

Committee(s): Policy and Resources Committee	Dated: 2022-01-20 00:00:00
Subject: Sponsorship for think tank report on 'levelling up'	Public
Which outcomes in the City Corporation's Corporate Plan does this proposal aim to impact directly?	Corporate Pain outcomes 2-10
Does this proposal require extra revenue and/or capital spending?	Yes
If so, how much?	£35,000
Has this Funding Source been agreed with the Chamberlain's Department?	Yes
Report of: Director of Communications	For Decision
Report author: Matthew Baird – Senior Corporate Affairs Officer, Corporate Affairs	

Summary

This report asks for sponsorship of the Centre for London's report into the Government's levelling up agenda and its impact on London.

The aim is to ensure London takes full part in the levelling up debate and develops a new narrative on why London's success matters to the whole country.

Recommendation(s)

That, Members

- i) Agree that the Policy and Resources Committee endorse the allocation of £35,000 from the 2021/22 Policy Initiatives Fund towards a research proposal on levelling-up by the Centre for London.

Main Report

Background

1. The Centre for London is a dedicated, London-focused think tank. The body is politically neutral and since its formation, has published over 100 policy reports and held 150 public events.
2. In their 2019 manifesto, the Conservative Party made clear that they plan to "spread opportunity across the whole United Kingdom... not just investing in our great towns and cities, as well as rural and coastal areas, but giving them far more control of how that investment is made."
3. Government has made clear that it intends to make levelling up a key policy initiative. It aims to address regional disparities across the UK including differing standards in housing costs, pay, health, education and investment, among other areas.

4. The considerations of the levelling up policy initiative identified and defined by the Centre for London (taken from their proposal) include:
 - a. Currently a rather poorly defined agenda
 - b. Conflated with anti-London resentment across the rest of the country
 - c. Failing to consider the huge socio-economic challenges that exist within London
 - d. Underplaying the important positive role the city has in the wider UK economy, and
 - e. Ignoring London's struggling recovery from the fallout from the COVID-19 pandemic.

Current Position

5. The Centre for London has identified levelling up as a key policy area for the capital and that there is potential to influence Government policy. We also believe contributing to the levelling up debate should be a priority for the City of London Corporation.

Project Proposal

6. The Centre for London has proposed a series of research topics to aid in the overall outcome, which include:
 - How do we best explain London's own levelling up challenges?
 - What new ways can we find to talk about London's own levelling up challenges?
 - What new takes on existing data can we use to create a fresh way of describing the enormous challenges within London?
 - What emotional as well as economic arguments work best in the debates over the importance of London to the country's economy?
7. The proposed project is subdivided into two phases:
 - A. Data collection including polling and in-depth qualitative methods such as focus groups.
 - This involves gathering evidence led socio-economic analysis, with challenges faced by the city and those who live here. It will go beyond the traditional measures of economic difference and explore how poverty, inequality and disadvantage are distributed across London.
 - This phase will seek to influence the Comprehensive Spending Review which has been identified as a key announcement.
 - B. Analysis of the contribution London can make to levelling up the rest of the country, as well as the interrelationships and interdependencies between the capital and the rest of the UK
 - Through this analysis, suitable language will be found to promote the notion that London too needs levelling up and also showcasing the role London plays in the economic growth of the UK.
 - Additionally, by challenging the anti-London sentiment, this phase will highlight the importance of London to another Government policy area – being 'Global Britain' – the Government's campaign to promote the UK on the global stage.
8. As a major sponsor, the City Corporation would play a central role in highlighting why the capital is important to the whole country, help shape the language and reputation

of London around the UK and ensure that areas of London in need of levelling up are not overlooked.

9. Benefits of sponsorship of this work include but are not limited to:

- Membership of the project advisory board, allowing the City Corporation to help shape the narrative.
- Input case studies to ensure that the City Corporation provides a direct evidence base.
- Media related speaking slots related to raise the profile of London, building an understanding of why the capital is important and in need of levelling up.
- Speaker opportunity at the launch event.

10. Possible funding partners to this project include the GLA, London boroughs, business organisations and others.

11. Monies will be spent on associated research costs, staffing and other miscellaneous expenses of the Centre for London.

Key Data

12. None.

Corporate & Strategic Implications

Strategic implications

13. Engaging with the Centre for London, a key London focused think tank, provides a further opportunity for the City Corporation to engage with key audiences via third party advocacy on national and local government issues and to demonstrate the City Corporation's involvement in a topical Government policy. Sponsorship would also help deliver outcomes 2 – 10 of the 2018-23 Corporate Plan.

Financial implications

14. It is proposed that the funding request of £35,000 towards a research proposal on levelling-up by the Centre for London be met from the 2021/22 Policy Initiative Fund, categorised as 'Promoting the City' and charged to City's Cash. The current uncommitted balance in the 2021/22 Policy Initiative Fund is £447,307 prior to any allowances being made for any other proposals on today's agenda

Legal implications

15. None.

Implications for funding.

16. £35,000 funding request.

Risk implications

17. None.

Climate implications

18. None.

Security implications

19. None.

Conclusion

20. Should the Committee provide endorsement, the report will be commissioned with the aim of shifting the overall narrative that recognises London's contribution to the rest of the UK. It would additionally seek to ensure that the levelling up agenda takes account of London's need for levelling up and that London is not detrimentally affected by the levelling up policy.

Appendices

21. None.

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