Present Ted Brocklebank MSP (Chair)
Roseanna Cunningham MSP
Karen Gillon MSP
Jamie Stone MSP
Margaret Neal (Secretary)

In Attendance: Ian Perry, Head of External Liaison Unit

1. Apologies

All Present

2. Minutes of the 3rd Meeting held on Wednesday 5 December 2007

Agreed

3. Matters Arising

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

The Secretary explained to the Executive Committee that events and proposals elsewhere in the Parliament could impact on the draft forward programme of activities. There was a possibility that the Scotland Week programme for April 2009 might include Canada therefore 2 visits from Scottish delegations in close proximity would perhaps not be the best use of limited resources (The draft Paper suggested that a cross party CPA delegation visit Canada in February 2009). The Secretary also mentioned that an outward engagement programme of activities for the Presiding Officer was in the very early planning stages and asked the Executive Committee to consider how best the Branch might add value to the Parliament’s engagement overseas.

A lengthy discussion took place and the Secretary was asked to explore the possibility of organising a cross party visit to Canada during the last week on November and the beginning of December 2007 to build on the Presiding Officer’s April 2008 visit to Canada and complement the proposed activity in Canada for Scotland week 2009. The Executive Committee suggested that Quebec, PEI, Nova Scotia and Alberta provinces should be considered in an itinerary to build on existing links establish new links and promote “The Year of Homecoming” in 2009. A visit at this time could possibly emulate the successful visit to Canada by the former Presiding officer in 2006 to British Columbia and Ontario which included parliamentary visits, visits to institutions with links to Scotland and meetings with the Scottish Diaspora.
The Secretary was also asked to explore the possibility of visiting Australia and New Zealand in August 2009 to promote the “Year of Homecoming” and to engage with some of the many Australian parliamentarians who had visited the Scottish Parliament since 1999.

The Executive Committee also acknowledged that the turnover of Members following the elections in May 2007 was high, 31.8%, and expressed concern that new Members might not be able to participate in CPA conferences and seminars due the political composition within the Parliament. Since May 2007, Scotland Branch had continued to apply for places at CPA conferences and seminars. However, the Executive Committee were concerned at the possible damage to the reputation of Scotland Branch if the Branch had to withdraw from conferences and seminars at short notice due to the absence of a pairing agreement between the main political parties.

The Executive Committee came to the conclusion that unless a pairing agreement was reached, attendance at CPA events would be very difficult to arrange unless the events fell within recesses.

It was agreed that the Business Managers should be informed of these concerns and should also be notified by the Executive Committee every time an invitation to attend CPA events was received.

The Executive Committee hoped to build on the success of previous Branch Executive Committees and maintain and improve the excellent reputation of the Scottish Parliament and CPA Scotland Branch across the Commonwealth. They felt that this aim might not be fully realised if Members were unable to engage with the Commonwealth community at CPA conferences and seminars.

The Executive Committee agreed to write to Business Managers and the Branch President to highlight these concerns and ask that they try to find a solution to ensure attendance at CPA events in the future. It was also agreed that a response by 28 March should be requested.

**Action:** The Secretary was asked to explore the possibility of visiting Australia and New Zealand in August 2009.
- Secretary to update Forward Plan
- Secretary to draft letter to Business managers
- Secretary was asked to explore the possibility of organising a cross party visit to Canada during the last week on November and the beginning of December 2007
The Secretary advised the members that Duncan McNeil MSP had withdrawn from the Conference due to circumstances outwith his control. Margaret Mitchell MSP had attended for the first 3 days. She returned to Parliament on the Wednesday afternoon in time to vote.

Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians (CWP) Conference

The Secretary reported that a reply had been received from the Secretary General of the CPA informing the Branch that the matter would be discussed at the CPA Executive Committee meeting in Jersey in April 2008.

CPA Scotland Branch visit to Malawi

Karen Gillon reported that the visit to Malawi had been successful and that the objectives had been met. The delegation had delivered a PowerPoint presentation to Members of the International Relations Committee on conducting committee inquiries and had been able to share information about best practise, involving CSOs and how the process operated in Scotland. The chair of the Committee had expressed an interest in strengthening the Scotland Malawi relationship at committee level and expressed a keen interest to explore the possibility of twinning with his counterpart in the Scottish Parliament and if possible, proposed that the relationship could be extended to include a twinning of the International Relations Committee and the European and External Relations Committee.

Karen Gillon also informed the Executive Committee that the delegation had been warmly received by the Speaker. The Speaker had been clear about what activities he hoped could be taken forward under the Technical Assistance Project under the auspices of CPA. These included training for Clerks to include both outward and inward visits, twinnings at every level and the Speaker hoped that he would be able to visit the Scottish Parliament in April.

The meeting with the Women’s Caucus had provided the delegation with a deeper level of understanding of what issues faced Malawian women MPs. The Malawian women Members were also keen to twin and had offered suggestions about what might be done to ensure women were included in any future arrangement.

The Secretary added that 2 visit reports would be prepared. Alasdair Morgan MSP would submit a report for consideration by the EERC Inquiry into International Development. The Secretary would also produce a report to cover the parliamentary aspects of the visit.

Karen Gillon expressed her disappointment that the Secretariat had been unable to arrange workshops with MPs and CSOs across the 3 regions.
There had also seemed to be a misunderstanding about the timing of taking forward plans for twinnings. However these issues had been fully discussed with the Speaker and Malawian Members and it was hoped that funding would be available at some point in the future to build capacity in these areas, providing this fitted in with the Parliamentary Reform Plan in Malawi. It was also mentioned that there could be a role for Scottish Members in workshops advising and informing Malawian MPs about Standing Orders and Members Code of Conduct if that were to be introduced.

The Executive Committee asked the Secretary to ensure that they were kept up to date with progress on the development of stage 3 of the TAP.

The Secretary was asked to contact the British Council in Malawi to note interest in participation by MSPs in the “Building Bridges” project which the British Council were running with assistance from the UK Members of Parliament.

The Executive Committee agreed to write to the Convener of the EERC informing him of the proposal to twin at committee level.

The Secretary was also asked to prepare a pro forma for twinning. (At an informal meeting of the Branch Executive Committee which was held on Wednesday 16 April, the Secretary was also asked to draft a Paper outlining a pilot scheme for twinning 9 Members from across the 3 regions in Malawi).

The Secretary was asked to find out what the position was regarding the re-drafting of standing orders in Malawi and to obtain information from the Clerk of the Scottish Parliament’s Standards Committee to send to the National Assembly.

**Action:** Secretary was asked to contact the British Council in Malawi to note interest in participation by MSPs in the “Building Bridges” project.
- Secretary to draft a letter to Convener of the EERC.re twinning.
- Secretary to find out what the position was regarding the re-drafting of Standing Orders in Malawi and to obtain information from the Clerk of the Scottish Parliament’s Standards Committee to send to the National Assembly.
- Secretary to ensure that Executive Committee were kept up to date with progress on the development of stage 3 of the TAP.

**Commonwealth Day 2008**

The Executive Committee were content with the arrangements however expressed disappointed that a Members’ debate had not been approved by the Parliamentary Bureau.

The Executive Committee outlined a procedure to reduce the possibility of the same situation arising in the future The Executive Committee agreed that they would write to Business Managers advising them of all the dates to be considered for Commonwealth debates until 2010.
Action: Secretary to draft a letter to Business Managers as above

Branch Accounts CPA PAPER 2007/08 – 12

As the Branch appeared to be heading for an underspend, the Executive Committee agreed that the Secretary should book flights for the Annual Conference in Malaysia as soon as the invitation was received. This would alleviate the pressure on the budget for 2008-09.

Action: Secretary to book flights for Annual conference

CPA UK and devolved Secretaries meeting, London: 12 December 2007

The Secretary reported that she had met with her counterparts in London. UK Branch was keen to find a project in which the 4 UK parliaments might collaborate although nothing specific was suggested. The Secretaries were warmly welcomed by the Chair and Treasurer of CPA UK Branch among others and by staff from the UK Branch Secretariat. During the visit the Secretaries observed a delegation of MPs discussing a recent CPA outward visit and the benefits to Members from participating.

Westminster Foundation of Democracy meeting Thursday 13 December 2007

The Secretary reported that the Westminster Foundation of Democracy had submitted a bid to DfID for £5million from the Global Transparency Fund to strengthen parliamentary democracy in developing countries. CPA UK Branch were partners along with other prominent organisations with an interest in this area.


The Executive Committee agreed that Margaret Mitchell MSP should lead the delegation to the BIMR Conference in Gibraltar. Ian McKee and Hugh O'Donnell MSP were also selected. Karen Gillon MSP was asked to remind her group that a Labour Party Member would be required to complete the delegation.

5. 20th Commonwealth Parliamentary Seminar: 8-14 June Ottawa

The Executive Committee agreed that the Secretary should: apply for a place; advertise this seminar to all Branch Members; and draft a letter for signature by all members of the Executive Committee to Business Managers re-iterating concern about the absence of a pairing arrangement to enable Members to attend CPA events outwith Edinburgh.
Action: Secretary should: apply for a place; advertise this seminar to all Branch Members; and draft a letter for signature by all members of the Executive Committee to Business Managers


The Executive Committee agreed that the Secretary should: apply for a place; advertise this seminar to all Branch members and draft a letter for signature by all members of the Executive Committee to Business Managers highlighting concern about the absence of a pairing arrangement to enable Members to attend CPA events outwith Edinburgh.

Action: Secretary should: apply for a place; advertise this seminar to all Branch Members; and draft a letter for signature by all members of the Executive Committee to Business Manager

7. Any Other Business

None

8. Dates of next meetings:

Wednesday 7 May 12.45pm
Wednesday 16 May AGM 12.45 Chamber