

Report – Policy and Resources Committee

Strategic Branding Review outcome and proposals

To be presented on Thursday, 6th March 2025

*To the Right Honourable The Lord Mayor, Aldermen and Commons
of the City of London in Common Council assembled.*

SUMMARY

This report sets out a summary of the City of London Corporation's first ever strategic branding review and outlines proposals for the future cross-organisational brand identity and strategy.

A review and audit of existing brands began in March 2024 and the proposals have been developed following extensive engagement with Members and senior officers across the City Corporation and its institutions, as well as through desktop research.

The outcome of the review centres on two clear recommendations:

- The adoption of a co-branding model with City of London Corporation institutions, funded programmes and entities.
- Roll-out of a 'descriptive' logo that includes the City Corporation's full name.

RECOMMENDATION

That Members agree the branding recommendations (as detailed in paragraphs 12 and 13 in the report).

MAIN REPORT

Background

1. As part of a project to develop the first brand strategy for the City of London Corporation, a short external strategic review was commissioned which ran from March to June 2024.

Current Position

2. Comprehensive research and analysis was carried out of all existing City Corporation assets carrying the brand and logo and all associated sub brands were explored.
3. This helped to build a picture of the current disparate nature of the application of the City Corporation brand, the significant proliferation of 'sub-brands' and the lack of guidelines, rules or oversight over how the City Corporation's brand or visual assets are used both internally and externally.

4. 32 in-depth interviews were conducted with elected Members, senior officers, and representatives of the City Corporation's Executive Leadership Board, which comprises all Chief Officers and Institutions.
5. The interviews explored views on:
 - Objectives and desired outcomes from the brand strategy project.
 - Perceptions of the City Corporation by different stakeholder groups.
 - Reputational threats.
 - The role of the City of London Corporation brand.
 - The existing brand identity.
 - The City Corporation's relationship with funded institutions and how this should be represented visually.
6. The key outcome and conclusion from the review is a widespread recognition of the need for a brand strategy for the City of London Corporation, something that has never been developed or deployed. The strategy will increase internal alignment and foster and promote a 'One City Corporation' across the whole organisation.
7. The feedback from the interviews demonstrated a widely held view that the lack of a brand strategy means the City Corporation does not receive appropriate (sometimes any) recognition for the good work that it does, or the contribution it makes to the economic, social and cultural lives of its many stakeholders and locations where it operates. This is seen as a consequence of:
 - An historic reluctance to actively promote the City Corporation's work and investments.
 - A lack of co-ordination and control internally, but also externally, over the branding of funded, supported or otherwise associated institutions and entities. Particularly in relation to appropriately crediting the role of and relationship with the City Corporation.
8. The City Corporation brand is seen as an interesting combination of the safe and traditional (trust, guardianship) with more dynamic attributes (progressive, professional). The word 'City' can lead to confusion between the organisation and the geographic location.
9. The interviews also indicated an appetite to resolve problems with the existing standard logo design. This design was initially deployed as a stopgap measure in 2006 when the Corporation of London was renamed as the City of London Corporation. However, no further brand work has been progressed since. The problems identified in the audit were:
 - a. Lack of clarity – by not including the word 'Corporation' it is easy for external stakeholders to assume that applications of the standard logo refer to the City of London as a place or other London institutions such as the Greater London Authority. A recent example of this is the cover of the Corporate Plan 2024 -2029 does not indicate it is a City Corporation product.
 - b. Practicality – the standard logo only works in a square format rather than the standard landscape format. This reduces its visibility and prominence when featured alongside partner logos in digital and in print as they will be typically landscape format in line with best practice.

- c. There are no brand guidelines, only guidance on how to use and position the current square format logo.
 - d. The City Corporation website is not seen as a good reflection of the organisation.
 - e. The City Corporation Intellectual Property requires protection and management, starting with creating coherence internally and across the City Corporation's own assets, especially if there is an ambition to create a revenue generating or merchandising programme in the future.
10. The outcomes were shared with the Executive Leadership Board (ELB), which includes senior leaders from our institutions, schools, and the Police Authority, in July, where resounding support to proceed to committee clearance was given.
11. The recommendations in this report will provide clarity and clear guidance on how and where the new brand identity should be used and positioned across the whole City Corporation family.

Proposals

12. As a result of the in-depth audit and review the first recommendation is for a co-branding model that:
- a. Raises the profile of the City Corporation's activities and investments by ensuring wider recognition of its positive contribution to the economic, social and cultural lives of London and the nation.
 - b. Helps external stakeholders better understand the relationship between a funded/supported institution and the City Corporation.
 - c. Encourages a one City Corporation ethos among everyone employed by the Corporation in line with the ambitions of the Corporate Plan and People Strategy 2024-2029.
13. The second recommendation is to develop an additional 'descriptive' logo to include the City Corporation's full name. This logo would be used on communications materials and the co-branding of funded, supported or otherwise associated institutions and entities.
14. The primary benefit of a co-branding approach is that it makes it easier for all stakeholders to understand and appreciate the breadth of work and investments of the City Corporation. It also removes potentially confusing anomalies, such as the application of the ceremonial City of London logo (with accompanying explanation) to facilities outside the Square Mile e.g. open spaces.
15. This co-branding approach will be applied flexibly. The Institution and City Corporation logos can be split within a channel – for example, at the top and bottom of a poster/document or top-left and top-right of a website (as illustrated by the new [London Archives website](#)).
16. In addition to the use of a standard logo design, clear rules will be provided to all teams across Guildhall and institutions on how the City Corporation should be credited in all materials. These rules will be consistent, simple to adopt and not

unduly restrictive. By consulting widely, before the rules are formally codified, every scenario will be covered. The focus will be on updating digital assets first to ensure this is a cost neutral approach.

17. Institutions will also be encouraged to cross promote each other where this adds value to external stakeholders, for example, the Barbican Centre should (as appropriate) promote other cultural attractions supported by the City Corporation such as the Guildhall Art Gallery and Guildhall School of Music & Drama, e.g. by including links on its website and vice versa.
18. The overt use of the City Corporation logo by funded institutions will not have an impact on their fundraising activities. It will send out a clear message that the City Corporation is providing core funding, which will be reassuring for corporate sponsors and donors.
19. Where legal considerations apply to the City Corporation's relationship to the institution, such as being a corporate charity trustee, as relevant, we will work with those institutions and entities (according to their governance rules) to implement the new branding policy.
20. There will be cases, which will be dealt with on a case by case basis, where the application of City Corporation co-branding is not appropriate for strategic reasons.
21. If the co-branding model is approved, the implementation will be phased, flexible and respectful of individual governance considerations.
22. The additional 'descriptive' logo would be used on communications materials and the co-branding of funded, supported or otherwise associated institutions and entities. This will provide greater visibility of the City Corporation's involvement and investment at a local, London and national level. All descriptions would be agreed through each institution's governing bodies and lead committee.
23. The existing square 'standard' logo will be retained for ceremonial applications, including official signage.
24. The existing coat of arms will not change in any way.
25. The descriptive logo will also be provided as an animation to ensure it can be used widely and creatively across the City Corporation's digital platforms and film content in a digital age.
26. All future agreements for City Corporation funding will include the level of City Corporation recognition and branding that is expected from funded, supported or otherwise associated institutions and entities.
27. New digital collateral and templates can be rolled out immediately following approval and will be accompanied by a branding rulebook.
28. If approved, the above alongside the co-branding agreements will be completed by April 2025.

Corporate & Strategic Implications

29. Financial implications – None. The new brand and identity will be rolled out digitally and signage and hard copy, printed products updated as they naturally come up for renewal.
30. Resource implications - The roll out of the new brand guidelines and identity will require resource from the corporate communications and external affairs and communications and marketing, digital and employee engagement leads across the City Corporation to update digital assets and collateral as required and when they are renewed.
31. Legal implications - There has been ongoing discussions with the Comptroller and City Solicitor to ensure that the legal entity and contractual arrangements of the City Corporation's institutions and initiatives are correctly described. Any intellectual property decisions will also be agreed with the Comptroller and City Solicitor and are part of a separate piece of work being led by the Chamberlain.
32. Risk implications – None.
33. Equalities implications – This does not require an Equality Impact Assessment as the proposals comply with the City Corporation's public Sector Equality Duty 2010 and will not have any impact (positive or negative) on people protected by existing equality legislation.
34. Climate implications – None.
35. Security implications – None.

Conclusion

36. Members are asked to review and note the outcome of the strategic branding review and to approve the co-branding and descriptive logo proposals as set out within the report.

Appendices

- Appendix 1 – Visuals of the descriptive logo and co-branding examples.
- Appendix 2 – Implementation plan timeline
- Appendix 3 – List of programmes, initiatives and institutions in scope.

All of which we submit to the judgement of this Honourable Court.

DATED this 13th Day of February 2025.

SIGNED on behalf of the Committee.

Deputy Christopher Michael Hayward
Chairman, Policy and Resources Committee