

## **Terms of Reference**

### **Review of Assembly committee engagement on cross-cutting Executive strategies**

#### **Background**

As part of its consideration of potential work topics for the current mandate, the Assembly and Executive Committee (AERC) wrote to various stakeholders for suggested matters for review. The Executive Office included this topic amongst a list of suggestions. The Chairperson and Deputy Chairperson of the Committee met with the First Minister and deputy First Minister to discuss their Department's suggestions and the Committee subsequently agreed to undertake a review of this topic.

#### **Purpose, scope and steps**

The review will examine the experience to date of engagement by Assembly committees on cross-cutting Executive strategies and identify potential improvements, as applicable. It is being undertaken for the purpose of ensuring co-ordinated and systematic scrutiny of such strategies by the legislature, which would underpin joined-up working by Executive departments.

The scope of the review will cover engagement with cross-cutting Executive strategies by the Assembly in committees. The AERC's work will include the following steps:

- (a) engaging with internal and external stakeholders to gather information and evidence on how the existing procedures, processes and practices for such engagement/scrutiny have operated to date, including from the perspective of both the Assembly and the Executive;
- (b) identifying and assessing options for improving the existing arrangements, in light of the evidence on the experience to date, including how any potential new mechanisms or structures would have regard to the functions of the existing Assembly committees; and
- (c) making recommendations to the Assembly on any identified improvements and how these should be implemented.

#### **Approach**

In conducting its review, the Committee will take written and/or oral evidence from a range of stakeholders to inform its consideration of the possible improvements. The stakeholders will include, for example:

- The political parties and Independent Members represented in the Northern Ireland Assembly;
- The Executive Office and the other Executive departments;
- The Speaker of the Northern Ireland Assembly;
- The statutory committees (and applicable standing committees) of the Assembly;
- The Assembly Chairpersons' Liaison Group
- Neighbouring parliaments on these islands; and
- The general public via public consultation;
- The Community and Voluntary Sector.

The Committee will also obtain research, legal advice and other information, as necessary, to inform its deliberations.

### **Outputs and outcomes**

The review will lead to an evidence-based report that will inform the Assembly and the Executive by providing an up-to-date examination and setting out:

- evidence on the experience to date of Assembly committee engagement on cross-cutting Executive strategies, including from the stakeholders involved in the operation of existing arrangements;
- comparative information from other legislatures on potentially applicable procedures, processes and practices for cross-cutting engagement/scrutiny; and
- the identification and assessment of options for improvement and associated recommendations.

The Committee's report will be debated in the Assembly, with the envisaged outcome of the review being to facilitate and support joined-up working by the Assembly and by Executive departments in the exercise of their respective functions in relation to cross-cutting government strategies.