

<b>Committee(s)</b>	<b>Dated:</b>
Public Relations and Economic Development Sub-Committee	12 December 2018
<b>Subject:</b> Sponsorship and Branding of Party-Political Events in Guildhall	<b>Public</b>
<b>Report of:</b> Director of Communications	<b>For Decision</b>
<b>Report author:</b> Eugenie de Naurois, Head of Corporate Affairs	

### Summary

The City of London Corporation has traditionally engaged with policy makers across all parties and with think-tanks of all political persuasions through a variety of channels and activities. The approach taken is a balanced one, so as to ensure cross party support throughout the year.

Some members raised concerns about this practice and requested a report on the sponsoring and use of City of London Corporation branding at party-political events in Guildhall.

This report sets out the law and current practices and requests a Members' decision on supporting party-political events at Guildhall.

### Recommendations

- Members of the Public Relations and Economic Development Sub-Committee are asked to recommend to the Policy and Resources Committee that:-
  - a. The City of London Corporation continue to sponsor events at Guildhall which may have party-political links; and
  - b. The City of London Corporation branding is associated with those events.

### Main Report

#### Background

1. Members requested a report to be presented to them following concerns about the City of London Corporation branding being associated with a party-political event hosted in Guildhall.

2. This led Members to ask for further clarity on the current rules in place for the City of London Corporation political engagement with party-political organisations on the Guildhall estate.
3. This report seeks to summarise the current arrangements in place and asks Members to agree current practices continue.
4. For the purpose of the report it is understood that a 'party-political event' is an event organised in partnership with or sponsoring a third-party organisation or individual which is either affiliated with or clearly supports policies emanating from a specific political party, for example The Fabians or the Centre for Policy Studies (CPS).
5. It can also include an event supporting a political party per se, i.e. The Conservative Party, the Labour Party, etc.

## **Current Position**

### **The Law**

6. According to the legal framework, the starting point is the Local Government Act 1986 ("the Act") which prohibits a local authority from issuing political publicity. The Act applies to the City of London Corporation in its capacity as local authority, police authority and port health authority only. It does not therefore cover City's Cash activities.
7. Section 2 of the Act prohibits a local authority from publishing any material which in whole or in part appears to be intended to affect support for a political party.
8. "Publish" is very widely defined as any communication in any form to the public or a section of it. It therefore covers not only traditional publicity but all forms of communication.
9. In determining whether material is prohibited regard must be had to, timing, content and style, target audience, likely impact and in particular whether it refers to a political party, a person associated with a party or a point of political controversy which is identifiable as the view of one party and not another.
10. In addition, a local authority may not give "financial or other assistance" to a person to publish material which it cannot publish itself.
11. A number of points arise:
  - Motive is not decisive – the test is whether it appears in whole or in part to be intended to affect political support (which can be positively or negatively).
  - Timing can be key – what may be unlawful the week before an election may not be unlawful the week afterwards.
  - Providing material assistance to another to issue prohibited material is also prohibited.

12. An authority who acts in breach of S.2 acts unlawfully and is amenable to judicial review. This could result, for example, in an injunction preventing publication or further publication.
13. The predominant part of the Guildhall estate is funded by City's Cash, with the exception of the Art Gallery and the Old Magistrates Court which means there should be minimal legal risk for the City Corporation to be hosting or partnering with an organisation with party affiliations, pending the 'motive' and 'timing' can be strategically justified.

## **The Practice**

14. Previously it has been held that it is not deemed to be in the interest of the organisation to support overtly political events. For example, a request to hold a debate between Sadiq Khan and Zac Goldsmith was turned down as it would have provided material assistance to both of them to issue political messages and likely to attract criticism from other candidates.
15. However, as part of the City Corporation's engagement programme it has traditionally sponsored smaller-scale events with groups with party-political affiliations, at Guildhall.
16. This has meant partnering with/supporting think tanks or similar entities across the political spectrum throughout the year. This may take the shape of supporting a policy analysis, a piece of research or an event.
17. It is the practice that most events the City Corporation are sponsoring be held in the Guildhall as this forms a key part of the type of support the City Corporation may provide.
18. It is also the practice that as part of the City Corporation's financial sponsorship, its logo should be clearly exposed alongside the partnering organisation.
19. This follows City Corporation's activities at annual party conferences where the City of London Corporation logo will be seen alongside either specific think tanks and/or near party political branding according to the party's conference in question. Examples include having our logo on an invitation alongside the logo of the partner organisation on a banner at an event, usually at the entrance of the venue or near the speakers.
20. It was agreed on 3rd May 2018 by the Policy and Resources Committee, that the City Corporation's engagement with think-tanks is beneficial to the organisation if it takes place on a strategic basis. Any engagement focuses on mapping the City's interests and those of the think-tanks to identify greater collaboration.
21. Members are asked to note that all partnerships/sponsorships which exceed £10,000 are under the auspices of the Policy and Resources Committee.
22. It has traditionally been the view that proactive engagement and focused relationship-building with organisations of relevance to the City Corporation's

priorities will enhance our visibility, enable us to contribute effectively to the policy debate and positively contribute to our political engagement programme.

23. It has also been the view that partnerships and sponsorships provide key opportunities to engage with policy-makers on key issues of concern, by facilitating events, meetings and occasions for policy discussion. It also enables the City Corporation to promote and participate to the policy-making process and debate.

## **Proposals**

24. Members are therefore asked to agree that:

- The City of London Corporation continues to sponsor events at Guildhall which may have party-political links
- The City of London Corporation branding is associated with those events

### **Eugenie de Naurois**

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