MINUTES OF THE 4th MEETING OF THE SCOTLAND BRANCH EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE HELD ON WEDNESDAY 10 DECEMBER 2008 at 12.45 in ROOM TG-45

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

In attendance Ian Perry (ELU)

1. Apologies

Apologies were received from Karen Gillon

2. Minutes of the 2nd Meeting held on Wednesday 29 October 2008

Approved.

3. Matters Arising

CPA Scotland Branch engagement with Malawi - Pilot Twinning Initiative

The Secretary reported that no response had been received from the National Assembly of Malawi.

CPA Scotland Branch engagement with Malawi – TAP

The Secretary reported that there had been no progress since the last meeting although informal communications with officials suggested that a study visit could possibly be requested.

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

The Executive Committee agreed that the Regional Secretary should be asked to visit the Branch early in January to discuss the election of the CPA Chair.

Cross Party Outward Visit to Canada: November 2008

Jamie Stone reported that the visit had been successful and that the objectives had been met. The government of Quebec had called an election and therefore although the National Assembly was not sitting the delegation were still able to meet with academics and senior Assembly staff. Jamie Stone also reported that there were many parallels with Scotland and Quebec and there was scope for further collaboration in the future.
During the visit interesting political developments were also taking place in the Federal Parliament which resulted in the Parliament being prorogued until January 2009. These developments highlighted the vulnerability of minority governments.

Jamie Stone reported that the delegation had also been well received in Nova Scotia and Ontario. The delegation were particularly pleased that this visit had taken place as the Legislative Assembly celebrated its 250th anniversary.

Canada is a key market for Scotland for inward and outward investment. Both countries have strong historical ties mainly through the waves of Scots emigrants who played an important role in the countries’ development over the centuries. During the visit to Nova Scotia it was clear that there are very many links which already exist with Scotland and have been maintained over the years. There are the obvious family links, clan associations, partnerships between universities, cultural exchanges in relation to Gaelic and music as well as economic links.

Overall the delegation felt that there were many areas which could be further developed particularly tourism, culture and learning which would be of mutual interest to both Scotland and Nova Scotia.

The delegation had also received a warm welcome at the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. The delegation attended the St Andrew’s Society of Toronto Annual Ball which was attended by 750 Canadians with links to Scotland which had provided the delegation with a perfect opportunity to promote the Year of Homecoming. Like Nova Scotia there were many areas which could be further developed particularly tourism which would be of mutual interest.

In total the delegation had the opportunity to meet with around 1,000 members of the Scottish Diaspora, attend 40 meetings and took part in 2 media interviews during the visit.

Jamie Stone felt that this visit had built on the previous work undertaken by Lord James Douglas-Hamilton in Canada and that the delegation had made many new friends during the visit.

On behalf of the delegation and the Branch Executive Committee Jamie Stone asked that the Secretary should record their thanks to the Secretariat for arranging an interesting and intensive programme.

UK Branch (CPA UK) International Development Seminar from 16-22 Nov 2008

The Executive Committee agreed that Robin Harper MSP should be invited to attend the next meeting of the Branch Executive Committee to discuss in more detail how the Branch might assist UK branch and others to strengthen parliamentary democracy to other Commonwealth legislatures.
Action: The Secretary was asked to contact Robin Harper and invite him to attend the next meeting on Wed 28 January.

Cross Party Outward visit to Australia and New Zealand: 2009 (CPA Paper 2008/09 (15))

The Executive Committee agreed that it was looking increasingly likely that proposed visit to Australia and New Zealand would have to take place during October recess 2009.

The Secretary was asked to plan on that basis and to also explore the possibility of the delegation leaving before the start of recess given that there would be considerable travelling time involved throughout the programme.

The Executive Committee also agreed that given the distance, business class fares should be sourced.

Action: The Secretary to draft a programme on the basis of an October visit


The Secretary advised the Branch Executive Committee that a notice advertising the International Parliamentary Conference on International Migration and Human Trafficking had been circulated to all Members on 5 December.


The Executive Committee agreed that if at all possible a Members Debate should be held on Wednesday 11 March for a Commonwealth debate. As that day had been allocated to the Labour Party for Members' business the Secretary was asked to contact Karen Gillon to request that she approach the Labour Business Manager in the first instance to ask if that slot might be allocated to a Commonwealth debate. Members of the Executive Committee also agreed to approach their own Business Managers about scheduling a debate on this day as the debate slots could be swapped between parties.

The Executive Committee agreed to host a reception in the Garden Lobby following the debate for representatives from Scottish organisations with links to the Commonwealth.

The Branch Executive Committee also agreed to invite Commonwealth High Commissioners to attend the debate, reception which would be followed by a dinner.

The Secretary also mentioned that an approach had been made to the Community Outreach officer to explore the possibility of arranging for
interested Members to visit a school in their constituency on Commonwealth Day. The Executive Committee asked the Secretary to provide an update at the next meeting.

**Action:** The secretary was asked to make the necessary arrangements to develop a programme for Commonwealth Day.

The secretary to contact Karen Gillon re the Members Debate

Members of Branch Executive Committee to flag up Commonwealth Debate to their own Business Managers.

5. **Homecoming 2009**

The Secretary reported that Speakers of the Canadian Parliament, Ontario Legislative Assembly, House of Assembly Tasmania, House of Keys, Northern Ireland Assembly Minister for Mining, Yukon, High Commissioner of Malawi and the Agent General of Quebec were among the distinguished international guests who had accepted the invitation to attend the Presiding Officer’s Burns Supper. The acceptance rate from Canada would have been higher had the date not clashed with a conference for Canadian Speakers. The Speaker from the Legislative Assembly of Ontario had been invited to lead Time for Reflection on 21 January.

The Executive Committee asked the Secretary to ensure that usual courtesies were extended to the CPA guests.

6. **Correspondence** (CPA PAPER 2008/09 (17))

The Executive Committee agreed that providing the President of the Branch agreed, the Scottish Parliament should undertake the Benchmarking of Commonwealth Parliaments self assessment exercise.

**Action**

Secretary to proceed to take forward arrangements for benchmarking exercise

7. **Any other business**

Ted Brocklebank informed the Executive Committee that he has attended the first meeting of the International Development Advisory Group which had been interesting and informative.

8. **Dates of next meetings**

   Wednesday 15 April 2009
   Wednesday 17 June 2009