



# British Virgin Islands

## Members Training Workshop

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June 2021

FINAL REPORT

# Contents

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<b>Programme Overview</b>	2
<b>Outcomes, Outputs &amp; Impact</b>	2
<b>Participating Members</b>	3
I. Understanding the Role of a Parliamentarian	4
II. Fostering Relationships through Communication & Diplomacy	6
<b>Monitoring &amp; Evaluation</b>	10
<b>About CPA UK</b>	12
<b>Speaker Biographies</b>	13
<b>CPA UK Team</b>	17



# Programme Overview

## Key Topics Covered:

- Fostering cross-party and government relationships;
- Working effectively with clerks;
- Parliamentary procedure and scrutiny;
- Role of select committees;
- Diplomatic and communications skills.

CPA UK was invited by the House of Assembly of the British Virgin Islands (BVI) to deliver three virtual training sessions on 14, 21 and 28 June 2021, for parliamentarians, more than two years after the General Elections. The programme aimed to ensure that parliamentarians would be well-equipped to continue to carry out their duties effectively, by building on the skills and knowledge they had gained since the General Elections. It provided a forum for parliamentarians to reflect on the challenges and opportunities they had experienced in office and explored a range of topics.

These topics were categorised under two main themes: Understanding the Role of a Parliamentarian, and Fostering Relationships through Communication & Diplomacy.

## Outcomes, Outputs & Impact

### Output 1



A virtual workshop was delivered via Zoom for all members.

### Output 2



Participants identified key actions to undertake within ten months, as a direct result of their participation in the workshop.

### Output 3



A comprehensive post-workshop report was produced by CPA UK and distributed to all relevant stakeholders.

### Outcomes

1

Members of the House of Assembly, Government departments and other relevant stakeholders developed a clearer understanding of the role, remit and value of parliamentary work.

2

The relationship between the UK (CPA UK, the UK Parliament, and Crown Dependencies) and British Virgin Islands House of Assembly was strengthened.

### Impact



As part of the wider UK Overseas Territories Project Phase Two (UKOTP II), the programme aimed to increase the capacity of the British Virgin Island's House of Assembly to perform its duties.

# Participating Members

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**Hon. Julian Willock, MHA**

Speaker of the House of Assembly



**Hon. Neville A. Smith, MHA**

Deputy Speaker of the House of Assembly



**Hon. Kye M. Rymer, MHA**

Minister for Transportation, Works and Utilities



**Hon. Shereen D. Flax-Charles, MHA**

Junior Minister for Trade and Economic Development



**Hon. Sharie B. de Castro, MHA**

Junior Minister for Tourism



**Hon. Vincent O. Wheatley, MHA**

Minister for Natural Resources, Labour and Immigration



**Hon. Carvin Malone, MHA**

Minister for Health and Social Development

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# I. Understanding the Role of a Parliamentarian

## *Introduction*

The workshop was declared opened by the Honourable Julian Willock, Speaker of BVI's House of Assembly. Following his statement, CPA UK's Chief Executive, Jon Davies, underlined the value of such opportunities for parliamentarians to exchange and promote democracy. Participants explored examples of good practice in parliamentary affairs and diplomacy. They frequently drew comparisons between legislatures, including Anguilla, Bermuda, BVI, Canada, the States of Guernsey, Montserrat, and the UK; each of which was represented by a speaker who contributed to the sessions.

### *a) Representing the Community*

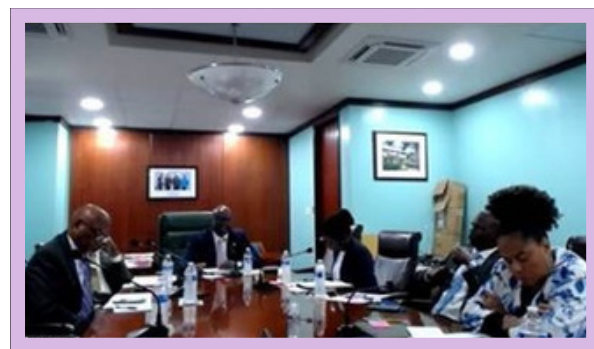
Participants explored what it meant to be an elected representative and considered the challenges and opportunities of public office. They compared the experience of parliamentarians in BVI to Guernsey. Deputy Gabriel of the State of Guernsey noted the importance of having mechanisms in place such as induction programmes to help new parliamentarians navigate their role. In Guernsey for example, such training is prepared by the civil service and tailored around how to set a budget. All 40 elected representatives in Guernsey are invited to this induction programme, which takes place fortnightly and creates a safe space for discussion.

Participants noted that following their election, they had been afforded the opportunity to serve their communities. To do so effectively, Deputy Gabriel suggested:

- Keeping the people regularly informed on your progress through local newspapers and media.
- Being visible and available in the community and engaging with people on how policy impacts their lives.
- "Walking the walk" and ensuring that campaign promises are delivered.

Participants also noted the value of cross-party collaboration to serve the electorate more effectively.

### *b) Scrutiny in the Committee Context*



Participants noted that the purpose of select committees is to study the legislation proposed by the government in depth, as well as government spending. They observed that both the Chair and the Clerk of Committees have important roles to play, as per the table below, to ensure for such scrutiny is conducted effectively.

CLERK OF COMMITTEE	CHAIR OF COMMITTEE
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Drawing up the agenda for the committee.</li> <li>• Setting a timetable.</li> <li>• Identifying witnesses.</li> <li>• Advising the Chair and the committee impartially.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Providing leadership to the committee.</li> <li>• Ensuring that individual committee members own areas of the work, to ensure both government and opposition members invest into the inquiry.</li> <li>• Ensuring witnesses are questioned effectively to hold government to account.</li> </ul>

- Disagreements between the two should be solved along the operation policy rather than through recourse to personalities.
- Speakers must be as transparent and honest as possible in their work with the Clerk.
- Speakers must protect their Clerk by ensuring that the Speaker's office is seen to be bipartisan, and that every issue is addressed with efficiency and respect.

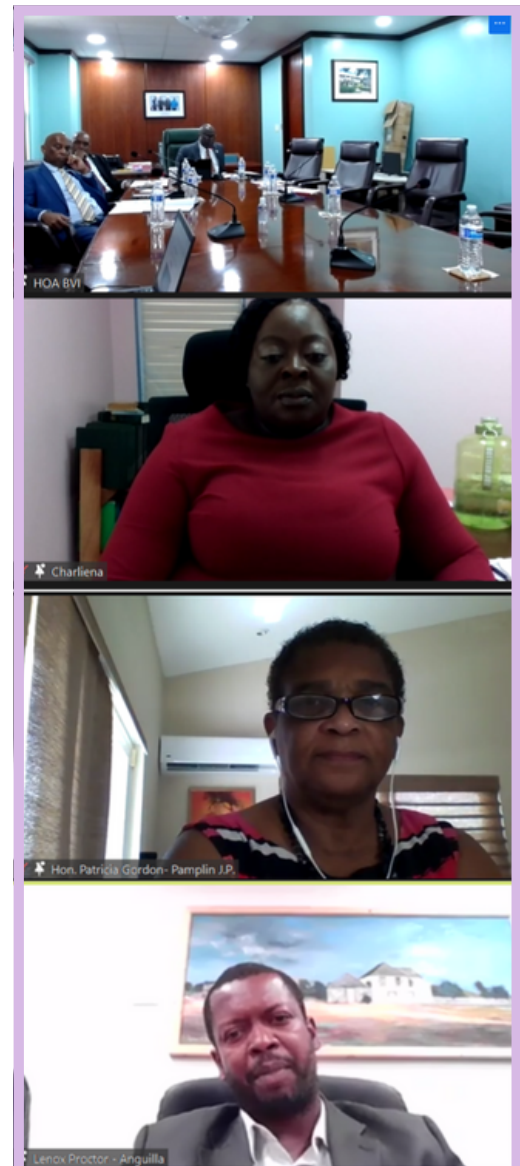
### *c) Working Effectively with Clerks*

Beyond the committee context, participants focused on the working relationship between the Speaker, whose responsibility is to preside over parliamentary sittings to ensure the rules of the House are followed; and the Clerk of the House, whose main responsibility is the administration of the legislature.

They underlined that such a relationship should be one of mutual respect and trust; the Speaker can rely on support from the Clerk to advise all members, including the Speaker, impartially, on parliamentary rules, regulations, and precedents. The Clerk who holds the institutional knowledge is expected to use it to help the Speaker oversee parliamentary affairs effectively.

Four recommendations were suggested for Speakers and Clerks to follow, to build strong working relationships, prevent and address misunderstandings:

- Speaker and Clerk must agree on a clear operation policy on priorities, strategy, and responsibilities.



## II. Fostering Relationships through Communication & Diplomacy

### *a) Working with Members from All Parties*

Participants also expressed their desire for the Government and Opposition in BVI to work together more frequently, especially on controversial bills, to inspire the public's confidence in the House of Assembly.

The value of working with members from all parties was subsequently highlighted by Baroness D'Souza, who advised against "underestimating the power of relationships". She observed that in the UK the House of Lords provides opportunities for cross-party collaboration, which in her experience, has contributed towards effective legislating.



Baroness D'Souza suggested three points to consider, to work effectively across party lines:

- Ensure your information on bills is up to date by engaging with experts.
- Debate a bill based on its merit.
- Seek to improve the legislation to improve the lives of those affected by it.

### *b) Fostering Relationships with the Government*

As participants further discussed the importance of fostering relationships in smaller jurisdictions, between opposition and government, Ms Shirley Osborne underlined the value of dialogue, stating that there must be discussions in a democracy before a decision is made, even if there is disagreement on the outcome of the dialogue. A good relationship with the government, she noted, can only be possible if the difference in roles between parliament and government was clear. Ms Osborne observed that:

- The legislature is the "principal branch of government", because laws are made there.
- The executive must receive permission from the legislature for laws to be passed.
- This must be particularly emphasised in smaller jurisdictions, where the distinction between the legislature and executive is not often clear-cut.

Participants noted that with this knowledge parliamentarians are empowered to challenge the executive assertively on points of contentions and stand firm in their opposition when necessary. Ms Osborne suggested that the below will likely improve the possibility to foster relationships with the government.



### STRONG CROSS-PARTY RELATIONSHIPS CAN DEVELOP WHEN:

- The ruling party thinks ahead on legislation and discusses its plans with the opposition to gain their support.
- The opposition is proactive in challenging the government and take interest in the prospective legislative agenda.
- The structuring of parliament is less antagonistic, unlike the Westminster system, which could reduce the oppositional nature of debates (e.g., The horseshoe structure of parliament in the Isle of Man encourages parties to work together).

### c) Communication Skills



In an interactive session led by Ginny Radmall, participants identified five key elements of effective communication: listening, emotion, pace, body-language, context. The importance of listening was highlighted particularly: "When we don't listen well, we cut people off, talk about ourselves, use selective listening, and pick out the main points rather than listening to the entire message."

### CHARACTERISTICS OF EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION

- Listen attentively
- Speak with passion
- Speak slowly and use pauses
- Project a strong body language
- Provide a context for your message

Participants noted that some people are either predominantly introverts or extroverts. Considering this, not all persons are receptive to one style of communication. Failure to communicate can sometimes be attributed to such differences in individuals being overlooked. By understanding one's own personality and how it differs from others, it becomes possible to understand others and their approach to communication more. Thus, the importance of attentive listening, which can be applied to difficult conversations particularly, by following the SEEDS method:

### EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATIONS STEPS (SEEDS)

SILENCE – allow others to speak their mind.

EMPATHY – use nonverbal cues and positive affirmations to show you understand the message.

EXPLORE – ask open questions to find out more (when? where? why?).

DISCLOSE – share own experience to build trust, without taking over the conversation.

SUMMARISE – listen carefully and repeat what was heard.



### d) Diplomatic Skills

Participants noted, furthermore, that the skills of a diplomat are used daily and not necessarily by people engaging in high politics. Mr Vijay Krishnarayan observed that diplomacy encompasses advocacy and negotiation. The individual or organisation engaging in diplomacy must first understand the interest they wish to advocate for, before deciding on the best way to achieve such interests. In other words, preparation is key in diplomacy: “the team that prepares best, wins”.



#### HOW TO PREPARE EFFECTIVELY IN DIPLOMACY

- Understand your environment.
- Resist the temptation to win.
- Work on establishing a relationship of trust work within your team.

Having suggested the above three points on preparing for diplomacy, Mr Krishnarayan further provided three practical recommendations for maximizing impact once engaged in diplomacy.

HOW TO ACHIEVE IMPACT AS A DIPLOMAT	EXPLANATION
BE PROACTIVE	You may not always be in control of a situation, but where the opportunity presents itself, it is important take it.
PLAY TO YOUR STRENGTHS	Be aware of the tangible and intangible assets of BVI, such as a talented civil service, or having allies in the UK parliament, and use these to your advantage.
BUILD PARTNERSHIPS	Building alliances is central to diplomacy, either across other Overseas Territories or in the Commonwealth.

Drawing from her experience in diplomacy as Representative of the Government of BVI in the UK and EU, Ms Tracy Bradshaw echoed Baroness D’Souza’s advice to participants never to underestimate the power of relationships. She also noted the importance of patience and resilience in diplomacy:

- Be calm in the face of conflict and accept that you will have to skilfully navigate disagreements and ignorance to find a solution.
- Refrain from entering a negotiation with preconceived notions about the outcome expected by the party opposite; instead observe, listen actively and display empathy and understanding, to reach an agreement.
- Diplomacy is not about achieving 100% success, so consider making small concessions in negotiations, to achieve results.

- Understand and respect cultural differences.
- Gain information through media, but also by being involved in the community on a personal and professional level.

## EFFECTIVE PRACTICE IN OVERCOMING CHALLENGES IN DIPLOMACY



Asking  
Questions



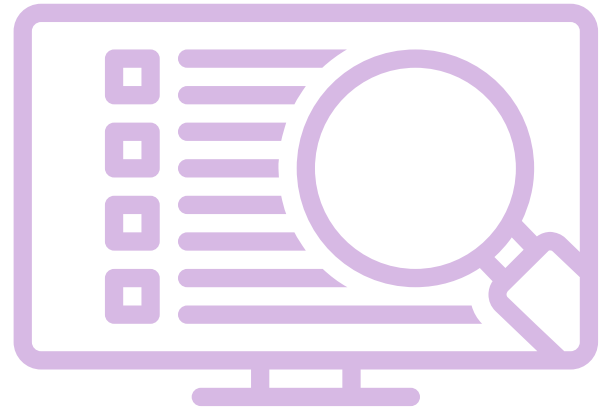
Continued  
Dialogue



Good  
Relationships

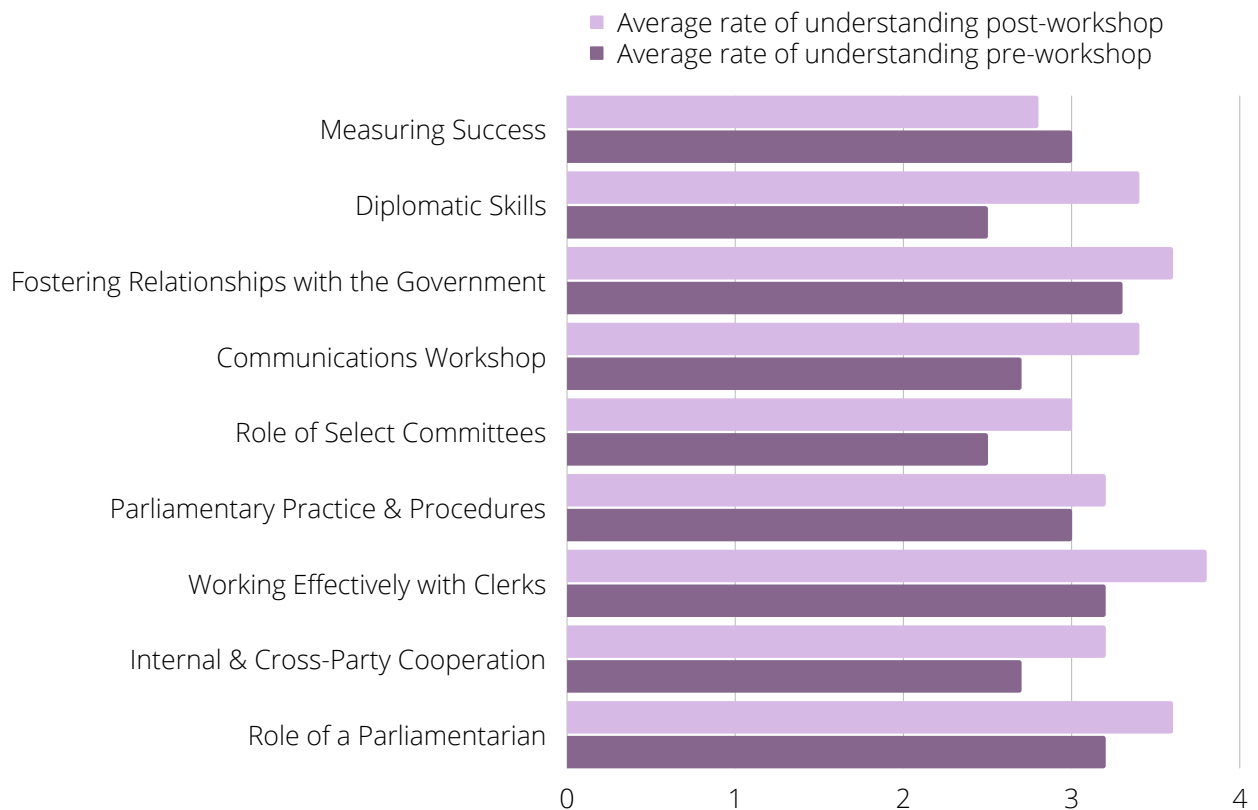
# Monitoring & Evaluation

Each delegate completed a pre-assessment form before the training, followed by a post-assessment form to conclude the training. On these forms participants rated their own level of knowledge and understanding of the nine areas the training focused on. They evaluated themselves according to the following scale: "None" (1), "Basic" (2), "Moderate" (3), "Confident" (4) and "Very Confident" (5).



## Feedback in numbers

### Average Understanding of Programme Areas



On average, we saw an 18% increase in the delegates' understanding of the different areas explored throughout the programme, with the highest increases including:

- Diplomatic Skills (36%)
- Communications (28%)
- Internal & Cross-Party Cooperation (20%)
- Working Effectively with Clerks (20%)
- The Role of Select Committees (20%)

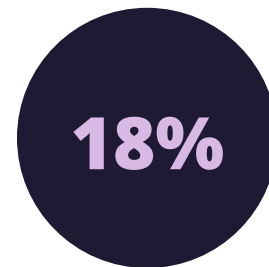
When delegates were asked how relevant the workshop was to their role, all responded that it was fully relevant to their role. When it came to meeting delegates' expectations, hundred-percent reported that the workshop met their expectations.

As the training drew to a close, participants made the following commitments:

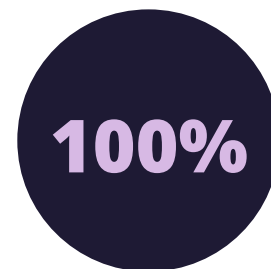
- 1.To work towards a more collaborative relationship between the Government and the Opposition.
- 2.To foster a strong relationship with CPA UK by engaging CPA UK more regularly.
- 3.To ensure that at least one standing committee is operational and meeting regularly.

Through the UK Overseas Territories Project (Phase II), CPA UK will approach the BVI House of Assembly within approximately ten months of the training, to identify what tangible outcomes there has been for participants in their roles as parliamentarians, which can be attributed to the recent training. This will be the opportunity for CPA UK, in partnership with the House of Assembly, to also identify areas where additional support and training may will be required.

## Average increase in knowledge



## Relevance to Role



## Met Expectations



# About CPA UK

Supporting  
& strengthening  
parliamentary  
democracy  
throughout the  
Commonwealth

CPA UK supports and strengthens parliamentary democracy throughout the Commonwealth. It focuses on key priority themes including **women in parliament, modern slavery, financial oversight, security** and **trade**.

CPA UK brings together UK and Commonwealth parliamentarians and officials to share knowledge and experience through peer to peer learning. It aims to improve parliamentary oversight, scrutiny and representation and is located in, and funded by, the UK Parliament.

CPA UK's core work is to build relationships with parliaments across the Commonwealth. This is achieved through a programme of parliamentary strengthening and capacity building activities. CPA UK undertakes work at the request of other parliaments around the Commonwealth, and our tailored programmes include both individual country activities, and large scale projects and activities that bring together Commonwealth parliamentarians and clerks.

For more information about our work and activities, please visit our website: [uk-cpa.org](http://uk-cpa.org)

## UK Overseas Territories Project



Since 2016 the CPA UK, in consortium with the United Kingdom's National Audit Office (NAO) and Government Internal Audit Agency (GIAA), has delivered the **UK Overseas Territories Project**. UKOTP works with partners in the UK and across the Overseas Territories (OTs) to deliver an ongoing programme of support for **good governance** and **public financial management**. Now in its second phase, the project is funded by the HMG-wide Conflict, Security and Stability Fund, and is committed to strengthening the role of parliamentary scrutiny across the OTs and building the capacity and effectiveness of important financial oversight and electoral institutions.



**The Project stood out as being different & one that has the potential to make a substantial impact. It addresses a recognised problem & is robust in its oversight.**

**Government departments with interests abroad can replicate success with this approach.**



Public Finance Awards  
2020 Judge

# Speaker Biographies

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**Hon. Speaker J. Willock**

House of Assembly of the British Virgin Islands

Mr. Julian Willock holds a Bachelor and Master's Degree in Political Science from the State University of New York at Buffalo, and a Certificate in Public Administration from the University of the West Indies. Before going to college, Mr. Willock was a trainee Air-Traffic Controller and a Bank Teller. He also lived in New York where he worked for Cooperate USA and volunteered in many organisations including Covenant House in New York City. Upon his return to the Virgin Islands, Mr. Willock became engaged as a businessman and has accomplished many assets and companies such as Real Estate, a Marketing Firm and also owns a Security company. He also, upon his return to the Virgin Islands held the post of Assistant Secretary in the then Ministry of Natural Resources and Labour. He was also promoted to the post of Director of the Water and Sewerage Department. Mr. Willock then left the Public Service of the Government of the Virgin Islands in 2012 at the rank of Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Communications and Works. He was elected Speaker of the House of Assembly of the Virgin Islands on 12th March, 2019.



**Mr Adrian Gabriel**

People's Deputy, States of Guernsey

Adrian was born and raised in Guernsey. His father sat as a Parish Douzenier, and also successfully standing in an Deputy's election in 2002. Adrian was encouraged to take an interest in local politics through this exposure at home. Adrian has furthered this knowledge by firstly being elected as a parish Douzenier in 2017 serving a full term of four years. The first Islandwide (one district) general election took place in October 2020. Adrian was successful and was elected as one of 38 representatives of the States of Deliberation. He was then elected by his parliamentary peers to serve on the Environment and Infrastructure Committee.



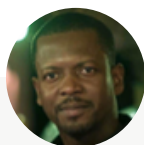
**Baroness D'Souza**

UK House of Lords

Baroness D'Souza joined the House of Lords in 2004. She was the Convenor of the Crossbench Peers from 2007 to 2011. In 2011 she was elected Lord Speaker of the House of Lords and served in this role until her term ended in 2016. She holds a Doctor of Philosophy from the University of Oxford and has lectured at the London School of Economics. She previously worked for the Nuffield Institute of Comparative Reproductive Physiology from 1973–77, Oxford Polytechnic (now Oxford Brookes University) from 1977–80, and was an independent research consultant for the United Nations from 1985-88.

# Speaker Biographies

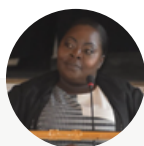
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**Mr Lenox J. Proctor**

Clerk Of The House Of Assembly, Anguilla

Joash has served as Clerk to the House of Assembly from 2015 to present. Previously he would have served as the Director of the Department of Youth and Culture within the Anguilla Public Service for several years. Joash has an in interest in governance, history, travel and culture.



**Hon. Charliena White**

Speaker of Montserrat Legislative Assembly

Hon Charlena White recently made history by becoming the youngest female Speaker of the Montserrat Legislative Assembly. She was appointed to the post during the last meeting of the Legislative Assembly for the year 2020 on Tuesday 22 December. Ms White takes over from Teresina Bodkin, who was appointed to the position in December 2019.



**Hon. Patricia Gordon Pamplin**

Former Chair of Bermuda Public Accounts Committee

The Hon. Patricia J. Gordon- Pamplin, JP, MP is a Bermudian politician and former Leader of the Opposition. During her parliamentary career, she has shadowed different portfolios including Youth, Sport & Recreation, Labour & Home Affairs, Finance and Public Works. She also served on the Public Accounts Committee for the House of Assembly as well as the Audit Committee, and is a member of the panel of chairpersons for the House. Gordon- Pamplin is a former Minister of Health, Social Development and Sport, Public Works, and Home Affairs. She was appointed Leader of the Opposition in September 2017.



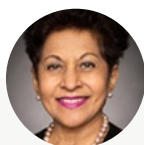
**Hon. Claude Hogan**

Member of Montserrat Legislative Assembly

Claude Bambi Hogan is a Member of Monsterrat Legislative Assembly and former Cabinet Minister in Monsterrat. Hogan has over 25 years of professional experience working with DFID, FCO, EU and the United Nations System. He has worked in a variety of high profile positions: Caricom Diplomat, Project Manager, University Lecturer. Hogan successfully contested the 2014 general election, and was appointed Minister of Agriculture, Lands, Housing & the Environment on 16 September 2014. He retained his seat in the 18 November 2019 general election; however the election resulted in victory for the Movement for Change and Prosperity (MCAP).

# Speaker Biographies

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## **Hon. Yasmin Ratansi MP**

Former Member of the House of Commons of Canada

Ms. Ratansi is the Member of Parliament for the riding of Don Valley East, in Canada, who was first elected to parliament in 2004. From 2004-2011, she was the Liberal Caucus Deputy Whip. She has chaired a number of committees including the Standing Committee on Government Operations, and the Standing Committee on Status of Women. She has authored numerous committee reports, including, Economic Security for Women, Human Trafficking, Gender Budgeting, Accountability and Transparency in Government. She is the Chair of the Canada Branch Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, which bridges the divide between various Commonwealth parliaments and shares best Westminster practices. Ms. Ratansi is a Fellow of the Chartered Professional Accountants (FCPA), a Certified Management Consultant (CMC) and a recipient of numerous business and professional awards. She is the Vice Chair of the Global Organization of Parliamentarians Against Corruption (GOPAC).



## **Ms Ginny Radmall**

Director, The Ivy Way

Ginny Radmall is the Director of The Ivy Way. She works with startups and corporates, equipping companies to communicate their message clearly. She has worked with the likes of Microsoft, Google, Salesforce, IKEA, WeWork and Moody's Analytics, as well as running all of the pitch training for Google for Startups across their global Demo Days. Over the last few months Ginny has been training companies on how to exercise good leadership in video calls, when it can often feel like you're speaking into a void.



## **Ms Shirley Osborne**

Former Speaker of Montserrat Legislative Assembly

Shirley Osborne served as Speaker of Montserrat Legislative Assembly (MLA) from September 2014 to October 2019. She was the first woman to chair a political party in Montserrat, and the party was elected overwhelmingly, under her leadership. During her time as Speaker of the MLA, she served as the Chairperson of the Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians of the Caribbean, Atlantic and the Americas Region, and as one of the Regional Representatives on the Executive Committee of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA). In 2015, she was elected Vice Chairperson of the CPA.



# Speaker Biographies

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**Ms Tracy Bradshaw**

Acting Director, BVI London Office

Ms Tracy Bradshaw leads the British Virgin Islands London Office, which represents the interests of the Government and people of the British Virgin Islands in the United Kingdom and Europe. Based at BVI House, the Office also serves as headquarters for official visits to the region and supports British Virgin Islanders living and studying in the UK.



**Mr Vijay Krishnarayan**

Former Head of the Commonwealth's Agency for Civil Society

Vijay served two terms at the head of the Commonwealth's Agency for civil society - the Commonwealth Foundation, from 2012-2019. Under his leadership, the organisation established a clear programme, framed within the Sustainable Development Goals and focused on SDG16 with an emphasis on inclusion. He served as the Foundation's Deputy Director from 2006-2012. In this capacity, he had direct responsibility for all aspects of the organisation's programmes and grant management. Vijay is an experienced facilitator adept at brokering dialogue between sectors. He is a specialist in strategy development, change management and stakeholder engagement.



**Mr Jon Davies**

Chief Executive of CPA UK

Jon has been Chief Executive of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association UK (CPA UK) since September 2017. He joined the UK Civil Service in 1990 as Desk Officer in the East African Department in the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO). After working in the Cabinet Office Assessment Staff from 1991 to 1993 he became head of the FCO's Iraq Section. He then worked in Madrid and the Tsunami Unit in the Consular Directorate, before spending 2005-2007 as Deputy Director of Communications. From 2007- 2010 Jon was Deputy Head of Mission, British Embassy, Cairo. In 2010 he returned to London as Iran Co-ordinator, and from 2011-2013 he was also Director, Middle East and North Africa. Jon then became the first Director of the new FCO Diplomatic Academy, from 2014 to July 2017. John has attended multiple CPA UK and CPA BIMR events since starting in 2017, plus CPC 2017 in Dhaka and CPA Executive Committee meetings in Mauritius, London and Ottawa.

# CPA UK Team

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**Axell Kaubo**  
Programme Officer,  
UK Overseas Territories  
Project



**Diana Atungire-Ocaya**  
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