

## Report on the 72<sup>nd</sup> CPA Westminster Seminar on effective Parliaments

### Held on 11<sup>th</sup> – 15<sup>th</sup> March 2024 in collaboration with Welsh Parliament - Senedd Cymru

I was privileged to attend the 72<sup>nd</sup> Westminster Seminar in March 2024. There was also the opportunity to visit the Welsh Parliament.

Before leaving St Helena, I knew that I would be a day late for the Seminar which would have been Commonwealth Day. The flight left St Helena on the Sunday due to the Ascension Island flight.

On boarding the flight in Johannesburg for London, on that Monday night, something went wrong with the air conditioning on the BA plane, so we were sent back to our hotels around 2.30am exhausted.

The flight was then rearranged for Tuesday night and we were on our way to London for the 11 ½ hour flight.

### Wednesday 13<sup>th</sup> March 2024

We arrived around 7am at Heathrow and I got to the Seminar at Westminster just before the morning tea break for Wednesday morning's session. Under discussion was **the Role and Impact of Select Committees – Insight into Public Accounts Committees** being chaired by none other than Dame Meg Hillier MP, Chair of the UK PAC and Member, UK House of Commons.

Select Committees carry out scrutiny on the work of government departments in different ways and highlight both the challenges and impact that committees can have.

We then had a session on **Holding the Prime Minister and Executive to Account** Chaired by Hon. Dessima Williams, Madame President of the Grenada Senate.

The aim was to foster a dialogue of good practice, challenges and innovative approaches in ensuring accountability, transparency and

effective scrutiny of the Executive branch. The session also outlined the importance of the separation of powers.

Just before lunch, lucky ticket holders was able to go to the House of Commons Gallery to view Prime Ministers Questions whilst the remainder of us could view this on screen in the training room.

After lunch one group went to do the **Committee Hearing Exercise on Human Trafficking in the context of sport** and I attended the group on **Cyber Security**. Another session that afternoon was on **Committee Recommendations and Follow Up**. Committee reports are often aimed at governments, recommending changes in policy, so the session explored how committees can effectively follow up on their recommendations and examine the challenges involved with generating a response from governments. One of the attendees from Australia also spoke about the work he was doing to introduce a bill for assisted dying.

**That evening those who were selected to attend the Welsh Senedd, left London for Cardiff.**

### **Thursday 14<sup>th</sup> March 2024**

We went to the Ty Hywel building for an **introduction to the Senedd** presented by Rt Hon Elin Jones MS, Llywydd (Presiding Officer) Senedd Cymru on exploring the function of a devolved parliament, how it works and what processes are in place.

There are 60 Elected Members in the Senedd from 40 Constituencies, covering 5 regions. Majority at the moment is Welsh Labour, then there is Welsh Conservatives, Plaid Cymru and one Liberal.

Government is at 3 levels

Welsh level

UK level

Local Authorities – Local level

We also had a session with the **Welsh Youth Parliament** Manager Delyth Lewis who informed us that the Welsh Youth Parliament took around 8 years to set up, the relationship between the Welsh Parliament and Youth Parliament and how they influence the Senedd and Elected members and highlight the priority issues important to young people in Wales. The ages are 11-18 years as at 18 they have the right to vote. There are 60 members, 40 covering each of the constituencies and 20 elected at large to ensure wider diversity and inclusivity.

**We then had a tour of the Senedd building and the surrounding areas before taking a Group Photo of the delegates attending.**



The final session that day was “**the Influence and Impact in Legislation**, delegates will actively explore the unique mechanisms and strategies crucial for influencing and shaping legislation”.

## **Friday 15<sup>th</sup> March 2024**

Again we were split into two groups one group went on a Constituency Visit in Cardiff and the other group went for a meeting with the Cardiff Council which I joined and first had a tour of Cardiff Castle. Following this we had our final session on how the Cardiff Council work as a devolved Council and their plans for the future of the Council. One of the things learnt for this discussion is that Wales does not have a female prison and has to send female convicts to England.

### **We finally went back to London for feedback from the Seminar and the Awards Ceremony.**

I would like to say the Seminar was beneficial to a first time politician and would like to thank all those who helped in any way to make this visit happen.

The Networking was really good and provided you with platforms to follow up on issues across the Commonwealth.

There were delegates from 29 Countries or Parliament with 67 delegates participating.

Submitted by: Councillor Ronald Coleman