MINUTES OF THE 7th MEETING OF THE CPA SCOTLAND BRANCH  
EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE HELD ON WEDNESDAY 10 JUNE 2009  
AT 2.00pm IN ROOM TG 45

Present:   Ted Brocklebank MSP  
Jamie Stone MSP  
Sandra White MSP (Chair)  
Margaret Neal (Secretary)  

In attendance:  Ian Perry, Head of External Liaison Unit

1. Apologies  
Karen Gillon MSP

2. Minutes of the 6th Meeting held on Wednesday 30 April 2008  
Agreed

3. Matters Arising

CPA Scotland Branch engagement with Malawi (CPA Paper 2008/09 (29))

The content of the paper was noted.

The Secretary was asked to invite Des McNulty and Karen Gillon to update Executive Committee on their experiences in Malawi at the next meeting of the Executive Committee.

Cross Party Outward visit to Australia and New Zealand: 2009 (CPA Paper 2008/09 (30))

The Executive Committee were content with planning arrangements and the objectives. A discussion took place about the itinerary. Given the magnitude of the Scottish Diaspora living in Perth and that the costs would not be significantly higher, the Executive Committee agreed that it would be a missed opportunity not to visit. The Executive Committee agreed that Perth should be included in the itinerary and that a member of the Executive Committee should lead the delegation during that leg of the visit.
The Executive Committee agreed the changes to the BIMR Regional constitution

The Executive Committee discussed the critique paper on CPA Governance commissioned by CPA Wales Branch which would be discussed at the forthcoming CPA British Irish and Mediterranean Region conference.

The Executive Committee appreciated, given the domination of current political debate in the UK by the public demand for transparency and accountability in matters of public spending, that it is appropriate for the CPA, like all publicly funded bodies, to review its governance mechanisms to ensure they are of the robustness required. The Executive Committee felt that the discussion opened by Wales CPA Branch was therefore timely, and the lessons learned from the current “expenses” political fallout in the UK might well be usefully looked at by many organisations.

However the Executive Committee had significant concerns about the way the paper was couched, and believed that the tone might in fact militate against, rather than for, a constructive discussion within CPA around these issues.

It was felt that the paper adopts a generally critical tone towards the current running of the CPA, towards the structure of the General Assembly and the Executive Committee, to the running of the budget, and to the control process. However none of the criticisms outlined are based on actual evidence of things being done wrongly or inappropriately, but rather arise from either the author’s opinion that a different structure might be more appropriate, or on suppositions made based on the author’s lack of knowledge of detailed internal processes. The author himself makes clear that he has no direct experience of how the organisation is run; some of the things he appears concerned about (such as the possibility of “regions clubbing together to achieve a common aim”) are simply the natural way of the political world, while other views would very likely be seen as personal prejudice (e.g. paragraph 32 which refers to “a powerful committee, a governing body that is reduced to a rubber stamp, and minimal accountability”)

The Executive Committee felt that this approach risks being perceived as simply a politically motivated criticism of the current CPA Executive and officials, and may lead therefore to it being rejected out of hand by key regions. There were concerns that this paper may exacerbate existing regional tensions.

The Executive Committee felt that an alternative approach could be adopted with a clear focus on putting forward some positive ideas that all parties could embrace. The Executive Committee felt that the new Director of Finance and Administration should be given the opportunity to report on the initiatives he is taking to improve internal controls, and perhaps ask that he provides a report for the next General Assembly in Tanzania setting out the CPA’s current governance arrangements and offering his own comments on whether these
are the most appropriate to meet the challenges of the modern world. This could provide a context for an informed and constructive discussion about the ideas contained in the Wales CPA paper re the value of audit and remuneration committees, etc, along with thoughts other branches might have on how the system might be sharpened up. The Executive Committee hoped this way might avoid a polarised argument between groups being either “for” or “against” the overall tone of the paper, and would set the discussion properly as not just being about CPA internal matters but about the much wider context of changing public demands of politicians and political organisations.

The Executive Committee agreed that Karen Gillon should attend the regional AGM and raise these points in the hope that the view of Scotland Branch would be seen as a constructive response to the critique paper. The executive committee emphasised that all Commonwealth parliamentarians should be committed to the CPA as a valuable organisation for parliamentarians worldwide to share experience in advancing democracy, and debates on the best way to structure CPA governance to enable this should always be welcomed.

**Action:** The Secretary and Karen Gillon to brief the delegation about the critique paper and advise of the Executive Committee’s steer.

*8th AGM - Wednesday 24 June 2009*

The Secretary reported that parliamentary business would likely impact on time available to conduct the Scotland Branch AGM on 24 June and that the Chamber would not be available given the extended plenary planned for that day. The Executive Committee agreed that the AGM should be held in Committee Room 6 and that sandwiches should be provided to allow Members to attend.

*7th CPA/Canadian Parliamentary Seminar: 18-24 October 2009*

The Secretary updated the Executive Committee on the Canadian invitation to attend the 7th CPA/Canadian Parliamentary Seminar in Ottawa. The Executive Committee agreed that the secretariat could issue a notice to members if Scotland Branch was invited to participate.

*CPA Annual Plenary Conference: Tanzania 1Oct to 6 Oct 2009*

The Secretary advised the executive Committee that the selection process for Tanzania should take place following the AGM on 24 June to enable arrangements to be made.

4. **International Parliamentary Conference on Climate Change: Countdown to Copenhagen (IPCCC) to be held at Westminster in London, from Sunday 5 – Saturday 11 July 2009.**
The Executive Committee agreed that 2 members could attend the International Parliamentary Conference on Climate Change: Countdown to Copenhagen (IPCCC) in London during July.

**Action:** The Secretary was asked to issue a notice to all Members.

5. **Any other business**

The Executive Committee asked the Secretary to explore the possibility of visiting Northern Ireland Branch to discuss the powers of the NI Assembly particularly in relation to equal opportunities. The Executive Committee were also keen to visit Ireland to meet parliamentarians to discuss the referendum.

The Secretary advised the Executive Committee about the forthcoming 50 strong CPA delegation visit to Scotland in November to study local government. The Executive Committee asked the Secretary to ensure an appropriate programme was put in place and to look for opportunities to showcase those areas where the parliament excelled as highlighted by the Scottish delegates who attended the CPA Annual conference in 2008.

**Action:** Secretary to explore the possibility of visiting Northern Ireland Assembly and the Irish Parliament.

**Secretary to monitor November inward visit programme for Commonwealth parliamentarians**

6. **Dates of next meeting**

To be set following the 1st meeting