1. The Annual General Meeting (“AGM”) opened in Committee Room 1 at 12.30pm and was chaired by Tricia Marwick MSP, President of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA) Scotland Branch.

Attendance

2. The following Members of the Branch were in attendance: Annabel Ewing MSP; Linda Fabiani MSP; Patricia Ferguson MSP; Alex Fergusson MSP; Murdo Fraser MSP; Kenny Gibson MSP; Fiona Macleod MSP; Nanette Milne MSP; Margaret Mitchell MSP; Tavish Scott MSP; Drew Smith MSP; Elaine Smith MSP and 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 2011 Annual General Meeting of the CPA Scotland Branch. The Branch President stated that CPA Scotland Branch had made a significant contribution to the reputation of the Parliament both at home and overseas and it would be a challenge in the future to continue the momentum. The Branch President commended her predecessor, stating that “Alex Fergusson would be a hard act to follow”.

Agenda Item 1 - Apologies

5. Jackie Baillie MSP; Jenny Marra MSP; Dennis Robertson MSP; Jean Urquhart MSP and Maureen Watt MSP.

Agenda Item 2 - Minutes from the 2010 AGM

6. The Minutes of the AGM 2010, which took place on Wednesday 23 June 2010, were proposed by Sandra White MSP and seconded by Margaret Mitchell MSP. The Minutes were agreed to.
Agenda Item 3 – The Report and Accounts for 2010/11

7. The Reports and Accounts for 2010/11 were proposed by the Rt Hon Alex Fergusson MSP and seconded by Sandra White MSP. The Branch President invited Members to comment on the Annual Report.

8. Margaret Mitchell MSP spoke about her experiences, to date, with CPA Scotland Branch. She mentioned that she had observed how CPA Scotland Branch had grown in stature over the years and commented on how Branch members had contributed to discussions on a wide variety of topics with the overarching aim of strengthening parliamentary democracy.

9. She stated, that given there was now a majority government in Scotland, she hoped CPA Scotland Branch would be able to play a full part in CPA activities. She spoke briefly about the benefits of membership; access to interact with other parliamentarians via inward visits and attending conferences and seminars in other places, which broadened and developed parliamentarian’s perspective on common issues.

10. She also spoke about the unique and special relationship that existed between Scotland and Malawi. In particular, she referred to the CPA Scotland Branch technical assistance work with Malawi which included parliamentary pairings between Members of both Parliaments and the internship programme. She stated that the she hoped that work in this area would be sustained and that dialogue between both parliaments would be maintained. She concluded by complementing the Branch Secretariat on the support provided to members who attended CPA conferences and seminars.

11. Sandra White MSP paid tribute to the former Branch President and Members of the former Branch Executive Committee. She reminded members that Jamie Stone had been keen to emphasise that the work of the CPA should not be under-rated. In particular, members of the former Branch Executive Committee had felt that Scotland Branch “had consistently punched above its weight”.

12. She also spoke about the CPA Scotland Branch’s work particularly in Sub-Saharan Africa. She informed members that she was a member of the Parliamentary Pairing Initiative with Malawi and whilst her relationship with her counterpart had been less successful than some, due to communication issues, she emphasised that members of CPA Scotland Branch should be proud of this initiative. The relationship between Scotland and Malawi was built on mutual trust, friendship and respect and that both parties perceived each other to be equal partners.

13. She also spoke briefly about Annie Lennox, Special Envoy for CPA Scotland Branch. Re-emphasising that the Branch was proud of its association with Ms Lennox and hoped to build on the good work already done this year which included the visit to Malawi with the former Presiding Officer in February and the report back to Parliament during Commonwealth Week earlier in the year. She also mentioned the
previous Branch Executive Committee’s wish that the internship programme should be expanded to offer 2 places to Malawian officials each year.

14. The Branch President thanked Members for their contributions.

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

15. Patricia Ferguson MSP, Margaret Mitchell MSP, Tavish Scott MSP, and Sandra White MSP were nominated and elected as members of the CPA Scotland Branch Executive Committee for the period 2011-12.

**Agenda Item 5 – Any Other Business**

16. The Rt Hon Alex Fergusson MSP welcomed the Branch President to her new role. He spoke briefly about his experience as Branch President and stated that Dr William Shija, Secretary-General of the CPA, had held Scotland Branch in high esteem. He also stated that the CPA, and many other Branches held Scotland Branch in high regard which was significant and disproportionate considering its size and that the Scotland Branch was relatively young.

17. He also mentioned that the former Branch Executive Committee should be extremely proud of its work with the Special Envoy. This unique collaboration had raised the bar on innovative working at parliamentary level and had raised the profile of not only CPA Scotland Branch but the Scottish Parliament and Scotland in a very positive way.

18. He spoke about his concern that there was a perception within the Scottish Parliament that the Branch Executive Committee was perceived as a “secret society” and wondered if ways might be found to make Branch Executive Committee processes more open and accountable. He mentioned that if this perception was picked up by new members, it could be a challenge to engage new members with Branch activities.

19. The Branch President thanked Alex Fergusson for his contribution and noted that she would chair the first meeting of the Branch Executive Committee where this matter would be discussed further.

20. Sandra White MSP agreed with Alex Fergusson MSP and also made the point that the newly elected members of the Branch Executive Committee should attend meetings regularly.

21. Margaret Mitchell MSP stated that transparency and accountability were key principles of modern parliaments and that the new Branch Executive Committee would need to address this matter if evidence suggested that there was a problem.

22. Linda Fabiani MSP expressed concern at the low turnout of members at the AGM and suggested that the Branch should adopt a more robust approach in advertising the Branch to Members. She further suggested
that Members who had an interest in the Branch could perhaps cascade information to their colleagues.

23. Tavish Scott MSP asked the Secretary to provide information to Members of the Branch Executive Committee about Branch activities during Session 3 to allow the Committee to examine if the current approach was fair and inclusive and whether or not changes to the current process were required.

24. The Branch President stated that she hoped the reception, that she was hosting that evening for Members, would contribute to spreading a positive message about the Branch, particularly to new Members. She further stated that she felt that there was enthusiasm for the work of CPA Scotland Branch from existing Members. She also suggested that the Branch Executive Committee might wish to explore options for engaging with Members in between AGMs.

25. The Branch President brought the meeting to a close and thanked Members for attending.

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