COMMONWEALTH PARLIAMENTARY ASSOCIATION
(SCOTLAND BRANCH)

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING: THURSDAY 13 JUNE 2013

DRAFT MINUTES

1. The Annual General Meeting (“AGM”) opened in Committee Room 2 at 12.45pm and was chaired by Tavish Scott MSP, Member of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA) Scotland Branch Executive Committee.

Attendance

2. The following Members of the Branch were in attendance: Clare Adamson MSP; Jayne Baxter MSP; Sarah Boyack MSP; Keith Brown MSP; Linda Fabiani MSP; Mary Fee MSP; Patricia Ferguson MSP; Hugh Henry MSP; Liam McArthur MSP; Margaret MacDougall MSP; Jenny Marra MSP; Stewart Maxwell MSP; Stewart McMillan MSP; Margaret Mitchell MSP; John Pentland MSP; Willie Rennie MSP; Tavish Scott MSP; John Scott MSP; Maureen Watt MSP; and Sandra White MSP.

3. Tavish Scott MSP advised Members that under Rule 9 (10) of the Branch Rules, he had been nominated by the other Members of the Branch Executive Committee to chair the AGM in the Presiding Officer’s current absence from Parliament, following surgery. In accordance with the Branch Rules, Mr Scott also asked Members if they were content that he should chair the meeting in the absence of the Presiding Officer. Members present unanimously agreed.

4. The Chairperson passed on his best wishes, and that of the Branch, to the Presiding Officer, wishing her a full and speedy recovery.

5. The Chairperson 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.

6. The Chairperson mentioned that the Annual Report of the CPA Scotland Branch detailed activities of the Branch over the last year.
7. The Chairperson stated that he had attended, along with Duncan McNeil MSP, to attend the Commonwealth Plenary Conference which took place in Colombo, Sri Lanka, in September 2012. The experience of meeting parliamentarians from every continent had been extremely rewarding. The Chairperson felt that there was much to be gained from informal conversations with politicians from other legislatures. The Chairperson encouraged Members to apply to attend CPA Conferences and Seminars and not to be discouraged, if not selected immediately.

8. The Chairperson informed Members that Patricia Ferguson MSP has recently been elected as a member of the Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians (CWP) Steering Group as the representative for the British Islands and Mediterranean Region.

9. The Chairperson concluded by stating that in addition to these headline events, CPA Scotland Branch members had participated in a wide range of inward visit programmes and represented the Branch at a variety of events and meetings across the Commonwealth.

**Agenda Item 1 - Apologies**

10. The Rt Hon Tricia Marwick MSP; Margaret Burgess MSP; Fergus Ewing MSP; Linda Fabiani MSP; Alex Fergusson MSP; Murdo Fraser MSP; MSP; Alison Johnstone MSP; Margaret McCulloch MSP; Angus MacDonald MSP; Mark McDonald MSP; Jamie McGrigor MSP; Alison McInnes MSP; Fiona McLeod MSP; Siobhan McMahon MSP; Duncan McNeil MSP; Nanette Milne MSP; Graeme Pearson MSP; Dr Richard Simpson MSP; Elaine Smith MSP; David Stewart MSP and Jean Urquhart MSP.

**Agenda Item 2 - Minutes from the 2012 AGM**

11. The Minutes of the AGM 2012, which took place on Wednesday 20 June 2012, 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 2011/12**

12. The Reports and Accounts for 2011/12 were proposed by Patricia Ferguson MSP and seconded by Sandra White MSP. All Members present were content. The Chairperson invited comments from Members on the Annual Report and the activities which the Branch had supported over the course of the year.

13. Jenny Marra MSP spoke about her experiences, to date, with CPA Scotland Branch. She informed those present that she was a new Member, elected in 2011, and had applied and been selected to attend the CPA Canada Parliamentary Conference in Ottawa which had taken place in June 2013.
14. Ms Marra stated that the Conference was attended by a representative number of delegates from across CPA Regions. She informed the members that the Conference had been well organised and delegates were warmly received by Members of both Houses. She further stated that the Conference had provided delegates with an opportunity to learn how democracy works in other places and share information on good parliamentary practise and procedures. The experience provided an opportunity to equip members with the knowledge and confidence to challenge assumptions on how parliaments work.

15. Ms Marra had also been particularly impressed by the way in which the Canadian women parliamentarians had organised themselves with formal structures in place to facilitate networking and collaboration between women at state and federal level. Ms Marra informed the meeting that she would write a report of the visit with a strong focus on women’s issues and offered to share information with Patricia Ferguson MSP to support her work with the CPA CWP Steering Group.

16. Ms Marra concluded by saying that overall the experience had been positive and she would encourage members to apply for future CPA events.

17. Stuart McMillan MSP spoke about the British Islands and Mediterranean Regional Conference which he had attended with Margaret Mitchell MSP in the Falkland Islands during February 2013. The theme of the Conference had been “Self-Determination and its role in Self Governance and Devolution”.

18. Mr McMillan also mentioned that Baroness Scotland had addressed delegates and described and defined referenda and self-determination from an international legal perspective. This session had been a particular highlight for the Member.

19. Mr McMillan mentioned that these Conferences also provided wider opportunities for Members to promote Scotland. On the margins of the main Conference, the members of the delegation were able to encourage Falkland Island Members and representatives from the oil and gas industry to contact Scotland Development International. Overall Mr McMillan felt that the Conference had been a unique experience and thanked CPA Scotland Branch Executive Committee for providing the opportunity to attend.

20. Patricia Ferguson MSP explained about her new role as a Member of the CWP Steering Group. She outlined the election process explaining that there had been 5 candidates all of whom had strong credentials for the role. Ms Ferguson felt that the fact CPA Scotland Branch had hosted the BIMR Conference in 2012 had been a contributory factor in her success. Ms Ferguson further informed members that plans were underway to establish a BIMR CWP Steering Committee, and that the first meeting would take place in London on 9 July 2013, followed by a meeting of the
CWP Steering Group during the Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference which would take place in Johannesburg in August 2013.

21. Ms Ferguson concluded by stating that she would be looking for opportunities both at home and with other regions to involve MSPs in strengthening existing networks within the CPA as well as exploring other avenues for opportunities for Members.

22. Margaret Mitchell MSP spoke about her experiences and what she had learned from attending the CPA UK Branch International Parliamentary Conference on Gender and Politics which took place in London during November 2012.

23. Mrs Mitchell described how the Conference was structured and that delegates had attended from across the Commonwealth and wider world. Sessions dealt with diverse issues which impact on women including the challenges facing women living in war zones and the challenges facing women politicians in affected areas, women and the media, how women could contribute to increasing a country’s GDP as well as other topics. Mrs Mitchell urged other members to apply for similar Conferences in the future.

24. Mrs Mitchell concluded by speaking briefly about the BIMR Conference in the Falkland Islands. She informed Members that 37 delegates from 11 jurisdictions, all with diverse constitutional arrangements had attended. As previously mentioned, the theme of the conference was “Self-Determination and its role in Self Governance and Devolution”. Given that the Falkland Islands and Scotland were due to hold referenda in the future, the theme was apt.

25. Mrs Mitchell referred to the BIMR Annual General Meeting which took place during the Regional Conference. In particular she spoke about the BIMR Annual General Meeting and updated members on CPA governance issues and other issues, for example future funding of CPA Regional Annual Conferences. Mrs Mitchell explained that there had been a proposal put forward by UK Branch to move to from the current arrangements whereby the host branch provides accommodation and hospitality to a “pay as you go” system. The proposal went to a vote and it was agreed that the status quo should continue.

26. The Chairperson contributed to this discussion by informing members that the proposed changes to the funding arrangements as discussed at the BIMR AGM would not have been in the best interests of Scotland Branch.

Agenda Item 4 - Election of Executive Committee

27. 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 2013-14.
28. The Chairperson invited Members of the Branch Executive Committee to address the meeting.

29. Sandra White MSP thanked her fellow members of the Branch Executive Committee for their work over the past 12 months. Ms White also thanked UK and International Relations Office officials, for their support during the year, in particular, Margaret Neal as Secretary to the Branch.

30. Ms White re-iterated that one of the main strengths of the CPA was to provide networking opportunities for members both at home and overseas. Ms White emphasised that the large number of parliamentarians who visited the Parliament from other jurisdictions, under the auspices of the CPA, provided members with an opportunity to hear first-hand how democracy works in other places and often could provide an insight into how other countries tackled similar social challenges. Ms White urged Members to become involved by applying for outward visit opportunities which were regularly advertised to all MSPs and by participating in inward visit programmes.

31. Ms White concluded by congratulating Patricia Ferguson MSP on her successful election to represent BIMR as a member of the CWP Steering Committee by stating that this was a wonderful opportunity for Ms Ferguson and would raise the profile of the CPA Scotland Branch throughout the CPA.

Agenda Item 5 – Any Other Business

32. There were no matters raised under this agenda item.

33. The Chairperson thanked Members for their contributions and asked Members to spread a positive message, about the work of the Branch, and the opportunities available to those who become involved, particularly to new Members.

34. The Chairperson brought the meeting to a close and thanked Members for attending.

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