

<b>Committee(s):</b> Communications and Corporate Affairs Sub Committee	<b>Dated:</b> 1 July 2024
<b>Subject:</b> Party Conferences 2024	<b>Public</b>
<b>Which outcomes in the City Corporation's Corporate Plan does this proposal aim to impact directly?</b>	
<b>Does this proposal require extra revenue and/or capital spending?</b>	<b>No</b>
<b>If so, how much?</b>	<b>N/A</b>
<b>What is the source of Funding?</b>	<b>Local budget</b>
<b>Has this Funding Source been agreed with the Chamberlain's Department?</b>	<b>N/A</b>
<b>Report of:</b> Emily Tofield, Executive Director of Communications and External Affairs	<b>For Decision</b>
<b>Report author:</b> Kristy Sandino, Assistant Director, Corporate Affairs	

### Summary

The City of London Corporation delivers a proactive programme of engagement at the annual Liberal Democrat, Labour, Conservative, Scottish National Party (SNP) and Green party conferences.

The Corporate Affairs Team lead on development and the organisation of the entire City Corporation party conference programme, including arranging and overseeing all events and activity taking place. Members, as well as officers from Corporate Affairs and Remembrancers Team attend party conferences on behalf of the City Corporation, representing the organisation through attendance at City Corporation organised events, other fringe events, bilateral meetings with political and business representatives and other strategic engagement opportunities.

### Recommendation(s)

Members are asked:

- To note the plans for the City Corporation's events at this year's party conferences.
- To discuss the size of future Member delegations and agree that that a final proposal on future Member delegations will be delivered to Communications and Corporate Affairs Sub Committee for decision following party conferences in 2024.

## **Main Report**

### **Background**

1. The City of London Corporation has attended the major party conferences every year since 1994, with the level of involvement and visibility (and numbers of Member attendees) increasing over time. Traditionally, Members of the Communications and Corporate Affairs Sub Committee are invited to attend the Liberal Democrat, Labour and Conservative party conferences, with the Policy Chairman additionally attending the Scottish National Party (SNP) conference.
2. The Corporate Affairs Team organises and funds both public and private events at Conservative, Labour and Liberal Democrat party conferences on behalf of the City Corporation. The City Corporation has hosted events at the SNP conference in recent years and has also attended the Green Party conference in an observer capacity in the past. Following the sub-committee taking place in February, a decision was taken that the Policy Chairman would not attend SNP Conference in 2024, and an Officer would observe and engage at the conference.
3. The purpose of the City Corporation's activities at party conferences is to deliver a programme of strategic engagement on issues of importance to the organisation with relevant politicians, policymakers and business figures and the political media. City Corporation party conference activity is a significant part of the Policy Chairman's political engagement and City Corporation advocacy and provides an excellent opportunity for Members and officers to meet many political contacts in one place. It also is a way for politicians and key stakeholders to build an understanding of the City Corporation and our strategic priorities. In 2024, with the potential for a high influx of new MPs, this awareness raising exercise is critical.

### **Overall Approach to Programme**

4. City Corporation activities are reviewed on a yearly basis to adapt to its own priorities and the current political and socio-economic environment. This year, the Corporate Affairs Team is organising:
  - a. An invitation-only roundtable in partnership with a think tank at the Conservative, Labour, and Liberal Democrat conferences. These roundtables will be chaired by the Policy Chairman and an additional Member of the Communications and Corporate Affairs Sub Committee may be invited to attend at the discretion of the Policy Chairman.
  - b. An invitation-only dinner hosting between 40-100 people at the Conservative, Labour and Liberal Democrat conferences. The dinners bring together key local, regional and national political representatives, businesses, think tanks and academics. The Policy Chairman gives a keynote speech as well as an external political guest.

- c. Two additional open fringe events in partnership with a think tank at the Labour and Conservative conferences. These interventions will afford the Policy Chairman the opportunity to communicate our key messages to a wider external audience, including a politician.
5. It is important that the City Corporation continues to receive value for money and, to ensure the success of future events, in 2024 we have looked into new partners to facilitate the highest level of political engagement across all fringe events. As a matter of course, the Corporate Affairs Team reviews partners each year.
6. Officers from Corporate Affairs organise and deliver the variety of Corporation-hosted events, and manage the programme for the Chairman of Policy and other senior Members. Officers from both Corporate Affairs and Remembrancer's teams will ensure City Corporation messaging is emphasised across the range of conference activities, and provide detailed political intelligence reports during the course of each conference and afterwards via the Parliamentary Brief.

## Proposals

7. The proposed format of events for the party conferences this autumn is:
  - a. Scottish National Party Conference, Friday 30th August to Sunday 1st September 2024, Edinburgh.
    - Plan: For an Officer to observe the conference and not organise any City Corporation funded events.
  - b. Liberal Democrat Party Conference - 14-17 September 2024, Brighton.
    - Plan: To host a private roundtable with a political representative in partnership with Social Market Foundation, covering a policy area of relevance to the City Corporation. To host a sit-down dinner of approximately 40 attendees with a select and focused guest list from the business, political and policy related sectors.
  - c. Labour Party Conference - 21-25 September 2024, Liverpool.
    - Plan: To host a private roundtable with a political representative in partnership with Labour Together, covering a policy area relating economic growth. To host an open fringe event in partnership with either IPPR or Fabian's Society, covering a policy area of relevance to the City Corporation. To host a sit-down dinner of 80-100 attendees with a select and focused guest list from the business, political and policy related sectors.
  - d. Conservative Party Conference, 29th September - 2nd October 2024, Birmingham.

- Plan: To host a private roundtable with a political representative in partnership with Onward, covering growth capital. To host an open fringe event in partnership with Centre for Policy Studies, covering a policy area of relevance to the City Corporation. To host a sit-down dinner of 80-100 attendees with a select and focused guest list from the business, political and policy related sectors.
- e. Green Party Conference, TBC.
- Plan: For an officer to observe the conference and not organise any City Corporation funded events.
8. Co-operative Party, dates and location TBC.
- It has been suggested it may be prudent to engage with the Co-operative Party. For 2024, it is suggested that an officer observe the conference and not organise any events.
9. Dinner venues and hotel rooms have been secured at the three main party conference venues for 2024. The Corporate Affairs Team continues to work with the suggested external partners to finalise the arrangements for our events.
10. The Corporate Affairs Team will also proactively outreach to organisations to propose attendance for the Policy Chairman, and relevant officials, at other events across the conferences.

### **Attendance at Party Conferences**

11. As agreed by the then PRED Sub Committee in 2017, all Members of the Communications and Corporate Affairs Sub Committee have been invited to attend party conferences as City Corporation representatives and are therefore eligible for a two-day commercial guest party conference pass, with the cost being met from the party conference budget.
12. The intention of Member attendance is for them to represent the City Corporation, and use their experience, connections and knowledge, across the range of conference events, not only at the City Corporation's hosted events. Members have played a key role as representatives, speakers and hosts at the Corporation's party conference activities.
13. As there has just been a general election, it is important that in 2024 the City Corporation aims to maximise our engagement, particularly if there are a large amount of new MPs, as projected.
14. It is therefore suggested that for 2024, all Members of the Communications and Corporate Affairs Sub Committee are invited to attend party conferences as City Corporation representatives and remain eligible for a two-day commercial guest party conference pass, with the cost being met from the Corporate Affairs party conference budget.

15. However, in light of inflation, think tank partnership costs, hotel costs and conferences pass costs have all increased. For example, compared with 2022, 2023 Labour Conference passes increased by 17.9%. From 2023 to 2024, a day pass at Labour Party Conference pass has increased by 21.7%. The Corporate Affairs Team communicated during the City's budget process that it expected overall costs to rise 10 – 20 per cent due to inflation and the final budget confirmed this estimate.
16. The City Corporation Member delegation has steadily increased in size in recent years. For instance,
- a. Last year, the Liberal Democrat party conference was held in Bournemouth from 23 – 26 September. A total of six (6) members of the Communications and Corporate Affairs Sub Committee attended the conference (7 member passes purchased). In 2022, for comparison, five (5) members attended. A Member was ill and unable to attend, hence the drop in numbers between purchasing and attending.
  - b. Last year's Conservative party conference was held in Manchester from 1 – 4 October. A total of 12 Members of the Communications and Corporate Affairs Sub Committee attended the conference (12 member passes purchased). In 2022, for comparison, ten (10) members attended.
  - c. Last year's Labour party conference was held in Liverpool from 8 – 11 October. A total of 11 Members of the Communications and Corporate Affairs Sub Committee attended the conference (13 passes purchased for Members). In 2022, for comparison, nine (9) members attended. Two Members were ill and unable to attend, hence the drop in numbers between purchasing and attending.
17. It is proposed that the size of the official Member delegation is possibly reduced from 2025 to ensure that the City Corporation continues to deliver a party conference programme that represents best value for money. Last year, for the first time, additional teams beyond the Corporate Affairs Team and Remembrancers also requested their officers were accredited.
18. The options posed for consideration:
- a. Chair of Communications and Corporate Affairs Sub Committee, Policy Chairman, Deputy Policy Chairman (3)
  - b. Policy Leadership representatives on Chair of Communications and Corporate Affairs Sub Committee and Chair of Chair of Communications and Corporate Affairs Sub Committee (4)
  - c. Chair of Communications and Corporate Affairs Sub Committee, Policy Leadership representatives that sit on Communications and Corporate Affairs Sub Committee and Member Leads that sit on Communications and Corporate Affairs Sub Committee (7)
  - d. No change; all Members of the Communications and Corporate Affairs Sub Committee invited.

19. As is the current process, it is suggested that all Members of Policy & Resources Committee are invited to attend the dinners at each party conference, at their own cost, should they be at Conference. Select senior Officers will also be invited to attend the dinners at party conference.

20. It is proposed that a final proposal on future Member delegations be delivered to Communications and Corporate Affairs Sub Committee for decision following party conferences in 2024.

### **Key Data**

21. None

### **Corporate & Strategic Implications**

#### Strategic implications

22. Engaging with political stakeholders, organising events associated with the party political conferences and working with think tanks and other third-party organisations to produce events and associated policy reports provides an opportunity for the City Corporation to engage with key audiences on important global, national and local government issues and to demonstrate the City Corporation's involvement in relevant debates. Sponsorship and political engagement would also help deliver the six outcomes of the new Corporate Plan.

#### Financial implications

23. The Corporate Affairs Team has an established budget for party conference and engagement related activity. Any sponsorship of ad-hoc policy projects is currently funded via the Policy Initiatives Fund according to decisions of the Policy and Resources Committee.

#### Resource implications

24. None

#### Legal implications

25. None

#### Risk implications

26. None

#### Equalities implications

27. None

Climate implications

28. None

Security implications

29. None

### **Conclusion**

30. Members are asked to note the plans for the City Corporation's involvement at the 2024 party conferences.

31. Members are asked to discuss the size of future Member delegations and agree that a final proposal on future Member delegations will be delivered to Communications and Corporate Affairs Sub Committee for decision following party conferences in 2024.

### **Appendices**

- None

### **Background Papers**

- None

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