

COMMONWEALTH PARLIAMENTARY ASSOCIATION
NORTHERN IRELAND ASSEMBLY BRANCH
ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING ON TUESDAY 10 JUNE 2025 AT 1.15PM
MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS

Present:

Mr Edwin Poots MLA, President
Dr Steve Aiken MLA
Mr Phillip Brett MLA
Mr Keith Buchanan MLA
Mr Tom Buchanan MLA
Mr Jonathan Buckley MLA
Mr Trevor Clarke MLA
Mr Stewart Dickson MLA
Mr Paul Frew MLA
Mr Paul Givan MLA
Mr William Irwin MLA
Miss Michelle McIlveen MLA

Apologies:

Ms Kellie Armstrong MLA
Mr David Brooks MLA
Mr Gary Middleton MLA
Mr John Stewart MLA

In attendance:

Ms Stephanie Mallon, Clerk Assistant (Secretary)
Ms Nicola Crawford, Parliamentary Engagement Co-Ordinator (Minutes)
Ms Clare Maguire, Public Engagement Manager
Ms Caroline Moore, Participation and Outreach Manager
Mr Jason Christie, Engagement Office
Mr Paul Stitt, PS to the Speaker

1. APOLOGIES

The President welcomed Members of the CPA NIA Branch to the meeting and advised them of the apologies received.

2. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The President asked Members to take note of the minutes of the previous Annual General Meeting, held on 5 March 2024.

Minutes proposed by Mr Jonathan Buckley MLA and seconded by Miss Michelle McIlveen MLA.

3. MATTERS ARISING

(i) Annual Branch Report

The President advised Members that the Executive Committee's report on activities of the Branch since the last meeting was in the meeting pack.

He stated that activities of note this year were:

50th Meeting of the Executive Committee

- The Executive Committee held its 50th meeting on Tuesday 18 February 2025.
- To mark the 50th meeting, the CPA Secretary-General, Mr Stephen Twigg, was invited to attend the meeting where he discussed his role and the current work of the CPA as well as ways in which the NI Assembly Branch can work with the wider CPA network.
- A reception was held after the meeting for all the CPA Members giving them a chance to mark the occasion and meet Mr Twigg.
- The following day Mr Twigg visited two local schools – Botanic Primary School and Campbell College. He was accompanied by two Executive Committee members, Jonathan Buckley MLA and Stewart Dickson MLA.
- During the visits Mr Twigg was given tours of the schools, met the principals and staff, and then was given the opportunity to meet pupils and take part in a question and answer session.

Branch Strategy

- The Executive Committee has developed and agreed a strategy for the Branch to guide work over the next two years.
- The strategy focuses on raising the profile of the NI Branch both internationally and locally; fostering and strengthening connections with Commonwealth countries; and supporting both Member and staff development.

Partnership with CPA Ontario

- As part of the Branch strategy, a partnership with the CPA Branch of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario has been formed.
- The President advised Members that he and Branch Chair Jonathan Buckley MLA had visited Ontario in March to discuss the partnership and how it can be developed to the mutual benefit of both Branches.
- A reciprocal visit by the new Ontario Speaker will be arranged after their elections.

(ii) Branch Strategy

The President advised Members that the Executive Committee has developed and agreed a strategy for the Branch to guide their work over the next two years and that a copy of the strategy was in the meeting pack.

The President then handed to the Branch Secretary to discuss the strategy further.

The Secretary, Ms Stephanie Mallon, advised Members that the strategy focuses on developing connections, supporting professional development, and developing and sharing parliamentary best practice. She stated that there is an action plan in place to facilitate each of these objectives. Some of the actions include a quarterly newsletter for CPA Members, regular training opportunities, and a strong social media presence all of which will help to raise the profile of the Branch.

(iii) Hosting the Annual Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians (CWP) Conference

The President announced to Members that the Branch will be hosting, for the first time, the annual Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians (CWP) Conference in February 2026.

He stated that work is underway in preparation for the conference and that Members will be informed as plans develop.

(iv) CPA Training Opportunities

The President advised Members that the CPA offers a wide range of training opportunities for them to avail of and, in particular, the CPA Academy has an extensive range of free online courses.

He stated that details of some of the Academy courses and how to register for these courses could be found in their meeting pack.

The President then recommended that Members look at the courses on offer and consider taking some of them over summer recess.

The President then handed over to the Branch Chair, Mr Jonathan Buckley MLA, to say a few words.

The Chair thanked the President for hosting the AGM and thanked the Members for helping the Branch be so active. He also thanked the Members of the Executive Committee for their work over the last year and the Secretary for her work on the Branch Strategy.

He stated that the strategy would help the Branch to further engage with the public, Members, and the wider CPA, and is an opportunity for the Branch to continue to grow and move forward.

4. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Dr Aiken MLA stated the importance of the continued outreach of the Branch within the Commonwealth and beyond.

5. NEXT MEETING

The next Annual General Meeting will take place in June 2026, date and room to be confirmed.

The President then thanked Members for attending and for their continued support. He also thanked Assembly staff for the administrative work they do in support of the Branch.

The President adjourned the meeting.

Edwin Poots MLA
President