

<b>Committee(s):</b> Public Relations Sub (Policy & Resources) Committee – For information	<b>Dated:</b> 24/01/2022
<b>Subject:</b> Parliamentary Team Update	<b>Public</b>
<b>Which outcomes in the City Corporation's Corporate Plan does this proposal aim to impact directly?</b>	6,7,8,9,11
<b>Does this proposal require extra revenue and/or capital spending?</b>	<b>N/A</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> Paul Double, City Remembrancer	<b>For Information</b>
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### Summary

This summary updates Members on the main elements of the Parliamentary Team's previous and planned activity in support of the City of London Corporation's political and parliamentary engagement since the last formal update in October 2021.

### Recommendation(s)

Members are recommended to note the report.

### Main Report

#### Legislative Programme Update

1. The Government is mid-way through its legislative agenda, with the majority of major Bills announced in the May 2021 Queen's Speech having made substantial progress or, in the case of the **Draft Online Safety Bill**, completed pre-legislative scrutiny (further detail on this is included in the Forward Look section). Some smaller Bills, such as the **Armed Forces Act** have received Royal Assent alongside the much larger **Environment Act**, which has completed its prolonged passage through Parliament. Notably absent from Bills before Parliament is legislation to reform planning rules, following backbench discontent at planning reforms proposed in the Government's White Paper, and a change of Secretary of State (and departmental name) at the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities.
2. Details on the progress of Bills with particular relevance to City Corporation interests are set out below.
3. **Elections Bill** – The Bill proposes changes to election law, introducing voter ID in parliamentary and local elections in England, removing the 15 year limit on overseas voters in UK parliamentary elections, and changing the ability for EU

citizens to vote in local elections in England and Northern Ireland. The Bill is also being used to introduce a “first past the post” system for the election of all Police and Crime Commissioners (PCC), Combined Authority Mayors, and the Mayor of London. The Bill takes account of the move to digital campaign material by extending the requirement currently applied to printed material identifying the producer and candidate being supported to digitally produced material.

4. To reflect reciprocal voting rights across the EU and in a post-Brexit move, the Bill proposes to alter the rights of EU citizens’ right to vote in local elections in England, (including in the City’s ward elections). EU citizens who arrived in the UK before 31 December 2020 and who have lawful status, including settled status, will continue to be eligible to vote. EU citizens coming to live in the UK after 31 December 2020 will be able to vote in the UK if reciprocal voting rights exist with that person’s home country. Currently Spain, Portugal, Poland and Luxembourg have agreed reciprocal voting treaties.
5. It is expected that the Bill will complete its Commons stages by the end of January but will not receive Royal Assent by the time of the City’s ward elections in March. Debate on voter ID continues to dominate discussions. Earlier this month, guidance was published regarding the documents that will be accepted as voter ID. Disabled ‘blue’ badges, photo driving licences, certain travel passes, voter ID cards and a range of similar documents will be accepted. The Government is likely to face strong opposition when the Bill moves onto the Lords in the coming months on the Bill’s voter ID provisions. A report on the Bill was submitted to the November meeting of the Policy and Resources Committee. A further report will be provided after committee stage in the House of Lords.
6. **Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill** – The Bill’s lengthy provisions grant the police further powers to address crime and disorder and cover a wide range of matters, including: the protection and wellbeing of police and other emergency workers, the extraction of information from electronic devices, criminal damage to memorials, public order, unauthorised encampments, road traffic offences, the sentencing and release of offenders, and court procedure. The Bill has encountered some controversy over its public order provisions, which strengthen police powers to restrict protests and public assembly. These provisions have been the subject of fierce debate in both Houses. The Bill has just passed through a lengthy Report Stage in the Lords and is nearing completion. The Bill has been reported to the Police Authority Board.
7. **Judicial Review and Courts Bill** - The Bill contains provisions which prospectively remove the limitations placed on the use of the buildings currently housing the City of London Magistrates’ Court and Mayor’s Court, these being linked to the development of the new court centre in Fleet Street. The main emphasis of the Bill is however on the reform of judicial review. This will be of significance to public bodies generally (including to the Corporation when acting in that capacity). The Bill is awaiting Report Stage in the House of Commons. Through a separate piece of legislation introduced in the Lords (the **Public Service Pensions and Judicial Offices Bill**) the judicial retirement age will

increase to 75 (from 70). The Bill received its Second Reading in the Commons on the 5 January. Updates on both Bills will be provided in future reports to this Sub Committee.

8. **Professional Qualifications Bill [HL]** – The Bill creates regulation-making powers designed to implement a new framework for the recognition of overseas professional qualifications in the UK, replacing existing EU-derived law in this area. The Bill also includes provisions for the implementation of international agreements on the recognition of professional qualifications as well as creating powers to authorise regulators in the UK to enter into regulator recognition agreements with regulators overseas.
9. The City's interest in the Bill derives from its implications for the recognition of overseas legal qualifications. The Law Society, the Bar Council and Association of Costs Lawyers fall within the scope of the legislation as regulators, and play a role in determining whether overseas qualifications are recognised. As introduced, the Bill would have allowed the Secretary of State to make regulations that would allow individuals with overseas qualifications to practise a regulated profession in the UK, thereby introducing the potential to bypass the existing regulatory regime.
10. The Bill was amended substantially in the Lords to address these and other concerns about the independence of regulators, as well as clarify which regulators would fall under the Bill's provisions. Given this substantial revision in the Upper House, and widespread support for the wider aims of the Bill, it passed Second Reading in the Commons unopposed. A report on the Bill is available to members of the Sub Committee upon request.
11. **Environment Act** – The Environment Act received Royal Assent in November 2021 following a long and complicated passage through Parliament, including a number of delays and having to be carried over between parliamentary sessions. The Act amends existing environmental legislation and introduces new measures on a range of environmental policy areas. The Act requires the Government to set and achieve at least one target in four priority areas: air quality; biodiversity; water; resource efficiency and waste reduction, as well as setting a target for fine particulate matter or "PM2.5".
12. The City Corporation was active during the Act's passage through amendments tabled by Lord Tope (Liberal Democrat), as reported in the last update. These amendments sought discretionary powers for Local Authorities to control emissions from combustion plant, if they choose to declare their area an 'Air Quality Improvement Area'. The proposals prompted discussion in the Lords on this issue and received cross-party support but were not ultimately adopted by the Government. Members of the Sub Committee and Port Health and Environmental Services Committee were updated on engagement during the passage of the Bill. A report on the Act will be submitted to the Port Health and Environmental Services Committee.
13. Lord Tope has subsequently been able to re-table the Emissions Reduction (Local Authorities in London) Bill, the provisions of which mirror the

amendments tabled to the Environment Bill. This Private Member's Bill was first introduced in January 2020 but was unable to progress further owing to a lack of parliamentary time. It is now a possible candidate for a Second Reading debate which will be sought before the end of the current session

14. During the passage of the Bill, an amendment tabled by the Duke of Wellington regarding the amount of sewage released into rivers attracted a great deal of attention, resulting in Ping Pong between the Houses. The Duke sought a duty on "sewerage undertakers to take all reasonable steps to ensure untreated sewage is not discharged from storm overflows into inland and coastal waters". The dispute led to the Government proposing a compromise amendment placing a duty on water companies to "progressively reduce the impacts of sewage pollution from storm overflows."
15. **Armed Forces Act** – The Armed Forces Act received Royal Assent in December 2021. The Act renewed the Armed Forces Act 2006 – required to continue in force the legislation enabling the armed forces to be recruited and maintained as disciplined bodies, made provisions relating to recommendations of the Service Justice System Review, and imposed a duty on local authorities to have due regard to the principles of the Armed Forces Covenant when exercising certain housing, education or healthcare functions. The City of London Corporation is already a signatory to the Covenant and has policies in place with regard to housing and education to ensure members of the armed forces community are not disadvantaged when accessing services. A report on the Bill will be provided to the Sub Committee at its next meeting.
16. The Government's reform of technical education, the **Skills and Post-16 Education Bill**, awaits Report Stage in the Commons, having already passed through the Lords. The Bill contains a number of varied provisions, including those regarding tailoring further education provision to meet local needs, changing the role of the Institute for Apprenticeships and Training when it comes to approving and regulating qualifications, gives the Secretary of State for Education powers to introduce a Lifelong Loan Entitlement, as well as measures to improve further education teacher training and to criminalise services that help post-16 students in England cheat on assessments. In Committee, the Commons reversed a range of amendments made in the Lords, including amendments to requiring local authorities to have a role in the development of Local Skills Improvement Plans, delaying the withdrawal of BTECs and allowing students to keep their Universal Credit entitlement while studying. Whether the Lords will insist on these amendments remains to be seen. A report on the Bill will be submitted to the Education Board.
17. A Private Members' Bill introduced by the City's MP Nickie Aiken (Con), the **Pedicabs (London) Bill**, received Government backing when it was considered at Second Reading. The Bill provides for the regulation of the carrying of passengers in Greater London by pedal cycles and power-assisted pedal cycles for hire or reward. Pedicabs have benefited from a legal loophole as they are currently defined as a "stage carriage" in Greater London under the Metropolitan Public Carriage Act 1869 and thus does not fall under TfL's

licensing powers. Despite a Minister expressing full support for the Bill from the Government, it will not proceed immediately to its next stage due to an intervention by Sir Christopher Chope (Con), who regularly objects to Private Members' Bills. It is anticipated that another opportunity to progress the Bill will be found. Subject to its progress a report on the Bill will be provided to the Sub Committee and other relevant committees.

18. Another Government-backed Private Members' Bill, the **Local Government (Disqualification) Bill**, has made considerable progress to Report Stage. Introduced by Conservative Paul Beresford, the short Bill would remove a loophole where individuals who are on sex offenders register can stand for election or hold office in borough and country elections. Currently while those who are added to the register and are subject to a custodial sentence are automatically disqualified from their elected post, those who do not receive a custodial sentence are not automatically disqualified. The Bill passed Committee in the Commons with little debate and is likely to progress rapidly through its stages. A report on the Bill will be provided to the Sub Committee at its next meeting.

## **GLA and the Devolved Institutions**

19. Following oral evidence given last year by Managing Director of the Bridge House Estates David Farnsworth to the London Assembly Transport Committee's inquiry into London's river crossings, the Office worked with Bridge House Estates on responding to the inquiry's final report. The Committee has also been offered a briefing on the work of the City Bridge Trust to enhance their understanding of the breadth of Bridge House Estates' work.
20. The Office contributed to the briefing for Shravan Joshi CC, Deputy Chairman of the Corporation's Streets and Walkways Sub Committee, ahead of his appearance before the London Assembly's Transport Committee to give evidence on the Mayor's Vision Zero initiative. The initiative seeks to reduce road fatalities and serious injuries to zero by 2040.
21. A representative from the Office attended the Scottish National Party conference, which was again held virtually this year. A note on the conference, produced in collaboration with Corporate Affairs, was sent to members of the Sub Committee shortly after its conclusion. Across the fringe, a recurring theme was the recent COP 26 conference and the transition to net zero in Scotland, while the path to independence featured more prominently on the main stage. In her speech, Nicola Sturgeon said that she would, in 2022, "initiate the process necessary to enable a referendum before the end of 2023," though did not provide the detail as to how this concession would be secured from Westminster.

## State of the Parties

22. The Prime Minister's decision to stick with Plan B COVID-19 restrictions in England has, at the time of writing, seemingly removed the prospect of a further 'lockdown' or significantly tighter public health restrictions. Regulations implementing Plan B are due to expire on the 26 January, though a decision on whether to extend these will be known shortly beforehand. The Government has generally offered a vote on any extension of regulations, so it remains to be seen if Conservative backbenchers will tolerate any further extension, with 101 rebelling over the implementation of COVID-19 certification.
23. The decision shortly after Christmas not to impose UK-wide restrictions on gatherings and certain hospitality settings has resulted in one of the biggest discrepancies in COVID-19 restrictions between the four nations of the UK. While responsibility for public health restrictions have been devolved throughout the pandemic, these measures have generally matched each other. The difference in approach, and devolved administrations' limited abilities to generate their own income to support businesses, may raise questions about the UK's devolution settlement.
24. The Conservatives went into the Christmas break in a discontented mood. Defeat in the North Shropshire by-election and the resignation of Cabinet Office Minister Lord Frost were attributed to a wide range of factors, both in the Conservative Party and the wider public. These included allegations of breaches of COVID-19 rules by the Government and officials, the introduction of new COVID-19 restrictions, concerns about the cost of living, and the absence of action by the Government to reduce the tax burden. Media speculation about letters of no confidence being sent to the 1922 Committee came to nothing. It is worth noting that Theresa May, who faced more open and consistent rebellion from her backbenchers, survived such a challenge in December 2018, by 200 to 117. Nevertheless, the PM is under intense scrutiny from his backbenchers, who have made clear their willingness to rebel, as seen with 101-strong rebellion over aspects of the Plan B COVID-19 measures. Lord Frost's resignation letter spoke of his "concerns about the current direction of travel," indicating discontent in some circles about Government policy.
25. The period has seen a polling boost for Labour, who have held a lead on POLITICO's voting intention poll of polls since the start of December. The party's performance in the North Shropshire by-election, however, where the Liberal Democrats were the beneficiary of the Conservatives' misfortune, may have been disappointing for the party. Leader Keir Starmer explained the task ahead of him in a keynote speech in January, recognising he was "aware that just because the Tories lose the public's trust it doesn't mean Labour simply inherits it." The speech set out three principles around which he would base his leadership; "Security, Prosperity, Respect." This was preceded by a wide-ranging reshuffle in November. Starmer brought in former Ministers Yvette Cooper and David Lammy to be Shadow Home Secretary and Shadow Foreign Secretary respectively. Also of note was the promotion of Pat McFadden to Shadow Chief Secretary to Treasury. The former Treasury Minister was

replaced in the financial services brief by Hampstead and Kilburn MP Tulip Siddiq.

26. Liberal Democrats find themselves entering 2022 with two additions to their parliamentary party and some evidence that they can attract 'protest votes' in by-election campaigns, where they have done well historically. The Greens and other smaller parties may see 2022's local elections, including London borough elections, as an opportunity to make a mark.

## **Quarterly Forward Look**

27. The Parliamentary Team is responding to the latest COVID-19 guidance in its efforts to resume face to face engagement activities. Access to the Parliamentary Estate remains limited. Officers have, however, held numerous face to face meetings with parliamentary offices. It is hoped that restrictions on guest access to the Parliamentary Estate and APPG events in Parliament will be relaxed soon.
28. Early 2022 will see two by elections take place, in Southend West following the murder of Sir David Amess in October 2021, and in Birmingham Erdington following the sudden death of Jack Dromey. There will also be London Borough Elections, along with elections in all local authorities in Scotland and Wales, and in some parts of England on 5 May 2022, following City Ward elections on 24 March.
29. Priorities for forthcoming engagement include the inclusion of fraud in the Online Safety Bill, engagement on international trade agreements, and the promotion of sustainable finance and ESG.
30. The final version of the Online Safety Bill is likely to be brought forward in the first half of the year, following the conclusion of pre-legislative scrutiny. The City Corporation, in collaboration with the City of London Police, successfully made the case for greater recognition of fraud in the Bill, with the joint committee examining the draft Bill recommending that fraud should be treated as a priority within the Bill and that paid-for online advertising should be included within the scope of the proposed legislation. By designating fraud as a "priority" in the Bill, online platforms would, said the Committee, need to be "proactive in stopping fraudulent material from appearing in the first instance, not simply removing it when reported." The Committee said that the draft Bill's current focus on user-generated fraud, excluding paid-for fraudulent advertising, would "obstruct the Government's stated aim of tackling online fraud and activity that creates a risk of harm more generally."
31. The Office, in close collaboration with the Corporate Affairs, Media, and Police Authority Board teams will continue to engage with various stakeholders to ensure the Government adopts the recommendations of the Joint Committee. During the pre-legislative scrutiny process, the Office supported T/Commander Clinton Blackburn of the City of London Police in giving oral evidence to the Joint Committee, which was quoted in the Committee's final report. A written submission was also made to the Committee, as well as the DCMS Sub

Committee on Online Harms and Misinformation. The Office will also continue to work closely with the City's MP Nickie Aiken throughout the Bill's passage. The Sub Committee will receive a full report on the final version of the Bill when it is published.

32. Further engagement on City Police matters took place through a parliamentary meeting with politicians and sectoral representatives was arranged to highlight the City Police's priorities in the fight against economic crime. An engaged audience of thirty guests heard from T/Commander Clinton Blackburn, Head of the City of London Police's Economic Crime Directorate and David Divitt, Vice-President, Financial Crime Solutions at Mastercard, with contributions from Police Authority Board chairman Deputy James Thomson.
33. Reflecting recent Government focus on signing international trade agreements following the UK's departure from the EU, the Office has engaged with various parliamentarians and parliamentary bodies to promote the consideration of financial and professional services in these (and other supplementary) international agreements. Working with IG's Global Trade Policy team, the Office facilitated a meeting between the Policy Chair and Stephen Timms MP, the Government's Trade Envoy to Switzerland and Lichtenstein, to discuss the sector's trading relationship with Switzerland and ongoing mutual recognition agreement negotiations. The Office has also made contact with Bim Afolami MP to discuss how to achieve better outcomes for services in trade agreements. In consultation with the Chair, the Office will engage where appropriate on Select Committee inquiries focusing on trade agreements, including new inquiries from the International Trade Committee on the UK's agreement with Australia and accession to CPTPP. This activity will build on previous submissions made to the Committee and the Lords International Agreements Sub-committee on digital trade and data, the UK's accession to CPTPP and trade relationships with Australia and Japan.
34. In consultation with the Chair, the Office will continue close engagement with London's APPGs. The Office met with the new APPG on London as a Global City shortly after its formation, with the Lord Mayor being invited as guest of honour for its inaugural reception in December 2021. The Office also produced a written submission to the Committee's inquiry into London's position as a Global City, with officers attending an oral evidence session. The Office is in discussion with the APPG for London on future engagement
35. In line with the mayoral theme of "People and Purpose," the Office will continue to promote the City Corporation's objectives and work on social mobility, sustainable finance and all parts of "ESG". The Office has secured a meeting for the Chair of Policy with the Chair of the Women and Equalities Committee to discuss the work of the Socio-Economic Diversity Taskforce and will seek to promote this to relevant APPGs and parliamentary stakeholders over the coming year. The Office has also made contact with the new APPG on ESG and has promoted IRSG work on the "S" in ESG to Gareth Davies MP (Con) ahead of a Westminster Hall debate on finance and modern slavery.



36. On sustainable finance, the Office will continue to promote the key messages of GHS@COP 26 and highlight the City Corporation's role in convening private finance at the summit and wider work in the sustainable finance space. The Policy Chair recently wrote to Louie French MP, winner of the Old Bexley and Sidcup by-election, setting out the City Corporation's work in this area. French has a background in sustainable investment, and it is hoped he will add to a growing number of Parliamentarians with an interest in this area. Reflecting the UK's year-long presidency of COP 26, parliamentary questions to the COP 26 President will continue, providing a further engagement opportunity.
37. Wider promotion of the UK's financial and professional services sector remains a priority. The Office briefed a large number of MPs ahead of a general debate on the contribution of the UK's Financial and Professional Services sector, reflecting a number of priority areas such as green finance, skills and access to talent and the UK's regulatory environment. Minister John Glen acknowledged the work of the City Corporation, Lord Mayor and Policy Chair in promoting the UK's FPS sector. On the UK's regulatory environment, the Policy Chair will meet with Sir Bob Neill MP (Con) to discuss regulation of financial services and how to accelerate change.
38. The Parliamentary Team resumed its role of supporting political and diplomatic engagement at City events over the second half of 2021. The return to face to face City events presented an opportunity to renew relationships with a number of parliamentary stakeholders and it is hoped that COVID-19 restrictions will allow events to continue to go ahead throughout 2022.
39. The Office will continue to engage with the 2023 Review of Parliamentary Constituencies. Last year, the Office submitted a response to the Boundary Commission's initial proposals — which would see the Cities of London and Westminster constituency separated, with the City of London forming a new constituency with Islington named "The City of London and Islington South" — emphasising the historical, commercial, community and cultural links between the City and Westminster. The secondary consultation on parliamentary boundaries is due to take place from Tuesday 22 February to Monday 4 April and will provide an opportunity to make further representations and comment on responses submitted to the first consultation. As part of the second consultation, a public meeting is due to be held in Westminster on 24th and 25th February.
40. With the agreement of the City's MP, a written question was tabled on Section 618 of the Housing Act 1985, which disqualifies City Corporation members who live in Common Council owned properties from voting on housing matters. A response from Minister Chris Pincher noted that the City Corporation had brought the matter to the Government's attention and that the Government is currently considering the Committee on Standards in Public Life's review of Local Government Ethical Standards and its recommendations that relate to disclosable pecuniary interests. The Office will monitor for the Government's response to the review, and will continue to seek an appropriate legislative vehicle for the repeal of the provision.

41. The Office will continue to engage with parliamentarians and diplomatic sources to advocate for the UK's accession to the Lugano Convention. While UK accession is not in the gift of parliamentarians and is not currently finding favour in EU Commission circles, work will continue to raise awareness of this and adjacent matters. The matter was recently raised by Chair of the Justice Committee Sir Bob Neill in a debate on the UK's Financial and Professional Services and by former Lord Chief Justice Lord Thomas of Cwmgiedd in a debate on the UK's relationship with the EU.

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