

Committee: Public Relations/Economic Development Sub	Date: 2 May 2013
Subject: City of London Corporation 2013 Party Conference Activity	Public
Report of: Director of Public Relations	For decision
<p><u>Summary</u></p> <p>This report sets out the background to the City of London Corporation's activity at the annual political party conferences and gives a summary of current plans for the 2013 Liberal Democrat Conference in Glasgow, the 2013 Labour Conference in Brighton and the 2013 Conservative Conference in Manchester. The report additionally considers Member attendance, officer attendance and the budget.</p> <p><u>Recommendations</u></p> <p>Members are recommended:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. to note the overall plans for the 2013 conferences; 2. to agree arrangements for Member attendance at the conferences; and 3. to agree that a request for an additional £12,000 funding for the 2013 conference programme should be submitted to the June meeting of the Policy and Resources Committee. 	

Background and history

1. The UK political party conferences date back to the beginning of the twentieth century. Originally they took place in London but then moved to provincial seaside resorts and recently to major urban centres. The conferences originally played a role in policy formulation but this function has declined significantly. The conferences now exist predominantly to provide platforms for leading politicians from the respective parties and as a money-making exercise. There has been mounting criticism that the conferences have become substantially events for representatives of corporate, non-profit, charitable and other outside organisations and no longer primarily for ordinary party members.
2. The City of London Corporation began attending the major party conferences in 1994, initially with small, private dinners and then also with fringe meetings from 1997. This formula has continued over recent years with a fringe meeting on the Monday evening followed by a private dinner, which is attended by representatives of the Policy and Resources

Committee and appropriate officers. The party conferences are a particularly useful part of the City Corporation's political contact programme as the majority of its key contacts are found in the same place at the same time. In addition, if the City Corporation were not to attend, then other organisations would be keen to fill the void.

2013 Conferences

3. This year's Party Conferences run across three weeks from the middle of September through to the beginning of October. The Liberal Democrat Conference is taking place in Glasgow between Saturday 14th and Wednesday 18th September. The Labour Party Conference is taking place in Brighton between Sunday 22nd and Wednesday 25th September. The Conservative Party Conference is taking place in Manchester between Sunday 29th September and Wednesday 2nd October.

Liberal Democrat Conference, Glasgow

4. The current plans for Liberal Democrat Conference in Glasgow are as follows –
 - Monday 16th September pm – Members travel to Glasgow
 - Monday 16th September 1800 -1915 – Fringe meeting in partnership with the key liberal think tank, CentreForum. This meeting will take place in the Boisdale room in the Scottish Exhibition & Conference Centre. N.B. This is inside the secure area, due to limited, suitable fringe space availability and therefore Members and officers will need to have Conference passes.
 - Monday 16th September 2000-2200 – Private dinner at the Hotel du Vin.
 - Tuesday 17th September am – Members return to London.

Labour Conference, Brighton

5. The current plans for Labour Conference in Brighton are as follows –
 - Monday 23rd September pm – Members travel to Brighton by train
 - Monday 23rd September 1800-1915 – Fringe meeting in partnership with the New Statesman. (2013 is the 100th anniversary of the founding of the New Statesman so we expect them to have a high profile at the Labour Conference). Venue to be confirmed.
 - Monday 23rd September 2000-2200 – Private dinner at Hotel du Vin in partnership with the key think tank, the Social Market Foundation. The dinner discussion will focus on NEETs and youth unemployment.
 - Monday 23rd September 2230 – Members return to London in City of London cars.

Conservative Conference, Manchester

6. The current plans for Conservative Conference in Manchester are as follows –
- Monday 30th September pm – Members travel to Manchester by train.
 - Monday 30th September 1800-1915 – Fringe meeting in partnership with the key centre-right think tank, the Centre for Policy Studies in the Reception Room at Manchester Town Hall.
 - Monday 30th September 2000-2200 – Private dinner at Manchester Art Gallery.
 - Tuesday 1st October am – Members return to London by train.

Member attendance

7. In previous years, attendance at Party Conferences was open to Members of the former Public Relations Sub-Committee. The need is for a suitable number of Members to act as representatives and hosts, but this is balanced by the continuing desire to reduce costs and ensure that the party conference expenditure is as efficient as possible. Experience suggests that the optimum Member attendance at each Party Conference would be four. Given the planned election of the three Deputy Chairmen, a mechanism that could be used would be the Chairman, two of the three Deputy Chairmen and one additional Member of the new PR/ED Sub-Committee attending each of the conferences with some variations, as necessary and desirable, in the different individual attendees at each conference. The Sub-Committee is asked to consider this approach. As in previous years, Members attending party conferences in other capacities would also be welcome to attend the dinners

Officer attendance

8. Considerable efforts continue to minimise the costs of officer attendance. At present three officers from the Public Relations Office attend each of the party conferences. Given the schedule for the Monday evening at Conference, this is the minimum required to administer the current activities and any reduction in officer attendance would impact on the ability to ensure a smooth programme of events. In addition, one officer from the Remembrancer's Office attends to monitor the Conference proceedings overall, including the fringe events, and produce an associated report. The Town Clerk and the Remembrancer also usually attend two or three of the conferences.

Budget

9. Continuing efforts are being made to ensure party conference expenditure is as efficient as possible, while maintaining a high quality programme of activity. In 2013 (as in 2012), the City Corporation is a partner with leading think tanks or relevant publications to help deliver a successful programme of activities. This currently requires payment of fees to the think tanks or publications. In 2012, the Policy and Resources Committee agreed to provide additional funds to cover these costs. It will also be necessary this year to seek an additional £12,000 to cover the expected fees for the four think tanks and publications with which we will be working in 2013 and it is planned, subject to the Sub-Committee's approval, to submit a report seeking these funds to the June meeting of the Committee.

Conclusion

10. Members are asked to note the plans for the 2013 party conferences and to agree the recommendations concerning Member attendance and additional funding.

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