

Committee(s): Communications and Corporate Affairs Sub-Committee – For Decision	Dated: 14/02/23
Policy and Resources Committee – For Decision	23/02/23
Subject: Worker Engagement: The City Belonging Project	Public
Which outcomes in the City Corporation’s Corporate Plan does this proposal aim to impact directly?	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 9 and 10
Does this proposal require extra revenue and/or capital spending?	Y
If so, how much?	£70,000
What is the source of Funding?	Committee Contingency
Has this Funding Source been agreed with the Chamberlain’s Department?	Y
Report of: Deputy Town Clerk	For Decision
Report author: Mark Gettleson, Head of Campaigns and Community Engagement	

Summary

The City Corporation has long struggled to engage our worker community as a whole with our activities, communications and consultations, including voter registration and events. While significant work is carried out by individual teams to engage specific people at specific organisations for specific purposes, a comprehensive approach to our 587,000-strong worker population has never been devised. We currently possess no central email list or other scalable means of contacting each City workplace. This affects how members interact with their worker constituents, who are extremely difficult to reach compared to residents; the existing Ward Newsletter, received by the 2% of workers on the Ward List at an annual cost of £40,000, is not an effective means of member engagement.

As we look towards the next City-wide elections in 2025, and December 2024 registration deadline, this report proposes that we create a new dimension to our relationship with City workplaces, irrespective of size and sector. By harnessing the increased role of diversity networks across the working City, we can use our convening power to promote and incubate inter-company communities across the Square Mile. We would draw this together into a community engagement campaign, modelled on the successful “Speak for the City” programme of election engagement, called the City Belonging Project. This would provide information on and support existing networks and activities, including our own events, and work with partners across the working City to develop new ones. In so doing, we would create significant value for our community, helping them to become better connected across the Square Mile. This will be of significant long-term benefit to our organisation, giving us a means by which to contact City workplaces for the purposes of community engagement irrespective of topic, from consultations and electoral registration to member-constituent engagement and event invitations. Not only should this save time and money for individual teams

looking to engage with workers, but may have the potential to be self-financing in the long term.

In advance of the 2021/22 Common Councillor registration period and elections, the Policy and Resources committee used its contingency funds to support a successful election engagement programme. It is proposed to again allocate £70,000 from Policy and Resources Committee Contingency to support this work, with a view to the City Belonging Project facilitating election engagement efforts. It is proposed to supplement this funding by suspending the Ward Newsletters for a period of two years, freeing up £80,000 in further funding over that period. This work will be project managed directly by the Head of Campaigns and Community Engagement.

Recommendation(s)

Communications and Corporate Affairs Sub-Committee is asked to:

- Note the report.
- Recommend to the Policy & Resources Committee, the suspension of the existing physical Ward Newsletters for a period of two years to provide up to £80,000 in additional funding for the above activities.

Policy and Resources Committee is asked to:

- Note the report.
- Authorise the suspension of the existing physical Ward Newsletters for a period of two years to provide up to £80,000 in additional funding for the above activities.
- Authorise £70,000 in funding from 2023/24 Committee Contingency to support the City Belonging Project, as a campaign focused on increasing worker engagement with the City Corporation and its activities ahead of the December 2024 registration deadline.

Main Report

Background

1. Approximately 587,000 people work in the City of London, equivalent to the electorate of eight parliamentary constituencies, making up more than 98% of the overall population of the Square Mile. It is this overwhelming proportion that provides the ongoing basis for the unique character of the City of London, including our organisation and electoral arrangements. While only a small fraction of the City's workforce is currently eligible to register, workers made up 69% of the Ward List last year.
2. As the recent worker and resident poll shows, a significantly lower proportion of workers are highly familiar with the City Corporation compared to residents, and they show lower levels of engagement with our organisation and activities across the board. This is reflected in difficulty of persuading many City workers

to register and participate in our elections, encountered over many decades. As noted in the October 2022 Elections Report to the Policy and Resources Committee, given that “we face no relevance challenge among residents: for most, we are their sole local authority and have a clear relationship with them based on service delivery.” Conversely, all but a tiny fraction of our worker community live, pay council tax, and have a more direct reliance on local services elsewhere. If we are to have more workers see themselves as citizens of the Square Mile, our relationship with them must be relevant and qualitatively different to that of their local authority at home.

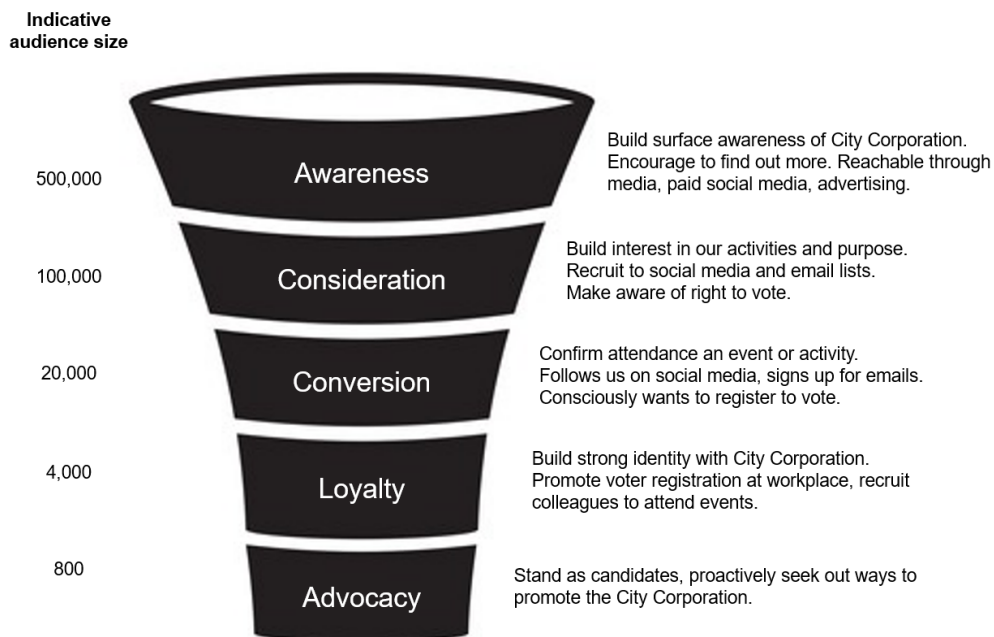
3. The challenge of increasing our relevance and engagement with workers at large, not just the senior leadership of the largest financial and professional services firms, lies at the heart of our vibrancy as an organisation, particularly as our next elections approach. We must also address the fact that we find it difficult to communicate with our worker population, either directly or through their workplace, hampering our engagement and consultation work across the organisation.
4. In trying to tackle this relevance challenge, we can do so in a way that addresses a number of key goals: in particular, promoting diversity and inclusion in the Square Mile, promoting the Destination City programme and electoral registration, and enabling any part of our organisation to better communicate and consult with the working City. In the long-run, investment in our ability to reach the working City will lead to significant savings in time and money continuously deployed by different departments trying to achieve the same goals for their own activities. Success will require a fundamental shift in the way we interact with our worker community: a B2B approach that encompasses every workplace irrespective of size or sector – and uses a community organising model to translate that to B2C.

Current position

5. Since the opening up of our electoral registration to City workers at large two decades ago – a right previously reserved mostly for senior leaders – members and the organisation as a whole have found it difficult to interact with our worker community. While residents can be doorstepped, met at public meetings or through casework, reaching behind the office door is a much more difficult ask, certainly at a scale necessary for a community of over half a million.
6. Our existing methods of engagement take insufficient account of the scale of this challenge. Wardmotes will only ever be attended by a tiny handful of the most active citizens, while the Ward Newsletter, posted only to the 2% of workers who are on the Ward List has limited reach. It should also be remembered that the Ward List is extremely fluid, with some of our largest firms choosing to entirely change their list of registered voters over the past year, causing people to drop in and out of Ward Newsletter contact. At almost £40,000 per year, the physical Ward Newsletter is not considered a value-for-money engagement tool and the lack of a centralised email list at City

workplaces, usable for community engagement purposes, means it cannot currently be disseminated digitally.

7. We must find more effective ways for our organisation and its elected members to engage with their worker constituents that reaches our whole community, digitally and in-person, in a way that reflects the contemporary City. Creating an email list as described above will be key to this effort, as will finding and promoting opportunities for City workers and their elected members to meet one another in person.
8. If we consider engagement as a marketing or sales funnel, we need interventions at each stage in a way that is timely and cost-effective.



Diversity Networks: the key to unlocking our worker community

9. The largest single advantage we have in approaching community engagement in the Square Mile is that the vast majority of the workforce is contained in organised workplace environments with clear structures and priorities, with which we can align. This can help ensure relevant and engaging communications cascade internally to reach a wider audience – a benefit no other local authority can harness in the same way.
10. The importance of Diversity Networks, also referred to as “employee resource groups” or “affinity networks”, has increased tremendously across organisations in recent years. These bring together staff with similar social identities such as women, ethnic minorities, LGBT and young people, and support and advance them in their workplace and beyond. The larger the workplace and the greater number of people identifying with a group, the better organised that network will be – often with the support of D&I professionals and strong vertical integration at the organisation, including an executive sponsor.

This reflects the extraordinary increase in the prominence and prioritisation of D&I within businesses, and the drive to put wellness, belonging and social connectivity at the heart of the post-pandemic workplace.

11. Though specific data does not yet exist, it is reasonable to assume that every one of the approximately 60 City workplaces with over 1,000 staff have numerous well-organised diversity networks and that the vast majority of approximately 600 with over 100 staff will have some kind of diversity network structure. These approximate to between a quarter and half of the City workforce respectively. As such, it seems almost certain that Diversity Networks collectively form the single largest subset of community organisations in the Square Mile, involving by far the largest number of people.
12. Links between communities across workplaces are often weak, however. While several inter-company sector-based organisations exist, particularly for Women and LGBT, coverage appears to be patchy and not necessarily linked to the Square Mile.

The City Belonging Project

13. The City Corporation has an unparalleled opportunity to add a profoundly meaningful and timely dimension to its relationship with the working City by using our convening power to foster links between diversity networks and provide assistance at scale to each workplace looking to foster a culture of belonging. We would provide support, information and promotion for existing groups and work with individuals, workplaces and partners to identify gaps in support and incubate new networks. In so doing, we immediately create value to City workplaces of all sizes and create new lists of contacts we can use for community engagement purposes.
14. It is proposed to launch a multi-year programme to support this work, modelled on the successful Speak for the City campaign, called the City Belonging Project. Activities would include bringing together, promoting and expanding existing community events, including but not limited to those we ourselves run. We would also aim to create new activities, such as networking, panel discussions, entertainment and educational events, in collaboration with the EDI directorate and other teams where appropriate. While there are significant advantages to hosting certain events ourselves and better opening up the Guildhall, Mansion House and Barbican to our community, there is also huge potential for partnership with hospitality, Livery Companies and other organisations with events spaces. Initial conversations suggest we can ask larger workplaces to host events on behalf of project and provide refreshments. We may wish to sign up other organisations as official partners of the City Belonging Project, and in the long term, it may also be possible to get sponsorship or even charge (directly or through a workplace) for certain activities, with the eventual aim of making this project self-financing. Any relevant activities would be put together online in a single place, providing an easily-accessible overview for the first time and opportunities to get involved.

15. This project will be of particular benefit to smaller workplaces and microbusinesses, from start-ups to coffee-shops, who will likely not have existing diversity network presence, yet see staff wellbeing as a priority. By identifying and creating pan-City networks, we can engage in a comprehensive programme to open up and communicate these opportunities to those in smaller workplaces, working with partners like SBREC and Heart of the City. Similarly, the positive effect on smaller social communities is likely to be profound, as even the largest workplaces can struggle to achieve a critical mass of staff to create organised networks for them internally. As we found with outreach around our recent Chanukah event, they hugely appreciate the provision of City-wide activities for such groups.
16. We should also not limit such community-building activities to the traditional diversity groups, but to think more broadly in an effort to ensure as many City workers are involved, even if they don't belong to a protected category. This could include national communities and places of origin, from Brazil to Cornwall, and involve partnerships with embassies, local authorities, MPs and alumni networks.
17. New starters also form a clear social identity and are organised into networks at many City workplaces. We have a clear role helping to provide a warm welcome across organisations into their life in the Square Mile and introducing them to their new community. While we would consult with businesses on relevant and appropriate material and activities, this could include anything from a welcome pack from the Lord Mayor, organised tours of the Square Mile or a welcome reception with their ward councillors. As everyone will at some stage have been a new starter, this engagement approach will over time become universal, allowing us the potential to form a direct relationship with our entire working community.
18. We would work with existing business engagement teams across the organisation, including in IG and Environment, as well as with the Lord Mayor's Appeal and the BIDs, to utilise existing channels of communication and help achieve the goals of those teams wherever possible.
19. While we lack a central organisation CRM, used by all public-facing officers and covering all of our worker and residential community, this work can help inform its requirements should it be developed in the future.
20. The City Belonging Project will benefit the City Corporation, the Square Mile and our communities in numerous ways, directly and indirectly:
 - Provide a meaningful and useful basis by which our organisation, institutions and members engage every single workplace in the City and their staff at scale, adding a new, timely and relevant dimension to our relationship with City businesses and workers.
 - Build on our existing events programmes and activities, enabling them to scale and better reflect our communities – and working with partners to identify new opportunities across the Square Mile.

- Ensure our consultations and communications are able to reach diverse audiences at each City workplace, leveraging the representative character of their networks. This will address long-term community engagement issues encountered across the organisation, from Climate Action to the Police Authority.
- Promote the Destination City programme, creating a new channel that will enable them to access large numbers of City workers.
- Work with City Solicitors to permission workplace contacts for community engagement in a way that would allow us to send them relevant updates that might include an electronic reimagining of the Ward Newsletter and other community communications.
- Directly address member diversity by building strong relationships with senior leaders involved in diversity networks across the working City – introducing them to the City Corporation and attracting them towards the idea of candidature.
- Reduce the amount needing to be spent on engagement ahead of the 2025 elections, as potential new voters and registration contacts will be identified at each City workplace.
- Work with the Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Directorate to ensure that our seven staff and internal networks at the City Corporation are effectively connected to relevant cross-City groups and activities, giving them access to peers and opportunities across the Square Mile.
- Provide a new pathway to introduce more workers to other aspects of civic life in the Square Mile, including helping the Livery movement diversify their membership.
- Establish the Square Mile as a world leader in community connectivity, in a way that highlights our role as the convenor and incubator of the networks that make it possible. This will not only improve perceptions of the organisation reputationally, but support powerful network effects that draw firms into the City.

Initial programme of work

21. Develop a brand and collateral around the City Belonging Project, modelled on the Speak for the City campaign, in a way that is eye-catching, multi-channel and applicable to workplaces of all sizes.
22. Conduct a wide-ranging research and stakeholder engagement programme with an aim of identifying:
 - a) A contact person for community and diversity network engagement at each City workplace (aiming towards 80% of workplaces above 1,000 staff and 40% of those above 100 in the first year).
 - b) The diversity networks that exist at each City firm, ideally with an estimate of numbers involved at each and, where permission is given, a contact person.
 - c) Existing cross-organisational networks with which City firms are involved, their stages of development and a contact person. Meetings should be secured wherever possible.

23. Explore expanding the scale and frequency of the diversity events programme run out of Remembrancer's, drawing them together into a calendar, ensuring they reach a wider audience and are seen as a key corporate priority. Include within this calendar external diversity events in the Square Mile with permission and where appropriate.
24. Work with partners across the City to identify and support communities looking to form intra-company networks and use our contacts, influence and facilities to convene them. Co-create initial events, hosted ourselves or with partners, to bring the community together.
25. Bring together HR leaders from a small number of City workplaces to develop a welcome offering for new starters and draw it together into a pilot programme.
26. First year KPIs could include:
 - Contact for community and diversity network engagement at 80% of workplaces above 1,000 staff and 40% of those above 100.
 - Creation of 5 new inter-company community diversity networks across the Square Mile.
 - Putting on 10 new "City Belonging Project" events, hosted ourselves or through partners across the City.
 - 100 City workplaces represented at least once at existing City Corporation community events.
 - 50 currently unregistered workplaces choosing to register voters on the next Ward List.
 - 10 workplaces participating in a pilot "City Belonging Project: Warm Welcome" programme for new starters.

Use of data

27. The City Corporation undertakes numerous activities that connect us with workers at scale. These build up email lists used for that particular purpose. Working with City Solicitors, we should explore a form of words that would allow us to contact consenting workers for a host of engagement and non-statutory consultative processes, similar to the "strategic engagement" permissions used by IG. This would then be deployed across departments who regularly sign workers up to communicate with them about specific issues.

Proposal

28. It is proposed that the Communications and Corporate Affairs Sub-Committee:
 - approve the suspension of the physical Ward Newsletter for a period of 2 years, totalling approximately £80,000 over that period. It is envisaged that, over time, this project will create a scalable means for such information to be disseminated digitally.

29. It is proposed that the Policy and Resources Committee:

- allocate £70,000 from 2023/24 Policy & Resources Committee Contingency to support the City Belonging Project, with a view to it facilitating election engagement efforts ahead of the December 2024 deadline.

30. Where departments have budgets currently allocated for worker engagement, opportunities will be explored to allocate some of these towards this project, so that the department can benefit from its success in the longer-term.

31. Should initial stages of the City Belonging Project be seen as successful and valuable, the committee may then be asked to consider further activities and development.

Corporate & Strategic Implications

32. Strategic implications – Improving engagement with our worker community, especially those from diverse audiences, helps contribute to all elements of a flourishing society in the Square Mile, and helps us become better connected with our communities, digitally and physically.

33. Financial implications – It is proposed that funding of £70,000 is drawn from the 2023/24 Policy and Resources Contingency Fund and charged to City's Cash to support the activities outlined in this report. The current uncommitted 2023/24 Contingency Fund balance is £285,000 prior to any allocations being made for any other proposals on today's agenda.

34. Resource implications – Additional support may be called upon from across the organisation to assist with the activities outlined in this report. By creating more scalable means to reach more City workplaces, it is hoped to reduce resources expended by individual departments to do the same.

35. Legal implications – Information collected on City workers as part of an engagement must be stored securely and only shared within the organisation in a way that is compliant with the GDPR and other data protection legislation.

36. Risk implications – Failing to better engage with our worker community reduces the effectiveness of our voter registration programmes and risks making our consultations and communications less meaningful and impactful.

37. Equalities implications – The activities suggested in this report are aimed squarely at engaging more individuals from diverse communities in our organisation and its activities. These aim to be of significant long-term benefit to our equalities duties and aspirations.

38. Climate implications – By promoting digital communications and being able to reach more workers by email, we will reduce the need to physical communications in the longer term.
39. Security implications – Any information held on City workers as part of this programme must be stored safely.

Conclusion

40. The activities and proposals contained in this report are aimed at improving communications, engagement and consultation with our entire worker community, in a way that is scalable, long-lasting and addresses a host of strategic priorities for the organisation – from the wish to become a leader in Equality, Diversity and Inclusion to maximising our election engagement. In so doing, it hopes to create a bold and timely dimension to our relationship with the working City, irrespective of sector and size of workplace.

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