

Committee(s): Policy and Resources	Dated: 20 January 2022
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?	Committee Contingency
Has this Funding Source been agreed with the Chamberlain's Department?	N/A
Report of: Chief Operating Officer and Acting Deputy Town Clerk	For Information
Report author: Mark Gettleson, Election Engagement Manager	

Summary

1. Following the postponement of the all-out 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.
2. This report provides a brief update on the work undertaken prior to the Ward List registration deadline on 16 December 2021 and presents some findings to be addressed in future campaigns.

Recommendations

3. Members are asked to:
 - Note the report.

Main Report

Current Position

4. Our voter registration campaign aimed to invest in a concerted multi-channel effort to encourage engagement with the election. This campaign was run against a background of a continuing pandemic, including remote working, varying legal restrictions, and an inability to conduct face-to-face engagement with most registrants over the past two years.
5. Despite this, the campaign met with significant success, with 6,148 residents and 12,860 workers registering by the deadline – giving an overall Ward List of 19,008 voters. This compares to the immediate pre-pandemic figure of

19,200 (which was the highest since 2015) and is an increase of 6,028 since last year, and is almost identical to the figure on which the last all-out election was held in 2017 (18,983). Overall, approximately 44% of eligible workplaces registered voters, the highest proportion since 2014 and an increase of 20 percentage points since last year.

6. Success was found not only in engaging organisations who registered immediately prior to the pandemic, but approximately 450 workplaces who didn't participate in 2019 registered more than 1,800 voters – including 200 workplaces, who we have no record of ever previously having done so.

A digital-first campaign

1. The key feature of the report approved in the Policy & Resources April 2020 meeting was running a digital-first campaign. The new “Speak for the City” website, designed by leading digital mobilisation consultancy Tectonica, was launched at the opening of registration on 1 September, as a one-stop-shop for information and engagement with the election.
2. Digital advertising was then used to direct traffic to the site, in the hope visitors would engage with the content. While Facebook and Twitter were also used, LinkedIn advertising formed the vast majority of this due to the ability to build a “company list” of eligible City organisations, and slowly reduce the size of that list as they registered. In the final ten days, additional adverts were placed among businesses who had registered, but not used their full allocation.
3. The most significant piece of digital marketing undertaken was to use the arrival of the new Lord Mayor to introduce him to City workers, make them aware of the election and invite them to become a voter. More than 47,000 individuals at eligible organisations were sent a message from Vincent Keaveney's LinkedIn account from 22nd November to 14th December - with a 52% open rate, 7.5% of whom immediately visited our website.
4. In addition, we displayed almost 640,000 content adverts to City workers in the course of the campaign overall, resulting in over 5,000 immediate visits to our website.
5. Once on the website, over 1,400 individuals requested a vote at approximately 600 organisations through the Speak for the City website. While most of these requests triggered an automatic email to an organisation's registration contact, they could also be used to identify a potential new contact, where none existed or was dormant. At several organisations not believed to have registered in the past, including Capita and Monzo Bank, individuals requesting votes ended up organising registration at their firm.
6. Individual vote requests upend the top-down nature of voter registration, creating an upward pressure on organisations to take part in the process,

often for the first time. In conversations with these workplaces, our ask could be much more direct: not simply promoting participation - but highlighting named colleagues wishing to be registered.

Field campaigning

7. An early and sustained focus on retail canvassing yielded significant dividends. Project managed by Sabrina Doshi, each non-responding retail and hospitality venue received at least one visit from a canvasser, who was given specific literature. Those still undecided about registering or where a form had been left to be completed received follow-up visits. Those registering included a huge diversity of businesses, from small independent shops and cafes to prominent retail brands. The most significant barrier to retail registration was not necessarily a lack of interest, but a view among branches of certain larger chains in particular that they required the consent of their central office to register. While some approaches were made to company's headquarters, the lack of existing relationships meant limited engagement.
8. We were able to take a similar approach with barristers chambers, visiting those which were unregistered or under-registered and passing the details of those who didn't engage to ward members, so existing relationships could be used to encourage engagement. Several of these required follow-up appointments or further contact over the phone. A very high proportion of eligible barristers ended up registered on the Ward List.
9. In-person campaigning was also used to target non-responding residential properties and larger businesses. Outside the latter, and at other busy locations, we placed a large City dragon cut-out and distributed dragon-shaped flyers to passers-by. While unconventional, it was felt this approach cut through the noise and led to a good number of expressions of interest at businesses close to these locations. On-the-street campaigning was likely held back, however, by a reticence to engage, given the ongoing pandemic.

Temporary Campaign Assistants

10. Six temporary field staff were engaged over the course of the registration campaign, deployed in a variety of tasks from residential and retail canvassing to research, online outreach, phone calls and data analysis. Placing recruitment adverts on the "work for an MP" website, a jobs board popular among those looking for their first political role, meant a very high quality of knowledgeable, enthusiastic applicant. This campaign would not have met with success without the incredible efforts of Sabrina Doshi, Charlotte Gamble, Keir Logan, Zarin Mahmud, Fredrik Matre and Reece Roberts. Their flexibility and diligence was of significant assistance both to the Election Engagement Manager and the Electoral Services team, as they were able to pick up ad-hoc tasks beyond their original remit. In order to

house this team and not distract from other activities, a meeting room was booked out for several months as a registration campaign office.

Cross-organisation working

11. While the Electoral Services and Election Engagement teams maintained their distinct roles - one in administering registration and the other in promoting it - an extremely strong and effective relationship was quickly developed to support each other's work. A key element of this was a continuous flow of data from the Electoral Services team to enable better targeting of registration efforts.
12. From October onwards, the Business Registration Delivery Group brought together officers from IG, CPAT, City Revenues, SBREC and D&I for a weekly meeting focused on leveraging existing relationships to promote business registration. Officers from City Solicitors and Mansion House were also engaged in registration efforts. Particular thanks go to Campaign Assistant Fredrik Matre, who project managed the BRDG work and to Rachel Smith in IG for relentless work with her team's Relationship Managers, ensuring that no opportunity was missed to contact unregistered businesses.

Online research and outreach

13. Much of the information in the City Occupiers Database is static legacy data and takes little account of staff turnover. Large numbers of bounce-backs were received to initial emails and, where possible, LinkedIn and other public sources, as well as the City Corporation's SEEMs database, were used to identify a potential new contact. New contacts were not however saved to the City Occupiers Database and a means should be found of doing this in the future. Where existing contacts proved unresponsive, we also reached out to a senior leader at the organisation, attempting to spur registration. In many cases, this led to the original contact being instructed to take action.

Empowering members

14. A significant proportion of the relationships between the City Corporation and potential registrants are held by members with businesses in their wards. While some ward members and teams were well-organised in introducing business contacts to members of the Election Engagement team, who were able to follow up with any queries from the firms concerned, some of this activity came too late in the day to be utilised fully. In the future, we may wish to consider devising a more thorough way of auditing member relationships to promote registration and other community engagement activities.

15. Members were empowered to support voter registration in a number of ways. They were provided target lists in their ward of larger unregistered or under-registered organisations, as well as workplaces where we lacked a registration contact. Members were also provided with campaign literature, such as specially designed registration cards and retail flyers. They were also invited for drop-in sessions in the Election Engagement office to discuss voter registration efforts in their wards.

Initial reflections for future campaigns

16. We should find better ways of deducing exactly where larger organisations are in the process - and that they had taken steps to ensure their whole workforce was aware of the election and the opportunity to register. Some organisations chose to register last-minute, not using their full allocation - and such situations should be avoided in the future.
17. We need to double down on the overwhelming importance of recruiting and empowering an active and engaged registration contact at each and every workplace. The current 'survey' process is too passive and relies too much on an organisation knowing who is best-placed to arrange their registration. It is also too static and unresponsive to organisational changes: we should spend the pre-registration period systematically researching each contact, using LinkedIn and other sources
18. At larger organisations, the process of informing a workforce of their opportunity to register and collect expressions of interest can be time-consuming, especially given end-of-year pressures. While the process of appointment is a matter for each organisation, we should consider developing ways of better facilitating those efforts and reducing the workload on the registrant.
19. We should also consider that the person nominated by a workplace to carry out registration is not necessarily a person in a senior leadership role, for whom the process is a priority. We should consider asking for more than one named contact at an organisation: someone with the authority to ensure registration takes place and the person actually arranging it. This would also insulate the process from staff changes by increasing the likelihood at least one contact remained in place year-to-year.
20. While the Electoral Services team did everything they could to provide accurate and updated information to support Election Engagement work, the manual nature of this work meant a significant time lag and distraction from the core process of administering the election. This was especially true in the weeks preceding the registration deadline, with large numbers of nominations coming in on a daily basis and an urgent need to accurately identify unregistered businesses - including from members looking to do last-minute follow-ups in their wards. Urgent investment should be put into new systems that allow for truly real-time reporting of registration details that can be shared across teams without the need to be processed manually.

21. The City Corporation, through IG, has an extremely effective programme of engagement with the leadership of the largest firms in financial and professional services. Due to the nature of our registration formula, however, these organisations host disproportionately fewer potential voters than the size of the workforce suggests. Three quarters of potential voters are in workplaces of fewer than 250 staff, some of which are SMEs and retail, but as many others are City branches of larger nationwide or international organisations. Much as various departments of the City Corporation hold relationships with some of these firms, as do some members in their wards, little priority has been given to ensuring all are covered - and the lack of a central CMS used by all officers makes it extremely difficult to identify existing relationships and gaps. This can lead to accusations from some businesses, as we encountered, that they “only hear from us at election time”.
22. Additionally, at some organisations, the City Corporation has a relationship with senior staff, but not with those who actually conduct the registration - often in HR or facilities management. The same too goes for those we want to encourage to register: there is a vital need increase the relevance and value of the City Corporation for the average City worker throughout the electoral cycle. Ever since the expansion of the City franchise in 2002, each registration campaign has had to explain our role from basic principle

Candidates

23. An informal reception to promote candidature was held in November with approximately 50 attendees, including a number of existing members. The event was gender-balanced and with had a high proportion of potential BAME candidates. CPR, the Head of Equality, Diversity & Inclusion and the Electoral Services Manager spoke, encouraging attendees to considering themselves forward for election. Feedback from the event was very positive, with a good number of guests following up with further questions about the process. Another, more formal, informational event for candidates is due to be held in February, with invitations to be sent out shortly.
24. 52 prospective candidates have expressed an interest in standing for election through the Speak for the City website since its launch in September, in addition to those previously on the list of interested parties. The candidates section of the website will be expanded in the coming weeks with additional information.

Turnout campaign

25. The Election Engagement campaign now moves to the turnout stage, as outlined in previous reports. The Speak for the City website is in the process of being re-focused to provide more information on the voting process and

candidates, including an online candidates guide and polling station finder for each ward.

26. Due to the ongoing Covid restrictions, we will be sending mail-merged postal vote application forms to all voters on the Ward List. We will also be sending them out by email where we have addresses – as well as supplying registration contacts with information to encourage take-up.
27. In addition to Wardmotes, attendance at which may be hampered by ongoing restrictions we will also set up more informal hustings, including online.
28. Due to the discrete nature of the Ward List, blanket digital or print advertising will not be undertaken in this stage of the campaign, but direct email and email communications will be deployed among both residents and workers.

Corporate & Strategic Implications

29. The work of Electoral Services and the Election Engagement campaign continues to 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 are helping to encourage residents and businesses to become more invested in engaging with democracy at a local level. It is helping to build more socially responsible businesses by engaging them in City democracy and encouraging them to promote diversity among voters and candidates. By reaching out to stakeholders and partners, we are making communities better-connected and encouraging collaboration across our organisation.

Financial implications

30. None

Resource implications

31. Resources from across the City Corporation will continue to be deployed to make the election a success and various teams asked to undertake work to support this activity.

Legal implications

32. Electoral Services and Election Engagement continue to work closely with City Solicitors to ensure that all activity is compliant, including with the GDPR.

Equalities implications

33. The aim of our Election Engagement work is to increase participation in the election and candidate diversity. Digitising both the electoral process and engagement campaigns has made it more accessible to a wider and more diverse audience and encouraged more City constituents to participate in the democratic process, including those with protected characteristics.

Climate implications

34. The proposals included in this paper do not carry any significant implications for the Climate Action programme.

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
- 8 April 2021 – Election Engagement Campaign
- 8 July 2021 – Election Engagement Campaign Update
- 14 October 2021 – Election Engagement Campaign

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