COMMONWEALTH PARLIAMENTARY ASSOCIATION
(SCOTLAND BRANCH)

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 2010

Wednesday 23 June 2010

DRAFT MINUTES

1. The Annual General Meeting ("AGM") opened in Committee Room 1 at 1.00 pm and was chaired by Mr Alex Fergusson MSP, President of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA) Scotland Branch.

Attendance

2. The following Members of the Branch were in attendance: Bill Aitken MSP; Ted Brocklebank MSP; Sarah Boyack MSP; Bill Butler MSP; Karen Gillon MSP; Rhoda Grant MSP; Jamie McGrigor MSP; Des McNulty MSP; Tricia Marwick MSP; Michael Matheson MSP; Margaret Mitchell MSP; Alasdair Morgan MSP; Hugh O’Donnell MSP; Dr Richard Simpson MSP; Jamie Stone MSP; Sandra White MSP.

3. The Branch President welcomed the Members and noted that the quorum for the AGM of one twelfth of the membership of the CPA Scotland Branch ("the Branch") had been met.

4. The Branch President opened the meeting and welcomed Members to the 2010 Annual General Meeting of the CPA Scotland Branch.

Agenda Item 1 - Apologies

5. Robert Brown MSP; Patricia Ferguson MSP; Linda Fabiani MSP; Stewart Maxwell MSP; Mike Pringle MSP; Maureen Watt MSP.

Agenda Item 2 - Minutes from the 2009 AGM

6. The Minutes of the AGM 2009, which took place on 24 June 2009, were proposed by Des McNulty MSP and seconded by Sandra White MSP. The Minutes were agreed to.

Agenda Item 3 – The Report and Accounts for 2009/10

7. The Reports and Accounts for 2009/10 were proposed by Sandra White MSP and seconded by Ted Brocklebank MSP. The Branch President invited Members to comment on the Annual Report.
8. Jamie Stone MSP emphasised that the work of the CPA should not be under-rated. He explained the benefits of membership, particularly access to interact with other parliamentarians via inward visits and the privilege of attending conferences and seminars in other jurisdictions which widened and deepened the parliamentarian’s perspective on common issues. Mr Stone also welcomed the recent announcement that Annie Lennox would become a Special Envoy for CPA Scotland Branch. This was an innovative initiative which illustrated that the work of CPA Scotland Branch, and the wider Parliament, could make a positive impact on perception about Scotland.

9. Mr Stone also hoped that this initiative would benefit those living in poverty in Africa and enhance the work of CPA Scotland with its work particularly in Sub-Saharan Africa. Mr Stone mentioned that he felt that CPA Scotland Branch had played an important role in promoting the Scottish model of democracy to the wider world. He said that the growing number of invitations to provide technical assistance to developing parliaments in particular, provided evidence to substantiate this view. Mr Stone also informed Members that CPA Scotland Branch had been allocated a Session at the Festival of Politics 2010, “Scotland and Malawi - Working for the Common Good” and encouraged Members to attend.

10. Mr Stone advised Members that given the current worldwide economic situation, CPA Scotland Branch Executive Committee Members would be called upon to make hard decisions in the future as reductions in public spending would no doubt impact on Branch resources. Finally, Mr Stone spoke about the role Scotland Branch had played within the British Islands and Mediterranean Region to lower the temperature on tensions around CPA governance issues. He felt that Members should be proud of the approach taken by Scotland Branch and urged Members to continue to take an active, helpful and constructive approach in this area in the future.

11. The Branch President thanked Mr Stone for his contribution and mentioned that he had met with the Secretary-General of the CPA during a courtesy call and could confirm that the CPA valued the work of Scotland Branch and advised Members that the Secretary-General had recently agreed to participate in the Scotland Branch session at the Festival of Politics.

12. Ted Brocklebank MSP spoke about the cross party delegation visit to Australia and New Zealand which had taken place in October 2009. Mr Brocklebank thanked CPA Members for providing him with the opportunity and reported back on the visit being very hard work, but interesting and informative. All the objectives for the visit had been achieved and he urged members to read the visit report on the CPA Scotland Branch pages of the Scottish Parliament’s website.

13. Mr Brocklebank also mentioned some negative media in Scotland concerning the visit, but reminded Members that over the past 9 years CPA Scotland Branch had facilitated around 150 visits from Australia and New Zealand and this was the first reciprocated outward visit. He further stated that the delegation had travelled over 26,000 miles and participated in an entirely business focussed programme. Mr Brocklebank thanked the Branch Secretary and other members of staff who had contributed to arranging an excellent programme.

14. Karen Gillon MSP spoke about the on-going discussion taking place about the future of the Commonwealth. Ms Gillon reminded Members that she had brought this matter to the attention of Members at the AGM in 2009. She reported that tensions still existed around regional voting and issues around transparency and accounting. She also informed Members that she had visited Malawi, with Michael Matheson MSP, for CPA in February 2010. She re-iterated that there was scope and opportunities to further develop this relationship and welcomed the launch of the Pilot Parliament Pairing Initiative. Malawian
MPs were not asking for financial assistance but assistance in terms of education and knowledge transfer which MSPs were perfectly positioned to deliver. Ms Gillo further thanked the other 9 Members who were participating in the PPPI and hoped that planned evaluation of the initiative would result in the expansion of the PPPI in the future.

15. Sandra White MSP thanked the CPA Branch Executive Committee and UKIRO officials for their work over the year. She mentioned that opportunities had been provided by Scotland Branch to attend not only meetings and events in the Scottish Parliament, but outwith Scotland. She encouraged other Members to become involved and also spoke of the visit to Australia and New Zealand, which she found a rewarding experience. In particular she had appreciated the opportunities she had to speak to Australian and New Zealand parliamentarians and officials in Australia, who had been involved with the planning of the 2006 Commonwealth Games in Melbourne. The knowledge gleaned during meetings and conversation would prove useful given that the Commonwealth Games were being held in Glasgow in 2014.

16. Finally Ms White spoke about the CPA Scotland Branch proposed Pilot Internship Programme which would allow one young person from a Commonwealth university or a Commonwealth legislature the opportunity to take up a placement within the Scottish Parliament for up to 3 months. Ms White expressed a hope that this initiative would be approved at the appropriate levels within the Parliament. The Branch President confirmed that arrangements were currently being put in place and it was expected that the programme would begin in January 2011.

17. Michael Matheson MSP spoke about the visit to the National Assembly of Malawi in February 2010. A full programme of project visits and workshops had been organised with over 40 MPs attending a joint workshop with Fiona Hyslop, Minister for Culture and External Relations on the Changing Role of Parliamentarians. A further 23 Members attended the Effective Use of the Media workshops in Blantyre, with 15 Members in Lilongwe and 10 Members in Mzuzu also participating in the same session. Feedback from attendees had been positive. Mr Matheson also reported that ideas for future collaboration had been discussed with counterparts and he and Karen Gillo MSP were feeding this back. He briefly touched on visits to projects and conversations with Scottish volunteers who were working in Malawi.

18. Sarah Boyack MSP spoke about the Climate Change conference she had attended in London in July 2009. She informed Members that whilst most of the delegates had heard about the UK Act, not many had heard about the Climate Change (Scotland Act) 2009. One of the main benefits for Scottish Members attending CPA conferences and seminars was that it gave MSPs a platform to inform countries such as Australia, Canada and other countries within the Commonwealth of the Scottish approach to common issues. The conference also served to inform other delegates about the issues facing countries such as Bangladesh and Sub-Saharan countries. She advised that delegates had drawn up a communiqué which was sent to relevant organisations. By issuing communiqués the CPA was able to potentially influence thinking on these important issues and highlight areas of concern. Ms Boyack also emphasised the importance of global groupings in tackling Climate Change.

19. Margaret Mitchell MSP spoke about her own experiences of CPA. Ms Mitchell felt that the CPA Scotland Branch “punched above its weight” at conferences, seminars and regional meetings. She spoke about how the Scottish Parliament was an excellent role model for fledging democracies in their pursuance of parliamentary democracy given that the Scottish Parliament is still a young Parliament but has achieved much in a short time. She also reported that she had attended a Human Trafficking conference organised by the CPA in London in 2008. Given the growing problem throughout the world in relation to people trafficking, the knowledge and information gained had proved invaluable,
particularly since the Equal Opportunities Committee within the Scottish Parliament were examining migration and people trafficking. Ms Mitchell also reported that delegates attending the conference in London also produced and sent a communiqué to international organisations with an interest or ability to influence legislation in this area.

20. The Branch President thanked Members for their contributions.

**Agenda Item 4 - Election of Executive Committee**

21. Ted Brocklebank MSP, Karen Gillon MSP, Jamie Stone MSP, and Sandra White MSP were nominated and elected as members of the CPA Scotland Branch Executive Committee for the ensuing year.

**Agenda item 5 – Any Other Business**

22. Karen Gillon asked the Chair’s permission to bring Members up-to-date regarding a recent decision by the Branch Executive Committee not to attend the CPA Annual Conference in Kenya. Ms Gillon explained the reasons why the Branch Executive Committee had felt compelled to decline the invitation to attend the CPA Annual Conference 2010 and sought the views of other Members.

23. The main points of the discussion were as follows:

- Members of the Branch Executive Committee had a duty to exercise caution when allocating financial resources to activities.
- Overseas visits were important and acceptable providing that there was a solid business case in place.
- CPA Scotland Branch would run the risk of becoming inward looking if engagement with the wider world ceased.
- Members were sympathetic to those countries that used such conferences to promote cultural aspects to raise awareness to bolster tourism.

24. The Branch President brought the meeting to a close and thanked Members for attending. He also added his thanks to the Branch Secretary for her work throughout the year and thanked the UK & International Relations Office staff for supporting Commonwealth visits. The Branch President asked the Secretary to record these comments in the minutes.

Margaret Neal  
Secretary, CPA Scotland Branch  
The Scottish Parliament  
Email: margaret.neal@scottish.parliament.uk