

REPORT

Westminster Workshop and 1st CAPAC Conference

4-7 December 2017

London

PARLIAMENT OF MALTA
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES



MONDAY 4th December 2017

Keynote Address by the Rt Hon. Dame Margaret Hodge

The 2017 Westminster Workshop for Public Accounts Committees was officially opened by a keynote address from the Rt Hon. Dame Margaret Hodge MP, Chair of the APPG on Responsible Tax. She spoke about her former role as the Chair of the UK PAC, the reforms she instituted and impact her committee had over that time. She stressed the importance of unifying the Committee and ensuring value for money and public finances were appropriately utilised.

Effective PACs, Governance and Structure

This session gave an overview of the effectiveness of PACs in both subnational and national parliaments. Helen Foster, a Lecturer in Accounting at Ulster University spoke about her research and the role of the devolved PACs. The Hon. Wavel Ramkalawan MP, Leader of the Opposition and Chair of the Finance & Public Affairs Committee in the Seychelles gave an overview of his Committee's work and the importance of ensuring bipartisanship. Tim Bowden, Media Officer of the UK Public Accounts Committee spoke about using media as a powerful tool to amplify messages and connect the work of a committee with the target audience - the taxpayers.

The following session focussed on governance and structure and explored the coordination and collaboration of PACs. The session was led by the Clerk of Committees, Paul Evans and Stephen McGuinness, former Clerk of the UK PAC. They were joined by the Hon. Akierra Missick, Chair of the PAC in the Turks and Caicos Islands, she spoke about the financial overhaul which has strengthened the ability of the PAC to hold government accountable.

Chairs and Members of PACs from Canada, Ghana and Bangladesh gave case study accounts of their experiences and inquiries they've covered. The panel contributors were the Hon. Kevin Sorenson MP, Chair of Standing Committee on Public Accounts in Canada, the Hon. Kofi Okyere Agyekum MP, Ranking Member, Public Accounts Committee in Ghana and the Hon. Dr. Muhiuddin Khan Alamgir MP, Chair, Public Accounts Committee in Bangladesh.

The Role of Auditors

The concluding session of the day introduced Shabana Mahmood MP, Member of the UK PAC who facilitated the session on audits. Linda Mills, the Parliamentary Relations Manager at the UK National Audit Office and Karen McConnell, Comptroller and Auditor General at the Jersey Audit Office explained the work of Supreme Audit Institutions with a specific focus on their Audit Organisations and how they work with PACs.

Tuesday 5th December 2017

Morning Sessions

The first part of the morning session was split into 3 sessions.

The Rt Hon. Caroline Flint MP, Member of the UK PAC and Richard Bacon MP, Member of the UK Public Accounts Commission discussed the pressures they face within committees and gave guidance on cross-party working.

In a parallel session, Geoffrey Clifton-Brown MP, Member of the UK PAC and Sarah Davies, Principal Clerk in the House of Commons discussed ways committees can maintain pressure on the government in the follow-up of their recommendations.

Meanwhile, clerks heard from Richard Cooke, Clerk of the UK PAC who explored ways to develop effective relationships with chairs of committees and witnesses and also discussed the effectiveness of 'pre-panels' during committee enquiries.

Media Masterclass

The delegates took part in an interactive masterclass on effective questioning with Kate Faragher from BeSpoke Skills. The masterclass covered techniques on developing questioning skills required when questioning witnesses and also gave delegates practical ways of effectively communicating their messages.

The clerks continued to hear from Richard Cooke who gave them practical advice on time management, committee spending on resources and advice on following up on government responses.

Meg Hillier MP then hosted a working lunch for chairs of PACs.

The Tax Transparency Workshop in Partnership with the OECD

In the afternoon delegates headed over to Guildhall for the Tax Transparency Workshop which was held in partnership with the OECD. Joseph Stead, Senior Policy Analyst at the OECD, Laura Stefanelli, Advisor at the OECD and Jason Braganza, Deputy Executive Director at the Tax for Justice Network explained the principles of tax.

Delegates were then split into 2 sessions. Toby Quantrill, Principal Economic Justice Advisor at Christian Aid and Laura Stefanelli from the OECD discussed the importance of ensuring large corporations pay tax to avoid small businesses becoming disincentivised in paying their taxes.

Meanwhile, Anneliese Dodds MP, UK Shadow Treasury Minister, Joseph Stead and Jason Braganza from the OECD explored engagement with parliamentarians on tax incentives.

Tax Transparency: Call to Action

The day concluded with a practical session on ways parliamentarians and PACs can engage on tax with international and domestic frameworks.

Duncan Onduru, Executive Director of the Commonwealth Association of Tax Administrators, Laura Stefanelli, Jason Braganza and Joseph Stead from the OECD discussed potential impacts on the role of national parliaments and the agreed international standards. The session was followed by a unique opportunity for delegates to have one-to-one discussions with OECD specialists in more detail.

Wednesday 6th December

Training: Media Engagement

The morning sessions were focussed on media engagement training.

Alanah Donnell, Deputy Director of Communications and Engagement at the UK Government Digital Service offered practical advice on using social media to engage with the public and manage media interest.

The following session was split into two, both Tim Bowden, a Media Officer from the UK PAC and Mark Jenner, a Media Relations Manager from the UK House of Commons both facilitated sessions on media training reflecting on their experiences working in the UK Parliament and the UK media landscape, with a case study of the UK PAC's St Helena Airport inquiry in 2016.

The following session was split into two.

PACs and the Sustainable Development Goals

The Chair and Member of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts in Fiji, the Hon. Ashneel Sudhakar MP, and the Hon. Aseri Radrodro MP respectively shared their experiences and facilitated a discussion on ensuring SDGs are met and holding the government to account.

Challenges and Opportunities for PACs in Small Legislatures

The Hon. Juan Paul Watterson SHK, PAC Chair and Speaker of the House of Keys in the Isle of Man and the Hon. Ezzard Miller MLA, Chair of the Cayman Islands PAC also shared their experiences and

discussed issues of resourcing, working with national audit offices, and effective ways of holding governments to account.

Engaging the Public

Clare Cozens, Second Clerk of the Exiting the EU Committee and Robert Baldry, Senior Engagement Officer of Select Committees, both from the UK House of Commons, spoke about the different ways they work to engage with the public. Clare spoke about a series of visits to UK regions to improve political engagement and awareness amongst students and young people and Robert spoke about wider outreach team by select committees and highlighted the use of significant events as a way to engage with the public, such as around anniversaries of laws that have been passed.

UK Public Accounts Committee hearing

The Workshop concluded with a live viewing of the Public Accounts Committee. The hearing itself was on Thameslink Programme. The delegates then had a unique opportunity to meet and engage with Dominic Stockbridge, second clerk to the PAC.

Conclusion

Delegates reflected on their experiences over the week and discussed what they plan to do when they go back to their parliaments and committees and were awarded certificates, photographs are attached to this email.

Thursday 7th December

CAPAC Conference

Welcome Keynote Address

Meg Hillier MP, Chair of the UK PAC welcomed the 1st Commonwealth Association of Public Accounts Committee. She expressed her excitement about having CAPAC as a group for international collaboration and to engage different perspectives.

CAPAC Keynote Address

The Hon. Joseph Fenech Adami MP, Chair of the CAPAC Executive Committee and Chair of the Malta PAC expressed his delight with the creation of the association so members can build on what they have in common and learn from each other. He outlined hopes for PACs to become more relevant in the international community, emphasising their significance now, more than ever before.

PAC Experiences and CAPAC Principles

Delegates shared their experiences from their respective PACs and the relevance and prospects of their work in the international community. The session was introduced by two presentations by David Christopherson (Canada PAC) and James Mathenge from the Parliament of Kenya.

Ian Paul Bajada, a Research Analyst from the House of Representatives in Malta, then presented the CAPAC Principles. The document was later adopted unanimously by the Conference.

General Meeting

The General meeting was held after suspended being for 15 minutes due to lack of quorum. Application from three new members (Seychelles, The Bahamas, Zambia) and one associate member (Turks and Caicos) were considered and approved by the General Meeting. The election of the Executive Committee took place and the following members were elected;

Dean Smith (Australia)
David Christopherson (Canada)
James Klutse Avedzi (Ghana)
Ashneel Sudhakar (Fiji)
Joseph Fenech Adami (Malta)
Mohammed Azam Kham Swati (Pakistan)
Koni Iguan (Papua New Guinea)
Wavel Ramkalawan (Seychelles)
Michael Foulkes (The Bahamas)
Meg Hillier (United Kingdom)
Howard Kunda (Zambia)

An urgent Executive meeting was held during the break to elect the three posts of the Executive Committee as outlined in the Constitution. Hon. Meg Hillier was elected Chairpersons, Hon James Klutse Avedzi Vice Chair and Hon. David Christopherson Treasurer.

The second half of the conference consisted of three short session on the following topics;

- CAPAC Governance and Structure
- CAPAC Funding and Resources

- CAPAC Scope of Work and Planning

For more information please contact:

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