



Background Information: Review of Assembly committee engagement on cross-cutting Executive strategies

When considering the scope of the review, the Committee identified a number of key areas that it wished to explore, which included the current arrangements for committee scrutiny of cross-cutting strategies arising from existing procedures and practices, including:

- a) Dealing with Matters of Joint Concern under the options provided for in Assembly Standing Order 64;
- b) The establishment of new standing committees as permanent committees of the Assembly (Standing Orders 50-52A);
- c) The establishment of ad hoc committees to deal with any specific time-bound terms of reference that the Assembly may set (Standing Orders 50 & 53);
- d) The practical option of one committee gathering the views of other committees on cross-cutting issues, other than under one of the options provided for in Standing Order 64 (e.g. in coordinating the responses of Assembly committees to the draft Budget, the Finance Committee will seek committee views of strategic and cross-cutting public finance issues; a statutory committee may consult with other committees when taking the Committee Stage of a Bill);
- e) The practical option available for one committee to invite non-nominated members to take part in its deliberations, though in a limited way; and
- f) The practical option available for one committee to invite officials/witnesses from different Executive Departments or public bodies to provide evidence on an issue which is cross-cutting (subject to the appropriate liaison with the other relevant committee/s).

The AERC has noted that, although well established, the procedures set out in Standing Order 64 (Dealing with Matters of Joint Concern) may have limitations in cases where engagement and scrutiny are required for a policy/initiative that spans several departments and, in some cases, all departments. For example, it may be impractical to hold a concurrent meeting of say six or seven statutory committees. Options to mitigate this issue will form part of the review, as well as examining any potential new mechanisms or structures.

In addition, the AERC would be interested to hear views and experience of scrutiny of cross-cutting legislation. This would include post-legislative scrutiny, where there are requirements for the Executive/Departments to report on the implementation or impact of cross-cutting legislation.

Standing orders can be found at the following link; [Standing Orders of the Northern Ireland Assembly](#)