

Independent Remuneration Board

Minutes of Proceedings

16 December 2025

Meeting Location: Room 106, Parliament Buildings

Present:

Alan Lowry, Chairperson

Craig Griffiths, Member

Robert Herron, Member

In Attendance:

Gareth McGrath, Senior Advisor

James Gilsenan, Assembly Clerk

Roisin Donnelly, Secretary

Claire Ellison, Clerical Supervisor

Dr Steven Aiken OBE MLA, Chairperson, Assembly Members' Pension Trustees (Agenda item 6)

Paula McClintock, Head of Finance, NI Assembly (Agenda items 6 and 7)

Jonathan McMillen, Head of Legal Services, NI Assembly (Agenda item 8)

Micheal Scholes, Research Officer, NI Assembly Research and Information Services (Agenda item 9)

The meeting commenced at 9:30 am.

1. Apologies

There were no apologies.

2. Declaration of Interests

No interests were declared in relation to the agenda items listed for the meeting.

The Board noted the completed register of interests for its members.

3. Chairperson's Business

The Chairperson advised members that he had met informally with the Chairperson of the Independent Parliamentary Standards Authority.

4. Draft Minutes

Agreed: The Board agreed the minutes of the meeting held on 24 November 2025.

5. Matters Arising

The Board noted the updated Rules of Procedure and Register of Interests template agreed at its last meeting.

The Board noted the most recent determination and salary information for members of the Senedd, Scottish Parliament, House of Commons, Dáil Eireann and Seanad Éireann further to discussion of this matter at the last meeting.

6. Assembly Members' Pension Scheme

Dr Steve Aiken OBE MLA, Chairperson of the Assembly Members' Pension Trustees and Paula McClintock, Head of Finance, NI Assembly joined the meeting at 9:35 am.

Dr Aiken and Ms McClintock briefed the Board on the Assembly Members' Pensions Scheme.

The briefing was followed by a question-and-answer session.

The Chairperson thanked Dr Aiken for his attendance and he left the meeting.

Ms McClintock agreed to provide the Board with further information on the Senedd Members' Pension Scheme annual accrual rates and options to address the identified legislative and best practice issues in relation to the Assembly Members' Pension Scheme.

Ms McClintock remained at the meeting for Agenda item 7.

7. Administration of Assembly Members' Salaries and Pensions

Paula McClintock, Head of Finance, NI Assembly briefed the Board on the role of the Finance Office in the administration of the Assembly Members (Salaries and Expenses) Determination (Northern Ireland) 2016.

The briefing was followed by a question-and-answer session.

The Chairperson thanked Ms McClintock for her attendance and she left the meeting.

Agreed: The Board agreed to request information in relating to the operation of Assembly statutory and standing committees including the frequency of meetings.

8. Role and Remit of the Board

Jonathan McMillen, Head of Legal Services, NI Assembly joined the meeting at 10:17 am.

Mr McMillen briefed the Board on its statutory responsibilities and the drafting of determinations and timescales.

The briefing was followed by a question-and-answer session.

The Chairperson thanked Mr McMillen for his attendance and he left the meeting.

Agreed: The Board agreed that a privacy notice; protocol on handling requests under the FOIA and subject access request under the UK GDPR; retention and disposal policy; and complaints procedure should be drafted for consideration at the next meeting.

9. Wider Financial Circumstances in Northern Ireland

Micheal Scholes, Research Officer, NI Assembly Research and Information Service (RaSe) joined the meeting at 10:31 am.

Mr Scholes briefed the Board on a research paper he had prepared on the wider financial circumstances of Northern Ireland.

The briefing was followed by a question-and-answer session.

The Chairperson thanked Mr Scholes for his attendance.

Agreed: The Board agreed to request further information on: ONS occupation salaries; District Council member remuneration; modelling on the effect of annual inflation rates on the salaries of MLAs from 2016 onwards; and further detail on public sector pay increases from 2016 onwards.

10. Correspondence

The Board noted responses it had received from the Alliance Party, People Before Profit, TUV and the Assembly's Independent Member to its request for views on the matters the Board should consider when undertaking its work to inform its determinations on salaries and pensions.

11. Forward Work Programme

The Board discussed the timescale for completing its work in relation to determinations for the current Assembly and the next Assembly in the 2027-2032 mandate.

Agreed: The Board agreed to request further information on the Secretary of State's interventions on the payment of salaries to MLAs during periods when the Assembly was not functioning.

Agreed: The Board requested the preparation of a revised timeline for implementation of a determination on salaries for the current Assembly members to take effect from 1 April 2026 for consideration at the next meeting.

12. Any Other Business

There was no other business.

13. Date, Time and Place of the next meeting

The next meeting of the Board was scheduled to take place at 9:30 am on Monday, 19 January 2026 in Room 106, Parliament Buildings.

The meeting was adjourned at 11:43 am.

Chairperson, Independent Remuneration Board

19 January 2026