

PUBLIC RELATIONS AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT SUB (POLICY & RESOURCES) COMMITTEE

Thursday, 19 February 2015

Minutes of the meeting of the Public Relations and Economic Development Sub (Policy & Resources) Committee held at the Guildhall EC2 at 3.00 pm

Present

Members:

Deputy Douglas Barrow (Deputy Chairman)
Roger Chadwick
Simon Duckworth
Stuart Fraser
Wendy Hyde
Oliver Lodge

Jeremy Mayhew
Deputy Catherine McGuinness
Ian Seaton
Tom Sleigh
Sir Michael Snyder
Alderman Sir David Wootton

Officers:

John Barradell	Town Clerk and Chief Executive
Alistair MacLellan	Town Clerk's Department
Linda Cross	Town Clerk's Department
Seth Alker	Town Clerk's Department
Tony Halmos	Director of Public Relations
Maja Erceg	Public Relations Office
Sheldon Hind	Public Relations Office
Adam Maddock	Public Relations Office
Greg Williams	Public Relations Office
Paul Sizeland	Director of Economic Development
Liz Skelcher	Economic Development Office
Isabelle Almeida	Economic Development Office
Paul Double	City Remembrancer
Nigel Lefton	Remembrancer's Department
Michael Johnson	Remembrancer's Department

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Mark Boleat, Deputy Alex Deane, Sophie Fernandes and The Right Honourable the Lord Mayor Alan Yarrow.

2. MEMBERS' DECLARATIONS UNDER THE CODE OF CONDUCT IN RESPECT OF ITEMS ON THE AGENDA

There were no declarations.

3. MINUTES

RESOLVED, that the minutes of the meeting held on 6 November 2014 be approved as a correct record.

Members agreed to vary the order of business so that items relating to the Public Relations Office were considered first.

4. CITY OF LONDON COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY 2015-18

The Director of Public Relations introduced a report on the City of London Corporation's Communications Strategy 2015-18, noting that it had been drafted with the intention of it being shorter and more concise than previous versions. In response to a question from a member he replied that social investment featured in the key message on working in partnership with local communities to increase skills and opportunities for all Londoners.

RESOLVED, that the City of London Communications Strategy 2015-18 be submitted to the Policy and Resources Committee for approval.

5. PUBLIC RELATIONS OFFICE BUSINESS PLAN 2015-16

The Director of Public Relations introduced a report on the Public Relations Business Plan for 2015-16. Several members commented on the nomenclature used to describe risks listed on the departmental risk register, and questioned whether it was appropriate to describe whether it was sensible to aim to arrive at a 'target' risk if sufficient measures had been taken to mitigate that risk. The Director of Public Relations responded that the nature of public relations meant that a risk could never be fully mitigated, and that the risk register was instead intended to demonstrate the steps taken to first identify then deal with a given risk.

In response to a query from a member regarding key performance indicators, the Director of Public Relations confirmed that there was a denominator against which to assess the number of business staff voters.

RESOLVED, that the City of London Business Plan 2015-16 be submitted to the Policy and Resources Committee for approval.

6. POLITICAL AND BUSINESS CONTACT PROGRAMME - EVENTS REPORT

Members received a joint report of the Director of Public Relations and Director of Economic Development on recent events in the political and business contact programme.

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7. CITY OF LONDON WARD ELECTIONS

Members received a joint report of the Director of Public Relations and the Electoral Services Manager on City of London Ward Elections. A member queried whether enough emphasis was being given to contacting large businesses to establish whether they were not registered for the business vote as a matter of policy or through not being aware of their entitlement to register electors. Whilst she welcomed the efforts to register electors outlined within the report she noted that it was important that an appropriate point of contact was identified within each business with whom to promote voter registration effectively. Another member queried whether it was necessary to provide the Electoral Services Team with more resources in order to increase the level of voter registration.

The Director of Public Relations replied that work was routinely undertaken to work with large businesses within the City to ensure they were aware of the business vote available to them, but he accepted there was scope for officers to make more effort in identifying appropriate points of contact within each business and ensuring this information was kept up to date. Regarding the level of resources available to the City Occupiers Database, he noted that three members of staff were employed full time in addition to temporary staff employed each year to conduct residential ward canvasses. He noted that the key question was ensuring the overall headline number of voters registered was consistently maintained each year.

A member commented that it was important not to focus on numbers alone. Instead it was important to be aware of the potential perception of the City Corporation being accountable only to 'big business' through the business vote. Another member agreed, and noted that it was important to ensure that business voters represented an accurate demographic of the overall workforce.

Another member argued that the business vote was an important factor that differentiated the City Corporation from other local authorities and it therefore should not be regarded negatively. He agreed that it was important to ensure that business electors were a fair reflection of the composition of the wider workforce.

In response to a question from a member, the Director of Public Relations confirmed that companies and residents moving into completed major developments within the City were contacted to include them on the ward registers.

A member reiterated the point that it was important to ensure particular individuals in appropriate roles were identified as points of contact within large organisations to ensure electoral correspondence was not lost or discounted.

The Director of Public Relations agreed to ensure more emphasis was placed on identifying appropriate points of contact, but noted that efforts to do so could be complicated by factors such as the time of year such an approach was made. He added that it was sometimes the case that businesses were unwilling to engage as they regarded the local services provided by the City Corporation as perfectly adequate.

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8. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OFFICE BUSINESS PLAN 2015-18

Members received a report of the Director of Economic Development regarding the Economic Development Office Business Plan 2015-18. A member expressed his opinion that not enough emphasis was given within the plan to the role of the City Corporation as an authority on economic issues and there was a risk therefore that the City Corporation could be seen to fail in taking the lead in being an authoritative voice on economic issues.

Another member noted that it was important to consider the evolution of the City Corporation's role in setting the debate on economic and regulatory matters. Both TheCityUK and the International Regulatory Strategy Group were positive developments that reflected the City Corporation's role as a representative body with significant convening power. The City Corporation could have chosen to set these two bodies up and then provided them with

minimal support and direction, but the decision had instead been made to support them.

The Director of Economic Development noted that comments thus far touched on common operational issues faced by the Economic Development Office. He noted that he had attended that day an event convened by the City Corporation featuring the Latvian President, a Vice President of the European Commission, and a Treasury Minister. He commented that this was a good example of the convening power of the City Corporation and there was a question therefore over how this convening power was used to best effect. Moreover it was important to ensure that the work the City Corporation embarked upon did not duplicate that undertaken by trade associations.

The Director of Economic Development concluded by noting that he was confident the City Corporation was receiving adequate recognition for the economic development work it was undertaking. A briefing meeting would be convened for members to establish if any further effort could be undertaken to guarantee the City Corporation's continuing success.

A member noted that it was important to consider which aspects of the business plan fell within the remit of the Education Board and requested that the issue be submitted to a future meeting of the Board.

RESOLVED, that the Economic Development Office Business Plan 2015-18 be submitted to the Policy and Resources Committee for approval.

9. **UPDATE ON THE ACTIVITIES OF THE INTERNATIONAL REGULATORY STRATEGY GROUP (IRSG)**

The Director of Economic Development introduced an update on the work of the International Regulatory Strategy Group (IRSG). In response to a comment from a member, he replied that the City Corporation provided input and direction into the work of the IRSG, and evaluated the advice produced to establish whether a particular issue presented an opportunity for further work or not: a good example would be the response to the Fair and Effective Markets Review (FEMR).

In response to a member who noted that the IRSG was an important body that enjoyed a fair amount of influence in its field, another member commented that he was uncertain that the group did the job that it described itself as doing, and questioned the degree of input that members of the City of London Corporation had into its work, such as the recent FEMR response. A member attending committee concurred, noting that financial regulation was an area of interest to her but that her impression of regulatory work at the City Corporation was that it was a 'closed shop' in which members had little opportunity to provide input.

The Director of Economic Development undertook to consider how involvement by members in the work of the IRSG could be increased. He noted that the timeframe for submission to the FEMR had been short, hence any impression that members had been given little opportunity to contribute to the submission. He added that each piece of work was distinct and therefore the scope for member involvement would vary accordingly.

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10. **ENGAGEMENT WITH EUROPEAN POLICYMAKERS SINCE NOVEMBER 2014**

The Director of Economic Development introduced a report on engagement with European policymakers since November 2014. In response to a comment from a member that the detail within the report was scarce, the Director noted that many meetings took place under the Chatham House rule which required non-attribution – and any non-attributed quotes could often be linked with published attendees of a given meeting. Nevertheless he agreed that further detail on the subject, purpose and general outcomes of each meeting could be reported to members in future reports.

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11. **THE GENERAL ELECTION 2015 AND THE CONSTITUTION**

The Remembrancer introduced a report on likely constitutional outcomes in the event of a hung Parliament after the May 2015 election. Members complimented the Remembrancer on the report and requested that the Town Clerk circulate it to wider members of the Court of Common Council for information.

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12. **QUESTIONS ON MATTERS RELATING TO THE WORK OF THE SUB COMMITTEE**

There were no questions.

13. **ANY OTHER BUSINESS THAT THE CHAIRMAN CONSIDERS URGENT**

There was no other business.

The meeting closed at 4.00 pm

Chairman

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