Cymdeithas Seneddol y Gymanwlad
Senedd Cymru

Commonwealth Parliamentary Association
Welsh Parliament

BRANCH EXECUTIVE MEETING

Date: Wednesday 8 July 2026

Time: 12:30-13:15
Format: Hybrid

Location: Dining Room 1

Present
Huw Irranca-Davies MS, Llywydd and Chair
Kerry Ferguson MS DPO and Vice-President
Natasha Asghar MS
Sarah Rees MS
Matthew Jones MS
Iain McIntosh MS
Shav Taj MS
Huw Thomas MS

Secretariat
Al Davies, Acting Branch Secretary
Elin Sutton, Llywydd's Private Office

AGENDA

1. **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCES**

Sam Rowlands MS
Helen Jenner MS

2. **CHAIR'S INTRODUCTION**

The Chair welcomed everyone to this first Branch Executive Meeting of the Seventh Senedd.

He noted that, for many of the Members present, the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association and its work would be new. It was an important network for the Senedd's international relations and offered an array of genuinely valuable opportunities to engage, learn and exchange best parliamentary practice with fellow parliamentarians across the Commonwealth.

The Chair reminded Members of the background briefing note on the CPA which had been circulated and that the Branch Secretariat were happy to advise and support our Members, as required.

3. **MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING** - Paper CPA 6S-26-01 (**DOC 1**)

Minutes of our last Branch Meeting were confirmed as an accurate record of that meeting.

4. **MATTERS ARISING FROM MINUTES**

There were no matters arising.

5. **Representation on CPA International Executive Committee**

The Chair provided a background to the CPA International Executive Committee and explained that, as had been agreed by the former Branch Executive Committee, Natasha Asghar MS had been the Senedd's Acting representative until the Senedd elections. The Chair thanked Natasha Asghar MS for undertaking this role so diligently,

including chairing the recent BIMR AGM in Gibraltar.

Members were pleased to support Natasha Asghar MS continuing in this role as the substantive Senedd representative for the remainder of our 2026-28 term.

6. **Representation on BIMR Networks**

The Chair discussed the need for us to nominate Members to represent the Senedd on some of our key CPA Networks.

- ***Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians (CWP)***

The Regional CWP Steering Committee required us to nominate two Members and these would be selected from this Branch Executive Committee. Members interested in these roles were asked to email the Branch Secretariat.

The Chair added that arrangements - including a mid-term rotation of positions if required - would be facilitated in order to ensure that everyone interested would have the opportunity to serve on the Steering Committee.

Natasha Asghar MS stated that she would not be pursuing an active role on the BIMR CWP Steering Committee for this Senedd term, in order to enhance opportunities for other Members.

- Commonwealth Parliamentarians with Disabilities (CPwD)

To date, no Members had expressed an interest in representing the Branch on this network. The Chair asked Members present to ensure that their wider party groups were aware of the network and of this opportunity.

- BIMR LGBT+

It was noted that our BIM Region of the CPA was currently the only one to have an official LGBT+ Network and that this had been launched last year, at the Senedd.

Following a call for expressions of interest, Members were pleased to support Matthew Jones MS and Sara Crowley MS as our nominations on this steering committee.

7. **Feedback and follow-up of recent Meetings, Visits, Events and Conferences**

- *BIMR CPwD Forum*
  Edinburgh, Scotland (Hybrid)
  20 February.

  Looking back at some of the Branch's activities since our last meeting, the Chair noted that former Member Mark Isherwood had represented the Senedd at this inaugural forum for Parliamentarians with Disabilities within our Region, hosted by the Scottish Parliament. The Forum included sessions on the importance of increasing the representation of persons with disabilities within our parliaments as well as the benefits of accessibility audits.

- *Visit by Dr David Wilson, Clerk of the New Zealand Parliament*
  9 June

  The Llywydd had been pleased to meet with David Wilson, Clerk of the New Zealand Parliament as part of his programme in June, which included sessions on a range of issues from our committee work to how we worked bilingually.

- *55th BIMR Conference*
  Gibraltar
  17-20 June

  Despite its proximity to our recent election, the Senedd had been able to field a full delegation (Natasha Asghar MS, James Evans MS, Matthew Jones MS and Shav Taj MS) to the Regional CPA Conference, hosted by the Parliament of Gibraltar. We were one of 10 CPA Branches to attend the Conference which covered a number of topics, from:

  - *utilising digital technology and Artificial Intelligence in Parliaments,*
  - *economic resilience in small jurisdictions,*
  - *advancing inclusion in Parliaments for LGBT+ individuals,*
  - *lessons from Youth Parliaments* .

An official report from the BIMR Secretariat would be drafted and shared, in due course.

- *BIMR CWP SC Meeting*
  Virtual
  6 July

  The latest meeting of the Regional Women's Steering Committee had taken place a few days previously. Natasha Asghar MS had attended and reported that the meeting had covered the proposed mentoring scheme as well as the questionnaire for Members standing down. Natasha Asghar MS had provided the Steering Committee with a brief update on the recent Senedd elections and that a new Senedd Women's Caucus would shortly be established.

8. ***FORWARD PLANNING***

Forthcoming Meetings, Visits, Events and Conferences

- *BIMR LGBT+ Network event and election.*
  Virtual
  13 July

  This virtual meeting would see our Region elect the LGBT+ Chair and Vice Chairs. The candidate statements would be circulated the following day.

  The Session would also include a panel discussion on the bans of conversion therapy, providing an opportunity to share experiences from across the region, including perspectives from jurisdictions where bans had been in place since 2016.

- *Visit by Speaker-led Delegation from the Parliament of New Zealand*
  16 July

The Chair noted that the Senedd was delighted to be hosting the first known Speaker- led delegation from the New Zealand parliament to the Senedd the following week.

As part of the programme, the Llywydd would be hosting an informal

lunch in the Oriel for the delegation with the newly elected Chairs of Senedd Committees, to which Members of the Branch Executive Committee would also be welcome.

- *Commonwealth Youth Parliament (CYP)*
  Sydney, New South Wales
  27-31 July

  The Senedd had once again been successful in gaining a place at the biennial Commonwealth Youth Parliament and, following a competitive process led by the former Senedd CPA Branch, Qahira Saha has been selected to represent the Senedd at the CYP, hosted by the Parliament of New South Wales in Sydney.

  Qahira, a young woman from Cardiff, currently studying at the University of Leeds was a former Members of the Welsh Youth Parliament. The Chair wished Qahira well in Sydney and the Branch looked forward to hearing more from her and to reading her report, in due course.

- *69th Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference*
  Cape Town, South Africa
  13-18 September

  This year's CPC – the annual general CPA Conference – would take place in Cape Town in September.
  In addition to our place on the Executive Committee, we also had one delegate place.

  The Llywydd explained that the Senedd had an important bilateral relationship with the Western Cape Provincial Parliament, in Cape Town, and was pleased to learn that the Speaker of the Western Cape had invited our delegation for a short programme and meetings, within the margins of the wider conference.

  Members present were pleased to support the Llywydd to attend as the Senedd Delegate.

  Afternote:
  It had subsequently not been possible for the Llywydd to participate in the CPC due to Senedd Business. The opportunity was advertised to Members of the Branch Executive Committee and Shav Taj MS was selected to attend as our Voting Delegate.

- *Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians Workshop*
  Suva, Fiji
  9-13 November

  The CPA Secretariat had confirmed that the next CWP Workshop would be hosted by the Parliament of Fiji in November. The theme of the Workshop would be '*Advancing Gender-Responsive Parliaments: Tools for Scrutiny, Oversight and Reform*'**.**

  Members agreed that we should apply for one of the places at the workshop The Branch Secretariat would issue a notification inviting expressions of interest and business cases. The opportunity would be opened up to *all* Women Members of the Senedd.

- *CPA BIMR Election Observation Training*
  Scottish Parliament
  22-23 November

  Finally, the Chair noted that we had been invited to send up to two Members to attend the BIMR's Election Observation Training, which was being hosted by the Scottish Parliament, in Holyrood.

  This training was mandatory before Members could apply to participate in BIMR observation missions of elections taking place in British Crown Dependencies or Overseas territories.

  The Chair noted that it was important for our Branch to replenish a pool of Members who could undertake future EOM Missions and so encouraged those present to apply for the training course.

9. **NEW ITEMS / ANY OTHER BUSINESS.**

   There was no other business raised.

10. **FUTURE MEETING DATE:**

    21 October 2026

END OF BUSINESS