Minutes of the 3rd Meeting of the CPA Scotland Branch Executive Committee held on Wednesday 5 December 2007 in Queensberry House Dining Room

Present: Ted Broacklebank MSP
Karen Gillon MSP
Jamie Stone MSP (Chair)
Margaret Neal (Secretary)

In attendance: Carolyn Costley (minutes)

1. Apologies

Apologies were received from Roseanna Cunningham MSP.

2. Minutes of the 2nd Meeting held on Wednesday 3 October 2007

The minutes were agreed.

3. Matters Arising

CPA Scotland Branch Draft Forward Programme of Activities CPA PAPER (2007/08 – 05 Annex A revised)

The Executive Committee was content with the proposals as set out in the revised draft forward programme of activities. It was agreed that the draft forward programme should remain flexible and should be included on the agenda for discussion at the AGM in June 2008.

It was agreed the Secretary should provide an oral update on Malawi at this point.

The Secretary briefly went over the background and explained that as part of the technical assistance project, Ann Nelson made the recommendation that there was scope for Members to visit Malawi and hold workshops on good parliamentary practice with a particular focus on the Standing Orders. A letter has been sent by the Clerk Chief Executive to the Clerk of the Malawi National Assembly and is currently awaiting a response. At a meeting with the CPA Secretary General during the CPA Annual Conference in New Delhi he had suggested that it would be useful to include other African Parliaments as well as the Scottish Parliament in any seminars funded by the Technical Assistance Project. The Secretariat felt that it would be for the Malawi National Assembly to coordinate with other African countries if they wished them to be involved and in the meantime this proposal would need to sit on the back burner until a response was received from Malawi. The Secretary reminded Members that at the last
meeting of the Branch Executive Committee on 3 October 2007, The Secretary was asked to report back on the possibility of arranging a visit to Malawi during February recess. The Secretary advised that there was just enough funds available in the budget to finance a trip by 4 MSPs and 1 official providing the visit took place before March 2008 and economy flights were booked early.

A lengthy discussion followed and it was agreed that a visit would be desirable primarily to strengthen the ongoing relationship between Scotland and Malawi at parliamentary level and contribute to overall aims of the CPA to strengthen parliamentary democracy and enable parliamentarians to share knowledge and experience.

The Executive Committee were keen to ensure that tangible outcomes were identified to maximise the use of resources. It was further agreed that the aims of the visit should try to: build on past engagement; add value to the Malawian Parliamentary Reform Plan; take forward proposals the next stage of the Technical Assistance Project; include an element of gender empowerment; provide an opportunity to allow members who had not visited Malawi to participate and generally strengthen the relationship between Members.

The option of Members twinning with Malawian MPs was raised. It was stressed that there were no resources in the External Liaison Unit to sustain this project however it would be possible to take forward this initiative if a basic framework/understanding for the twinning initiative were to be drawn up and agreed by interested parties. It was felt that providing Members were committed to making the twinning initiative work it would be fairly easy to sustain. Minimum requirements would be that MSPs would provide mentoring via email and phone. Karen Gillon MSP stressed that it was important to be clear on the expectations for delivery.

Karen Gillon MSP suggested that on this occasion the visit should also include practical ‘hands on’ activities, perhaps undertaking some manual work or looking at the issues in constituencies and the needs and aspirations as well as perhaps organising workshops for women Members and possibly Civil Society Organisations. She reminded the Members of the Executive Committee of Dr Sylvia Jackson’s past findings on the issue of women Members and the need for training on the basics, for example understanding Standing Orders and effective debating skills.

There was some discussion about the selection process. Members agreed to follow the convention recommended by the Branch Executive Committee in 2005, that a Member who had visited Malawi with the last delegation should be included if possible, and that the delegation should also be led by a member of the Branch Executive Committee. Ted Brocklebank MSP suggested sending Members of the European and External Relations Committee who had not already been as the Committee would be carrying out an inquiry into the Scottish
Government’s International Development Policy. Members felt that whilst there would be obvious benefits for some Members of the European and External Relations Committee visiting Malawi to deepen and broaden their understanding about Malawi and international development, concerns were raised about this including a potential conflict of interests between the remits of CPA Scotland Branch and the Committee. Concern was also expressed that the integrity of the Scotland Branch could be compromised. The point was also raised that previous delegations to Malawi had taken the view that whilst it was acceptable to make recommendations to the Scottish Government and provide feedback following visits; it was not within the remit of CPA Scotland Branch to scrutinise activity to the degree necessary for parliamentary committee inquiries. It was felt that the delegation should be made up of Members who had a genuine interest in strengthening ties with Malawi with the ultimate aim of contributing to the strengthening of democracy within the institution of parliament. The Executive Committee agreed that the normal procedures for selection should be followed and that members of the European and External Relations Committee should be encouraged to apply. The Executive Committee also felt discussion on who to send was premature. It was however agreed that Karen Gillon MSP given that she was a member of the Branch Executive Committee and that she had also been a member of the previous delegation who had visited Malawi in February 2006.

The Secretary was asked to send a notice to all Members to include guidance on criteria and expectations inviting applications to fill up to 3 other places.

The Secretary was also asked to take forward arrangements and liaise with Karen Gillon MSP to develop a suitable programme.

**Action:** The Secretary to send a notice to all Members inviting applications

The Secretary to take forward arrangements and liaise with Karen Gillon MSP to develop a suitable programme

19th CPA Parliamentary Seminar, Edinburgh 28 October to 3 November 2007

CPA PAPER (2007/08 – 08)

The feedback from delegates had been very positive. Indications were that the delegates had found the topics interesting and informative. They had also been impressed with the standard of the Scottish discussion leaders and with the arrangements for the seminar.

The Secretary advised that thank you letters had been sent to all those outwith the Parliament who had provided hospitality or contributed in some other way.
Jamie Stone MSP was nominated to write a letter of thanks to Ian Perry, Head of External Liaison Unit to thank his staff for all their hard work.

**Action:** Jamie Stone MSP to write a letter of thanks to Ian Perry, Head of External Liaison Unit to thank his staff for their efforts in organising the Seminar.

**Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians (CWP) Conference**  
**CPA PAPER (2007/08 – 09)**

Margaret Mitchell MSP had submitted a report to the Executive Committee reporting that the Conference had been a success and important issues had been discussed. It was however marred by the election of a Chair Person. The rules had not been strictly adhered to which had resulted in some criticism of the process. Margaret Mitchell had provided a draft letter for consideration by the Branch Executive and requested that the letter should be sent to the Secretary General by the Executive Committee. The Branch Executive Committee considered that it was entirely appropriate and agreed that Jamie Stone MSP should sign the letter on behalf of Branch.

**Action:** Secretariat to arrange dispatch of letter to CPA secretariat with Jamie Stone

**53rd CPA Annual Conference 21 to 30 September, New Delhi, India**

The Branch Executive Committee were content with the Secretary’s report and agreed that it should be posted on the website.

**Action:** Secretary to post Annual conference report on website

**Visit to Northern Ireland Branch**

Due to parliamentary business it was agreed that this visit be postponed until the New Year.

**Engagement with Malawi**

This item was discussed under the draft forward programme of activities.

**International Parliamentary Conference “Climate Change – Tackling Causes Managing Impacts”: Westminster during the period 26-30 November 2007**

Jamie McGrigor MSP and Patrick Harvie MSP attended this Conference. The Secretary was asked to contact both Members and ask them to provide a short report for consideration the Executive Committee.
Action: Secretary to obtain Conference report

Commonwealth Day 2008 and Forward Proposal for activities from 2008-2011
CPA PAPER (2007/08 – 10)

The Executive Committee were happy with the proposal. They were keen for the programme for 2008 to be simple, relevant and of a high quality.

The Secretary was therefore asked to develop a programme for 2008 to include a Members Debate followed by a reception.

The Secretary was asked to draft a suitable motion and inform Chamber Desk that the Executive Committee intended to put forward a motion for a Members’ Debate on Wednesday 12 March. The Secretary asked the Executive Committee to also alert their Business Managers of the intention to put forward a motion for Commonwealth Day.

Branch Accounts CPA PAPER (2007/08 – 11)

The Executive Committee were happy with the accounts. The Secretary reported that the Head of External Liaison Unit had been requested to propose that the CPA budget to be increased in line with inflation so the Executive Committee had sufficient funds to cover the visit to Australia in 2009.

Action: The Secretary to check for progress

Any Other Business

Conference “Tackling Drugs, Changing Communities - Challenges for Parliamentarians for 2008” organised by CPA UK Branch, from 3 February - 8 February 2008 at Westminster

The Secretary advised the Executive Committee that Scotland Branch had been invited to send a delegate to a Conference “Tackling Drugs, Changing Communities - Challenges for Parliamentarians for 2008” organised by CPA UK Branch, from 3 February - 8 February 2008 at Westminster. The Secretary advised that the cost to the branch would be in the region of £100.00 providing budget flights could be obtained.

The Executive Committee agreed that the Secretary should send out a notice to all Members inviting applications from Members in the usual way and that she should also enquire to ask if Scotland Branch could obtain 2 places to assist Business Managers to manage the absence of Members.

Action: The Secretary to send out notice as agreed
The Secretary advised that she would be attending a Westminster Foundation of Democracy meeting about parliamentary democracy in London on 13 December and had been invited by the UK Secretary to a meeting with other Secretaries from the UK devolved legislatures to discuss matters of mutual interest and meet other members of the UK Branch Secretariat.