

Committee(s)	Dated:
Policy & Resources – for decision Public Relations and Economic Development Sub (Policy & Resources)	16 Feb 2017
Subject: Think tank review and memberships, 2017	Public
Report of: Director of Economic Development	For Decision
Report author: Eugenie de Naurois, Head of Corporate Affairs	

Summary

- As part of the City Corporation's political engagement programme, the Corporate Affairs Team has reviewed the City of London Corporation's work with and membership of think tanks. Building on our long-standing programme of working closely with over 35 think tanks over the past 15 years, nine of which the City Corporation is a member. The purpose of the review was to:
 - refresh our approach to working with think tanks to ensure that we have the maximum impact with these partnerships.
 - test whether we are members of the right think tanks in the given context.
- It is clear from the outcome of the review that the City Corporation's engagement with think tanks is beneficial to the organisation. The intention is that future engagement will focus on mapping the City's interest and those of the think tanks to identify greater collaboration. The Corporate Affairs Team will also continue to ensure that a balance is maintained politically. In addition it is proposed that the City Corporation maintains its membership of the seven think tanks referred to below and that it ceases its membership of two of them.

Recommendation

Members are asked to agree to:

- The updated approach to working with think tanks which will be based on proactively searching out opportunities aligned to the Corporation's priorities.
- Agree to renew the City of London Corporation's corporate membership of the seven think tanks listed below at a total cost of £56,800, to be met from your Committee's Policy Initiatives Fund(£25,300 from 2016/2017 and £31,500 from 2017/2018) categorised under the Events section of the Fund and charged to City's Cash:
 - o Centre for the Study of Financial Innovation

- Chatham House
 - European Policy Forum
 - Institute for Public Policy Research
 - Local Government Information Unit
 - Reform
 - Whitehall and Industry Group (WIG)
3. Agree to discontinue the corporate membership of:
- The New Local Government Network
 - Foreign Policy Centre

This does not preclude working with either of these think tanks on an ad hoc basis.

4. A think tank grid is available at members' request. It summarises the think tanks we are currently members of, those with whom we work with on an ad hoc basis and those we could work in the future.

Main Report

Background

1. In October 2015, the Public Relations & Economic Development Sub Committee agreed that the City Corporation's relationships with think tanks should be reviewed, and that this review should consider existing engagement, the policy context, policy themes and cost. At that time, the City Corporation had taken the decision to discontinue its corporate membership of two think tanks, Centre Forum (now the Education Policy Institute) and Demos, bringing the number of think tanks it was a member of down from ten to eight.
2. The City Corporation has worked with over 35 different think tanks across the political spectrum and covering a broad range of topics, over the last 20 years. This costs £250k per year.
3. In addition, the City Corporation is a corporate member of eight think tanks. This costs £78k per year with benefits such as:
 - a. strengthening relationships with the think tank
 - b. inputting into its areas of focus
 - c. invitations for Members and officers to attend high level events
 - d. copies of publications and policy briefings.

Current Position

4. The Corporate Affairs team has undertaken a thorough review of the City Corporation's engagement with and membership of think tanks over the last year. This included:
 - a. meeting all the think tanks of which the Corporation is a corporate member of and some of those which we regularly work with.
 - b. analysing the work and relationships we have with those think tanks we work with less frequently.

- c. understanding think tanks' priorities for the year(s) ahead
 - d. gauging the best relationship the City Corporation can have with them to ensure it is relevant, proactive and beneficial to both parties
5. We also examined all the think tanks of which the City Corporation was a member in 2016/2017. The City Corporation was a corporate member of the following think tanks:
- a. **Centre for the Study of Financial Innovation** -specialising in organising debates on the financial services sector and regulatory issues.
 - b. **Chatham House** - leading foreign policy institute, providing research and organising events on international affairs with senior political and diplomatic figures.
 - c. **European Policy Forum** - aiming to improve the quality of policy ideas in the UK and EU, particularly in the financial, energy, telecoms and other regulated sectors.
 - d. **Foreign Policy Centre** - progressive foreign affairs think tank specialising in issues pertaining to Africa.
 - e. **Institute for Public Policy Research (IPPR)** - progressive think-tank, aiming to produce policy ideas for a fair, democratic and sustainable world.
 - f. **Local Government Information Unit (LGIU)** - membership organisation for UK local government, providing news bulletins and research reports on local government issues.
 - g. **New local Government Network** - think tank promoting the decentralisation of power, public service reform and enhanced local governance.
 - h. **Reform** - centre-right think tank promoting new directions for public policy based on free market solutions.
 - i. **Whitehall and Industry Group** - a charity which helps leaders in all sectors in the UK come together to discuss mutual challenges, and find the synergies that would help them work more effectively together.
6. Following the City Corporation's decision to sponsor a major IPPR project, the Corporate Affairs Team negotiated a 50% discount in the City Corporation's membership subscription to IPPR over the next two years.

Proposals

7. Following the review it is clear that the Corporation's engagement with think tanks has strong benefits for the City of London. The four benefits of this programme are to:
- a. Strengthen visibility for the Corporation's contribution.
 - b. Provide Members with the opportunity for excellent networking.
 - c. Input into the policy agenda on issues of importance to the Corporation and its stakeholders.
 - d. Support think tanks in their role as a vital contributor to political debate.
6. In leading the engagement with think tanks, Corporate Affairs proposes the following approach:

- a. Shift the focus towards an annual cycle of proactive engagement with think tanks to map their interests for the year ahead, our interests, and identify where we can best work together.
- b. Continue to be agile, by welcoming unsolicited ideas as well.
- c. Ensure a broad balance of think tanks that we work with - both thematically and politically.
- d. Insist on excellence, both as a collaborative delivery partner and the quality of their products/events.
- e. Ensure that we are getting the best value for money.

If Members agree, this will be the framework for our think tank engagement going forward.

13. In terms of memberships, these offer an effective means of supporting think tanks and accessing benefits. Payment is due in 2017 to all these think tanks in order to renew the City Corporation's membership for 2017/2018. In view of the review and the current political and economic context it is proposed that the City Corporation renew its membership of the following seven think tanks for 2017 for a total cost of **£56,800**:

- a. Centre for the Study of Financial Innovation - £5,000
- b. Chatham House - £14,000
- c. European Policy Forum - £7,500
- d. IPPR - £6,300
- e. Local Government Information Unit - £10,000
- f. Reform - £9,000
- g. WIG - £5,000

15. It is proposed that the City Corporation discontinues its membership of the following think tanks for 2017:

- a. Foreign Policy Centre
- b. New Local Government Network

In both cases, while we intend to continue to work with these think tanks on specific projects or events, the review has highlighted that the costs of membership outweigh the benefits.

Corporate & Strategic Implications

16. Proactive engagement and focused relationship-building with think tanks of relevance to the City Corporation's priorities will enhance our visibility, enable us to contribute effectively to the policy debate and contribute positively to our political engagement programme.

17. Renewing the membership of those key think tanks will provide the City Corporation with opportunities to engage with government on key issues of concern, by facilitating events, meetings and occasions for policy discussion. It will also enable the City Corporation to promote and participate to the policy-making process and debate.

Financial Implications

18. It is proposed that the required funding of £56,800 is drawn from your Policy Initiatives Fund (£25,300 from 2016/17 and £31,500 from 2017/18), categorised under the Events section of the Fund and charged to City's Cash. The current uncommitted balance available within your Committee's Policy Initiatives Fund 2016/17 amounts to £117,400 and for 2017/18 £505,300 prior to any allowance being made for any other proposals on today's agenda.

Conclusion

18. Adopting a new approach to think tanks will strengthen the Corporation's political engagement programme, and allow it to contribute more effectively to the debate. Renewing seven think tank memberships for 2017 will contribute to the improvement of the City Corporation's targeted engagement with Government and participation in policy-making in relevant policy areas.

Eugenie de Naurois

Head of Corporate Affairs, Economic Development Office

T: 020 7332 1942

E: eugenie.denaurois@cityoflondon.gov.uk