



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

**Tuesday 21 October 2025**

**Present:**

Mr Jonathan Buckley MLA, Chair  
Mr Keith Buchanan MLA  
Mr Stewart Dickson MLA  
Mr Paul Frew MLA  
Miss Michelle McIlveen MLA

**Apologies:**

Dr Steve Aiken MLA  
Mr Trevor Clarke MLA  
Ms Stephanie Mallon, Secretary

**Also In attendance:**

Mrs Lesley Hogg, Clerk/Chief Executive  
Mrs Clare Maguire, Public Engagement Manager  
Mrs Caroline Moore, Participation & Outreach 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.

**2. APOLOGIES**

Apologies were received from the following:

- Dr Steve Aiken MLA
- Mr Trevor Clarke MLA
- Ms Stephanie Mallon, Secretary

### **3. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**

The minutes were agreed.

Proposed by: Mr Keith Buchanan MLA

Seconded by: Mr Stewart Dickson MLA

### **4. CPA CONFERENCES/SEMINARS/WEBINARS**

#### **68th Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference (CPC), 5 - 12 October 2025, Bridgetown, Barbados**

The Chair advised that Mr Edwin Poots MLA, Speaker and Branch President, represented the Assembly at the conference and was accompanied by Mrs Lesley Hogg who also attended the Society of Clerks at the Table (SOCATT) conference.

Mrs Hogg stated that the conference was very successful and that the Speaker had excellent engagement throughout including with the British High Commissioner and the Prime Minister of Barbados. Mrs Hogg also stated that the new Chair of the CWP Steering Committee is from the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. A suggestion was made to invite the new Chair, Mrs Catherine Fife, to the CWP Conference in February and Members agreed to do this.

The Chair stated that another letter should be written to the Ontario Speaker regarding the partnership and how we can move it forward. It was also suggested that the Speaker could be invited to the CWP Conference along with Mrs Fife.

**ACTION: CWP Chair and Ontario Speaker to be invited to the CWP Conference. A follow up letter to be sent to the Speaker regarding the partnership.**

#### **Parliamentary Caucus at the Athens Democracy Forum, 1 – 3 October 2025**

The Chair stated that an invitation was received from the Democracy and Culture Foundation for CPA Members to participate in the Athens Democracy Forum (ADF), which took place from 1 to 3 October 2025 in Athens, Greece and that, having seen the further information on the conference, Members had asked if the Scottish and Welsh Parliaments were sending a delegation to the conference.

The Chair advised that the Scottish and Welsh Parliaments were contacted, and they advised that they were not sending delegations to the conference. This information was passed on to the Executive Committee and it was agreed that the Assembly would not send a delegation to the conference.

### **Artificial Intelligence Conference - The Role of Parliament in Shaping the Future of Responsible AI, 28-30 November 2025, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia**

The Chair stated that the Parliament of Malaysia, CPA, the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) had invited us to register for the upcoming Conference on 'The Role of Parliament in Shaping the Future of Responsible AI', to be held from 28-30 November 2025 in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

He advised that it was agreed at the last meeting that the Branch should register a Member to attend the conference. Applications were sought from the CPA membership, and two applications were received from Dr Steve Aiken and Mr Phillip Brett. Having considered both applications, the Executive Committee chose Dr Aiken as our nominee.

The Chair advised members that Dr Aiken's nomination to attend the conference was registered and was successful. Arrangements will now be made for Dr Aiken to attend the conference.

### **CPA Parliamentary Academy Residency Programme for Members (Practice & Procedure), Trinidad and Tobago (December 2025)**

The Chair stated that at the last meeting Members agreed to issue the invitation to attend forthcoming CPA Parliamentary Academy's Residency Programme for Members of Parliament (Practice & Procedure) in Trinidad and Tobago to the CPA membership.

He advised that the invitation was issued but no applications to attend were received.

### **LGBT+ Forum and Networking Reception, 24 November 2025, Westminster**

The Chair advised Members that an invitation had been received to attend the forthcoming LGBT+ Forum and Networking Reception on 24 November in Westminster. The invitation was sent to the membership, but no Members have responded.

He also advised that the Branch has been asked by CPA UK to nominate a Member, who identifies as LGBT+, to sit on the Steering Committee. The Chair asked Members if they were content for a representative to be sought from the membership and they agreed.

**ACTION: Reminder to be issued to Members about the forum and reception and a representative to be sought for the Steering Committee.**

## **74<sup>th</sup> Westminster Seminar on Effective Parliaments, 9-13 March 2026, London**

The Chair advised Members that an invitation had been received to nominate delegates to represent our legislature at the 74th Westminster Seminar on Effective Parliaments, in London, from 9 - 13 March (inclusive). This annual event, intended for parliamentarians and parliamentary clerks who are relatively new in their role, provides space for delegates to fully immerse themselves in discussions and reflections on the characteristics of effective parliaments. It also offers delegates opportunities to discuss global challenges and their implications for parliaments across the Commonwealth, including in the UK.

He stated that the Seminar provides a unique forum, where delegates will have invaluable opportunities, throughout the week, to exchange good practice for parliamentary work, build strong networks of peers, and refine their skills and ability to hold power to account.

The Chair advised that each legislature may apply for a maximum of three places: two for parliamentarians and one for a parliamentary clerk/official. One nomination must be female. He then asked Members if they were content that we issue the information to the membership and request applications and Members agreed. It was also agreed that information be issued to the Clerk Assistants to seek representation from parliamentary clerks/officials.

**ACTION: Information about the Seminar to be issued to Members and Clerk Assistants and applications from relatively new Members and officials to be requested.**

## **5. MEETINGS WITH CPA-UK BRANCHES**

The Chair stated that, as discussed at the last meeting, a request for a virtual meeting has been sent to each of the UK and British Isles Branch Chairs and we are waiting for a response.

## **6. REVIEW OF THE BRANCH RULES**

The Chair advised Members that officials have reviewed and updated the current Branch rules and then handed over to Mrs Clare Maguire to discuss the changes with them.

Mrs Maguire went through minor changes relating to the following aspects of the rules:

- The aims of the Branch – Members were content.
- The CWP Steering Committee member –Members agreed that if at any given time there are no female members on the Executive Committee then a female branch member can fill the role.
- The Branch Secretary – Members were content.
- Conference reports – Members were content.

Mrs Maguire advised that the rules would be amended as discussed and the new rules issued at the next meeting.

**ACTION: Rules to be updated to reflect the changes and be issued at the next meeting.**

## **7. ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

### **(i) Annual Update**

- The Chair advised that, as per the Branch Strategy and action plan, the annual update and call for members was issued to all Assembly Members.

### **(ii) Members Survey**

- The Chair advised that, as per the action plan, the survey to identify areas of interest to explore with the other CPA Branches was issued to all CPA Members.
- The Chair encouraged Members to complete the survey and stated that the results would be discussed at the next meeting.

### **(iii) Commonwealth Groups**

- The Chair stated that at the last meeting Dr Aiken advised during the discussion on Commonwealth groups and clubs within Northern Ireland, that there is now an Indian Consul General for Northern Ireland, and Members agreed that the Executive Committee should arrange to meet with him.
- The Chair advised Members that the International Relations office in the Executive Office informed staff that whilst an acting Consul General (Mr VVS Ramakrishna) is in place, a permanent appointment has not yet been made. He then asked if Members would like staff to reach out to the Acting Consul General or wait until a permanent appointment has been made. Members agreed to wait for the permanent appointee to be in place.

## **9. DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING**

The next meeting will take place on Tuesday 25 November at 1:15pm (plenary business permitting) in the Private Dining Room.

The Chair adjourned the meeting.