

Committee(s): Communications and Corporate Affairs Sub Committee – For Information	Dated: 31/10/2022
Subject: Party Conference Update	Public
Which outcomes in the City Corporation’s Corporate Plan does this proposal aim to impact directly?	Corporate Plan Outcomes 2-10
Does this proposal require extra revenue and/or capital spending?	No
If so, how much?	N/A
What is the source of Funding?	N/A
Has this Funding Source been agreed with the Chamberlain’s Department?	N/A
Report of: Deputy Town Clerk and Executive Director of Communications and External Affairs	For Discussion
Report author: Sarah Bridgman, Senior Corporate Affairs Officer	

Summary

This report provides an update to Members on the work of the Corporate Affairs Team in relation to the City of London Corporation activity and engagement at the party conferences in September and October 2022.

City Corporation events at the party conferences are an important way of building relationships with key political and business stakeholders, and ensuring that our messaging is heard by the right people.

The party conferences remain a vital way for the City Corporation to highlight its work and participate in debates on issues affecting the sector and the country. The investment in the City Corporation’s party conference activity remains good value for money and should be maintained in future years.

Recommendation(s)

Members are asked to:

- Note the report.
- Provide feedback and commentary to the Corporate Affairs Team on this year’s party conference activity.

Main Report

Background

1. The City of London Corporation has attended the major party conferences every year since 1994, with the level of involvement and visibility increasing over time. Traditionally, Members of the Communications and Corporate Affairs Sub Committee are invited to attend the Liberal Democrat, Labour and Conservative party conferences, with the Policy Chairman additionally attending the Scottish National Party (SNP) conference.
2. The party conferences provide an important opportunity for City Corporation Members and officers to engage with the most relevant stakeholders across the political spectrum, to communicate our key messages and to build relationships with other influential conference attendees.
3. The current format of our party conference activity is to hold a City Corporation sponsored private roundtable and dinner at the conferences of the main UK-wide parties, with an additional open fringe event at the party of government. A panel event is also held at the SNP conference. The fringe and private events always feature a policy area of relevance to the City Corporation.
4. City Corporation dinners in particular have become part of the calendar of party conference events, with partners across the financial and professional services sector keen to attend.
5. This year, at the request of the Policy Chairman, the Corporate Affairs Team provided additional advice and suggestions to Members on fringe events to attend that would be of relevance to the City Corporation, and asked for feedback from those sessions to be provided. Members attending gave feedback and intelligence from those events and from their conversations with both political and business attendees. This will directly feed into our tailoring of messaging and activity over the course of the year.
6. A significant portion of the Corporate Affairs Team budget is used to organise the party conference activity and facilitate the extensive political engagement the Policy Chairman and Members are able to participate in.

Liberal Democrat Party Conference 2022

7. The City Corporation had been due to hold a private roundtable on green finance as well as a dinner at the Liberal Democrat party conference, with frontbench spokesperson Sarah Olney MP due to speak at both events.
8. However, due to the sad death of Her Late Majesty The Queen, and the ensuing period of national mourning, the Liberal Democrats took the decision to cancel their party conference. The Corporate Affairs Team similarly cancelled the City Corporation events that were due to take place in the margins of the conference.

Outcomes

9. The Corporate Affairs Team has been working with partners to ensure that the money spent on the cancelled events can instead be used for future party conference events.
10. The Corporate Affairs Team will also seek to arrange engagement with relevant Liberal Democrat politicians, in lieu of the meetings and events that would have taken place at the party conference, to ensure that the City Corporation is able to maintain positive relationships with the Liberal Democrats.

Labour Party Conference 2022

11. This year's Labour party conference was held in Liverpool in the last week of September. A total of eight Members of the Communications and Corporate Affairs Sub Committee attended the conference. As is customary, the City Corporation held a roundtable and a dinner, which four further Members attended. The Corporate Affairs Team also supported the Policy Chairman and other Members with additional engagements.
12. The City Corporation's roundtable was held in partnership with the Fabian Society on the subject of culture in economic recovery. Shadow Minister for Sport, Tourism, Heritage and Music Jeff Smith MP addressed the session, and the Policy Chairman had the opportunity to talk about Destination City, the City Corporation's flagship policy for culture-driven recovery from the pandemic. The event was well-attended, with over 20 representatives from across the cultural sector joining the event, both from London and across the UK.
13. The City Corporation's dinner and reception was attended by approximately 100 guests, made up of MPs, Assembly Members and councillors from London, and representatives of the financial and professional services sector. Following a speech from the Policy Chairman, the keynote speaker was the Shadow Economic Secretary and MP for Hampstead and Kilburn, Tulip Siddiq. Other notable attendees included two members of the Shadow Cabinet and a Shadow Business Minister. The number of attendees at the dinner was slightly higher than the previous year.
14. During the course of the conference, Members were able to attend events and receptions organised by external partners that allowed them to engage with a range of other senior political and business figures. According to feedback received from six Members, they attended a total of 13 external fringe meetings and events. The figure rises to at least 26 external fringe meetings and events when officer attendance is included. Members also reported one to one conversations they had held with Shadow Ministers, MPs and key business stakeholders during the conference.

Outcomes

15. A key objective for the City Corporation at Labour conference was to ensure that connections were made with the most relevant Shadow Ministers, who may

hold key positions in the next government. This was achieved in particular through conversations had at the City Corporation dinner, and also through brush-by meetings around the conference centre. This engagement could be further strengthened with follow up meetings.

16. Both the roundtable and dinner events allowed City Corporation messaging in important areas including the competitiveness of the UK financial and professional services sector and Destination City to be shared with relevant Shadow Ministers.
17. Member and officer attendance at selected fringe meetings allowed for intelligence gathering on the current political environment and issues of importance to the City Corporation. Where relevant, it also allowed Members to highlight City Corporation messaging in line with the briefing provided by the Corporate Affairs Team.
18. The City Corporation events were well-received by political and business attendees and the organisation continues to cement its place as a reliable conference attendee and partner.

Conservative Party Conference 2022

19. This year's Conservative party conference was held in Birmingham in the first week of October. A total of ten Members of the Communications and Corporate Affairs Sub Committee attended the conference. The City Corporation held a private roundtable, a panel fringe event and a dinner, which a further four Members attended. The Corporate Affairs Team also supported the Policy Chairman and Members with other engagements.
20. The private roundtable was held in partnership with the Centre for London and covered the subject of London and levelling up. The main speaker was the Minister for London, Paul Scully MP. There were 18 attendees, and those present included representatives of business groups, London Assembly Members and councillors and a former adviser in 10 Downing Street. The Policy Chairman was able to highlight City Corporation messaging on levelling up, and one topic of the discussion was the new government's approach to this policy area.
21. The fringe event was held in partnership with the Centre for Policy Studies and was entitled: "Trade, Exports and Global Britain". The panel consisted of senior figures in the trade in services field, including the Policy Chairman, a Trade Minister, the former International Trade Secretary Liam Fox MP, Sally Jones of EY and Charlotte Crosswell of Open Banking. The Policy Chairman's remarks covered the importance of trade in services to the UK economy, and the Minister mentioned the importance of market access work despite free trade agreements receiving more media coverage. The fringe event was well attended, with the room full.
22. The party conference dinner and reception had approximately 98 guests attending, again made up of London MPs, Assembly Members and councillors

and representatives from the financial and professional services sector. The newly appointed Exchequer Secretary to the Treasury and MP for Kensington, Felicity Buchan, was the keynote speaker, and the guests also heard from the Policy Chairman. Again the number of attendees at the dinner was slightly higher than the previous year.

23. Members also had the opportunity to attend other events and receptions organised by external partners during the course of the conference, allowing them to engage with a wide range of other key political and business figures. According to feedback received from five Members, they attended a total of 15 external fringe meetings and events. This number rises to at least 28 external fringe meetings and events when officer attendance is included. Members also reported on one to one conversations they had held with Ministers, MPs, Ambassadors and key business stakeholders during the conference.
24. The Policy Chairman additionally had a regional media interview which gave him the chance to comment on topical economic stories and highlight City Corporation messaging.

Outcomes

25. A key objective of the City Corporation at the Conservative party conference was to engage with Ministers in the new government, both at City Corporation events and through brush-by meetings around the conference centre. The City Corporation sponsored events gave the Policy Chairman and other Members the opportunity to speak to Treasury Ministers, a Trade Minister and the Minister for London as well as other relevant backbenchers. These connections and conversations again could be consolidated through follow up meetings to further build relationships.
26. The City Corporation roundtable, panel and dinner provided opportunities for our messaging on important topics including levelling up, trade in services and the competitiveness of the financial and professional services sector to be heard by key politicians and policymakers.
27. Member and officer attendance at selected fringe meetings allowed for intelligence gathering on the current political environment and issues of importance to the City Corporation. Where relevant, it also allowed Members to highlight City Corporation messaging in line with the briefing provided by the Corporate Affairs Team.
28. The City Corporation events were well-received by political and business attendees and the organisation continues to cement its place as a reliable conference attendee and partner.

Scottish National Party Conference 2022

29. This year's SNP conference was held in Aberdeen over a weekend in October. The Policy Chairman attended with one Corporate Affairs Officer and the City Corporation sponsored a panel event jointly with TheCityUK.

30. The panel event was held in partnership with Dods and covered the subject of financing the just transition. In addition to the Policy Chairman, the panel consisted of Michael Matheson MSP, Cabinet Secretary for Net Zero, Energy and Transport, Dame Susan Rice, Chair of the Global Steering Group of the Global Ethical Financial Initiative and Doug Thomson, a former fund manager. The Policy Chairman's contribution covered the City Corporation's work on sustainable finance and the Scottish financial services sector. The event was well attended with over 60 guests present.

Outcomes

31. A key objective of attending the SNP conference is to maintain positive relationships with the Scottish government, both as part of our regional strategy and because of the substantial financial and professional services sector based in Scotland. This was achieved through the Policy Chairman being able to have a positive discussion with the Cabinet Secretary.

32. The City Corporation event was well-received by political and business attendees and the organisation continues to cement its place as a reliable conference attendee and partner.

Key Data

None

Corporate & Strategic Implications

Strategic implications

33. Engaging with political stakeholders through organising events associated with the party political conferences. Events which engage with key audiences on important global, national and local government issues and to demonstrate the Corporation's involvement in relevant debates. Sponsorship and political engagement would also help deliver outcomes 2 – 10 of the 2018-23 Corporate Plan.

Financial implications

34. The Corporate Affairs Team has an established budget for all party conference related activity. As of Tuesday 18 October, there was £89,790.00 in processed expenditure on this year's conferences, including all passes, the majority of hotel stays, event costs and partnerships.

Resource implications

None

Legal implications

None

Risk implications

None

Equalities implications

None

Climate implications

None

Security implications

None

Conclusion

35. The party conferences provide an important annual opportunity for the City Corporation to engage extensively with a number of senior political and business figures all in one location and in a short space of time. This has been particularly important this year given the changes in government that have taken place in recent months.
36. The City Corporation events draw significant numbers of attendees and allow for our messaging on key topics to be heard by influential policymakers. Our dinners in particular form a key part of the party conference calendar for the financial and professional services sector.
37. The political engagement completed at the party conferences could be further consolidated by senior Members holding follow up meetings, organised by the Corporate Affairs Team.
38. A significant portion of the Corporate Affairs Team budget is used to facilitate the activity at the party conferences. In the opinion of the Team, given the extensive engagement with influential political figures that the conferences allow for, this represents value for money and is something that should be maintained in future years.
39. Members are asked to note the update on this year's party conference activity and provide any feedback and commentary to help inform the plans for future years.

Appendices

None

Background Papers

None

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