



**COMMONWEALTH PARLIAMENTARY ASSOCIATION
NORTHERN IRELAND ASSEMBLY BRANCH – EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE**

**Executive Committee,
Monday 16 January at 5 pm
Room 29**

Present:

The President, Mr William Hay MLA
Mr Jim Wells MLA
Mr Jimmy Spratt MLA
Mr David McClarty MLA
Mr Basil McCrea MLA
Mr Stewart Dickson MLA

Apologies:

Dr Alasdair McDonnell MP MLA

Also In attendance:

Mr Peter Hall, Head of Outreach & Education
Mr Robin Ramsey, Advisor to the Speaker
Mrs Louise Close, Outreach Manager
Ms Nicola Rafferty, Outreach (Minutes)

1. WELCOME

The President welcomed Members to the meeting.

2. APOLOGIES

Dr Alasdair McDonnell was unable to attend.

3. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes were agreed without amendment.

4. **APPOINTMENT OF NEW BRANCH SECRETARY**

The Speaker introduced Mr Peter Hall, the new Head of Outreach and Education, to the Committee and nominated him to become the new Branch Secretary. The Members all agreed to this. The Speaker then welcomed Peter to his new role and stated that the Branch looked forward to working with him.

5. **CONFLICT, PEACE & REGENERATION CONFERENCE**

The Speaker asked Mrs Louise Close to give an update on the preparations for the conference.

Louise advised Members that there had been a good initial response from countries who had been invited to the conference but only 5 had made a firm commitment to attending. As a result Louise proposed that the Conference should be postponed until May when it would be a new financial year and countries may be in a better financial position to attend. This would also give the Outreach Office more time to approach countries, make arrangements and confirm the keynote speaker.

The Speaker proposed to Members that the Conference be postponed. All the Members agreed.

6. **KOSOVO**

The Speaker asked Mrs Close to update the Members on the visit to the Assembly by the Committee for European Integration, from the Assembly for Kosovo, in December.

Mrs Close stated that the aim of the programme was to blend as many different strands and people together with expertise in European matters as possible while also providing information on the functions of the Northern Ireland Assembly. There was excellent feedback received from the group with one member stating that it was one of the best international visits he had ever been on. Mrs Close also advised Members that Gareth McGrath was currently in Kosovo meeting contacts and gathering further information for a partnership with the country.

The Speaker then stated that if the Assembly is to send a delegation to Kosovo it must be with a specific piece of work in mind.

Mr McCrea asked about possible funding for the trip and suggested that European Commission may be willing to fund it. The Speaker agreed that funding would be a good idea.

7. COMMONWEALTH DAY 2012

The Speaker asked Mrs Close to update Members on the proposed Assembly event for Commonwealth Day.

Mrs Close advised Members that Commonwealth Day, with the theme of 'Connecting Cultures' will be on 12th March this year with the Assembly planning to host an event on the evening of 14th March. The event will be a concert showcasing artists from different Commonwealth countries with an invited audience of 150-200 people.

The Members were happy with the proposed event.

Mr McCrea stated that the history of the Commonwealth should be included and emphasised within the event.

Mr Hall advised that this would be looked at.

8. SELECTION COMMITTEE MEETING

The decisions made by the Selection Committee at their last meeting were noted by Members.

9. INWARD VISITS

Mrs Close advised Members of upcoming inward visits to the Assembly. She also stated that there had been over 90 visits in 2011 and that the Outreach team's efforts in facilitating these visits should be noted.

Mr McCrea asked when the next meeting of the BIMR would take place. Mrs Close stated that there had been no correspondence regarding this yet but staff would contact the Scottish Branch to see if a date has been set.

10. AOB

The Speaker advised members that a copy of the most recent CPA newsletter was included in their packs.

11. Date of the next meeting

The next will be held on 20 February 2012 in Room 29.

W. Hay

**WILLIAM HAY MLA
PRESIDENT**