

Committee(s): Public Relations and Economic Development Sub-Committee – For information	Date(s): 17 November 2020
Subject: Corporate Affairs update	Public
Report of: Bob Roberts, Director of Communications	For Information
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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.

The focus over the past two months has been on engagement to help recovery from the pandemic, standing up for the Square Mile and warning that the economy should not be allowed to hibernate through winter.

We have also been able to make significant engagements on the Climate Action Strategy, the importance of creative industries and ensured our sports engagement strategy has moved forward.

The Corporate Affairs Team coordinates and organises the City Corporation’s political engagement and supports both Members and Officers in its delivery. The focus of this report is on the activity undertaken by the Lord Mayor and Policy Chair, including activities at recent party-political conferences which members will be interested to note included events with majority-female panels.

The activities documented in this report focus largely on those led by the Corporate Affairs Team but 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

Overview

1. Based on developments in the domestic political and economic landscape and in line with the City Corporation's corporate priorities, the Corporate Affairs Team has focused its activity in the areas of engagement listed below. This activity has been significantly affected by the lockdown and continued restrictions on face-to-face engagement due to the COVID 19 pandemic. Where possible mass gatherings have either been postponed or modified into an online format and one-to-one engagement has instead been held via video conferencing applications.

Domestic Political Engagement

Ministerial and opposition spokespeople engagement

2. 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. Provided briefing and support for the Policy Chair for her meeting with the Economic Secretary to the Treasury, John Glen MP
 - b. Provided briefing for the Policy Chair's ongoing regular engagement with the No.10 adviser Alex Hickman
 - c. Contributed to briefing for the Lord Mayor's meeting with the Minister for the Middle East and North Africa, James Cleverly MP
 - d. Co-ordinated engagement with relevant government ministers and opposition spokespeople over City Corporation reports on tax and immigration
 - e. Worked with the Innovation and Growth Directorate to send a submission to the Government's Comprehensive Spending Review
 - f. Commenced ongoing engagement with relevant government ministers and opposition spokespeople on the London Recharged report
 - g. Continued briefing and support for the Policy Chair in her role on the London Transition Board, jointly chaired by the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, Robert Jenrick MP, and the Mayor of London, Sadiq Khan.
 - h. Provided briefing and support for the Policy Chair's regular meeting with the Shadow Economic Secretary to the Treasury, Pat McFadden MP, and supported the Policy Chair in writing to newly appointed members of the shadow treasury team
 - i. Managed a City Corporation hosted roundtable on sustainable private finance, which the Policy Chair chaired, as part of our contribution to the IPPR Environmental Justice Commission
 - j. Managed external political engagement relating to the publication of the Climate Action Strategy from the Policy Chair

Engagement with the devolved nations and regions

3. The Corporate Affairs Team has contributed to the ongoing work to engage with the City Corporation's partners around the UK:
 - a. Provided briefing and support for the Policy Chair for her meeting with the Scottish Government Cabinet Secretary for the Economy, Fiona Hyslop MSP
 - b. Provided briefing on the regional tiered COVID-19 system for the Lord Mayor's virtual visit to Leeds and Manchester.

London engagement

4. 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 and continue to:
 - a. Meet regularly with Nickie Aiken, Member of Parliament for the Cities of London and Westminster at both officer level and Policy Chair level.
 - b. Maintain strong links with Unmesh Desai AM, London Assembly for City and East.
 - c. Support the Policy Chair in her membership of the London Recovery Board which is jointly convened by the Chair of London Council Cllr Georgia Gould and the Mayor of London, and supporting the Policy Chair in her role as Vice Chair of London Councils
 - d. Engage with the GLA, updating colleagues within the GLA on cross working and other developments.
 - e. Grow and build on relations with political stakeholders including Leaders and political advisers across the 32 London Boroughs, supporting the Chair of Policy and Resources in this engagement including recent meetings with the Leaders of Bexley and Camden.
 - f. Meet regularly with the Minister for London, updating the Minister on major developments, including the Markets relocation project.
 - g. Close working relationship with London Councils, ensuring that they are appropriately updated on the City Corporation's work.
 - h. Develop and commission think tank reports on areas of interest to the City Corporation.
 - i. Provide up to date COVID-19 related political intelligence to internal colleagues, offering advice and engagement guidance.
 - j. Understand the working of City Corporation colleagues, which may have political implications, opportunities or risks including supporting the Port Health and Markets & Consumer teams in response to changes flowing for the UK's impending departure from the EU's single market.

Think tanks and third-party influencers

5. The Corporate Affairs Team continues to work with think tanks and other third-party influencers:

- a. Arranged sponsorship of the Centre for European Reform's annual Ditchley Conference, this year being held virtually
 - b. Held discussions with a wide range of think tanks to consider projects and partnership opportunities including Bright Blue, Chatham House and others
 - c. Attended several virtual roundtables and events on subject matters of interest to the City Corporation and briefed colleagues on the key points.
6. The team has worked with the Tackling Racism Taskforce to support the launch of a public consultative exercise to assess the future suitability of historic landmarks in the City of London that are connected to slavery and other forms of racism. This forms part of the seven workstreams established by the Taskforce.

2020 Autumn Party Conferences

7. The Corporate Affairs Team coordinated the City Corporation's engagement at three of the four autumn party conferences this year, with the SNP conference to come at the end of November. All have been held virtually due to the pandemic, which meant that the dinners the City Corporation would normally hold were not possible. However, the City Corporation continued its engagement with the political parties in the virtual format through online events.
8. The City Corporation held one event at the Liberal Democrat party conference – a virtual roundtable with the think tank Social Market Foundation on the future of the creative industries: how we can ensure the sector survives and thrives post-Brexit and post-COVID. The Policy Chair was one of the main speakers and spoke about the City Corporation's involvement in culture and the creative industries. Representatives from a cross-section of the creative industries attended, including music, gaming and advertising. The Liberal Democrat business spokesperson Sarah Olney MP attended and gave the party's views.
9. The City Corporation held one event at Labour Party Conference 2020 – a roundtable entitled 'Net-Zero London: Challenges & Opportunities' and was hosted in partnership with the IPPR think tank. The Policy Chair was joined by the shadow Climate Change Minister Matt Pennycook MP, and Deputy Mayor for Environment & Energy, Shirley Rodrigues. The purpose of the roundtable was to discuss how London can work collaboratively to transition to net zero emissions and the value of ensuring business is at the heart of this transition. It was a good opportunity to promote the work of the Climate Action Strategy, particularly how the City would use this landmark action to complement the work of the GLA and London Boroughs. It was also an opportunity to signpost the value of green finance initiatives and the wider involvement of the business community, specifically the FPS sector, in tackling climate change.
10. The Policy Chair also attended the Labour Business Forum Panel event, which was a set-piece virtual discussion with members of the shadow cabinet. Speakers included Anneliese Dodds (Shadow Chancellor), Rachel Reeves (Shadow Cabinet Secretary) and Ed Miliband (Shadow BEIS Secretary). There

was also a host of other Labour frontbenchers, business stakeholders and trade union leaders in attendance. It was an opportunity to raise the value of ESG in the FPS sector, the role of responsible business practices, the work we are doing on re-capitalisation and back to workplace messaging

11. At the Conservative Party conference, the City Corporation held two events. The first was a virtual roundtable on free trade in services, held in conjunction with the Centre for Policy Studies. The Policy Chair spoke along with Trade Minister Greg Hands MP. There were other representatives present from financial services and those with an interest in trade and there was a discussion on the importance of free trade in services as well as the government's approach to trading relationships as the UK leaves the European Union.
12. The second City Corporation event at the Conservative conference was a virtual open fringe panel event held in conjunction with the think tank Onward. The panel consisted of the Policy Chair, the Chief Secretary to the Treasury Rt Hon. Steve Barclay MP, South Ribble MP Katherine Fletcher, the Telegraph economics reporter Lizzy Burden, and it was chaired by South Cambridgeshire MP Anthony Browne: a majority female panel. The discussion was on levelling up not down: London's role in regional economic growth and panellists agreed that the approach should not be to "spread the jam more thinly" but rather to help areas outside of London and the South-East region to grow.
13. Alderman Vincent Keaveny took part in another majority female panel at the Conservative conference representing the Policy Chair at a Law Society event on gender equality in the law. The panel also included the Deputy Speaker of the House of Commons Eleanor Laing MP, the former Minister Helen Grant MP, Iana Vidal from Innovate Finance and it was chaired by Simon Davis, the then President of the Law Society. Discussion focused on how to improve gender equality in the law and in politics and how this had been affected by the pandemic.
14. Sheriff Chris Hayward attended a virtual fireside chat with the Economic Secretary to the Treasury, John Glen MP, hosted by the Centre for Policy Studies and Hanover. There was a wide-ranging discussion on his brief, the pandemic and the current economic situation. Sheriff Hayward asked a question on TheCityUK's recapitalisation report and the impact levels of business debt in the regions could have on the government's levelling up agenda. The Minister's response focused on the government's approach to levelling up.
15. The SNP conference is due to be held virtually 28th-30th November, with the First Minister Nicola Sturgeon MSP scheduled to make her keynote speech on 30th November. The City Corporation is holding a joint virtual event at the conference with TheCityUK and the influential Holyrood Magazine.
16. Since the party conferences, follow up letters have been sent to the party spokespeople thanking them for their involvement in the City Corporation events and highlighting key discussion points. The Policy Chair will be meeting with Sarah Olney MP in the coming weeks as part of that follow up.

17. Planning for the 2021 party conferences is underway. The recent additional COVID-19 restrictions mean that the parties' arrangements for any spring conferences are yet to be confirmed. However, the Corporate Affairs Team has begun discussions with think tank partners and prospective hotel venues regarding bookings for autumn 2021.

Sport

18. Despite the limitations on sport following the Coronavirus pandemic, the City Corporation's sport engagement programme continues to move forward. As mentioned in the last update to Members, several events are planned for next year and the Sport Engagement Manager is leading on two pieces of work around research.
19. The first is a survey being undertaken by Ukactive (formerly the Fitness Industry Association) on the changing leisure and active needs of the City's business population since lockdown in March. The survey is now live and being publicised to local businesses through social media and other communications. We have so far had nearly 100 participants in the survey but keen to get many more over the next few weeks. Members are encouraged to circulate the following link to local businesses in their ward: www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/CoLWellbeing. It is hoped that some of the initial findings will be presented at this year's UK Active National Summit, which will be held online throughout November. Deputy Keith Bottomley will be representing the City Corporation on the 18th November panel session about 'Placemaking for better social, economic and public health outcomes'. Members can register for this or any other session through the City's Sport Engagement Manager.
20. The second piece of research is in conjunction with UK Sport and is seeking to understand the soft power and trade benefits to the UK of hosting major sport events. Following a lengthy procurement process, Ernst & Young has been appointed to take forward this project. It is envisaged that the findings will provide a useful tool for future sport and international engagement undertaken by the City Corporation, as well as generating valuable information on the importance of sport event bids to the economic and diplomatic competitiveness of the UK. A presentation on the findings will be given to interested Members early next year and in advance of the launch of the publication.

Priorities for the next quarter

21. 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 continue preparations for the upcoming SNP party conference and to consider other opportunities for physical events when possible including potentially at the 2021 Spring and 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.

Corporate & Strategic Implications

22. 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

23. 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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