



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

Tuesday 14 May 2026

Present:

Mr Jonathan Buckley MLA, Chair
Dr Steve Aiken MLA
Mr Keith Buchanan MLA
Mr Stewart Dickson MLA
Miss Michelle McIlveen MLA

Apologies:

Mr Trevor Clarke MLA
Mr Paul Frew MLA

Also In attendance:

Mrs Lesley Hogg, Clerk/Chief Executive
Ms Lisa McElherron, Clerk Assistant
Mrs Clare Maguire, Public Engagement Manager
Mrs Nicola Crawford, Parliamentary Engagement Co-ordinator (minutes)

1. WELCOME

Mr Jonathan Buckley MLA, Chair, welcomed Executive Committee Members of the CPA NI Assembly Branch to the meeting and stated how good it was to be able to have the meeting in the Assembly's marquee at the Balmoral Show.

2. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from the following:

- Mr Trevor Clarke MLA

- Mr Paul Frew MLA

3. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes were agreed.

Proposed by: Dr Steve Aiken MLA

Seconded by: Mr Stewart Dickson MLA

4. CPA CONFERENCES/SEMINARS/WEBINARS

69th Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference, Cape Town, 13–18 September 2026

The Chair advised that an invitation had been received from CPA HQ for the 69th Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference taking place in Cape Town from 13–18 September 2026. Applications were sought from Members as per normal branch procedure; and in response applications were received from the Speaker and Dr Steve Aiken MLA.

The Chair stated that the Speaker and Dr Aiken will therefore represent the Branch at the CPC.

Members were content with this.

5. COMMONWEALTH COMMUNITIES WITHIN NORTHERN IRELAND

The Chair advised that Members had agreed the Branch strategy back in October 2024, and since then, have been making great progress. The strategy is based on three tiers: Building Connections, Professional Development and Sharing Best Practice.

The Chair stated that, to date, the Branch has been particularly active in the areas of professional development and sharing best practice. However, there is now a timely opportunity to strengthen the Building Connections strand before the end of the mandate. This would support fuller delivery of the strategy by developing relationships with groups and individuals who work with, support or represent people from Commonwealth countries living in Northern Ireland.

The Chair suggested that, as a first step, he would suggest inviting Commonwealth Honorary Consuls to Parliament Buildings to have lunch with the Committee. This would allow for discussions about how the

Branch can improve awareness, accessibility and participation among Commonwealth communities in Northern Ireland, with input from the Honorary Consuls on how this can be best achieved.

Members were content with this, and Mr Dickson suggested that formal questions are provided for Members to ask the Honorary Consuls at the lunch to ensure the meeting is as useful as possible.

6. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

(i) CPA Committee Research

The Chair advised Members that CPA Headquarters Secretariat was approached by a CPA Branch who are conducting research into how to improve monitoring, evaluation and learning around the work of Committees. The CPA Secretariat agreed to assist with this undertaking through the CPA's Commonwealth Parliamentary Research Service (CPRS) and Branches were asked to answer core questions, pertaining to subject select/standing committees.

The Chair stated that CAMS Office had supplied the requested information to CPA HQ.

(ii) UK Elections

Dr Aiken advised Members that, following the recent UK elections, there had been changes in membership within both the Scottish and Welsh Parliaments, resulting in the departure of a number of valuable and experienced CPA Members.

Dr Aiken suggested that the Chair write to the outgoing CPA Executive Committees, on behalf of the Branch, and thank them for their service.

Dr Aiken also suggested that, as membership of some BIMR working groups has changed, it would be useful to identify any current vacancies and consider whether the Branch could nominate suitable replacements.

**ACTION: Letter to be sent to the outgoing Executive Committees.
BIMR working group vacancies to be identified.**

6. DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING

The next meeting will be the annual general meeting on Tuesday 16th June at 1.15pm.

The Chair adjourned the meeting.