MINUTES OF THE 2nd MEETING OF THE SCOTLAND BRANCH EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE HELD ON WEDNESDAY 3 SEPTEMBER 2008 at 12.45 in Room TG45

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 Members present

2. Minutes of the 2nd Meeting held on Wednesday 3 September 2008

   The minutes were approved.

3. Matters Arising

CPA Scotland Branch engagement with Malawi - Pilot Twinning Initiative
   (CPA PAPER 2008/09 - 04)

   The Secretary was asked to contact the Speaker of the National Assembly to ensure that the letter dated 1 July from the Presiding Officer about the Pilot Twinning Initiative had been received.

   Action: Secretary to contact NAM to ensure aforementioned letter had been received.

   CPA Scotland Branch engagement with Malawi – TAP

   The secretary reported that the Secretary and Head of External Liaison Unit met with the committee clerks who visited Malawi at the end of August for feedback about the visit. The clerks reported that they enjoyed the visit and felt that they had been able to make a positive contribution to the working practises and procedures within the committee system. The clerks conducted workshops over the course of 4 days for staff and committee chairpersons. In addition the Clerks also met with an official from DfID at the beginning and end of the visit to provide DfID with feedback about the visit.

   Based on the clerks impressions from conversations with officials it seemed likely that The Scottish Parliament could: provide more input in the area of education and outreach; assist Malawian MPs with constituency development; assist Members development in understanding the role of the opposition and the role of MPs; assist with capacity building in the provision of research services to committee; assist with reviewing the National Assembly’s
allowance system; assist with website development; Bbild on the work already carried out with Committee Chairs.

The Secretary reported that an informal enquiry had been received from the Head of Broadcasting at the National Assembly of Malawi exploring the possibility of a small number of Members and officials visiting the Scottish Parliament to look at broadcasting services.

Following a discussion the Executive Committee raised concerns that there seemed to be insufficient involvement of Members in the decision making in relation to the TAP. The Secretary explained that part of the problem was the different structures within each institution for dealing with CPA matters. As a result there were no apparent Malawian counterparts with the exception of branch presidents and branch secretaries.

The Secretary also reported that there had been slippage in the Reform Plan and given that the Malawian elections would take place within the year, previous areas identified for collaboration might have to be deferred until the new parliament was formed post May 2009.

The Executive Committee re-iterated that the Malawian parliamentarians should decide what their priority areas were for using the remaining TAP funding. The secretary was asked to draft a letter to the Speaker with 3 proposals for possible engagement. The first proposal was a study visit to the Scottish Parliament for Members and officials to study broadcasting services. The second was a visit to Malawi in October 2008 by 2 Members to share information about constituency development, to raise awareness amongst constituents about the democratic process, to explore methods of engaging Civil Society Organisations in the democratic process, and to promote the institution of Parliament to constituents. The third proposal suggested the possibility of arranging a week long study visit to the Scottish Parliament for the Chairperson of the International Relations Committee. The delegation for this visit could also include a representative from each of the main political parties from that committee, and the visit could be timed to coincide with the forthcoming Glenrothes by-election.

Further discussion ensued about how the CPA Scotland Branch and the Scottish Parliament could develop meaningful engagement over the next 3 years given that the NAM’s reform progress had slipped. The Secretary reminded the Executive Committee that the areas for collaboration highlighted by the Speaker and Members in February 2008 included: a potential role for Scottish Members in workshops advising and informing Malawian MPs about Standing Orders; Members Code of Conduct; support for women parliamentarians and twinning at all levels of parliament. The pilot twinning initiative would embrace constituency development, role of the MP, engaging with constituents, role of the opposition in some cases, amongst other things. The Executive Committee agreed that it was time to take stock and look closely at what engagement had taken place. The Secretary was asked to produce a list of all parliamentary engagement with Malawi and once the final
stages of the CPA funded TAP had been agreed an action plan for Malawian engagement should be developed to cover the period to 2011.

The Secretary informed the Executive Committee that a letter had been sent to the CPA Secretary General to enquire about the possibility of Members of the Scottish Parliament election observing in Malawi in May 2009. The Secretary had also asked the Secretary General to consider the possibility of involving Scotland Branch Members in delivering post election seminars if invited to do so by the National Assembly of Malawi.

**Action:** Secretary to produce a list of all parliamentary engagement with Malawi

**20th Commonwealth Parliamentary Seminar: 8-14 June Ottawa**

The Secretary was asked to remind the participant that the visit report is overdue.

**Action:** Secretary to contact Member to request visit report.


The contents of this paper were noted.

**Action:** The Secretary was asked to post the visit report onto the CPA Website.

**54th Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference, 4-10 August: Kuala Lumpur**

The secretary reported that arrangements for the Conference had gone well and a de-briefing meeting would be arranged as soon as possible with the delegates. The Northern Ireland Secretary would provide a report in due course.


A lengthy discussion took place and the Executive Committee agreed that the delegation should visit the provincial legislatures and assemblies of Québec New Brunswick, Nova Scotia and Ontario in November 2008. The aims and objectives should be: challenges and solutions presented by minority governments; language policy; public appointments particularly the appointment of Commissioners and other areas of mutual interest for parliamentarians to be agreed once delegation has been selected. The Executive Committee were also keen that the delegation should take the opportunity to promote Scotland and the Year of Homecoming throughout the visit wherever possible.
Action: Secretary was asked to circulate a notice to all Members inviting applications.


The contents of this paper were noted.


The secretary advised that this visit had been cancelled at short notice due to the death of the Zambian President a few days before the visit had been due to take place.


The Executive Committee agreed that Dave Stewart and Sandra White should attend the Conference.

Action: Secretary to inform successful applicants.


The Executive Committee agreed that the Presiding Officer should be invited to lead the delegation. The Executive Committee felt however that summer recess would be better for arranging this visit in view of the travelling distances involved between Scotland and Australia and interstate travelling. Roseanna Cunningham MSP mentioned that the SNP Annual Conference took place in mid October which might deter SNP Members from applying.

The Secretary advised the Executive Committee that the Australian and New Zealand Parliaments had not yet published sitting dates for 2009 however recent visitors from Victoria and New South Wales Parliaments had suggest that October would be the best time to visit as Parliaments in Australia would either not sit in August or if so it would only be for 2 or 3 days.

The Secretary was asked to explore the possibility of a July visit and report back at the next meeting.

Action: Secretary to provide relevant information as requested at the next meeting.


The Executive Committee noted the contents of the paper and asked the Secretary to update regularly on progress and correspondence made by the Regional Secretary.
10. **Any other business**

None

11. **Dates of next meeting:**

   - Wednesday 10 December 2008
   - Wednesday 28 January 2009
   - Wednesday 15 April 2009
   - Wednesday 17 June 2009