The 2019 Westminster Seminar on Effective Parliaments

OFFICIAL REPORT



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	2
ABOUT CPA UK	4
ABOUT THE WESTMINSTER SEMINAR	5
MEET THE TEAM	6
INTRODUCTION	7
OUTCOME AND OUTPUTS	8
DELEGATE BREAKDOWN	9
 HIGHLIGHTED AREAS Attributes of an Effective Parliament Our Roles and Responsibilities as Parliamentarians and Clerks Communication: Theory and Practice Effective Scrutiny in Practice Comparative Governance Structures 	11
FEEDBACK	23
CONCLUSION	25
DELEGATE LIST	26



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

On behalf of the CPA UK Executive Committee, I would like to thank you for your attendance and participation in the 68th Westminster Seminar on Effective Parliaments – especially as the programme took place during a very interesting and busy time in Westminster.

We aimed to provide an engaging environment for learning in order for you to get as much as possible out of this seminar. The seminar was designed to provide a balance between theoretical and practical sessions which allowed you to share your learning and best practice, create new networks and gain new ideas which could be implemented within your own context.

In a very intense week of learning we covered various topics which centred around how your role contributes to making your parliament effective. For members this involved looking into the different forms of representation, scrutiny, governance structures and parliament advocacy. For clerks the week consisted of exploring the role of a clerk, effective communication, stakeholder management and innovative research methods.

This report aims to present the findings of the various sessions, the feedback you provided and how we plan to implement that in future programmes.

Once again, thank you for participating in this seminar. I hope you found it a valuable, interesting and worthwhile experience.

Jon Davies CPA UK Chief Executive Officer



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1. Expert Regional Workshop: The Role of Parliamentary Committees in Combatting Human Trafficking and Forced Labour, Perth, Australia December 2019. 2. UKOTP Oversight of Public Finances & Governance - London Forum, December 2019

> 3. Constituency visit during the Westminister Seminar, London, November 2018 4. Westminster Workshop on Gender Sensitive Scrutiny, London, June 2019



CPA UK's Strategic Objectives are:

- 1. To strengthen parliamentary democracy
- 2. To link Westminster with the Commonwealth
- 3. To set and demonstrate high peformance standards

The international Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA) is the professional association of all Commonwealth parliamentarians, an active network of over 17,000 parliamentarians from 185 national, state, provincial and territorial Parliaments and Legislatures.

CPA UK supports and strengthens parliamentary democracy throughout the Commonwealth. We focus on key issues including women in parliament, modern slavery, financial oversight, security and trade.

Peer to peer learning is central to the way CPA UK works. CPA UK brings together UK and Commonwealth parliamentarians and officials, to share knowledge and learn from each other. We aim to improve parliamentary oversight, scrutiny and representation. CPA UK is located in, and funded by, the UK Parliament.

For more information, please visit the CPA UK website www.uk-cpa.org or the CPA UK twitter @CPA_UK.

VISION

Inclusive, representative and transparent Commonwealth Parliaments; fully effective in enforcing the accountability of the executive and representing the interests and concerns of the electorate.

PURPOSE

To learn from and strengthen Commonwealth Parliaments to deliver effective oversight, scrutiny and representation.

CPA UK is also the secretariat for the CPA British Islands and Mediterranean Region, organising activities in support of the Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians network. CPA UK also works to strengthen the Commonwealth Association of Public Accounts Committees in its core objectives.

CPA UK continues to work in partnership with a multitude of national and international organisations for mutual benefit; including the Commonwealth Secretariat, World Bank, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), Organization of American States and the UK Government.



THE WESTMINSTER SEMINAR

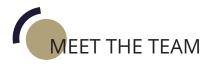
The annual Westminster Seminar is CPA UK's flagship capacity-building programme for parliamentarians and appointed procedural/committee clerks from across the Commonwealth.

Each year the five-day programme provides a unique platform for participants from across the Commonwealth to network and engage with counterparts, exploring approaches to parliamentary democracy, practice and procedure in the context of the Westminster System and drawing comparisons between Commonwealth legislatures.

WHY DO WE RUN THIS INITIATIVE?

Whilst many legislatures have their own training programmes, CPA UK's Westminster Seminar provides a unique platform for participants to meet their counterparts from across the commonwealth, build lasting relationships and explore the role and functions of parliamentarians/clerks in depth. Attended by over 60 parliamentarians and clerks each year, participants have an unrivalled opportunity to share their knowledge and experiences with others and consider the challenges they face in their own work. CPA UK hopes that this programme will have a lasting impact on all those who attend.







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Over a period of five days (25 November – 29 November 2019), 61 participants from 29 legislatures participated in stimulating debates, interactive exercises, peer to-peer exchanges and expert panel sessions as part of CPA UK's flagship programme, The Westminster Seminar.



This closing report reflects discussions on key issues surrounding the concept of effective parliaments, as identified by participants throughout the 68th annual Westminster Seminar. Organised into overarching themes, this report will look in to:

- Attributes of an Effective Parliament
- Our Roles and Responsibilities as Parliamentarians and Clerks
- Communication: Theory and Practice
- Effective Scrutiny in Practice
- Comparative Governance Structures

These cross-cutting themes shaped the participants' examination of their role as parliamentarians and officials in tackling challenges within respective parliaments. Delegates explored the opportunities for parliamentarians across the Commonwealth and beyond to strengthen their representative duties through legislation, oversight, scrutiny and by building engagement and partnerships internationally.

Despite the sheer diversity of parliaments participating – small and large nations, national and subnational legislatures – participants had several challenges in common. The uniqueness of this year's Westminster Seminar, taking place during a UK election, further prompted the need for a Commonwealth perspective looking into the current events taking place in Westminster. There was a keen interest in the proceedings of Brexit, the question of democracy within an era of modern politics and the role of the media.

CPA UK's Westminster Seminar has a strong history of providing a unique platform for its participants to meet their counterparts from across the Commonwealth and build lasting relationships. This is an unrivalled opportunity for delegates to reflect on their own roles, responsibilities and opportunities, share their knowledge and experiences with others and develop key skills to improve their capacity as representatives and legislators in the crucial functions of scrutiny and oversight.

For both the <u>member's</u> and <u>clerks'</u> programme and the full <u>delegate</u> and <u>speaker</u> biographies please click on the highlighted text.



Our desired outcome was for delegates to have an enhanced understanding of how to effectively scrutinise, represent and deliver oversight in their respective parliaments.

The outputs for the Westminster Seminar were as follows:

Output 1: Delegates will have a wider network, creating open communication lines to work collaboratively with their peers.

Output 2: Delegates will have practical skills to enhance their leadership and administrative roles in their respective legislatures.

Output 3: Delegates will have a deeper understanding of the components that make up an effective parliament within the Westminster context, using examples from the UK and across the Commonwealth.

What did delegates want to get out of attending the seminar?

"To enhance and strengthen my role as a clerk and to have the ability to teach other staff members the importance of parliamentary procedure and what is expected of the speaker and Members for the smooth running of the legislature."

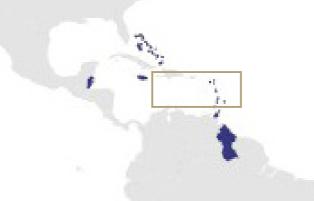
"Enhanced knowledge on effective parliamentary procedure, processes and public scrutiny."

"Learn how to better scrutinise political processes in order to make meaningful change in peoples lives."

The first course on parliamentary procedure and practice , June 1952







61 delegates from 29 legislatures representing 25 countries



17 National Parliaments 5 Subnational Parliaments 2 Crown Dependencies 4 UK Overseas Territories 1 Provincial Legislature



30 Female

40 Members

Delegate Role Balance 21 Clerks

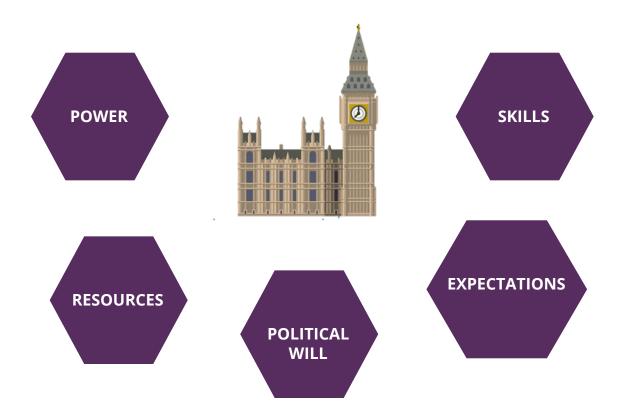
Delegate Gender Balance ^{31 Male}

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HIGHLIGHTED AREA: Attributes of an Effective Parliament

What Contributes to an Effective Parliament?

At the start of the official seminar, the foundations of what makes an effective parliament were discussed by three prominent actors within the Westminster Parliament. Whilst exploring the question of what makes an effective parliament, 5 key aspects were discussed:



Power

An effective parliament utilises its power to effectively scrutinise measures brought forward by the executive. As a law-assenting body, parliament has the leverage to assent or amend bills in order to ensure legislation best serves society. A balance between parliament and the executive is needed to ensure it remains proactive, current and effective.

Resources

Access to adequate resources are essential for enabling staff, members and clerks to successfully deliver their roles. Resources are individual and collective such as: access to communications including telephones and internet, the day to day running of parliament, innovative uses for research and data collection internally and externally and adequate space to meet formally and informally. However, people are the most valuable resources as they provide expertise, skills and knowledge which is used to steer parliament in the right direction.

Skills

Skills are necessary for knowing how to best utilise power and resources to accommodate procedural processes. For members, one essential skill is having the ability to effectively question, as it is key to holding the relevant person or department to account.

Parliaments have a duty to ensure there are opportunities to enhance skills whether by training or by means of performance management.

Political Will and an Understanding of what is Expected

Skills gained cannot have maximum impact if those that hold them have no political will and/or understanding of what is expected of them. Political will can allow for space for innovation or be used as a motivational tool to achieve change. One speaker suggested that, as an MP, challenging the debate in the last decade has been more effective than in the last 50 years, as due to the growth of mass political parties, there is less chance of only one dominating voice being heard.

The UK Political Scene in 2019

Tony Grew (creator of Parlyapp) and Lord Boateng started the week off with a vigorous debate on the events that had taken place within Westminster over the preceding months. The discussion addressed the overarching theme of Brexit which led to the change of Prime Minister and the upcoming election. However, this opened the question of populism and whether it is influencing democracy. Topics explored also included the rise of identity politics and the influence it has on dividing not only parliament but the country.

Questions from the floor included whether the referendum is a good tool for democracy, and the rising conflict of whether parliamentarians are representatives or delegates. Bringing a journalist and parliamentarian together provided a frank and objective discussion but also raised questions about the media's role in political debate.



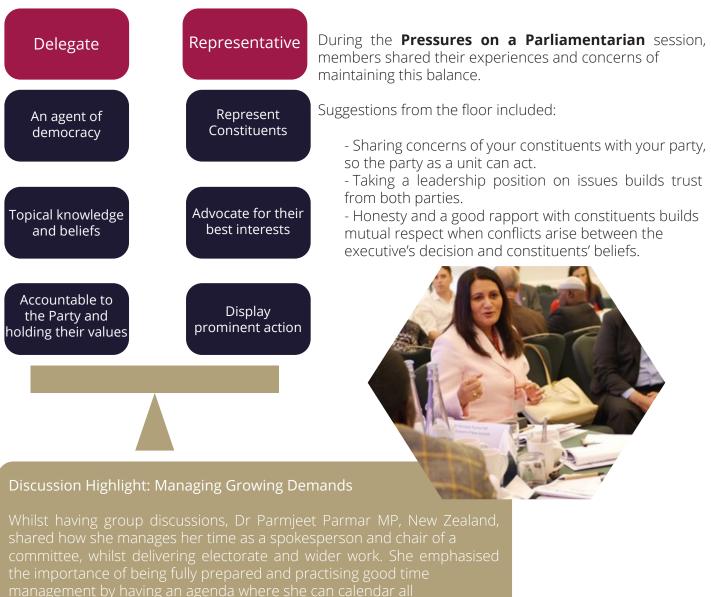


HIGHLIGHTED AREA: Our Roles and Responsibilites

Key Thoughts on Being a Modern MP

The difficult balance of being both a delegate and a representative was a constant discussion point during the Westminster Seminar.

Dame Margaret Hodge highlighted this complexity during the **Effective Parliaments: Our Roles and Responsibilities** session, citing Brexit as an example of a scenario where there were differences between her party's stance and her constituents and the conflict of acting on what she thought was best for her constituents.



constituency events and committee meetings so she can fully engage.

In terms of managing a work life balance, delegates highlighted that the largest pressure they have, especially for young members, is balancing family life. Dr Parmar suggested utilising the support of family and friends to ease the pressure of work commitments.



Maintaining standards and behaviour and the preservation of Privilege

During the **Privilege: Standards, Behaviour and Etiquette** session, member delegates were presented a comparison of how privilege is used in the UK and in Uganda.

Since the conception of the 1969 Bill of Rights, which covers freedom of speech and proceedings within parliament, courts have been ready to look at parliamentary proceedings. The power dynamic between the courts and parliament has since changed.

Legal changes have made it harder for parliament to exercise its powers, an example being witnesses defying parliamentary summons.

The 2015 Recall of MPs Act meant that actions which surpass the threshold and have support of a petition will allow a by-election to take place in the member's constituency.

Members are also not protected by immunity if an act outside their remit has been committed.

In Uganda the manifestation of power and privilege is borrowed heavily from the UK.

Privilege is circumscribed and is not absolute. Rules within the parliament include English being the only language permitted on the floor and discussions being limited to the matter of the debate.

The Speaker of the House has the unilateral power to suspend members.

Members have absolute immunity from prosecution, however the parliament is not exempt from judicial scrutiny and in cases which contravene the constitution, action can be brought before the court of law.

"The root to success is not only through being in a leading executive role, there is another way of doing politics, being an effective parliamentarian both nationally and locally."

Dame Margaret Hodge places a reminder that there are many ways to make a impact as a parliamentarian, however it is the parliamentarian's responsibility to actively seek these opportunities.

Key thoughts on being an Effective Clerk

For clerks, the curriculum was structured around the different aspects of being an effective clerk, opening discussions around general competencies and how these take form in the various key positions clerks may hold whilst serving in parliament.

The first discussion during **Effective P arliaments: O ur R oles a nd Responsibilities** explored the key competencies of a clerk. Matthew Hamlyn, Head of Scrutiny, Committee Office, argued the following competencies were vital in ensuring clerks play an integral role in the effectiveness of parliament. Each characteristic is utilised continuously in day to day work and forms the mechanisms which allow parliamentary business to take its course effectively.

Balanced

Clerks serve both members and the institution, which may be difficult. However, being firm on prioritising the best actions and/or decisions ensures the most positive outcome for both the institution and the member.

Impartial

Clerks must be able to provide informed advice ensuring all sides of the argument are taken into consideration.

Forward Thinking

Members have various priorities that often need reactive thinking. However, it is the clerk's role to be proactive, thinking of the longer term.

Adaptable

When working with various stakeholders it is key to be ready to adapt your approach

Practical Learning

Throughout the week, clerks explored the practical skills needed to deliver effectively, such as time management, research, data collection and neutrality. With their own programme, clerks had their own space to share ideas and best practice, building a network with clerks from across the Commonwealth.



One learning point for clerks included how to foster productive relationships with members as they work together in various forms, despite having other roles to deliver. The relationship often varies depending on the size of the parliament and how it functions.

Insight Highlight

n Gibraltar, there are 17 MPs and 1 Clerk. Although there is greater responsibility on the clerk, it is easier to have more personal relationships.



Discussion Highlight: Bullying and Harassment of Staff within Parliament

A key discussion point during the **Members and Clerks Relationships** session was the review of bullying and harassment with case studies from both the UK (<u>Cox Report</u>) and New Zealand parliaments (<u>Francis Review</u>) being shared. In both cases, findings showed bullying and harassment had been inherent and systematic within the workforce. Both reports highlight that staff were disproportionately affected, however the UK specifically found that bullying and harassment was also gendered. In New Zealand, there was an environment of heavy workloads, increased pressure to perform, long hours and complex rules and processes.

Recommendations in both reports centred around the need for an independent disclosure process, a stronger implementation of a code of conduct between MPs and staff and an independent process for investigating accusations and sanctions.

Where the Francis report suggested a 3 to 5 year implementation period, change has already started to take form with the development of the parliamentary code of conduct.

Within the UK Parliament, there has been a change in the conversation and awareness, including a new behavioural code and specific helplines. The direct effect on the relationship between members and chairs is the redevelopment of the standards of service which is shared with all committee chairs and members to ensure members manage their expectations of the working relationships with clerks.

HIGHLIGHTED AREA: Communication Theory and Practice

For both member and clerk programmes, communication was a major aspect of the overall seminar. Clerks were given the opportunity to develop their learning in many aspects of communication. This helped them to display assertiveness, deliver clear briefings and present recommendations. For members, the programme looked into the various tools of communication, such as social media and the wider press.

Parliamentarians' use of Engaging the Media

An aspect of the members' programme was exploring the various forms of media. Members could use these tools not only to engage with constituents, but also with the wider public. It was also an opportunity to share experiences and innovations of media usage from diverse environments.

Initial thoughts on the media from delegates were negative as there was a perceived notion that the media provided a negative focus to sensationalise their headlines.

Kate Farager from Bespoke Media delivered a communications masterclass on how to utilise media to their advantage.

This included:

-A practical workshop on making professional videos using limited resources.

-Tips on how to use social media to provide consistent, clear and viewer friendly messages.

- -Exploring press interview techniques.
- Sharing best practice in speechwriting.

Delegates highly engaged with the session as it provided practical elements which they could apply within their own regions. The skills shared were easy to learn and inclusive to all parliamentarians as they require little to no funding to implement, meaning legislatures with limited resources could also maximise their media outreach.





Session Highlight: Social Media, a Balanced Approach

Tommy Shane, from First Draft News, joined delegates to discuss disinformation and media manipulation and provided a space for delegates to learn how best to identify it and respond.

Delegates were informed of the different types of misinformation and were given real examples of positive and negative consequences of responding, with a guided process of how to detect misinformation and the best way of ensuring a timely response. Members found this session useful as most oversee their own social media accounts and have often witnessed how quickly misinformation can spread.

For members from rural constituencies who have limited access to the internet, WhatsApp is the most common social media platform which makes it harder to manage, highlighting the need for further training in this area.



Assertive Clerks and Effective Briefings

The communication focus for clerks involved concentrating on key aspects which will enhance the effectiveness of their role. These aspects comprised of learning to be more assertive and delivering high levels of service through briefings.

During the **How to be Assertive and Communicate Clearly with Members and Stakeholders** session, delegates highlighted what they hoped they would learn during the session. This included:



Exercise Spotlight: Builders and Briefers

During the **How to Communicate as a Clerk** session, clerks were put in groups and given a landmark which they had to build as a team. The lead had to give instructions on the build without informing the team on what the landmark was. To encourage delegates to deliver clear information to a diverse group, clerks were prompted to ask for clarity if the initial information was not clear. Learning from this exercise can be applied when briefing and receiving information from stakeholders.

HIGHLIGHTED AREA: Effective Scrutiny in Practice

This year, much of the programme was centred around select committees, providing discussion on comparative approaches across the Commonwealth. Delegates also participated in two committee inquiry exercises which aimed to allow members to enhance their questioning skills and clerks to put their learning from the previous communication session into practice by leading on the briefings, question writing and delivering of recommendations.

Delegates explored techniques of scrutiny through a case study on the skills shortage in the UK cybersecurity sector, specifically the lack of female representation. Through a "freeze-frame" technique, participants and observers were encouraged to pause proceedings at any time to make constructive comments or suggestions to the committee.



Some of the feedback delivered through the freeze-frame model included:

Follow up ambiguous answers with direct questions for clarity to ensure the witness does not get away with providing vague answers Listen attentively and address any answers that contradict what the witness had previously said. Maintain a quick pace with timely open and closed questions as this keeps the witness alert and decreases the chance of the witness providing long winded answers containing irrelevant information.

HIGHLIGHTED AREA: Comparative Governance Structures

Member delegates were hosted by the City of London Corporation in central London on 28 November 2019. The structure of the day evolved around how national parliaments engage with local governments. It was also an opportunity to discuss similarities in scrutiny models, taking examples from the London Assembly. Delegates found this segment useful as it provided an opportunity for provincial, subnational and smaller legislatures to discuss governance in a more relatable manner. It was also useful for national legislatures to learn more about how they can support local governments and how innovations within local governance models can be applied in a national context.

Local Government Ties with National Government

In discussions with the Commonwealth Local Government Forum, delegates learned that local government also works with a party system which includes the function of supporting MPs in campaigns.

Comparisons were also made on local governance structures. For example, in Kenya, there is a funding reward system for constituencies and committees look at the needs of constituencies.

In Singapore, MPs manage local governments, however there are limits to what they govern. Housing, for example, is managed centrally and funding is provided by government programmes.





Local Scrutiny Highlight: The London Assembly

The London Assembly showed an innovative way of engaging the public in holding the mayor to account.

The Mayoral Question Time takes place once every month and the public are encouraged to send questions in via the website or by text and watch the session live via UK Parliament TV or the Greater London Assembly website.

This ensures the public get the opportunity to highlight the needs of their community directly to the Mayor which the committee will follow up on once action has been stated.

Comparative Governance Structures across the Commonwealth

With a diverse mix of legislatures, this session offered a chance for delegates to hear from those whose legislature varies in governance structures, differing from national models. Delegates from the North West Provincial legislature, South Africa, and Alberta, Canada, presented these structures to the wider group, which opened conversations around financial management and procedure. Such conversations are key to building more awareness of the diversity within the Commonwealth.

Spotlight on North West Provincial's Structure

The North West Provincial Legislature represents one of 9 Provincial assemblies in South Africa. Within this structure, intergovernmental relations are always promoted.

All provinces are 100% funded by central government and due to the introduction of the District Development Model in 2019, there is increased scrutiny and accountability on how funding is used. For example, if a municipality grant for roads is not used, the money is returned to central government and is redistributed.

This led to a wider discussion amongst delegates on funding models within local government. There was an interest from The Gambia as they have a differing model, where 25% of the government's budget is allocated to municipalities. This raised the question of the level of local government autonomy. Conversations like these open space for policy transfer and strengthening networks amongst legislatures.

Spotlight on Alberta's Structure

Alberta provided a good example of a subnational structure which was relevant to a large proportion of delegates.

Alberta is one of 10 provinces in Canada and each have 6 representatives aimed to maintain regional balance. However, one challenge is the uneven distribution of population.

Delegates were interested in cooperative federalism which is a unique feature in Canada. This meant distancing from a division of powers structure and moving towards national standards which include healthcare.

Financial management has been a key part of its governance, with the fiscal capacity of each region equalised to ensure each region has the same ability to pay for services.



Level of Understating on Effective Parliaments

As part of the seminar's monitoring and evaluation process, delegates were asked to, complete pre- and post-workshop assessment forms to measure how effective the seminar had been in raising their level of understanding on Effective Parliaments and related topics. The graphs below show the average understanding of delegates substantially increased across the board as a result of the seminar.



*Based on responses from all seminar delegates (52 Pre-Workshop and 48 Post-Workshop Assessment forms).



The biggest learning was in **Comparative Commonwealth Parliamentary Systems** with a 28.06% increase in understanding after the seminar.

"Most of the things learnt were similar to the setup in Pakistan so the way it has been elaborated has given me a clearer analysis of my work. I feel more confident and focused."

Second was on **Engaging the media** which saw an 21.58% increase.

"It will help me enagage my constituents and stakeholders and find commonalities among other members."





Third was **Westminster Parliamentary System & UK Political landscape** with a 17.98% increase.

"Gave me a better understanding of parliament committee workings and the legislative process, in addition to how the political situation has affected procedure and the job of clerks. It was good to share different countries' scenarios and get ideas on how to do some things in my parliament."



The 2019 Westminster Seminar on Effective Parliaments was a success in providing a learning space for delegates to enhance their roles and further build on their understanding of the Westminster parliamentary system.

Increasingly, the Seminar is becoming an opportunity for not just Commonwealth parliamentarians and clerks to learn about Westminster, but an opportunity for UK members and clerks to learn about how effective parliaments are run across the Commonwealth and to promote cross-Commonwealth dialogue.

This year's programme was unique to previous Westminster Seminars because, due to the political environment in the UK, there was a heavier presence of diverse speakers which included media, academic, and industry experts. This provided delegates the opportunity to expand their depth in theoretical and practical knowledge, encouraging a rich learning experience. There was also a strong presence from the House of Lords, which allowed their vast experience to be shared and opened the opportunity to analyse the changing world of politics. This highlights the importance of expanding our reach for contributions as it allows a wider exchange of thought, strengthening our cross-learning experience.

As in previous years, the split programme for members and clerks furthered the opportunity to ensure content was relevant to each role. However, we will be looking at how we can bolster more opportunities for both groups to share their learning and have mixed discussions.

We are keen to strengthen this programme for the benefit of our participants from across the Commonwealth are working with past delegates to identify what works well for them and their colleagues. We will also be drawing on advice from Westminster Seminar alumni to find ways in which we can ensure the network is active and people can stay in touch.





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Malawi: Hon. Getrude Nankhumwa Malta: Miss. Anita Muscat Malta: Hon. Silvio John Grixti Malta: Hon. Kevin Cutajar New Zealand: Hon. Parmjeet Parmar New Zealand: Ms. Fiona McLean New Zealand: Hon. Raymond Huo Northern Ireland: Ms. Lucia Wilson Pakistan: Hon. Aisha Ghaus Pasha Pakistan: Hon. Anwar Taj Malik Pakistan: Mr. Saeed Ahmad Maitla Pakistan (Punjab): Hon. Sumaira Ahmed Pakistan (Punjab): Hon. Ammar Yasir Sierra Leone: Mrs. Mariama Jalloh Sierra Leone: Hon. Alimamy Kanu Sierra Leone: Hon. Yusuf Mackery Singapore: Hon. Anthea Ong Singapore: Ms. Aisyah Safuan Singapore: Hon. Murali Pillai South Africa: Hon. Speaker Sussana Rebecca Dantije Sri Lanka: Mr. Anil Hewawasam St Helena: Hon Clint Beard St Lucia: Hon. Jeannine Giraudy-McIntyre St Lucia: Hon. Moses In Baptiste The Gambia: Mrs. Amie Barrow The Gambia: Hon. Sunkary Badjie The Gambia: Hon. Assan Touray Uganda: Hon. Margaret Lamwaka Uganda: Ms. Esther Nadunga Uganda: Hon. Asuman Basalirwa



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