; and the Committee agreed to add this report to the evidence base for the review.

Agreed: The Committee noted that Chris Hazzard MP has indicated that he is available to attend an oral evidence session in September 2026 on to set out the Sinn Féin position on reform options; the Committee agreed to schedule an additional meeting on 15 September 2026 for the oral evidence session.

8. Correspondence

Agreed: The Committee noted the correspondence, dated 30 March 2026, from the Committee for Communities on the scrutiny of policy delivered by Arm's Length Bodies (ALBs) and agreed to respond to advise that it is not aware of any barriers to statutory committees scrutinising the work of ALBs vis-à-vis their sponsoring departments and that the Committee has not received any evidence from other statutory committees of any difficulties in this regard, as part of its ongoing Review into Assembly and Executive Reform.

Noted: The Committee noted the correspondence, dated 10 April 2026, from Mr Peter Emerson on his published articles on Assembly reform.

Agreed: The Committee noted the correspondence, dated 6 May 2026, from the Northern Ireland Local Government Association (NILGA) on the Review of Assembly Committee Engagement on Cross-cutting Executive Strategies and agreed to



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consider a combined panel with the Northern Ireland Council for Voluntary Action (NICVA), pending its submission to the Review.

9. Forward Work Programme

Noted: The Committee noted the Forward Work Programme.

10. AOB

None.

11. Date, time and place of the next meeting

The next meeting of the AERC will take place on Tuesday 2 June 2026 at 9.30 a.m. in Room 21.

The meeting was adjourned at 11.49 a.m.

Jonathan Buckley MLA
Chairperson, Assembly and Executive Review Committee

2 June 2026