

Liberal Democrat conference report

The Liberal Democrat conference took place in Brighton from Saturday 17th to Tuesday 20th September. City Corporation representatives were in attendance throughout. The City Corporation's organised events and main activities took place on Monday 19th September.

Meeting with Baroness Kramer

The Chairman and Deputy Chairman of Policy & Resources met Baroness Susan Kramer (the Lib Dem Treasury spokesman) on the morning of Monday 19th September to discuss the City Corporation's work on Brexit.

Roundtable event

At 11.30am on Monday morning, the Policy Chairman hosted an invitation-only roundtable event with the Education Policy Institute on the topic *How can we best promote employability among young people?*

This was attended by representatives from the House of Lords, local government and the education sector, including Baroness Sue Garden, Baroness Barbara Janke, David Laws (chairman of the Education Policy Institute), Sir Simon Hughes and Matthew Patten (chief executive of the Mayor's Fund for London). Topics covered included weaknesses in employment and 'soft' skills and lack of employment experience among many young people, a lack of focus on the half of young people who do not go to university, challenges to schools in rural areas and the difficulty of measuring outcomes. The importance of teachers willing to engage with businesses and of businesses focusing attention not only on the areas where they were based, but also where their employees lived, was emphasised. Within London in particular, some guests emphasised the need to look beyond inner London and for the City Corporation and businesses to engage with all parts of the capital.

Feedback was sought from participants afterwards. Positive feedback was received on this event from attendees. People felt the organisation was good and the event well-attended, with a good range of participants. Some suggestions were made for improvements to similar events in future to enable a more sharply focused and ordered discussion.

Business Lunch

The Policy Chairman and Deputy Chairman attended the Liberal Democrat business lunch, organised with Bloomberg Tradebook and hosted by Nick Clegg MP. Nick Clegg called on businesses to make their case heard during the negotiation process and expressed gratitude to those present for continuing to engage with the party.

Meeting with Caroline Pidgeon AM

At 4pm on Monday afternoon, Deputy Catherine McGuinness met Caroline Pidgeon, the sole Liberal Democrat London Assembly Member, and discussed a range of London issues and the City Corporations' work across a number of areas including education and the City of London academies, the City of London Police, the Old Bailey, and the Cultural hub. The work on Bank junction was also discussed. There was also a wider discussion on devolution, elections, education and the policies of the new Mayor of London.

Dinner

At 8pm on Monday evening, the Policy Chairman hosted an informal invitation-only dinner at the Hotel du Vin. This was attended by 36 guests, including Tom Brake MP (the only Lib Dem MP representing a London constituency), Baroness Kramer (Treasury spokesperson), Lord Shipley (local government spokesperson), Ruth Dombey (leader of London Borough of Sutton), James Kempton (chairman of Ofsted) and Gerald Vernon-Jackson (Local Government Association vice chairman). Six City Corporation Members and six officers attended.

The main topic discussed at the dinner was the aftermath of the EU referendum and Brexit.

We sought feedback from Members, senior officers and external guests who attended. We received positive feedback on the organisation, the venue, the table planning and the quality of the meal. Most of those consulted agreed the dinner should be used as a platform to set out some of the City Corporation's policy positions and priorities, and some felt more could be done to achieve this in future events, possibly by having a more formal or structured discussion format or more detailed speeches. All those consulted and others who offered feedback considered the dinner a good or very good event overall.