

Committee Public Relations and Economic Development Sub Policy and Resources	Dated: 16 February 2017
Subject: City of London Corporation – Recommendations for 2017 Party Conferences	Public
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Summary

The City of London Corporation delivered a programme of strategic political engagement at four party conferences in 2016 – Liberal Democrat, Labour, Conservative and Scottish National Party (SNP). This report provides an opportunity for Members to review the 2016 programme and approve recommendations for the 2017 conference season.

As in recent years, large dinners were held at the 2016 Liberal Democrat, Labour and Conservative conferences. In addition, private roundtables were organised at all three, marking a change in recent years, when larger public fringe events were held. There was an additional public fringe, however, at the Conservative conference, organised with Open Europe. At the SNP conference, the City Corporation did not host an event, but was represented by Deputy Catherine McGuinness, who attended a number of roundtables, a dinner with the Institute for Public Policy Research and held a number of bilateral meetings with SNP politicians.

Recommendation

1. It is recommended to:
 - a. continue hosting events at the Liberal Democrat, Labour and Conservative conference, with slight changes to the format;
 - b. extend activity at the SNP conference.

Main Report

Background

2. A brief summary of the City Corporation's activity at the 2016 party conferences:
 - **Liberal Democrat:** Organised a private roundtable with the Education Policy Institute, hosted a private dinner and organised bilateral meetings for the Chairman of Policy and Resources.
 - **Labour:** Organised a private roundtable with the Smith Institute, hosted a private dinner and organised bilateral meetings and appearances on panels at fringe events for the Chairman of Policy and Resources.
 - **Conservative:** Organised a private roundtable with Bright Blue, a public fringe event with Open Europe, hosted a private dinner and organised bilateral meetings and appearances on panels at fringe events for the Chairman of Policy and Resources.
 - **Scottish National Party:** The Deputy Policy Chairman attended on behalf of the Corporation and participated in private roundtables, a private dinner and held bilateral meetings with key political stakeholders.

3. An evaluation of the City Corporation's programme of activity at the four party conferences in 2016 can be found in Appendix A.

Proposals

4. Similar to 2016, it is proposed that the Chairman of Policy and Resources attends four party conferences: Liberal Democrat, Labour, Conservative and Scottish National Party.
5. For each conference, it is essential to identify the right activity the City Corporation should undertake, which provides the most effective opportunities for strategic political engagement with each political party.
6. The Corporate Affairs team has evaluated the programme of engagement undertaken in 2016 and sought feedback from guests at City Corporation events. Based on the latter, it is recommended that the 2017 season follows the following format:

2017 Liberal Democrat Party Conference, 16-20 September, Bournemouth:

Context: The Liberal Democrats are well represented in the House of Lords and MPs. Because they are active in the on-going Brexit debate and are have a clear pro-EU stance, it is important to continue engaging and ensure our messages are relayed.

Proposal: to host a private roundtable in partnership with a think-tank and independently host a smaller private lunch or dinner.

2016 Evaluation: Both events organised were well-attended politically. The City Corporation's presence at Liberal Democrat Conference was noted. While the Liberal Democrats are very vocal on Brexit, they still have only nine MPs. It is felt a smaller dinner, with a more select, focused guest list, can deliver effective engagement.

2017 Labour Party Conference, 24-27 September, Brighton:

Context: The City Corporation is engaging with Labour Party figures, both inside and outside the Shadow Cabinet. While the Opposition Frontbench is leading Labour's scrutiny of the Government's Brexit plans, a number of senior Labour MPs, many who are former Ministers, hold prominent select committee positions and play a leading role in Parliament's scrutiny of Brexit negotiations.

Proposal: to host a private roundtable in partnership with a think-tank and independently host an evening drinks reception, followed by a small, private dinner.

2016 Evaluation: The traditional dinner was successful. However it is proving difficult to bring in new political invitees. Given the nature of Labour conferences, an informal drinks reception may prove to be more useful in engaging with key Labour figures.

2017 Conservative Party Conference, 1-4 October, Manchester:

Context: The City Corporation is engaging with Government Ministers to outline the concerns of the financial services sector in Brexit negotiations. Party conference provides additional opportunities to engage with government and business and to ensure our presence is felt in the policy debate.

Proposal: to host a private roundtable in partnership with a think-tank, a public fringe event in partnership with another think-tank, and to independently host a private large-scale dinner.

2016 Evaluation: This format worked well in 2016. The City Corporation is well known at this annual event, so should maintain its presence. There was a very high level of attendance among senior business figures also.

2017 Scottish National Party Conference, *dates and location TBA:*

Context: Scotland voted to remain in the European Union at the Referendum. This has led to repeated calls from First Minister Nicola Sturgeon for a separate deal that retains membership of the Single Market for Scotland. This has raised the prospect of a second independence referendum. There is widespread interest in the SNP, corroborated by the high level of business attendance at the 2016 Conference.

Proposal: to host a small, private roundtable and continue with a programme of bilateral meetings and appearances at roundtables.

2016 Evaluation: this was a very useful event and the Deputy Policy Chairman formed many relationships with financial services practitioners based in Scotland. With regards to Brexit and financial services, there were shared concerns and our presence there was noted and appreciated by a number of SNP political figures..

7. The City Corporation will also undertake a programme of political engagement at the four aforementioned party conferences for the Chairman of Policy and Resources in 2017. This will include at each conference: bilateral meetings with relevant political and business figures, attendance at private roundtables, where issues of key importance for the City Corporation will be discussed and speaking opportunities at other open fringe events.

Conclusion

8. Members are asked to approve recommendations for the City of London Corporation's programme of engagement at the 2017 party conferences.

Appendix

A. Evaluation of City Corporation activity at party conferences

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