CPA Scotland Branch Working Practices

The functions and procedures of the Branch Executive Committee (BEC) are set out in the Branch Rules (copy attached at Annex A). It should be noted that it is for this group to determine its own working practices.

The former BEC flagged up a possible review of Branch working practices in the Handover Paper (noted under organisational issues in the Handover Paper). A copy of the paper is attached at Annex A. Most of the working practices below feature in the Handover Paper.

a) Publication of papers

Members will be aware that following the approval of the Parliament’s publication scheme in 2004, which was required in order to be compliant with freedom of information legislation, the SPCB agreed to publish papers on the Parliament’s website, subject to certain exemptions (such as confidential material). As part of this first meeting Members may wish to consider whether this approach would be extended to publish all appropriate papers for future meetings of this session.

Recommendation

It is recommended that the BEC:

- Continue to meet as usual and publish all its papers on the parliament website where appropriate to do so;

b) Timings of meetings

Given that the BEC comprises 4 Members, it is important to find a time for the BEC meetings which allows all 4 members to attend. The BEC has tended to meet every 4-6 weeks on Wednesdays at 12.45 with a working lunch and an end time of 2.00pm. The past 12 months have seen some issues around maintaining a quorum at meetings, with problems partly because meetings are currently scheduled during the parliamentary lunch break period, which has been the only slot available in the current electoral circumstances. The Committee is therefore invited to consider:

- Whether another time would be more suitable, to allow business to be more appropriately taken and (occasionally) less rushed.
• Whether the period of 6 weeks between meetings is still appropriate, given the level of business of late has required often long agendas that have not been concluded

Recommendation

It is recommended that the BEC:

• Continue to meet on Wednesdays with the suggestion that meetings are calendared for the last Wednesday of the month.

c) Nature of paperwork

The Committee has previously expressed views on the onerous level of paperwork required to support the business of the Committee. The Committee is invited to confirm they are content with précised style of paper for meetings, focussing on the decisions required to be made.

Recommendation

It is recommended that the BEC confirm:

• They are content with a précised style of paper for meetings, focussing on the decisions required to be made.

d) Branch Rules

The Branch Rules have been in place since 2000 and are loosely based on Westminster rules. The rules have worked well in the past and have been amended on one occasion in 2005. Given the focus on governance within the CPA over the past 2 years, we suggest that the committee should consider a review of the Branch rules to examine if the rules are still fit for purpose. During the CPASB AGM 2011, a brief discussion took place about future development of the Branch which included selection procedures for outward visits, BEC Membership and Branch Rules. There was a view that the Branch working practices should reflect the openness and accountability which is one of the underpinning principles of this Parliament.

Recommendation:

• It is recommended that the BEC consider a thorough review of the Branch rules as an on-going piece of work over the 2011/12 year.

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