

PUBLIC RELATIONS SUB (POLICY & RESOURCES) COMMITTEE

Monday, 18 October 2021

Minutes of the meeting of the Public Relations Sub (Policy & Resources) Committee held at the Guildhall EC2 at 3.00 pm

Present

Members:

Christopher Hayward (Deputy Chairman)	Deputy Jamie Ingham Clark
Deputy Keith Bottomley	Alderman Sir David Wootton
Anne Fairweather	Alderman Prem Goyal
Alderman Timothy Hailes	Deputy Edward Lord

Officers:

Bob Roberts	- Director of Communications, Town Clerk's Department
Eugenie De Naurois	- Head of Corporate Affairs, Town Clerk's Department
Sarah Bridgman	- Corporate Affairs, Town Clerk's Department
Sam Hutchings	- Sports Engagement, Town Clerk's Department
Richard Messingham	- Town Clerk's Department
Polly Dunn	- Town Clerk's Department
Paul Double	- City Remembrancer
Paul Wright	- Deputy Remembrancer
Bruce Hunt	- Remembrancer's Department
Bukola Soyombo	- Chief Operating Officer's Department
James Gibson	- Chief Operating Officer's Department

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Deputy Catherine McGuinness, Alderman Vincent Keaveny, Tijs Broeke, Karina Dostalova and Deputy Tom Sleigh.

2. MEMBERS' DECLARATIONS UNDER THE CODE OF CONDUCT IN RESPECT OF ITEMS ON THE AGENDA

There were no declarations of interest.

3. MINUTES

RESOLVED – That the public minutes and summary of the meeting held on 29 April 2021 be approved as a correct record.

4. PARTY CONFERENCE UPDATE

Members received a report of the Director of Communications regarding the Party Conference Update.

First and foremost, Members expressed their sincere thanks for the efforts made by officers to organise the various engagements across the party

conferences, it was agreed that significant improvements had been made in recent years. The City's involvement was far more established and was being recognised as part of London leadership more widely.

Concerns were raised about the accommodation in Manchester. It was felt the service was not at a satisfactory standard. Officers agreed that alternatives should be sought for future years.

Members suggested that it would be useful to come together on a daily basis, even for 30 minutes, to provide a debrief for their respective engagements that day. This would be in addition to the meeting on the first night, which was considered a helpful feature in the timetable.

It was also requested that arranging individual programmes would be beneficial in future. Wider membership beyond the Chair and Deputy Chairman would then have the opportunity to join specific fringe events, allowing them to learn as well as contribute. Resources could be deployed more effectively. It was noted that this year there were fewer private events.

The dinners were considered very valuable and there had been a lot of positive feedback received by attendees. It was noted that the two events drew in different audiences, with both feeding into different areas of our corporate objectives. There was, however, concern that the Chair's speech at both events had been too similar, especially given the number of guests who attended both. They also should have been better tailored, with a relevant angle for the differing audiences.

The key themes from the conferences were shared under separate cover to Members of the Court of Common Council.

Main highlights of the Liberal Democrats' virtual Conference were party leader Ed Davey's speech and, as an organisation, a successful City-organised roundtable on how local government can reach its goals for net zero.

At the Labour Conference, there were less attendees than in previous (pre-Covid) years. The Corporate Affairs Team felt the events were a success and that the Chair had engaged key shadow front benchers and spoke alongside them on the subject of financial services and contributions the sector can make towards sustainable finance.

At the Conservative Conference, there was a buoyant atmosphere with positive engagement that was more business focussed.

RESOLVED, that the update be noted.

5. **CORPORATE AFFAIRS UPDATE**

Members received a report of the Town Clerk regarding Corporate Affairs.

There was a discussion on the importance on ensuring that fraud is included within the Online Safety Bill and the ongoing work of the Corporate Affairs

Team, alongside the City of London Police and the Remembrancer's Department. The Team had also been engaged with relevant Trade Associations.

A forward look be re-added to the report in future.

It was confirmed that matters regarding the City's elections were and would continue to be reported to Policy & Resources Committee, not the Sub-Committee.

Members and officers drew attention to levelling up. It was noted that this should not mean the 'levelling down' of the South-East. Recognising this, it was agreed that the City should ensure it acts as a helpful contributor to the campaign, not an opponent. It was noted that experiences within London were very varied.

Members requested source material they could use and call upon to provide examples of what the City was doing in order to contribute to the levelling up agenda. Examples including the Market co-location programme and academies were raised.

RESOLVED, that the report be noted.

6. **SIX MONTH MEDIA UPDATE**

Members received a report of the Director of Communications regarding the six month media update.

The Director of Communications gave three observations: 1) that there was a perceived change in tone surrounding Covid-19, with the negativity surrounding return to the office now more positive and encouraging; 2) that climate change continued to be a struggle, with a lack of media interest; and 3) with police and the fraud agenda, closer working relationships had been established, resulting in greater coverage and results for our political agenda.

A question was raised as to whether the City should reconsider the use of an unnamed spokesperson in relation to announcements that require technical expertise. This would possible mitigate any doubt surrounding the qualifications of any given commentator. The Director of Communications agreed to look into this.

Greater trend analysis was sought on media coverage in this period compared to previous periods. It was also suggested that any coverage that did not meet the criteria to be included in the analysis section, could be 'swept' into a smaller summary category.

On Climate change, the view was that very little extra could be done to resolve the issue around climate change coverage without hard edged policy initiatives. The plan was to continue to plug away at COP and continue trying.

Following a discussion on Corporate reputational risk it was agreed that the relevant information could feature in reports in future.

Regarding the Financial Times article concerning the incorrect assertion that the City would be repurposing office buildings to housing, officers and Members reaffirmed that the City was a business district with a vibrant and thriving offer. This message would be repeated until the misleading impression from the FT article was finally disregarded.

RESOLVED, that the report be noted.

7. SPORT ENGAGEMENT UPDATE

Members considered a report of the Director of Communications regarding the sports engagement update.

Members all expressed their keen support for funding this work despite other challenges on City's finances. This was a valuable programme, and it was felt that in future there should be more invested in the strategic development and delivery of sporting events.

In future, it was hoped more work could be done to maximise on the potential of the City's Open Spaces and Family of Schools.

The Lord Mayor and Policy Chair's Office would continue to be involved, particularly in larger events such as the forthcoming Commonwealth Games and Women's Euros.

There was a discussion about celebrating recent British/London-based sporting champions.

RESOLVED, that Members

- note the progress being made on the City Corporation's sport engagement programme as outlined in this report; and
- agree that the Policy and Resources Committee be asked to allocate £75,000 from the Policy Initiatives Fund towards sport engagement activity for 2022/23.

8. PARLIAMENTARY TEAM UPDATE

Members received a report of the Remembrancer regarding an update from the Parliamentary Team.

A question was raised over whether the Public Service Pensions and Judicial Offices Bill would affect any changes to the enforced retirement age for the Court of Aldermen. The Remembrancer confirmed that the legislation was separate and the Court of Aldermen was not impacted as this would be an internal matter for the City Corporation.

On the Judicial Review and Courts Bill, a query was raised as to how the Government sought to raise the hurdles in obtaining judicial review of decisions by Government or public bodies. This had been a controversial area and whilst raised hurdles were likely as a result of the Bill, how those might manifest was yet to be determined.

There was discussion on the Professional Qualifications Bill and what happens to those that do have the necessary qualifications that need to be recognised in order to be able to work in the country. Until its enactment, the status quo remains in place.

Thanks were issued to the Remembrancer's Department for the work undertaken on the Environment Bill. They moved at speed to arrange key meetings and agree amendments with London Councils in very short order.

RESOLVED, that the report be noted.

9. **QUESTIONS ON MATTERS RELATING TO THE WORK OF THE SUB-COMMITTEE**

There were two questions.

Having just engaged with MPs at the party conferences, a Member noted that there used to be a regular formal programme of outreach including lunches and dinners Guildhall. The Remembrancer agreed to work with Corporate Affairs to continue to provide the same offers for engagement as the City Corporation had done before.

The first concerned sports engagement and where its formal home was within the City's Committee structure. It was confirmed that Sports Engagement was in the Sub-Committee's terms of reference. Although, it was noted that Sports Development was a distinct function that was not currently provided for explicitly under the Committee structure.

10. **ANY OTHER BUSINESS THAT THE CHAIRMAN CONSIDERS URGENT**

There was one item of urgent business: Members requested more frequent meetings, ideally every two-months.

11. **EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC**

The Sub-Committee approved the non-public minutes without comment in public session.

12. **NON-PUBLIC MINUTES**

RESOLVED, that the non-public minutes and summary of the meeting held on 29 April 2021, be approved as an accurate record.

13. **NON-PUBLIC QUESTIONS ON MATTERS RELATING TO THE WORK OF THE SUB-COMMITTEE**

There were no questions.

14. **ANY OTHER BUSINESS THAT THE CHAIRMAN CONSIDERS URGENT AND WHICH THE SUB COMMITTEE AGREES SHOULD BE CONSIDERED WHILST THE PUBLIC ARE EXCLUDED**

There were no items of urgent business.

The meeting closed at 4.13 pm

Chairman

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