

<b>Committee(s):</b> Policy and Resources Committee – For decision	<b>Dated:</b> 22 <sup>nd</sup> February 2024
<b>Subject:</b> Central London Forward: Joint Venture Agreement renewal	<b>Public</b>
<b>Which outcomes in the City Corporation’s Corporate Plan does this proposal aim to impact directly?</b>	<b>2,3, 5 and 8</b>
<b>Does this proposal require extra revenue and/or capital spending?</b>	<b>No</b>
<b>If so, how much?</b>	
<b>What is the source of Funding?</b>	
<b>Has this Funding Source been agreed with the Chamberlain’s Department?</b>	<b>N/A</b>
<b>Report of:</b> Damian Nussbaum, Executive Director, Innovation and Growth	<b>For Decision</b>
<b>Report author:</b> Laura Davison, Innovation and Growth	

### Summary

Central London Forward (CLF) is the strategic sub-regional partnership of the 11 central London local authorities and the City of London, created in 2007. CLF promotes inclusive and sustainable growth in central London. The City Corporation is a founder member of CLF and acts as the contracting body.

The CLF partnership is governed by a Joint Venture Agreement (JVA) between the 12 members. The JVA is due to end on 31<sup>st</sup> March 2024. This report seeks approval to sign the JVA, and extend the City Corporation’s involvement in CLF for a further four years until 31<sup>st</sup> March 2028. The annual membership cost of £40,000 would continue to be met from the Innovation and Growth budget.

CLF is a key partnership for central London boroughs, enabling a collective focus on shared priorities. This includes CLF managing employment and training programmes, which supported over 20,000 residents into work since 2020. It also includes securing funding – with CLF securing £667k of funding for the City Corporation since 2020 to support residents and City-based businesses post-pandemic.

The CLF Board - comprising the 11 leaders of the other member boroughs and the Chairman of Policy & Resources - have expressed a wish to continue the CLF Partnership for a further 4 years. This is subject to approval of the JVA and payment of an annual subscription of £40,000 per annum.

### Recommendation(s)

Members are asked to:

- Agree to extend the Central London Forward Joint Venture Agreement until March 31<sup>st</sup> 2028. The annual membership contributions of £40,000 would continue to be met from the Innovation and Growth existing budget.

## Main Report

### Background

1. Central London Forward (CLF) is the strategic sub-regional partnership of the 11 central London local authorities and the City of London.<sup>1</sup> The partnership works on behalf of its members to provide a collective voice for central London and to facilitate collaboration on key opportunities and challenges across boroughs and the City of London. CLF's work includes:
  - Supporting partnership working across central London on shared priorities;
  - Bidding for funding to support collective priorities around sustainable growth;
  - Managing large-scale employment and skills programmes;
  - Acting as a collective voice and seeking to engage policymakers;
  - Conducting and commissioning research to inform policy making.
2. The City Corporation was a founding member of CLF in 2007, and has acted as the host and contracting body for the organisation since its creation. The most recent renewal of the JVA came to Policy and Resources in February 2020, at the same point in the process.
3. CLF is governed by a Board made up of the Leaders or Mayors of member boroughs and the Chairman of Policy & Resources. The Board sets the priorities for CLF and determines the work programme. The CLF governance structure also includes the Chief Executives Group, which the Town Clerk sits on.
4. In the last four years, CLF has delivered significant impact and benefits for the City Corporation and central London:
  - **Helping residents into work** – CLF's employment programmes have helped over 20,000 central London residents into employment since 2020. CLF secured £11m of European Social Fund to deliver employment and skills support post-COVID. The City Corporation received £667k of this to support residents and City-based businesses;
  - **Ensuring the skills system meets business needs** – CLF developed a [Local Skills Improvement Plan](#) for central London. This seeks to address skills gaps in priority sectors including financial and professional services. The plan is being used to shape the investment of £6.3m of Local Skills Improvement Fund in central London;
  - **Leading on the green skills agenda** – CLF produced research on [green jobs](#) which established a shared definition of what a green job is, and quantified green jobs across London. CLF has supported the Skills for a Sustainable Skyline taskforce, with CLF's Director being a member of the Strategy Steering Board. Following the recommendation of the

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<sup>1</sup> City of London, Camden, Hackney, Haringey, Islington, Kensington and Chelsea, Lambeth, Lewisham, Southwark, Tower Hamlets, Wandsworth and Westminster

taskforce, CLF is exploring the potential to align section 106 policies across central London in order to improve skills supply;

- **Supporting the recovery of the CAZ** – CLF worked with the City Corporation, neighbouring local authorities and business groups to develop an [action plan](#) for the recovery and adaptation of London's Central Activities Zone. CLF produced research into the [future of the office](#) post-pandemic in central London. This highlighted the ongoing importance of and demand for high-quality office space;
  - **Making the case for central London during levelling-up** – CLF has engaged with Ministers including the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities and the Minister for London. CLF has highlighted the importance of central London for the UK's economy, and to made the case for policy changes to unlock growth in central London;
  - **Highlighting central London's infrastructure needs** – CLF worked with the City Corporation and other member authorities to identify [central London's infrastructure priorities](#). CLF has helped make the case for ongoing capital funding for TfL to keep central London moving.
5. CLF works in partnership with other London stakeholders to maximise impact and avoid duplication. This includes BusinessLDN and other business groups, London Councils, and GLA. CLF led on the development of an action plan focused on the recovery of the Central Activities Zone post-pandemic, which was co-created with GLA, BusinessLDN and local Business Improvement Districts.

### Current Position

6. CLF's core team is funded by subscriptions from member local authorities. Subscriptions have been frozen at £40k per annum since 2016. CLF's programmes and the team that manages these, are funded by grants from Department for Work and Pensions and Greater London Authority.
7. CLF is governed by a Joint Venture Agreement (JVA). The JVA was first agreed in 2007, and it has been extended four times since, with the last extension agreed in 2020. The JVA is due to expire on 31st March 2024.
8. The CLF Board – on which the City Corporation is represented – has expressed a wish to continue the partnership for a further four years.
9. The JVA has been updated, with some minor changes from the current version. The revised JVA has been reviewed and approved by the City of London Legal officers. The draft has been shared with CLF member authorities and reviewed by their legal teams. The draft was approved by the CLF Chief Executives Group on 26<sup>th</sup> January, and by the CLF Board on 7<sup>th</sup> February.

### Options

10. Extending the JVA – including the City Corporation's role as the contracting body - for a further four years. This would enable the continuing delivery of the employment and skills support, funding, and wider benefits set out. On behalf of the City Corporation and the member boroughs of CLF. The level of financial

input and agreement duration have been collectively agreed across CLF members.

11. It would be possible to discontinue membership and / or cease acting as the contracting body. This would impact on CLF's ability to deliver benefits for central London as a whole. And hence carry reputational and political risk. It would also impact negatively on the City Corporation's relationship with neighbouring boroughs. The City Corporation would become the only authority in the capital not working together in a sub-regional partnership with neighbouring authorities. This would come ahead of an election year, and the potential significant extension of devolution of local economic powers.

## Proposals

12. It is proposed that the Committee approve the extension of the Central London Forward Joint Venture Agreement until March 31<sup>st</sup> 2028. And the authorisation for the City Corporation to complete the agreement. The proposed subscription of £40,000 per annum would continue to be met from the Innovation and Growth budget.

## Key data

13. **Connecting Communities** - CLF secured £9m of European Social Fund to deliver this employment and training programme. £668k was allocated to City of London's Community and Children's Services team, to provide employment and skills support to residents in City and central London, as well as central London-based businesses. This enabled the team to support 323 people, helping 277 people into work, education or training.
14. **UK Shared Prosperity Fund** - CLF offered the City Corporation £51k of UKSPF funding to provide employment and skills support to local residents. This was higher than the allocation of £8K based on the London-wide funding formula.
15. **Acting as a collective voice for central London:** CLF Board meetings in the last year have been attended by Government Ministers and Shadow Ministers, providing the Policy Chairman and the Town Clerk with an opportunity to raise priority issues.
16. **Low Carbon Retrofit Labour Demand Analysis:** Building on the City Corporation-led Skills for a Sustainable Skyline Taskforce, this [commissioned piece](#) looks at the labour demand generated low carbon retrofit. They have consequently joined the Strategy Steering Board for the Skills for a Sustainable Skyline Taskforce.
17. **Driving the recovery of the CAZ:** CLF worked with member authorities, the GLA and business organisations to agree a collective [action plan](#) focused on the recovery and adaptation of the CAZ post-pandemic.
18. **The future of the office in central London:** CLF [commissioned research](#) from Arup into the future of the office post pandemic, which helped inform the City Corporation's thinking and policy. The City Corporation commissioned [follow-on research](#), looking in more detail at the picture in the Square Mile.
19. **Meeting employer skills needs:** CLF have a goal to help shape the local training system to ensure it delivers the skills that employers need. Their [local skills improvement plan](#) for central London, includes a focus on key sectors

for the City and the City Corporation, such as financial and professional services, green, and arts, entertainment and recreation.

## **Corporate & Strategic Implications**

### **Strategic implications**

20. Continued membership of CLF will enable the City Corporation to deliver on outcomes 2, 3, 5 and 8 of the Corporate Plan, and priority 1-4 of the [CLF Strategy](#).

### **Financial implications**

21. Continued membership requires membership subscriptions of £40,000 per annum for the next four years. These will be met from the Innovation and Growth Budget.

### **Resource implications**

22. As the contracting body, the City Corporation hosts the CLF team, providing desk space, and HR, IT and finance support. CLF contributes toward these costs at a level assessed annually.

### **Legal implications**

23. The Comptroller and City Solicitor's Department has reviewed the JVA and approved the changes and text.

### **Risk implications**

24. The CLF JVA states member local authorities are individually responsible for delivering programmes. It further states that members will fully indemnify the City Corporation for any potential losses.

### **Equalities implications**

25. Membership of CLF will have a positive impact on equalities in the City of London and central London. CLF's work is focused on tackling labour market inequalities.

### **Climate implications**

26. Membership will have a positive impact on the climate. CLF's work supports central London authorities in delivering on their net zero goals.

### **Security implications**

27. There are no security implications.

## **Conclusion**

28. Central London Forward acts as the Strategic SubRegional Partnership for the City Corporation with 11 central London local authorities. This supports a range of benefits, including CLF securing £667k of funding for the City Corporation since 2020 to support residents and City-based businesses post-pandemic. And enables a collective focus on shared priorities for central London authorities.

29. Members are asked to approve the continuing membership of Central London Forward via the Joint Venture Agreement, as set out at Appendix 1. Enabling

the City Corporation to complete the agreement. The annual subscription of £40,000 would continue to be met from the Innovation and Growth budget.

## **Appendices**

Appendix 1 – Joint Venture Agreement 2024-2028

## **Background Papers**

P&R Joint Venture Agreement – [paper on previous renewal Feb 2020](#)

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