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| Committee(s): Communications and Corporate Affairs (Policy & Resources) Committee – For information | Dated: 24/04/2024 |
| Subject: Parliamentary Team Update | Public |
| Which outcomes in the City Corporation’s Corporate Plan does this proposal aim to impact directly? | 6,7,8,9,11 |
| Does this proposal require extra revenue and/or capital spending? | N/A |
| 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: Paul Wright, City Remembrancer | For Information |
| Report author: 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 28 February 2024.

Recommendation(s)

Members are recommended to note the report.

Main Report

Legislative Programme Update

1. Speculation about the date of the next general election is rife in Westminster, with its timing having considerable consequences for the legislative agenda. As noted in the last report to this Sub Committee, when an election is called the Government has a limited period in which to “wash up” and pass Bills. Those not passed will fall. An early poll would kill off any outstanding government Bills. The later an election is called, the greater chance a Bill will have an opportunity to pass. The long-stop position is that Parliament will dissolve automatically on 17 December 2024 (and consequently a general election will be held on 28 January 2025).
2. There has been some debate about the Government’s utilisation of legislative time. Financial Times analysis of how long the House of Commons has sat claimed that the “working day for MPs in the House of Commons chamber has been shorter on average this parliamentary session than in any other in the past quarter century”, leading to accusations from Shadow Leader of the House Lucy Powell that the government’s legislative agenda was “out of steam”. In the

Commons, Leader of the House Penny Mordaunt rejected claims of a “zombie parliament” arguing the opposition was struggling to put forward speakers for debates. However, eyebrows have been raised in the media as to why parliamentary “ping pong” on the **Safety of Rwanda (Asylum and Immigration) Bill** has not been brought forward, as well as claims that backbench pressure has influenced changes to the **Renters (Reform) Bill** and backbench criticisms of changes to the **Leasehold and Freehold Reform Bill** (further details of which are set out below).

3. **Economic Activity of Public Bodies (Overseas Matters) Bill** - This is a carry-over Bill from the last session. The Bill fulfils the commitment in the 2019 Conservative manifesto to ban public bodies from imposing their own direct or indirect boycotts, divestment or sanctions campaigns against foreign countries. The Bill is cast in terms of preventing regard to territory-specific considerations if political or moral disapproval of overseas public authorities would be signalled as a result as regards certain economic decisions. Those economic decisions are “procurement decisions” (decisions about a contract for the supply of goods, services or works to the decision-maker) and “investment decisions”. Investment decisions are defined as decisions about (a) the acquisition by the decision-maker of an asset wholly or principally for purposes of investment, or, (b) the management, retention or disposal by the decision-maker of an asset held wholly or principally for such purposes. The Remembrancer submitted evidence at Committee Stage in the House of Commons as regards the definition of public body and the meaning of an “investment” decision in terms of what decisions are in the scope of the Bill. The Bill is currently part way through Committee Stage in the House of Lords (second house). The Remembrancer does not intend to make any further submission in respect of the Bill in the Lords.
4. **Pedicabs (London) Bill** – The Bill has passed all its parliamentary stages and awaits Royal Assent. The Bill reflects a long campaign by City MP Nickie Aiken to control pedicabs in London. The Bill gives TFL powers to regulate pedicabs and provides that ministers may issue guidance to TFL on how to regulate. The Bill applies only to pedicabs operating within the TFL area.
5. **Trade (Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership) Act** – This technical Act to facilitate UK accession to CPTPP received Royal Assent on 20 March.
6. **Victims and Prisoners Bill** - The Bill, which was carried over from the previous session, places the key principles of the Victims’ Code in primary legislation and sets out the minimum level of service victims can expect from criminal justice agencies, among other related measures. The Bill is nearing its final stages in the Lords, having already been through the Commons. Discussions with the Ministry of Justice over the application of the Bill to the City Police in its capacity as National Lead Force are ongoing.
7. **Leasehold and Freehold Reform Bill** - This large Bill is currently in the House of Lords, its second House, and has reached Committee Stage. It is primarily of interest to the Corporation in its role as a local authority and as a freehold

owner (in its private capacity). It is receiving a less than warm welcome in the House of Lords and peers have at Second Reading heavily criticised aspects of the Bill for failing to deliver on promises made in the Conservative's 2019 manifesto. The Lords now looks set to vote on a number of amendments to the Bill at Committee Stage, raising the prospect of an extended period of ping-pong given the level of discontent caused by the perceived backtracking. The discontent focuses in particular on a failure to properly effect a "ban on the sale of new leasehold homes" given that the Bill only bans leasehold houses, not flats. Frustration was also expressed about the Bill failing to deal with the issue of forfeiture and what has been termed "fleeceholds".

8. The Bill has been flagged to relevant Children and Community Services colleagues and will be reported to the relevant Committee once the Bill receives Royal Assent (assuming it is not timed out by a General Election). The Remembrancer has also engaged with DHLUC, the relevant Government department for the Bill, to ensure that reference in the Bill to the Common Council appropriately catches it only in its role as a local authority and housing authority.
9. **Renters (Reform) Bill** - This large Bill is currently in its first House, the House of Commons, and it completed Committee Stage in December 2023 with no further progress made since then, and a date for Report Stage is awaited. The individual policies in the Bill on introduction had included the abolition of 'no fault' evictions and fixed term tenancies. It has been widely reported however that Housing Secretary Michael Gove is now proposing to amend the Bill to enhance protections for landlords and will be watering down the "no fault" evictions prohibition. As a result, groups such as the Renters' Reform Coalition have accused the government of making "major concessions to landlord groups and pro-landlord Conservative MPs". The delay to Report Stage of the Bill is therefore likely to be to allow time for the Government to prepare amendments to the Bill to reflect the revised policy. It is worth noting that clause 18 of the Bill, at least as it currently stands, makes consequential amendments relating to accommodation for homeless people/duties of local authority by amending Part 7 of the Housing Act 1996 to reflect the repeal of fixed term tenancies and the removal of no fault evictions. It does this by amending sections 193B and 193C of the Housing Act 1996 which deal with what happens when a person, who is owed either the prevention or relief duty, deliberately and unreasonably fails to cooperate with the local housing authority. The Bill was flagged to relevant officers in Children's and Community Service but it is not of direct concern to the Corporation as it primarily concerns reforms for private renters. However, the Remembrancer has engaged with DHLUC, the relevant Government department for this Bill, to ensure that reference in the Bill to the Common Council appropriately catches it only in its role as a local authority and housing authority.
10. **Automated Vehicles Bill** -The Bill awaits Report Stage in its second House, the House of Commons. The Bill will provide the framework for the safe deployment of self-driving vehicles and deliver one of the world's most comprehensive legal frameworks for self-driving vehicles, with safety at its core. Under the Bill, local authorities will be required to send the legal orders they

make (for example, to set speed limits, close roads and designate parking bays) to a central publication platform. This data will be used to create a digital map of the road network to support the safe operation of self-driving vehicles. The Bill will therefore impose some new duties on the Corporation in its role as a local authority and will be flagged to relevant officers in the Environment Department on Royal Assent.

11. **Digital Markets, Competition and Consumers Bill** – The Bill has completed its passage through the House of Lords and awaits “ping pong” in the House of Commons. The Bill picked up a number of backbench amendments in the Lords, mostly of a technical nature, though notably a measure was added regarding requirements on “secondary ticketing” websites to reduce fraud. However, as a backbench amendment, it is unlikely to be accepted by the House of Commons.
12. **Data Protection and Digital Information Bill** – The Bill is progressing through Committee stage in the House of Lords, its second House. Officers are in contact with colleagues in IG regarding the Bill’s wider policy implications for financial services and with the IRSG’s data workstream, engaging with relevant government departments.
13. Private Members’ Bills face particular challenges in progressing through the Commons. As well as many hurdles to overcome in the Commons Chamber, only one Public Bill Committee may consider a Private Members’ Bill at any one time, resulting in a bottleneck. Private Members’ Bills of interest which have Government support include Julie Elliott’s (Lab) **Building Societies Act 1986 (Amendment) Bill**, which would enable building societies to raise more funds from sources other than member savings and bring some administrative rules in line with those which apply to banks. The Bill will have its Report Stage on 19 April, having passed through Committee quickly and without amendment.
14. Wayne David’s (Lab) **Strategic Litigation Against Public Participation Bill** aims to tackle the misuse of litigation and threats of litigation that are collectively and commonly known as strategic litigation against public participation (“SLAPPs”). The City’s interest in the Bill relates to London’s position as a provider of legal services. The Bill, which has the support of the Government, reflects the outcome of a government call for evidence on the matter in 2022. The Bill mirrors provisions in the Economic Crime and Corporate Transparency Act 2023 which set out a statutory definition of a SLAPP and provided for a power to strike out claims at an early stage and protect the defendant from paying costs. Due to the scope of that legislation, the measures only apply to claims relating to economic crime, such as fraud. The Bill will replace those provisions, allowing them to apply beyond the scope of economic crime. Despite Government support, however, the Bill awaits a date of Committee Stage.
15. Jonathan Lord’s (Con) **Space Industry (Indemnities) Bill** is also supported by the Government. The Bill would require operator licences authorising the carrying out of spaceflight activities to specify the licensee’s indemnity limit. The Bill seeks to address the potential barrier caused by the possibility of unlimited

liability of a spaceflight operator licence holder to indemnify the Government and a number of named public bodies. The issue of how insurance requirements and products are relevant to the growth and sustainability of the spaceflight sector is aligned with the Lord Mayor's Space Protection Initiative which would make the purchase of Space Debris Retrieval Insurance Bonds (SPADRIBS) a condition of launch for satellites. The Office intends to engage with Mr Lord on this matter. The Bill awaits Committee Stage.

16. Former pensions Minister Baroness Altmann's (Con) **Alternative Investment Fund Designation Bill** is still awaiting a date for Committee Stage.

City Corporation Private Legislation

17. The **City of London (Markets) Bill** received its Second Reading on 6 February 2023 without debate, and was subsequently carried over into the current parliamentary session. The London Borough of Havering lodged a petition objecting to any retail trade at the new site and contending the new market infringes their market rights. There has also now been a petition against alteration (essentially objecting to the amendments requested by Havering) which will also need to be addressed.

Forward Look and Engagement Update

18. Preparations are underway for political engagement following a general election. While the timing and outcome of the election is unknown, there will be considerable turnover in MPs, with 99 MPs saying they will not stand at the next election. As such, engagement plans seek to reflect a considerably changed House of Commons.
19. Working in close collaboration with the Corporate Affairs team, plans include identifying engagement priorities for the Policy Chairman, drafting template letters of welcome to incoming MPs, analysing if Corporation assets have changed constituencies given boundary changes, scoping possible events shortly after an election and preparations to analyse the legislative agenda of an incoming government. This is supported by a flexible agenda of engagement in the build-up to an election, including identifying key moments for political outreach across the rest of 2024, scoping engagement with prospective parliamentary candidates and taking forward events with the APPG for Financial Markets and Services.
20. The City's MP, Nickie Aiken, has announced she will step down at the next general election. Candidates for the Cities of London and Westminster seat selected so far are: Timothy Barnes (Conservative), Rachel Blake (Labour), Edward Lucas (Liberal Democrat), Ranjiv Sinha (Green) and Luke Wates (Reform UK).
21. The 2024 London Mayoral election will take place on 2 May, alongside elections to the London Assembly. In collaboration with the Corporate Affairs team,

letters of congratulation will be sent to winning candidates where appropriate upon the result.

22. The AGM of the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Financial Markets and Services took place on 19 March. As previously noted, the Office successfully bid to take over the administration of the APPG, securing the future of the group, which has been the leading cross-party voice for wholesale financial markets and services in Parliament for over 20 years.
23. At the AGM, Alun Cairns (Con) was elected as chair of the group, and their office will support the administration of the group in Parliament. Sir Stephen Timms (Lab), Sir Robert Neill (Con) and Lord Teverson (Lib Dem) were elected as vice-chairs. The group will continue to be led by its Industry Advisory Group (of which the Corporation has been a member for a number of years) and its parliamentary members. However, the City's new position provides an excellent opportunity to add weight to the Corporation's role as convenor of the UK's FPS sector. The Corporation will play a closer role in constructing the APPG's agenda of events which will initially follow a format of monthly breakfast meetings. The first meeting will take place in May on the topic of the UK and EU's relationship in financial services.
24. Following an introductory letter from the Policy Chairman, the new House of Lords Financial Services Regulation Committee invited a Corporation representative to brief the Committee in private as they prepare their upcoming schedule of work.
25. Sir Stephen Timms MP, Trade Envoy to Switzerland, was briefed ahead of a trip to Switzerland by Nick Collier, Managing Director of the Brussels office and Duncan Richardson, Assistant Director Global Trade Policy and Markets. The briefing followed Sir Stephen's attendance at a recent Guildhall event on the Berne Financial Services Agreement between the UK and Switzerland. It is hoped that the briefing and further engagement will ensure consistent messaging on financial services priorities in ongoing free trade agreement negotiations, complementing the Policy Chairman's April visit to Switzerland.
26. The Policy Chairman wrote to Dame Harriett Baldwin (Con) in her capacity as Chair of the Treasury Sub-Committee on Financial Services Regulations regarding an FCA consultation on listings. Dame Harriett invited the Corporation to share its views following evidence given by Alderman Lyons to the Treasury Committee on this matter during his mayoralty.
27. AC Nik Adams and Service Delivery Director Chris Bell of the City of London Police wrote to Dame Diana Johnson, Chair of the Home Affairs Committee, following their appearance before the Committee on 28 February. The evidence session covered the impact of technology on fraud, skills to tackle fraud amongst policing, how the City Police works with other law enforcement agencies and the rollout of the replacement to the Action Fraud service.

28. The City Police was back in front of the Home Affairs Committee again on 17 April for a follow-up evidence session on violence and abuse toward retail workers. Superintendent Patrick Holdaway, lead for the National Business Crime Centre at City of London Police, gave evidence. The evidence session was intended to follow up on the Committee's initial inquiry into the matter in 2021, where Holdaway appeared in front of the Committee, alongside the then-Commissioner.
29. In collaboration with colleagues in IG and Comms, engagement plans are being developed for the launch of the joint Corporation/TheCityUK report on the tax contribution of the financial and professional services sector. As well as engagement upon launch, the report also provides a helpful resource for future briefings to parliamentarians.
30. The Director of the London Museum spoke at a City of London/Industry & Parliament Trust meeting on 'Unlocking Economic and Social Growth: Investing in Culture and Creatives for Vibrant Towns and Cities'. Mark Williams, DCEO, Heart of London Business Alliance, also spoke. The meeting was chaired by Baroness Thornton, Labour's shadow on culture, media and sport, and attended by members of the Lords and Commons as well as representatives of the British Museum and other museums, the music industry, and national cultural organisations. Several politician guests are considering ways in which the discussion can be continued, perhaps through arts debates in Parliament.

William Stark

Senior Parliamentary Engagement Officer

T: 07584 327 077

E: william.stark@cityoflondon.gov.uk