

<b>Committee(s):</b> Communications and Corporate Affairs (Policy & Resources) Committee – For information	<b>Dated:</b> 15/11/2023
<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 Wright, City Remembrancer	<b>For Discussion</b>
<b>Report author:</b> William Stark, Senior Parliamentary Engagement Officer	

### 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 to the subcommittee on 6<sup>th</sup> September 2023.

### Recommendation(s)

Members are recommended to note the report.

### Main Report

#### Legislative Programme Update

1. The end of the 2022/23 Parliamentary Session at prorogation on 26 October November saw seven Acts receive Royal Assent, however some significant pieces of legislation, including the **Data Protection and Digital Information (No. 2) Bill** and **Renters (Reform) Bill**, were carried over. Such Bills will have to be considered alongside the legislative agenda set out at the King’s Speech, which took place on 7<sup>th</sup> November, after the submission of this paper. An additional note on the contents of the King’s Speech will be shared with members of this subcommittee at the meeting on 15<sup>th</sup> November.
2. Business managers in the House of Commons and Lords faced a challenge in completing the passage of a number of Acts ahead of prorogation, most notably the **Levelling-up and Regeneration Act**, where the House of Lords insisted on a number of amendments, forcing a tense period of “ping-pong” in the final few days. The conclusion of parliamentary proceedings on the **Online Safety Act** prior to the conference recess will have been a relief for business managers, though Royal Assent was only signified at prorogation.

3. **Economic Crime and Transparency Act** – The Act received Royal Assent at prorogation after an extended period of “ping pong” between both Houses. While the Government inserted a “failure to prevent” economic crime offence for large businesses in the Lords following backbench pressure, a number of backbench amendments expanding the offence to SMEs led to the Bill bouncing back and forth between the Houses. Following a final attempt to insert such an amendment in the Commons was defeated, Peers backed down and allowed the Bill to pass into law. The Act will be reported to the Police Authority Board.
4. **Online Safety Act** – While the Online Safety Act saw considerable changes in the House of Lords, its return to the House of Commons for “ping pong” was relatively smooth. Assurances from the Government allayed MPs’ main concern that the Act might undermine end-to-end encrypted messaging services. As such, it passed the Commons without division, which at the same time saw a number of backbench Lords amendments stripped out. Similarly, Peers were content to comply with the Commons. While the Act’s provisions on economic crime (the City’s main interest in the Act) have remained unchanged for some time, the Act receiving Royal Assent at prorogation means that these, alongside other requirements for online platforms, can be brought into force in due course. A separate report on the Act will be made to the Police Authority Board.
5. **Levelling-up and Regeneration Act** – After an arduous journey and despite over 100 last-minute attempted amendments, the Act received Royal Assent last week. Provisions include those on members of the Common Council voting on housing matters (see paragraph 23), changes to planning procedures on Local Plans and access to planning consultations, heritage protections, and provisions to make permanent the liberalisation of pavement licenses. In its final stages Peers, who had repeatedly insisted on the importance of allowing council meetings to be held virtually, gave in to Government pressure, which was implacably opposed to virtual meetings.
6. **Procurement Act** – The Act is intended to make public procurement more accessible for new entrants, enabling them to compete for public contracts. Following discussion with the Cabinet Office, the Government brought forward amendments at Report Stage in the Commons (the Act’s second house) to clarify the scope of the application of the Act’s regime to the activities of the Corporation, ensuring that the regime only applies to the Corporation’s functions as a public authority. The Act received Royal Assent at prorogation. Procurement colleagues in the Corporation have been made aware of the effect of these amendments to the Act.
7. **Energy Act** – The Act makes provision about energy production and security, including the regulation of heat networks and the establishment of heat network zones. This is particularly relevant to the Corporation as, according to the 2021 Census, the highest proportion of households with district or communal heating as their only source of central heating was in inner London, with rates of 19% in the City of London. In collaboration with officers in the Energy team of City

Surveyors, the Remembrancer's Office submitted written evidence to the House of Commons Public Bill Committee in June. The Act received Royal Assent at prorogation.

8. **Non-Domestic Ratings Act** - This Act implements a number of changes to the system of non-domestic rates (known as business rates) in England and Wales. The majority of the provisions for England give effect to conclusions of the government's Business Rates Review. The Act received Royal Assent at prorogation. The implications of the Act for the business rates system (and the timelines for the provisions coming into force) have been outlined to officers in Chamberlain's.
9. **Worker Protection (Amendment of Equality Act 2010) Act** - The Act (a Private Member's Bill which received Government support) consists of two principal measures related to the prevention of sexual harassment in the workplace - a duty on employers to take reasonable steps to prevent sexual harassment and explicit protections from harassment by third parties. The Act was brought forward after Government consultation on these and other non-legislative measures relating to harassment in the workplace. The Act received Royal Assent at prorogation. The implications of this short Act will be outlined to Corporation HR officers in due course.
10. Public Bills that received a carryover motion prior to prorogation include:
  - Data Protection and Digital Information (No 2) Bill
  - Digital Markets, Competition and Consumers Bill
  - Economic Activity of Public Bodies (Overseas Matters) Bill
  - Victims and Prisoners Bill
  - Renters Reform Bill
11. Bills announced in the May 2022 Queen's Speech which were not introduced or published in the 2022/23 Session include:
  - Conversion Therapy Bill
  - Modern Slavery Bill
  - Transport Bill
  - Draft Audit Reform Bill

### **City Corporation Private Legislation**

12. The **City of London (Markets) Bill** received its First Reading in the House of Commons on 30<sup>th</sup> January and its Second Reading on 6<sup>th</sup> February without debate. It was carried over into the next parliamentary session shortly before prorogation, without debate in either House. The next stage is Commons Committee Stage. The London Borough of Havering have lodged a petition objecting to any retail trade at the new site (alleging the new market will be a rival to Romford Market, a market in relation to which it has certain market rights), and negotiations have been ongoing. The Corporation will soon need to contact the House Authorities to schedule unopposed committee if an agreement can be reached that enables Havering to withdraw the petition, or an opposed committee if not.

## Forward Look and Engagement Update

13. Following the King's Speech on 7 November, both Houses will sit until Christmas Recess on 19 December. The Chancellor will deliver his Autumn Statement on 22 November.
14. Promotion of *Vision for Economic Growth: A Roadmap to Prosperity* remains a priority. In addition to briefing material issued at launch, the King's Speech and subsequent debates on the economy in both Houses provided an opportunity to circulate physical copies of the report to key parliamentary stakeholders, including the chairs of the Treasury and Business and Trade Committees. On 21 November, the Policy Chairman will speak at an event arranged by the cross-party Industry and Parliament Trust on a theme from the report. Similarly, opportunities to hold an event on a theme from the report have been provisionally agreed with the All-Party Group on Financial Markets and Services in December, and the All-Party Group on London as a Global City early in the new year. The Parliamentary team are also supporting the Corporate Affairs team in facilitating an event with party group Labour in the City, which will also provide an opportunity for promotion of the report. The office is also in contact with the Conservatives in the City group and will scope opportunities for engagement.
15. Economic crime and the City of London Police's position as national lead force for fraud remains a considerable focus. Further to a preliminary private evidence hearing with the City Police, the Home Affairs Committee has launched an inquiry into fraud. A joint City of London Police/Police Authority written response has been submitted to the Committee and it is expected that the City of London Police will be asked to give oral evidence to the Committee. Outside of the inquiry, officers issued briefing notes to MPs and Peers following debates on home affairs following the King's Speech, and are supporting on submissions to government inquiries, such as the Home Office's inquiry into evidence disclosure and economic crime. Through regular liaison with City Police and Police Authority communications colleagues, political insight has been shared ahead of the Prime Minister's Fraud Champion, Anthony Browne's appearance at the City-hosted Economic Crime Briefing.
16. Representatives from the Office attended Liberal Democrat, Conservative, Labour and SNP conferences. Officers monitored conference developments (particularly in regard to fringe events), supported the delivery of the Corporation's agenda and activities, and produced a written report on each conference, in collaboration with the Corporate Affairs team. At Conservative conference, officers staffed a meeting between the Policy Chairman and Jerome Mayhew (Con), lately Chair of the All-Party Group on Sustainable Finance. They discussed *Vision for Economic Growth* and the City's work in promoting financial inclusion and education. The Office is following up with Mr Mayhew about future collaboration on financial inclusion.
17. The Lord Mayor spoke at a breakfast event jointly organised with the Industry and Parliament Trust on the theme of "Reforming Pensions to Drive Economic Growth." Chaired by Labour's Sir Stephen Timms, Chair of the Work and

Pensions Committee, the event saw a lively discussion on the Corporation's proposals for pension reform under the Chatham House rule. Peter Branner, Chief Investment Officer at Abrdn spoke alongside the Lord Mayor.

18. The Office is following up with Liberal Democrat peer Lord Sharkey following a written parliamentary question regarding future signatories to the Mansion House Compact. This follows successful engagement with the Liberal Democrats at their party conference, and a meeting in the summer with the Liberal Democrat Treasury teams in both houses.
19. The Office supported David Farnsworth, Managing Director of the City Bridge Foundation, with preparation for and at a meeting with Fleur Anderson MP, regarding the Foundation's management of its bridges. The meeting was at Anderson's request ahead of a future debate in the House of Commons on the ownership and management of London's bridges. Anderson's Putney constituency has been significantly impacted by the closure of Hammersmith Bridge.
20. In consultation with colleagues at the Heathrow Animal Reception Centre (HARC), officers are drafting a letter to the Chair of the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Committee following an appearance by Gavin Stedman, Director of Port Health & Public Protection, before the Committee in October. Officers provided political background briefing and attended the session and will support on follow up matters. It is hoped that the Committee may accept an offer to visit the HARC.
21. Follow up material is being produced following oral evidence given by the Corporation's Policy and Innovation Director Kerstin Mathias to the Conservative European Forum as part of their work analysing the UK-EU Trade and Cooperation Agreement ahead of its review in 2026. Appearing alongside FPS representatives from EY, the London Market Group, New Financial and AMFE, the evidence session was a good opportunity to set out priorities of the UK's ongoing relationship with the EU.
22. The Order in Council required to implement the new parliamentary constituency boundaries is currently awaited and is expected to be considered at the next meeting of the Privy Council. A separate report on the Parliamentary Boundary Review was made to the Policy and Resources Committee.
23. With the Levelling-up and Regeneration Act receiving Royal Assent, provisions addressing concerns regarding s618 of the Housing Act 1985 (which remove an additional restriction within that section relating to voting on housing matters for members of the Common Council living in Corporation owned property) have become law. The relevant section of the Act will come into force two months after Royal Assent. Practical implications of the amendment for Members will now be addressed through the Corporation's internal machinery, with officers engaging with the Town Clerk's department on this matter to ensure Members are full briefed on any change to procedure as a result of the amendment.

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