

MANAGEMENT BOARD

57th Annual Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference, 21-28 July 2011: Volunteer Conference Assistants

Paper by the Conference Manager

Purpose

1. This paper sets out a proposal for Commons and PICT staff to volunteer as conference assistants for the Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference (CPC 2011).

Action for the Board

2. **The Board is asked:**
 - a. **to agree that Commons and PICT staff may volunteer as conference assistants for the Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference (CPC 2011); and**
 - b. **to agree that volunteers should be offered a day off in lieu for each day worked at the weekend.**

Background to CPC 2011

3. Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference (CPC) 2011 will bring together over 500 parliamentarians and parliamentary staff from 175 Commonwealth Parliaments and Legislatures to exchange views on global political issues and developments in the parliamentary system. First held in the UK in 1948, the CPC will be hosted in the UK in 2011 to mark the centennial year of the CPA, formally the Empire Parliamentary Association. The Speaker and Lord Speaker are joint hosts of CPC 2011; the Speaker is also the President of the CPA for 2010-11. The conference will take place in Parliament and the Park Plaza Westminster Bridge. Many parts of the House service are already involved in the planning for CPC 2011, particularly the SAA, media and communications service, web centre, banqueting, furnishings, pass office, commercial services, visitor services, estates, print services and outreach.

CPC 2011 staff

4. Working with Andrew Tuggey (CPA UK) and a Steering Committee comprising officials and Parliamentarians, Libby Hammond (DCCS) is project managing the conference. The conference team is drawn from DIS, DCCS and CPA UK but as with previous events of this type, additional Parliamentary staff are sought to help during the conference.

Proposed application process

5. Subject to Board approval, staff from all Directorates¹, including PICT, will be invited to apply for approximately 35 conference assistant roles. Applicants will complete an application form which must be authorised by their line manager. Applications will be considered on the basis of their skills match to the positions available whilst trying to ensure a balance of grades and directorates. Additional specialist functions, such as ceremonial and tours, will be advertised within appropriate offices (e.g. Doorkeepers / Visitor Assistants). Subject to the agreement of the Board, the application process will start later this month to enable successful candidates to plan their annual leave around the conference period.

Time commitment

6. Most of those selected would be asked to assist for 3-4 days during the conference period from Thursday 21 to Thursday 28 July, including Saturday 23 and Sunday 24 July. Some assistants would also be asked to help at evening events, including the centennial cultural evening.

Roles

7. Conference assistants would perform a variety of tasks such as:
 - meeting and greeting delegates as they arrive at the hotel;
 - meeting and greeting invited speakers and escorting to meetings;
 - staffing the registration and accreditation centre within the hotel;
 - supporting delegates in meetings both in Parliament and the Park Plaza;
 - checking delegate accreditation prior to transportation to Parliament for events such as the Opening Ceremony;
 - transport management;
 - protocol including seating plans and invitation management;
 - acting as problem-solvers and assisting delegates; and
 - IT support.
8. Staff applying for these posts will need to demonstrate:
 - experience in dealing with parliamentarians, particularly in difficult or challenging situations;
 - excellent communication, interpersonal and organisational skills;
 - ability to act on initiative and think ahead;
 - ability to work as part of a team; and
 - self-motivation even when working long hours including evenings.

Payment to staff and annual leave

9. A *per diem* would be paid to cover meals and so on, as would travel or accommodation costs for those required to work late. As on previous occasions, however, staff will not receive any additional remuneration and

¹ The House of Lords has been asked to supply around 15 conference assistants.

would not therefore have to take annual leave in order to volunteer.² It would be helpful were departments to offer staff time off in lieu for weekend working (one day's leave for each day worked).

Benefits

10. The benefits for staff include an exciting and unusual opportunity to undertake a role outside their normal work, experience of working with colleagues from other directorates in the House and PICT and valuable personal development experience. The NATO PA in 2009 was widely regarded as an outstanding example of cross-House working and of the "unified House service" in action.
11. The international reputation of the UK Parliament and as hosts of the conference, the Speaker and Lord Speaker, would be damaged if CPC 2011 were not delivered to an appropriate standard. It is therefore crucial to use Parliamentary staff to provide professional support to the Conference, rather than outside staff with little knowledge of the institution.

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² For example, the OSCE Parliamentary Conference in 2004 and the NATO Parliamentary Assembly Conference in 2009.