RECENT INVITATIONS RECEIVED

Purpose

1. The purpose of this paper is to seek the views of Members with regard to three invitations to attend conferences which have been received recently. The deadlines for responses to these invitations are all during March 2013 and therefore require your consideration, and decision, at this point. The invitations are:

- The 10th Canadian Parliamentary Seminar, 2-8 June 2013
- The 62nd Westminster Seminar on Parliamentary Practice and Procedure, 17-21 June 2013, and
- The 3rd Westminster Workshop on the Public Accounts Committee, 24-27 June

2. Members will be aware from the paper at the preceding agenda item that the budget for 2013-14 is currently forecast to be overspent by £13,162 albeit many of these activities have not yet been agreed to. Therefore, if any of the activities, outlined below, were agreed to Members the Branch would need to consider which of the activities currently proposed for 2013-14 will be removed from the forward programme of activities.

Content of the Seminars / Workshop

3. The 10th Canadian Parliamentary Seminar will be structured around the themes of Strengthening Democracy and the Role of Parliamentarians: Challenges and Solutions. The seminar is aimed at newly elected Members and / or back-bench Parliamentarians. The invitation states that the seminar is not suitable for Speakers or Committee Convenors. The Scotland Branch has been invited to send one delegate to the seminar. However, the seminar organisers aim to achieve gender balance at the seminar and would therefore seek one female and one male nomination for the conference.

   The cost of accommodation and meals will be met from June 2-8 by the organisers. Based on the cost of flights to Ottawa, and one nights hotel accommodation, it is estimated that attendance at this seminar will cost £3,008. Details of the seminar are provided at Annex A.

4. The 62nd Westminster Seminar on Parliamentary Practice and Procedure is intended to enhance the capacity of participating Parliamentarians and
Clerks in their respective roles. The invitation is for **two Members and one Clerk** to attend the conference. Based on attendance by two Members and one Clerk it is currently estimated that the cost of flights and six nights hotel accommodation at the seminar will be £4,014. This estimate does not include the cost of food, expenses and other incidentals. Clearly, if the size of the delegation is reduced then the cost estimate would reduce on a pro rata basis. In addition, it is possible that Chamber / Committee Office would pay for the attendance by a Clerk at the seminar and this could potentially further reduce costs. Details of the seminar are provided at Annex B.

5. The 3rd Westminster Workshop on the Public Accounts Committee is intended to explore the purpose, structure and practical functioning of the Public Accounts Committee, relations with the Supreme Audit Institution, and the challenges for small legislatures. The invitation is for up to **two Members and one Clerk** to attend the workshop. The organisers will prioritise applicants from small legislatures. Based on attendance by two Members and one Clerk it is currently estimated that the cost of flights and four nights hotel accommodation would be £2,670. This estimate does not include the cost of food, expenses and other incidentals. Clearly, if the size of the delegation is reduced then the cost estimate would reduce on a pro rata basis. In addition, it is possible that Chamber / Committee Office would pay for the attendance by a Clerk at the seminar and this could potentially further reduce costs. Details of the workshop are provided at Annex C.

**Decision**

6. Members are invited to:

- Consider whether to apply for any, or all, of the seminars / workshops detailed above, and

- Should agreement be reached to apply for places at the seminars / workshop that Members consider which of the proposed 2013-14 activities should be removed from the programme of forward activities.

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