

<b>Committee(s):</b> Policy and Resources Committee	<b>Date:</b> 08/07/2021
<b>Subject:</b> Think Tank Review and Membership, 2021-22	<b>Public</b>
<b>Which outcomes in the City Corporation's Corporate Plan does this proposal aim to impact directly?</b>	Corporate Plan outcomes 2-10
<b>Does this proposal require extra revenue and/or capital spending?</b>	<b>No</b>
<b>If so, how much?</b>	<b>N/A</b>
<b>What is the source of Funding?</b>	<b>N/A</b>
<b>Has this Funding Source been agreed with the Chamberlain's Department?</b>	<b>N/A</b>
<b>Report of:</b> Bob Roberts, Director of Communications	<b>For Information</b>
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## Summary

As part of the City of London Corporation's political engagement programme, the Corporate Affairs Team coordinates and reviews the relationships we hold with think tanks.

The City Corporation holds corporate membership of seven think tanks and works with a number of others across the political spectrum on a variety of projects and events in accordance with our strategic priorities.

The Corporate Affairs Team will continue to ensure that the City Corporation's engagement with think tanks is organised in a strategic way in order to ensure that we continue to work with the most influential organisations.

## Recommendation(s)

Members are asked to:

- Note the partnerships and engagement with think tanks.

## Main Report

### Background

1. For the purpose of this report, the term "think tank" denotes regular academic think tanks, self-styled research and policy institutes and charities with a key policy function.
2. As part of the City of London Corporation's political engagement programme, the Corporate Affairs Team coordinates and reviews the relationships we hold with think tanks.

3. The City Corporation's engagement with think tanks is beneficial to the organisation if it takes place on a strategic basis. Any engagement focuses on mapping the City's interests and those of the think tanks to identify opportunities for greater collaboration. The Corporate Affairs Team also ensures that a political balance is maintained across the organisations we engage with.
4. The City Corporation currently holds corporate membership of seven think tanks. Membership provides a number of benefits including:
  - a. Strengthening relationships with the think tank;
  - b. Influencing its agenda;
  - c. Receiving invitations to attend private roundtables/briefings/receptions
  - d. Receiving copies of publications and policy briefings.
5. Outside of membership, the City Corporation also benefits from working with think tanks on specific areas throughout the year, particularly projects and events in accordance with our priorities, and including events held at the party conferences. This gives flexibility and allows us to work across the political spectrum, with think tanks who have the ear of the government or opposition.
6. The agreed approach that has been adopted regarding the City Corporation's work and relationships with think tanks is to:
  - a. Ensure we are working with the most influential think tanks at a given time;
  - b. Be agile by welcoming unsolicited ideas;
  - c. Ensure we work with a broad political and thematic balance of think tanks;
  - d. Insist on excellence as a collaborative delivery partner and in the quality of their product; and
  - e. Ensure that we are getting the best value for money.

## **Current Position**

7. The City Corporation is currently a corporate member of seven think tanks:
  - a. Centre for the Study of Financial Innovation (CSFI)
  - b. Chatham House – including membership of one of their research programmes
  - c. Local Government Information Unit (LGiU)
  - d. New Financial – including our sponsorship of the Women in Finance Charter
  - e. New Local (formerly New Local Government Network)
  - f. Onward
  - g. Whitehall and Industry Group (WIG)
8. We also have a number of ongoing and recent projects with other think tanks across the political spectrum.

9. The City Corporation has sponsored the Institute for Public Policy Reform's (IPPR) Environmental Justice Commission, which will shortly be coming to an end with the publication of its final report.
10. A partnership with the Fabian Society has just been agreed for a Commission on Poverty and Place. Work on this will begin in the coming months.
11. We regularly work with the Centre for Policy Studies who are widely known to be a particularly influential think tank on the current government. Their annual Margaret Thatcher Conference is held at the Guildhall and plans are being made for the forthcoming conference. We also work with them on one off projects in line with the City Corporation's priorities such as through a private roundtable on US-UK relations in June with an influential American pollster and strategist, and a panel event as part of their Going for Growth series in September 2020.
12. As well as our membership of the influential centre-right think tank Onward, we also recently sponsored a panel event as part of their series on "levelling up", entitled "Who Funds Levelling Up". Levelling up is a stated ambition of the current government and Onward is leading much of the policy thinking in this area. The City Corporation is seeking to ensure a nuanced approach to the discussion that includes levelling up within regions as well as between them.
13. A project with the independent and politically neutral think tank Institute for Government on green recovery will conclude at the end of June. Through a private roundtable with influential government and industry figures, a policy paper and a public panel event, the partnership has sought to understand how government and the private sector can work together on green recovery and the drive towards net zero.
14. We have supported Centre for London through Phase 1 of their London Futures project, which looked at the current challenges facing London. Phase 2 has now begun bringing together London stakeholders to look at ways to address these challenges. This project is particularly timely given the impact the pandemic has had on London and the levelling up agenda.
15. In addition to these projects, the Corporate Affairs Team is currently organising the regular programme for this autumn's party conferences, which will involve arranging events with key think tanks.

## **Proposals**

16. The City Corporation seeks to engage with a politically balanced range of think tanks in a number of key and relevant policy areas. The direction and degree of our engagement is shaped by a number of factors, including amongst others: a particular think tank's public profile and the influence it has on government, major political parties and public policy debates.

17. The influence and public profile of think tanks fluctuates. As a result, organisations such as ours must be agile in this respect and strive to work with the most influential political think tanks at a given time, who are connected to work on the key issues of the moment.

18. The Corporate Affairs Team will continue to ensure the City Corporation works with the most influential think tanks according to our strategic priorities, both through membership and through the flexibility of specific events and projects. We will also ensure that a balance is maintained across the political spectrum.

## **Corporate & Strategic Implications**

### *Strategic implications*

19. 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.

20. Continuing the engagement with 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 participate in policy debates.

21. This work would also help deliver outcomes 2 – 10 of the 2018-23 Corporate Plan.

### *Financial implications*

22. The Corporate Affairs Team has an established budget for all engagement related activity. Any sponsorship of ad-hoc policy projects is currently funded via the Policy Initiatives Fund according to decisions of the Policy and Resources Committee.

### *Resource implications*

23. None

### *Legal implications*

24. None

### *Risk implications*

25. None

### *Equalities implications*

26. None

*Climate implications*

27. None

*Security implications*

28. None

**Conclusion**

29. Members are asked to note the work of the Corporate Affairs Team in relation to the memberships of and engagement with think tanks across the political spectrum.

**Appendices**

- None

**Background Papers**

- None

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