

<b>Committee(s):</b> Public Relations and Economic Development Sub-Committee	<b>Date(s):</b> 11 February 2021
<b>Subject:</b> Corporate Affairs Update	<b>Public</b>
<b>Report of:</b> Bob Roberts, Director of Communications	<b>For Information</b>
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### Summary

This report provides an update of the Corporate Affairs Team's activities in supporting the City of London Corporation's strategic political engagement.

Since the last report in January the focus has continued to be on responding to the worsening COVID 19 pandemic and the impact of lockdown on the City and the wider business sector. We have urged the Government to keep the public health measures under evidence-based review, calling for support for businesses and cultural institutions as well as ensuring we are doing all we can to speed the recovery. Much of this activity has involved working closely with London stakeholders including the GLA, London Councils and the 32 London Boroughs.

Following the UK's departure from the EU single market at the end of 2020, much of the activity detailed in the report has been focussed on engaging with the Government and political stakeholders to ensure the financial and professional services sector is able to shape the UK's new regulatory regime. Looking ahead to the rest of 2021, the Corporate Affairs Team has been focussed on preparing for the year's key inter-governmental events – the UK's Presidency of the G7 and the UN Climate Change Summit (COP26) in Glasgow in November.

The activities documented in this report focus largely on those led by the Corporate Affairs Team, but they are delivered with the support of several teams across the Corporation for which we are grateful. Each area of activity is linked back to the objectives outlined in the Communications Business Plan. The timeframe of this report spans the period lapsed between the previous and current meetings of this Sub Committee.

### Recommendation(s)

Members are asked to note this report.

## **Main Report**

### **Domestic Political Engagement**

#### **Ministerial and opposition spokespeople engagement**

1. The Corporate Affairs Team has delivered the following activity to engage and build relationships with ministers, opposition spokespeople and their advisers during this period:
  - a. Worked with colleagues in the Innovation and Growth team to write the City Corporation's submission ahead of the Budget in March.
  - b. Arranged a letter to the City Minister about the negotiations with the EU on the Memorandum of Understanding.
  - c. Helped with the joint lobbying effort with neighbouring boroughs on the amount of the discretionary grant funding received from the Government.
  - d. Organised letters of congratulations following new ministerial and peerage appointments.
  - e. Sent a letter to Chair of the Northern Research Group of MPs, Jake Berry, suggesting a meeting on the financial and professional services sector's role in facilitating levelling-up across the UK.
  - f. Invited the City Minister to attend the forthcoming launch of the RegTech report and worked with the Regulatory Affairs team on political engagement on it.
  - g. Engaged with the Skills Minister, Digital Minister and their opposition party shadows on the relevant recommendations of the Benchmarking report.
  - h. Continued preparations for political engagement on the Total Tax report and the Report of the Culture and Commerce Commission.
  - i. Collated briefing for the Policy Chair and Lord Mayor's meeting with Lord Grimstone.
  - j. Supported the Regulatory Affairs team with their preparations for the launch of the Trade Ecosystem report, where the keynote speaker is Trade Minister Greg Hands MP.
  - k. Continued discussions with think tanks including Onward and the Institute for Government on partnerships for forthcoming events.
  - l. Continued with preparations for the City Corporation's involvement at the autumn party conferences and considered options for City Corporation events at the 2021 spring conferences.
2. Following the decision of the Policy and Resources Committee to accept the recommendations of the Tackling Racism Taskforce to remove and re-site statues within the Guildhall associated with slavery, the Chair of Policy and Resources has written to Robert Jenrick, the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government and Oliver Dowden, Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport to brief them on the reasons for the decision.

#### **London engagement**

3. The Corporate Affairs Team seeks to actively maintain and develop the Corporation's engagement with political stakeholders, think tanks and other bodies across London. As part of this work, the team have:
  - a. Met regularly with Nickie Aiken, Member of Parliament for the Cities of London and Westminster
  - b. Grow and build on relations with Leaders and political advisers across the 32 London Boroughs, supporting the Chair of Policy and Resources in this engagement. Recent engagement included recent meetings with the Leaders of Barnet, Bexley, Camden, RBKC, Brent, Bromley, Lambeth, Hackney and Islington. Meetings with other Borough leaders will take place in the coming weeks and months
  - c. Provided briefing for the Policy Chair for her pan-London COVID meetings, including the London Transition Board, London Recovery Board, the London COVID Business Forum and the Business Reopening Strategy Group.
  - d. Ensure close working relationship with the GLA and London Councils, ensuring that they are appropriately updated on the City Corporation's work.
  - e. Organised a letter to pan-London political stakeholders highlighting the wider recommendations of the Tackling Racism Taskforce Report.
  - f. Continued to provide additional communications advice to officers and the operational working group established to manage the removal and re-siting of unsuitable statues identified by the P&R report.
  - g. Continued to engage and support the COLC and Guy Fox Publishing project to commission a Children's book on the City of London
  - h. Provided support to the Superintendent of Epping Forrest on political engagement with Stella Creasy MP regarding anti-social behaviour in Epping Forrest
  - i. The chair of the Hampstead Heath, Highgate Wood & Queen's Park committee corresponded with political stakeholders relating to charges for use of the Hampstead Heath ponds

## **Sport**

4. The Sport Engagement Manager continues to oversee research work being carried out by partners into the impact of the pandemic on sport and leisure in the City and the importance of this provision to any recovery. He is also managing the research project led by Ernst and Young looking into the potential economic and soft power benefits to the UK of hosting major sport events. It is hoped the findings will be presented to Members at the next meeting of the Sub-Committee.
5. Plans for future sport related celebrations are also being developed, including events at Guildhall. However, it is recognised that there may be some potential for disruption this year owing to the pandemic. Other potential areas of sport related work for the Sport Engagement Manager to oversee this year are being developed, including the role of sport and physical activity in the City's recovery plans. A full update will be provided to Members on these proposals and future sport engagement activity at the next meeting of this Sub-Committee.

## **Priorities for the next quarter**

6. Priorities for the Corporate Affairs Team over the next four months are:
  - a. Continuing a plan of engagement for the Policy Chair and Lord Mayor with key Ministers, political spokespeople, devolved and regional government leaders across all parties.
  - b. Supporting the Policy Chair in her engagement with London Government - Mayor and borough leaders - focussing on speeding London's recovery.
  - c. To consider opportunities for physical events when possible at the 2021 Autumn Party Conferences.
  - d. Support the Corporation with political intelligence and relationship building as the UK changes its formal relationship with the EU and moves to increase its engagement with international rule setting organisations such as the WTO and in anticipation of the UK's role as Chair of the G7 in 2021.

## **Corporate & Strategic Implications**

7. Engaging with political stakeholders, organising events associated with the party-political conferences and working with the thinktanks and other third-party organisations to produce events and associated policy reports provides an opportunity for the Corporation to engage with key audiences on important global, national and local government issues and to demonstrate the Corporation's involvement in relevant debates. Sponsorship and political engagement would also help deliver outcomes 2 – 10 of the 2018-23 Corporate Plan.

## **Implications**

8. The Corporate Affairs Team has an established budget for all party conference and engagement related activity. Any think-tank memberships and sponsorship of ad-hoc policy projects are currently funded via the Policy Initiatives Fund according to decisions of the Policy and Resources Committee.

## **Appendices**

None

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