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| Committee | Dated: |
| Public Relations/Economic Development Sub | 28 May 2015 |
| Subject: City of London Corporation 2015 Party Conference Activity | Public |
| Report of: Director of Public Relations | For Decision |

Summary

This report sets out the background to the City of London Corporation's activity at the annual political party conferences and gives a summary of the proposed programme of activities in 2015 for the Liberal Democrat Party Conference in Bournemouth, the Labour Party Conference in Brighton, the Conservative Party Conference in Manchester and the Scottish National Party Conference (the location of which is still to be determined). The partner organisations for the fringe partners will be CentreForum, Policy Network and the Centre for Policy Studies at the Liberal Democrat, Labour and Conservative conferences respectively. In addition private dinners will be organised solely by the City Corporation. The report additionally considers dinner invitation lists, Member attendance and Officer attendance.

Recommendations

Members are recommended to:

- i. confirm the proposed overall programme for the 2015 conferences; and
- ii. agree arrangements for Member attendance at the conferences

Main Report

Background

1. The UK political party conferences date back to the beginning of the twentieth century. Originally they took place in London but then moved to provincial seaside resorts and recently to major urban centres. The conferences originally played a role in policy formulation but this function has declined significantly. The conferences now exist

predominantly to provide platforms for leading politicians and as a money-making exercise for the respective parties.

2. The City of London Corporation began attending the major party conferences in 1994, initially with small, private dinners and then also with fringe meetings from 1997. This formula has continued over recent years with a fringe meeting on the Monday evening followed by a private dinner, which is attended by representatives of the Policy and Resources Committee and relevant Officers. The party conferences are a particularly useful part of the City Corporation's political contact programme as the majority of its key contacts are found in the same place at the same time. The conferences also allow the City Corporation to maintain its presence in a number of strategically significant policy debates.

Current Position

2015 Conferences

3. This year's Party Conferences run across three weeks, from the end of September through to the beginning of October. The Liberal Democrat Party Conference is taking place in Bournemouth, 4-8 October, the Labour Party Conference is taking place in Brighton, 21-24 September and the Conservative Party Conference is taking place in Manchester, 28 September-1 October. The Scottish National Party's (SNP's) Conference is due to take place in November with precise arrangements still to be confirmed.
4. The current programme of activity at the respective party conferences is as follows:

| <u>Liberal Democrat Party Conference, Bournemouth</u> | | |
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| Monday 21 September | | Members travel to Bournemouth by train. |
| | 18:00- 19:15 | Fringe meeting in partnership with the Centre Forum at the Royal Bath Hotel. |
| | 20:00- 22:00 | Private dinner at the Royal Bath Hotel. |

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| | 22.30 | Members return to London. |
| <u>Labour Party Conference, Brighton</u> | | |
| Monday 28 September | | Members travel to Brighton by train. |
| | 18:00- 19:15 | Fringe meeting in partnership with Policy Network at the Old Ship Hotel. |
| | 20:00- 22:00 | Private dinner at Hotel du Vin. |
| | 22:30 | Members to return to London. |
| <u>Conservative Party Conference, Manchester</u> | | |
| Monday 5 October | | Members travel to Manchester by train. |
| | 18:00- 19:15 | Fringe meeting in partnership with the Centre for Policy Studies at Manchester Town Hall. |
| | 20.00 - 22:00 | Private dinner at Manchester Art Gallery. |
| Tuesday 6 October | AM | Members return to London. |

5. Given the results of the 2015 General Election, it is reasonable to give serious consideration to the City Corporation's attendance at this autumn's Scottish National Party conference. The timing and the venue of the Conference are still to be determined, but the current proposal is to organise a business focussed private dinner with a partner organisation such as the IPPR's new Scottish operation.
6. The invitation lists for external guests at the City Corporation's party conference dinners are drawn from various political audiences relevant to

the City of London, including Government ministers, Opposition front bench spokespersons, Parliamentarians who are members of relevant select committees, London MPs, London MEPs, MEPs on ECON Committee, London Assembly Members, representatives from the Mayor of London's Office, London Borough Leaders and Borough Group Leaders, parliamentary candidates for London constituencies, parliamentary candidates with an interest in financial services, government advisers and party staffers, and representatives from relevant think tanks. The details of the named individuals in each of these categories which it is proposed to invite are available on request to any Member of the Sub-Committee.

Attendance

7. Members play a pivotal role as representatives and hosts at the City Corporation's party conference activities, though this is balanced by the continuing desire that expenditure on activities is as cost-effective as possible. In 2014 attendance was open to all Members of the PR-ED Sub-Committee, while, as in previous years, other Members attending party conferences in other capacities were also welcome to attend the dinners. The Sub-Committee is asked to agree the same arrangements for Members to attend the 2015 conferences.
8. Considerable effort continues to be made to minimise the number of officers attending the party conferences on behalf of the City Corporation. At present, three officers from the PR Office attend each of the party conferences. Any reduction in the number of officers attending would have a significant impact on the City Corporation's ability to deliver its programme of activities. In addition, one Officer from the Remembrancer's Office attends in order to monitor the Conference proceedings overall, including the fringe events. The Town Clerk and Remembrancer typically attend at least two of the conferences.

Conclusion

9. Members are asked to confirm the proposed plans for the 2015 party conferences and to agree the recommendations concerning the attendance of Members.

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