

Committee(s): Communications and Corporate Affairs Subcommittee	Dated: 31/10/2022
Subject: Think Tank Review and Membership, 2022-23	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 & Executive Director of Communications and External Affairs	For Discussion
Report author: Kristy Sandino, Head of Corporate Affairs	

Summary

As part of the City of London Corporation's political engagement programme, the Corporate Affairs Team coordinates and reviews the relationships we hold with think tanks.

The City Corporation holds corporate membership of eight think tanks and works with a number of others across the political spectrum on a variety of projects and events in accordance with our strategic priorities.

The Corporate Affairs Team will continue to ensure that the City Corporation's engagement with think tanks is organised in a strategic way in order to ensure that we continue to work with the most influential organisations.

Recommendation(s)

Members are asked to:

- Note the partnerships and engagement with think tanks.

Main Report

Background

1. For the purpose of this report, the term "think tank" denotes regular academic think tanks, self-styled research and policy institutes and charities with a key policy function.

2. As part of the City of London Corporation's political engagement programme, the Corporate Affairs Team coordinates and reviews the relationships we hold with think tanks.
3. The City Corporation's engagement with think tanks is beneficial to the organisation if it takes place on a strategic basis. Any engagement focuses on mapping the City's interests and those of the think tanks to identify opportunities for greater collaboration. The Corporate Affairs Team also ensures that a political balance is maintained across the organisations we engage with.
4. The City Corporation currently holds corporate membership of eight think tanks. Membership provides a number of benefits including:
 - a. Strengthening relationships with the think tank;
 - b. Influencing its agenda;
 - c. Receiving invitations to attend private roundtables/briefings/receptions
 - d. Receiving copies of publications and policy briefings.
5. Outside of membership, the City Corporation also benefits from working with think tanks on specific areas throughout the year, particularly projects and events in accordance with our priorities, and including events held at the party conferences. This gives flexibility and allows us to work across the political spectrum, with think tanks who have the ear of the government or opposition.
6. The agreed approach that has been adopted regarding the City Corporation's work and relationships with think tanks is to:
 - a. Ensure we are working with the most influential think tanks at a given time;
 - b. Be agile by welcoming unsolicited ideas;
 - c. Ensure we work with a broad political and thematic balance of think tanks;
 - d. Insist on excellence as a collaborative delivery partner and in the quality of their product; and
 - e. Ensure that we are getting the best value for money.

Current Position

7. The City Corporation is currently a corporate member of eight think tanks:
 - a. Chatham House – including membership of one of their research programmes
 - b. Centre for the Study of Financial Innovation
 - c. Local Government Information Unit (LGiU)
 - d. New Financial – including our sponsorship of the Women in Finance Charter
 - e. New Local (formerly New Local Government Network)
 - f. Onward
 - g. Whitehall and Industry Group (WIG)
 - h. International Business and Diplomatic Exchange

8. We also have a number of ongoing and recent projects with other think tanks across the political spectrum.
9. We regularly work with the Centre for Policy Studies who are widely known to be a particularly influential think tank on the current government. Their annual Margaret Thatcher Conference is held at the Guildhall and plans are being made for the forthcoming conference. We also work with them on one off projects in line with the City Corporation's priorities such as our engagement at Party Conference.
10. As well as our membership of the influential centre-right think tank Onward, we also recently contributed to their annual dinner which was held in Guildhall. This event saw a significant number of key policymakers travel into the Square Mile to hear remarks from the Policy Chairman, alongside the then Chancellor Rishi Sunak. This was a beneficial moment to share our messaging on levelling up as well as our engagement with government on the State of the Sector report.
11. We have supported Centre for London through their ongoing 'Levelling Up' work and Corporate Affairs is a member of the advisory board of this project and a major sponsor. This report will be launched at the upcoming London Conference, forming a basis for London's argument in the levelling up agenda.
12. The City Corporation has maintained membership of the Centre for the Study of Financial Innovation (CSFI) in recent years, as well as providing them with a grant to support their continued occupancy in Leadenhall Market. Earlier this year they surrendered their lease on the office and informed supporters they would be dissolving as an independent charity. They are planning to continue operating under the brand of CSFI with a new business model and we are expecting further details of this in due course.
13. Relations between the UK and EU remain an important strategic priority for the City Corporation given the level of economic output for the UK driven by trading relations with the EU. As we have done in previous years, we have partnered with the European Policy Forum's (EPF) Cumberland Lodge Financial Services Summit. Guests at the summit will include representatives from the financial services sector in the UK and Europe and the City Corporation will have a representative speak on the session on The Outlook for the UK and Europe.
14. The City Corporation supports events run by the Strand Group of King's College London, where relevant to our policy interests. In June the City Corporation sponsored an event with a keynote speech from the Chief Economic Adviser to the Treasury, which covered the state of the economy post-pandemic. In November the Vice Chair of Policy and Resources will be giving opening remarks at an event in Edinburgh with a keynote speech from Lord Macpherson on "Treasury orthodoxy: fact or fiction" and also covering the role of the Treasury throughout the UK.

15. In addition to these projects, the Corporate Affairs Team recently organised the regular programme for this autumn's party conferences, which involved arranging events with key think tanks such as Centre for Policy Studies, Centre for London and Fabian Society.

Proposals

16. The City Corporation seeks to engage with a politically balanced range of think tanks in a number of key and relevant policy areas. The direction and degree of our engagement is shaped by a number of factors, including amongst others: a particular think tank's public profile and the influence it has on government, major political parties and public policy debates.

17. The influence and public profile of think tanks fluctuates. As a result, organisations such as ours must be agile in this respect and strive to work with the most influential political think tanks at a given time, who are connected to work on the key issues of the moment.

18. The Corporate Affairs Team will continue to ensure the City Corporation works with the most influential think tanks according to our strategic priorities, both through membership and through the flexibility of specific events and projects. We will also ensure that a balance is maintained across the political spectrum.

Key Data

None

Corporate & Strategic Implications

Strategic implications

19. Proactive engagement and focused relationship-building with think tanks of relevance to the City Corporation's priorities will enhance our visibility, enable us to contribute effectively to the policy debate and contribute positively to our political engagement programme.

20. Continuing the engagement with think tanks will provide the City Corporation with opportunities to engage with government on key issues of concern, by facilitating events, meetings and occasions for policy discussion. It will also enable the City Corporation to participate in policy debates.

21. This work would also help deliver outcomes 2 – 10 of the 2018-23 Corporate Plan.

Financial implications

22. The Corporate Affairs Team has an established budget for all engagement related activity. Any sponsorship of ad-hoc policy projects is currently funded

via the Policy Initiatives Fund according to decisions of the Policy and Resources Committee.

Resource implications

None

Legal implications

None

Risk implications

None

Equalities implications

None

Climate implications

None

Security implications

None

Conclusion

23. Members are asked to note the work of the Corporate Affairs Team in relation to the memberships of and engagement with think tanks across the political spectrum.

Appendices

None

Background Papers

None

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