



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

**Executive Committee,
Monday 13 May at 5.00pm
Room 30**

Present:

The President, Mr William Hay MLA
Mr Stewart Dickson MLA
Mr Basil McCrea MLA
Mr John Dallat MLA (attending on behalf of Alban Maginness MLA)

Apologies:

Mr Jim Wells MLA
Mr David McClarty MLA

Also In attendance:

Mr John Stewart, Director of Information & Outreach
Ms Susie Brown, Acting Head of Outreach & Education (CPA Branch Secretary Designate)
Mr Robin Ramsey, Adviser to the Speaker
Ms Nicola Rafferty, Outreach (Minutes)

1. WELCOME

The President welcomed Members to the meeting.

2. APOLOGIES

Mr David McClarty and Mr Jim Wells were unable to attend.

3. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes were agreed without amendment.

4. CPA REVIEW

The President asked the Secretary to update Members on the current review of the Branch.

The Secretary advised Members that feedback was still being received about the review paper and therefore the feedback will be presented at the next meeting.

5. BIMR ANNUAL CONFERENCE

The President told Members that he attended the BIMR Annual Conference in February with his adviser, Robin Ramsey. He advised that a report of the conference, written by Mr Ramsey, was included in their meeting packs.

Mr Ramsey informed Members that the Falkland Islands was a very interesting place and was worth going to see. He advised that they had received excellent hospitality from their hosts and that the conference had been very worthwhile. He stated that the Speaker had been able to contribute to discussions regarding self-determination. He also advised that they had discovered strong Northern Ireland links on the islands mainly through people working in the marine and agricultural fields.

The Speaker reiterated that it was a very good conference and that interesting issues had been raised during it.

5. BIMR UPDATE

The Secretary advised Members of the following matters:

- a. CPA BIMR CWP Steering Committee.

Jo-Anne Dobson MLA was nominated to join the newly formed Regional CWP Steering Committee (RCSC) as the NI Assembly's representative which will support the Regional CWP Representative.

The first meeting of the RCSC will provisionally take place on 3rd or 4th June 2013 at Westminster.

b. Funding of BIMR Conferences.

CPA regional branches were asked to decide on one of two options for the funding of future BIMR conferences. Decisions were gathered and the final result was to remain with the status quo i.e. he who hosts pays, with just 5 votes against this option. Therefore arrangements remain the same and will continue as per the current system.

6. **ELECTION OF BIMR COMMONWEALTH WOMEN PARLIAMENTARIANS (CWP) REPRESENTATIVE**

The President advised Members that an e-election took place on Tuesday 26 March to elect a regional CWP representative to serve for three years.

Jo-Anne Dobson MLA was nominated as the NI Assembly candidate for the role. Unfortunately Ms Dobson was not successful in the election which was won by Patricia Ferguson MSP from the Scottish Parliament.

However, as mentioned previously, Mrs Dobson will join the CWP Steering Committee.

7. **59TH COMMONWEALTH PARLIAMENTARY CONFERENCE**

The President advised Members that CPA South Africa Branch will host the 59th Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference in September. The theme of the conference will be 'Effective Solutions to Commonwealth Developmental Challenges'.

He also advised that the Branch is currently awaiting a formal invitation to attend the conference but normally we are invited to send one delegate and observers are given places on a 'first come, first served basis'.

The Secretary then discussed travel cost with Members advising that the cost of return business class flights to Johannesburg are approximately £3600. There is no fee for our delegate but there is a fee of approximately £2066 for an observer and £1356 for a Clerk (attending the Society of Clerks at-the-table). The Secretary advised Members that it is now Assembly policy that Members travelling on flights over six hours long should be flown business class therefore flights to Johannesburg are considerably more expensive.

Basil McCrea stated that one person attending does not give any continuity and that two delegates should attend.

The President advised that the Branch could not defend the cost of sending two Members, as a second delegate would incur an observer fee on top of the cost of return flights, but ultimately it would be down to the Selection Committee to make the final decision on how many Members would be sent.

Mr McCrea stated that other Assembly offices could be approached to fund a second Member's travel. The President advised that it would be highly unlikely that other offices would be willing to do this due to already tight budgets.

The President asked Members to vote on whether the Branch should send a delegate to the conference. All Members agreed that the Branch should be represented.

The Secretary then advised that the next step would be for CPA Members to be contacted and asked to apply to attend the conference. Once applications are received the Selection Committee will meet and choose the delegate/s.

8. WESTMINSTER WORKSHOPS

The President advised Members that there are two workshops taking place at Westminster in June:

- 62nd Westminster Workshop On Parliamentary Practice And Procedure
- 3rd Westminster Workshop: The Public Accounts Committee

Despite registering the Branch's interest in attending, both workshops are oversubscribed but the Branch has been assured that it will be prioritised for places next year.

9. INWARD VISITS

The Secretary asked Members to take note of the inward visits to the Assembly since the last meeting in February.

The President advised Members that MLAs have not been turning up for arranged meetings with VIP visitors or leaving after a few minutes and that this must not be allowed to happen. He stated that it is sending out the wrong message to visitors, causing embarrassment, and that a solution must be found to prevent this from happening.

Basil McCrea stated that we must try and find Members who are willing to meet the visitors and who have a genuine interest in the visit.

John Dallat advised that he it may be necessary to make Party Leaders aware that Members are not attending these meetings.

Mr McCrea stated that he would still like to be invited to meet guests as an independent MLA.

10. AOB

- **COMMONWEALTH DAY 2013**

The Assembly held a concert in Derry/Londonderry on 14th March to celebrate Commonwealth Day. Eight acts with links to Commonwealth countries performed at the concert in the Great Hall of Magee College.

The President advised Members that the concert was a resounding success with excellent feedback received from all who attended. He also stated that there was a good turnout from locals and from MLAs.

- **EXTERNAL RELATIONS STRATEGY**

The President advised Members that the Northern Ireland Assembly Commission has agreed to develop a strategy that captures its work regarding external relations. He stated that the paper was in packs for their information.

11. DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING

The next meeting will be the **Annual General Meeting on Monday 24th June 2013 in Room 29.**



**WILLIAM HAY MLA
PRESIDENT**