

Committee(s):	Date:
Policy and Resources	8 April 2021
Subject: Election Engagement Campaign	Public
Which outcomes in the City Corporation's Corporate Plan does this proposal aim to impact directly?	3, 4, 5, 9 and 10
Does this proposal require extra revenue and/or capital spending?	N
If so, how much?	N/A
What is the source of Funding?	N/A
Has this Funding Source been agreed with the Chamberlain's Department?	N/A
Report of: Director of Communications	For Decision
Report author: Mark Gettleson, Election Engagement Manager	

Summary

Following the postponement of the elections for Common Councillors and Aldermen until March 2022, the Policy and Resources Committee chose to take this opportunity to improve engagement in those elections: digitising the registration process and hiring a new Campaign Manager.

This report contains the proposals of the Election Engagement Manager to address issues relating to election registration, turnout and candidate diversity.

It recognises while some issues relating to participation in the election relate directly to the COVID-19 pandemic – such as ongoing social restrictions and changed working patterns – others are due to longer-term factors, including our internal processes and community engagement.

Dealing with these issues goes to the heart of who we are as an organisation: how we relate to those we serve and represent, the value they place on us and the democratic mandate we receive from them.

This report therefore proposes:

- A whole-organisation approach – leveraging the strong existing relationships of Members, Officers, and partners to disseminate action-based election messages at meetings and digitally. These relationships and activities will be tracked centrally to ensure success and replicate best practice in successful modern political campaigns.
- A “digital first” approach – as is essential during a period of continuing unpredictability, we will focus on online outreach to communicate with organisations and individuals most likely to engage in the election, through simple and attractive online content, digital advertising to promote it, and temporary staff to assist with that outreach.

- Strong and synchronised messages - to effectively raise the salience of the elections. As far as possible, we will root the election campaign in messages and campaigns relating to City recovery and diversity, which are high priorities for registrants and tie into other streams of work being undertaken by the City Corporation.

Recommendations

Members are asked to:

1. Approve the report.
2. Approve the use of £182,000 Committee Contingency funds previously allocated for spending on the election campaign (£127,000 in February 2020 and £55,000 in March 2020) to implement the plan covered by this report, specifically:
 - (a) £47,000 to create an election “campaign portal” CRM and website, enabling us to encourage and track all engagement with the election in real time and be a central source of key information for all audiences.
 - (b) £40,000 on digital advertising and engagement.
 - (c) £40,000 to recruit additional temporary staff to carry out that engagement online and offline, prior to the registration deadline.
 - (d) £25,000 on direct mail, print advertising and material including an easy to distribute leaflet for use by Members and Officers.
 - (e) £20,000 to part fund a role to lead on senior internal stakeholder engagement and ensure a whole-corporation approach to election engagement.
 - (f) £5,000 to hold a candidate diversity reception.
 - (g) £5,000 towards creative production and graphic design, as required in the course of the campaign.
3. Agree that non-financial resources across the organisation to deployed the support the above activities, as a priority, including:
 - (a) IT support for the creation and maintenance of an engagement CRM that is able to draw information in real time from other City Corporation CRMs – and ensure the City Occupiers’ Database is able to update automatically with new information collected online.
 - (b) Support from all departments and partners with a community engagement function (e.g. CPAT, CBL, Chamberlains [rates], Surveyors [Tenants], Licensing, Heart of the City, etc.)
 - (c) Subject to GDPR compliance, information and contact details be shared across the organisation to support election engagement goals.
 - (d) Making clear the City Corporation’s preference for postal voting among both residents and workers, in order to maximise participation.

Main Report

Background

1. At its December meeting, the Committee approved the appointment of a dedicated election campaign manager, tasked with improving registration, turnout and candidate diversity ahead of the postponed Common Council and Aldermanic elections to now be held in March 2022. The postholder was asked to come back to this committee as soon as possible after their appointment to present a new election engagement plan. Acting at significant pace, the post was advertised on 1 February, with a campaign manager in place on 1 March and this report presented in April.
2. The Committee approved a £127,000 programme of activities for this election at its February 2020 meeting and made available a further £55,000 for additional activities at its December 2020 meeting. Having reviewed existing plans, the Election Engagement Manager has proposed a significantly altered composite campaign plan that forms the basis of this report.

Current Position

3. In March 2022, the delayed all-out elections will take place to elect Common Councillors and Aldermen. These elections will be based on the Ward List, for which voters can be registered between 1 September and 16 December (City of London Act 1957, section 7). Each qualifying body must be informed of the number of voters they are able to register prior to 1 September (City of London Act 2002, section 8) – based on the size of their workforce, determined in part by responses to the City Occupiers' Survey, which we conduct between now and June.
4. As outlined in the November 2020 report, complexities arise from the continued dislocation of the City workforce, with voting eligibility dependent on predicting the number of workers who will use a City address as their principal place of work on 1 September, even if they are still working flexibly. Those expected to now be working from home permanently will not be counted towards voting eligibility.
5. Due to the disruption caused by the Covid-19 pandemic, the number of voters on the Ward List fell from 19,200 (6,484 residents and 12,716 workers) in 2019/20 to 12,980 (4,993 residents and 7,987 workers) in 2020/21. The number of qualifying bodies (businesses and others) registering voters fell from 41% of those eligible in 2019/20 to 24% in 2020/21. There are, however, longer-term trends at play, with the majority of identified eligible qualifying bodies not having registered voters since 2014/15.
6. Qualifying bodies registering more than one voter are required, so far as is reasonably practicable, to ensure that the voters it appoints reflect the composition of its workforce (City of London Act 2020, section 4). Attempts to enforce this legal requirement have so far been limited.

7. The City Corporation is undertaking a number of campaigns relating to City Recovery, which focus on many of same audiences as the election campaign.
8. Electronic voter registration will be introduced for residents for the upcoming registration canvass in 2021, making it far easier to undertake this process quickly and remotely. The electronic voter registration for businesses will also be altered to be integrated with the Electoral Services Software system providing efficiencies for the Electoral Services Team. It is also now possible to complete the City Occupiers Survey online; however, this does not automatically populate the City Occupiers Database and any information given must be re-entered manually.

Proposals

9. While previous programmes of election activity have focused on promotional materials and awareness-raising, the aim of this plan is to take a more holistic and targeted approach, focused on encouraging and tracking specific actions among registrants, voters and potential candidates. As outlined in the summary, this plan takes a whole-organisation and digital-first approach to addressing election engagement, while rooting messages in high-salience topics relating to City recovery and improved diversity.

Campaign Portal Backend: Election Engagement CRM

10. Various teams across the City Corporation and its partners engage with businesses and other organisations on a regular basis. Leveraging those relationships effectively will be crucial element in ensuring each organisation is fully registered and engaged in our elections. As such, we must develop a means of bringing together those relationships centrally: using the City Occupiers Database for underlying information and overlaying information from SEEMs (the shared IG, Mansion House, Communications and Remembrancers CRM), the City Business Library and other CRMs. This Election Engagement CRM would allow for a single overview, helping us identify the relationships we need to leverage in order to engage an organisation in the election.
11. The Election Engagement CRM would also track particular key metrics in live time, such as completion of the City Occupiers Survey, voter registration, postal vote applications and new information we collect in the course of the campaign, such as information about potential voters and candidates. Some of this will require changes to the City Occupiers Database, such as digital surveys automatically updating the database, enabling live data to feed in immediately.

Campaign Portal Frontend

12. We will then create a central campaign site, under the slogan “Speak for the City” with a series of attractive targeted landing pages, providing information and collecting details from those we want to engage in the election – deploying exceptional design and user experience. This would include the City Occupiers Survey, voter registration, postal vote applications, expressions of interest in being a voting representative or a candidate. We would guide organisations

through the process of selecting their voting representatives and push them to do this prior to registration opening on 30 August – collecting contact details, where possible, on those they plan to register. All these actions and information would be stored in our Election Engagement CRM.

13. Learning from the Local Government Association's *Be A Councillor* programme, a key section of the campaign portal would be information and advice to new candidates, especially those from diverse backgrounds, including voxpops from women, BAME and LGBT+ members and officers. Visitors could choose to complete a survey, which would match them with member and officer 'mentors', who they would be able to contact immediately. Members will be asked for their support in creating content for this section, in order to keep it as relevant as possible to the lived experience of being a candidate and councillor.
14. If practicable, following the close of nominations in 2022, the campaign portal could also include a section with information on each of the candidates – a virtual 'candidate booklet' of the kind issued during a London Mayoral Election – which would include contact details and the ability of visitors to engage with them further. We could also consider experimenting with integrating an online hustings functionality via Microsoft Teams, as a supplement to wardmotes.
15. As legislation requires us to publish provisional ward lists "on or before 30 November", it is proposed to publish a searchable list online of organisations and their registration status in real time after 30 August, including the number of voters to which an organisation is entitled. This would enable workers to check on their organisation and to contact us if they are interested in becoming a voter themselves. Such a function would aim to generate 'network effects', whereby leaders will want to be seen to engage in the process on behalf of their staff, and where staff are able to act as internal election advocates. Likewise, elected members will be able to see which organisations in their ward have registered and whether they have used their full allowance. It may also be possible to give a demographic breakdown of larger organisations' registered representatives, in order to encourage the submission of diverse and reflective lists, as is required by legislation.
16. It is proposed that we would develop the campaign portal externally, using experts in digital campaigning, supported by internal assistance from IT and other departments.

Voter contact

17. During an ongoing and unpredictable health crisis and changes to working patterns, overly relying on printed materials would put the success of the campaign at risk. While we propose producing some physical materials and canvassing activities, the campaign should be "digital first", focused on identifying online exactly those we're looking to survey, register and turn out. These will then be directed to appropriate, targeted landing pages on our campaign portal.

18. Where possible, we will first use the relationships and information the City Corporation and its partners already hold, to encourage engagement – ensuring compliance with the GDPR while mindful of our legal obligations to ensure correct registration. We will develop different approaches for organisations of different sizes, mindful of the need in large organisation to get buy-in from senior leadership, as well as administrators. We will also leverage the relationships held by our diversity networks, both for ensuring organisations nominate representative voters (as required by law) and finding candidates.
19. Where we lack responses, existing information or relationships, we will use social media advertising to contact potential voters directly. This should include Twitter, Instagram and – primarily – LinkedIn advertising. We will pursue a formal partnership with LinkedIn to try and maximise our ability to reach the right organisations and staff directly, using tools like LinkedIn Sales Navigator, which could integrate directly with our Election Engagement CRM (subject to compliance with the GDPR).
20. For this work, both online and offline, we will enlist additional temporary staff May to December as part of a “field team”. This team will be given weekly targets relating to key election outcomes and attend twice weekly field campaign meetings, with metrics shared with interested members and officers. They will work closely with existing staff, both permanent and the ‘retail follow-up’ team, with the latter co-managed by the Election Engagement Manager.
21. The development of paper communications materials will depend heavily on the physical reality of the time of distribution, and while there is reason to be optimistic, there are advantages to retaining some flexibility. All paper communications should focus on directing readers to our online campaign portal, helping to track and quantify its effectiveness. These may include a special election edition of CityMatters or a wraparound of CityAM. As was approved at the March 2020 meeting, approaches from the Lord Mayor may prove highly effective at persuading unregistered businesses to take part in the election. It is proposed to retain a direct mail and paper communications budget, representing a small proportion of the overall election engagement budget, for this purpose.
22. While most of the fall in residential registration 2019/20 to 2020/21 is believed to be due to people being temporarily away from London during the annual canvass, particular effort will be made to follow up with those properties which fell off the register. Additionally, where temporary accommodation has been made more permanent during the pandemic, we will ensure these are identified and approached for registration.
23. Following the closure of registration on 16 December, the main focus of the campaign will become turnout among both residents and workers. While many of the engagement ideas proposed above will serve to increase participation, specific actions will also be taken such as strong encouragement of postal votes and email reminders of the election date and individuals’ polling station locations. We could also make businesses aware that whether or not their nominating voters cast a ballot is a matter of public record.

24. A diversity reception for potential candidates, as undertaken in previous years and approved by this Committee, will be undertaken in the autumn, though candidates will also be encouraged to meet their “mentors” on an ad-hoc basis. However, it is our intention to embed diversity messages throughout the registration process, reflecting the high priority which target registrants will give it.

Corporate & Strategic Implications

25. The opportunities presented in this report will assist the City Corporation’s vision in terms of its Corporate Plan. It will help the organisation’s contribution to a flourishing society, ensuring people have equal opportunities to enrich their lives through our democracy. The activities and engagement proposed will help encourage residents and businesses to become more invested in engaging with democracy at a local level. They will help build more socially responsible businesses by engaging them in City democracy and encouraging them to promote diversity among voters and candidates. The proposals to create an innovative digital-first election campaign will make our communities better-connected and encourage collaboration across our organisation and its partners.

Resource implications

26. Significant resources from across the City Corporation will need to be deployed to make the election engagement campaign a success, specifically from all departments and partners with a community engagement function, as well as IT, as many of the solutions proposed require digital changes and support.

Legal implications

27. While many activities relating to voter registration are public duties required by law, several of these proposals involve significant GDPR considerations – and will only be implemented subject to the agreement of the City Solicitor.

Equalities implications

28. The aim of this campaign plan is to dramatically increase participation in the election and candidate diversity. It also addresses the requirement for qualifying bodies to nominate a reflective representation of their workforce as voters. Digitising both the electoral process and engagement campaigns will make it more accessible to a wider and more diverse audience and encourage more City constituents to participate in the democratic process, including those with protected characteristics, for example, those with mobility issues.

Climate implications

29. The proposals included in this paper do not carry any significant implications for the Climate Action programme. However, the increasing digitisation of the electoral process and engagement will contribute to decreasing the City

Corporation's footprint. While some paper materials will still be required, this plan aims to reduce significantly the proportion of outreach this represents.

Conclusion

30. Members have expressed their wish for increased participation and diversity in City elections over many years. While the Covid-19 pandemic has brought this matter to a head, issues relating to community engagement and collaboration across the organisation have developed over many years. The activities listed here focus on resolving these beyond a purely promotional or awareness-raising response, building innovative digitally-led solution that will enable the City Corporation to track and improve all engagement with its elections. This outreach will be focused, while generating significant network effects, encouraging people across the City to engage in our elections. It is hoped this will yield significant dividends for the whole City Corporation and its democratic legitimacy.

Background Papers

Reports to the Policy and Resources Committee:-

- 20 February 2020 – Common Council Elections in March 2021
- 7 May and 9 July 2020– COVID-19 Implications – possible postponement of the City-Wide elections in March 2021
- 10 September and 8 October 2020 - Common Council Elections Change of Date from March 2021 to March 2022 – Bill for an Act of Common Council
- 19 November 2020 – Electoral Registration Update
- 10 December 2020 – Electoral Registration Campaign Manager

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