

<b>Committee(s):</b> Communications and Corporate Affairs Sub Committee  Policy and Resources Committee	<b>Dated:</b> 10 December 2025  29 January 2026
<b>Subject:</b> Political Party Conferences 2024/2025 Review and 2026 Forward Look	<b>Public report:</b> For decision
<b>This proposal:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• delivers Corporate Plan 2024-29 outcomes</li> <li>• provides business enabling functions.</li> </ul>	Dynamic Economic Growth
<b>Does this proposal require extra revenue and/or capital spending?</b>	No
<b>If so, how much?</b>	£0
<b>What is the source of Funding?</b>	Not applicable
<b>Has this Funding Source been agreed with the Chamberlain's Department?</b>	No
<b>Report of:</b>	Kristy Sandino, Interim Executive Director, Corporate Communications and Engagement
<b>Report author:</b>	Shelby Roberts, Senior Corporate Affairs Officer and Ellie Varley, Senior Corporate Affairs Officer

## Summary

This report details a summary of the current impact of the City of London Corporation programme and engagement at the main political party conferences in 2025. This programme of work was led by the Corporate Affairs Team, with cross-corporate support from various teams including the Remembrancer and Innovation and Growth teams.

A targeted and planned presence at the party conferences is an important opportunity for the City Corporation to build understanding of the scale, value and impact of its work across our key policy areas, including our work related to the financial and professional services (FPS) sector, across London and the wider UK.

Given the number of key political and industry stakeholders present at conferences, they provide significant opportunities for promoting our strategic priorities as an organisation, including policy recommendations in major City Corporation reports. They are also an important way of cementing and building relationships with key political figures at many levels and political media to ensure the City Corporation is increasing its reach, maintaining and building its reputation and profile with target audiences.

The overarching objective for the 2025 conference programme was to build on the success of previous years, in building understanding across the political spectrum of the City Corporation's unique convening power and the key partnership role the City Corporation plays in delivering economic growth for the nation.

Overall, party conferences remain a significant opportunity for the City Corporation to highlight the breadth and impact of its work, build profile by participating in debates on issues affecting the sector and the country, and focus on relationship building for the City – both now and for the future. In this context, there remains a clear case for investment in the City Corporation's party conference activity. However, the exact composition of activity and how budget is deployed should be considered for future years.

## **Recommendations**

Members are asked to:

- Note the initial summary of 2025 activity.
- Approve the following proposals for 2026 party conference programme:
  - One fringe event and an additional event (reception or dinner) at Liberal Democrat Conference
  - One fringe event and an additional event (reception or dinner) at the Conservative Party Conference (HM Official Opposition)
  - Two fringe events and an additional event (reception or dinner) at Labour Party Conference (HM Government)
  - Member and officer attendance at Reform Conference
  - Officer monitoring of Co-op and Green Conferences.
- Consider the expression of interest process for the Member delegation travelling to party conferences.
- Approve that one (1) Business Day pass is secured for the Policy Chairman use at the party in Government for 2026.

## **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 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 in previous years. It was agreed at the November 2023 Communications and Corporate Affairs Sub Committee that the Policy Chairman would not attend from 2024.
2. The party conferences provide an important opportunity for City Corporation Members and officers to engage with the most relevant stakeholders across the

political spectrum, to communicate our key messages and to build relationships with other influential conference attendees.

3. Led by the Corporate Affairs Team, the City Corporation increased its party conference activity for 2023 by adding an additional fringe event at Labour Party Conference, who were then in Opposition, holding City Corporation private roundtables, panel open fringe events and dinners at the conferences of the Conservative and Labour conferences, as well as a private roundtable and dinner at the Liberal Democrat dinner. This approach was continued in 2024 as the programme had been planned prior to the General Election being called. In 2025, the programme was amended to reduce the number of fringe events at the Conservative Party Conference to one, and to host drinks reception instead of a dinner at the Liberal Democrat conference.
4. A significant portion of the Corporate Affairs Team budget is used to organise the party conference activity and facilitate the political engagement of the Policy Chairman, whilst ensuring in the current model that Members can also participate and contribute their expertise.
5. In addition to the cost of the additional Business Day tickets, costs across the conference have gone up year on year. Additional funding provided by Policy & Resources enabled us to deliver our 2024 programme; however cost saving measures are necessary as the Corporate Affairs Team Budget is a set amount and inflation continues to contribute to overall costs.

## **Current Position**

### **Fringe Events**

6. The Corporate Affairs Team led, secured and delivered five fringe events across the conferences. These were:
  - a. An open fringe panel at the Liberal Democrat party conference titled "*The UK economy in an uncertain world: what can be done to unlock investment and boost trade?*" with the Institute for Government. The politician in attendance was Clive Jones MP (Liberal Democrat Spokesperson for Trade).
  - b. An open fringe panel at Labour party conference titled "*Resetting the Relationship: A New Chapter for the UK and EU*" with the Fabian Society. The politicians in attendance were the Rt Hon Nick Thomas-Symonds MP (Paymaster General and Minister for the Constitution and European Relations) and Stephen Doughty MP (Minister for Europe, North America and UK Overseas Territories).
  - c. A roundtable at the Labour party conference titled "*Growing investment and catalysing UK economic growth*" with Labour Together. The politicians in attendance were:
    - John Grady MP (MP for Glasgow East, Member of the Treasury Select Committee)
    - Adam Jogee MP (MP for Newcastle-Under-Lyme, Member of the International Trade and Investment APPG)

- Noah Law MP (MP for St Austall and Newquay, Member of the Private Capital APPG and Sustainable Finance APPG)
  - Toby Perkins MP (MP for Chesterfield)
  - Henry Tufnell MP (MP for Mid and South Pembrokeshire)
  - Chris Ward MP (Parliamentary Secretary to the Cabinet Office)
  - Rosie Wrighting MP (MP for Kettering, Member of the Business and Trade Select Committee)
- d. An open fringe panel at Conservative party conference titled “*Financing the Green Transition: Who Pays, Who Gains?*” with the Centre for Policy Studies. The politician in attendance was Mark Garnier MP (Shadow Economic Secretary to the Treasury and Shadow City Minister).
7. While the Corporate Affairs Team aims to secure partnership deals tied to other activity across the year where possible, the cost of partnerships with think tanks, particularly where fringes take place within the secure zone, remains high. To ensure a high calibre of politician attendance, it was decided to hold one event in the secure zone at Labour Conference this year. As the cost the party charges for space within the secure zone had increased (with the costs of some City Corporation fringe events doubling between 2022 and 2025), this ensured the costs of fringe events at the Labour Conference remained lower in 2025 when compared with 2024.
  8. Our choice of partnerships secured us quality political engagement despite the difficulty of securing MPs generally across party conferences this year. The Corporate Affairs Team was able to cover additional costs of partnering with well-respected partners by hosting one fewer event at the Conservative Party Conference and hosting a reception at the Liberal Democrat conference.
  9. All were felt to be successful in hitting City Corporation objectives of raising the City Corporation's visibility, securing high-profile political engagement, leading and influencing policy discussions during the conference period, and seeing a wide range media coverage.
  10. It is of the utmost importance that the City Corporation continues to receive value for money and, to ensure the success of future events. Given the expectation that the Labour Government will likely remain in place until 2029, it is recommended that the City Corporation proceed with the following programme for 2026:
    - a. One fringe event and an additional event (reception or dinner) at Liberal Democrat Conference.
    - b. One fringe event and an additional event (reception or dinner) at the Conservative Party Conference (HM Official Opposition).
    - c. Two fringe events and an additional event (reception or dinner) at Labour Party Conference.
    - d. Member and officer attendance at Reform Conference
    - e. Officer monitoring of Co-op and Green Conferences.

11. This proposed programme represents one less event than occurred in the 2024 programme, continuing our decreased engagement at Conservative Party Conference. This approach will afford us some cost savings, and can be reviewed again in the year preceding a general election, or reviewed by the Subcommittee dependent on political environment.
12. There are additional political parties across the UK with some taking a decision to hold conferences. It is recommended that Officers monitor other party conferences that may take place in 2026.

### **Political & Industry Dinners**

12. The City Corporation receptions and/or dinners at party conference continue to provide an important platform for communicating our key messages and demonstrating the pivotal role the City Corporation plays in convening the sector and the City audience together.
14. The Corporate Affairs Team worked with Members, Innovation and Growth and other departments to curate and maintain a high calibre of attendees and confirm an influential, interesting external speaker for each event.
15. The Corporate Affairs Team usually aims to have 50 attendees at Liberal Democrat Party Conference reception, and 100 at each Labour and Conservative. This year, due to extremely high demand at Labour, this was increased to 130 (with an additional waiting list). There was a total of approximately 80 guests at the City Corporation dinner at Conservative Party Conference.
16. The City Corporation's reception at Liberal Democrat party conference was attended by approximately 50 people. The guest speaker was Daisy Cooper MP, who is the current Liberal Democrats' Deputy Leader and Treasury spokesperson. Feedback from this reception was that it could be shorter in the future, it should start earlier or later to avoid dinner clashes, and should be based around the timings of the guest speaker.
17. The City Corporation's dinner at Labour party conference was attended by approximately 130 guests made up of MPs, Assembly Members, London councillors, senior journalists and political editors, and business representatives. Following a speech from the Policy Chairman, the guest of honour was the Prime Minister's Special Adviser on Business & Investment, Varun Chandra. The calibre of guests this year at Labour Conference was extremely high, and guests fed back how pleased they were with the speaker and format of a Q&A with him.
18. The City Corporation's dinner at Conservative party conference was attended by approximately 70 guests. Following a speech from the Policy Chairman, the keynote speaker was Shadow Local Government, Housing and Communities Secretary, Sir James Cleverly MP. Despite there being a number of receptions and events at the same time on the Monday night, and overall lower attendance at Conservative Party Conference, there was still strong representation at the City Corporation dinner.

19. To confirm in-demand venues and hotels, the Corporate Affairs Team selects and confirms the venues and hotel rooms by the end of the calendar year the year prior to conference (i.e. December 2024 for 2025 conference season).
20. In 2024, for the first time, the Corporate Affairs team utilised the CRM system that is based in Innovation and Growth to introduce efficiencies. This was a helpful tool in deploying invitations and monitoring uptake. It is noted that Innovation and Growth Officers lent their time and support to assist the Corporate Affairs Team, demonstrating successful collaboration across the two teams.
21. There are several learnings to be factored into the creation of guestlists for next year, such as consulting with Members of the Communications and Corporate Affairs Sub-committee on the guestlist ahead of deploying invitations.
22. Feedback from the dinners has been overwhelmingly positive, with various commentary and responses from external stakeholders about the value that attendees found in attending and the calibre of speaker.

### **Media Impact**

24. Working closely with the Media Team, it was an objective for 2025 to achieve strong media impact and coverage.
25. The Policy Chairman shared social media posts on X (formerly known as Twitter) and LinkedIn with various politicians following City Corporation events at the conference.
26. Taking a proactive approach to media scheduling, the Policy Chairman featured in a live radio and television interview on Bloomberg TV and Radio and [Times Radio](#).
27. We invited journalists to a dinner hosted by the City of London Corporation. The event strengthened our relationships with several news outlets and provided an opportunity to facilitate conversations between them and the Policy Chairman. The outlets we invited included The Telegraph, The Guardian, Financial Times, Politico, and City A.M.
28. We issued a press release following the Chancellor's speech at the Labour Party Conference, which subsequently generated coverage of our response. He was quoted in [Europe Says](#).

### **Member Attendance**

27. 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 play a key role as representatives, speakers and hosts at the Corporation's party conference activities.
28. In light of inflation, think tank partnership costs, hotel costs and conferences pass costs have continued to increase year on year by around 10 per cent.

## **Member Delegation in 2025**

29. The size of the official City Corporation Member delegation was reduced from 2025 to ensure that the City Corporation continues to deliver a party conference programme can be delivered within the Corporate Affairs current budget.
30. As decided in February 2025, all Members of the Communications and Corporate Affairs Sub Committee were invited to attend the Labour Party Conference.
31. Four members (and the Policy Chairman) were invited to attend the Liberal Democrat and Conservative Party Conferences. All attending Members were eligible for a two-day commercial guest pass, with the costs being met from the party conference budget.
32. The final delegation numbers for 2025 are listed below:
  - a) This year's Liberal Democrat Party Conference was held in Bournemouth from 20<sup>th</sup> – 23<sup>rd</sup> September. A total of five (5) members of the Communications and Corporate Affairs Sub Committee attended the conference (5 member passes purchased).
  - b) This year's Labour Party Conference was held in Liverpool from 28<sup>th</sup> September – 1<sup>st</sup> October. A total of 7 Members of the Communications and Corporate Affairs Sub Committee attended the conference (8 member passes purchased – one Member ill and unable to attend).
  - c) This year's Conservative Party Conference was held in Manchester from 5<sup>th</sup> – 8<sup>th</sup> October. A total of 5 Members of the Communications and Corporate Affairs Sub Committee attended the conference (5 member passes purchased).
33. Those interested in attending the Liberal Democrat and Conservative conferences were asked provide a short Expression of Interest (maximum 500 words) demonstrating suitability for attendance at each party conference.
  - i. The proposed applications process was as follows:
    1. The opportunity to join the delegation will be advertised to the Communications and Corporate Affairs Committee.
    2. Those wishing to apply are asked to submit expressions of interest, setting out relevant experience / skills against the relevant criteria.
    3. Applications to be reviewed by an assessment panel (comprised of the Chairman, Deputy Chairman, Vice Chairs and Chairman of Communications and Corporate Affairs Sub-committee) supported with advice from Officers.
    4. Policy Leadership and the Chairman of the Communications and Corporate Affairs Sub-committee take a final decision with an assessment of the process undertaken presented back to Committee at the next Sub-committee meeting.
34. There was an Officer error in the administration of this year's expression of interest process for party conferences, which resulted in the process not fully operating as intended (i.e the panel was completed over email) and also resulting in the process taking much longer than is standard.
35. Steps are being taken to review the circumstances and implement improvements to ensure greater clarity, consistency, and timeliness in future years. This will

strengthen governance and provide assurance that submissions are managed appropriately.

### **Member Delegation 2026 Proposals**

36. It is proposed that the majority of the same proposed process is followed for 2026 for the selection of the Member Delegation, with Officers ensuring that the process is accurately followed. It is proposed the following change:

1. Applications to be reviewed by an assessment panel (comprised of the Chairman, Deputy Chairman, and Chairman of Communications and Corporate Affairs Sub-committee) supported with advice from Officers.

37. A proposed timeline for Members to consider is as follows:

#### **January – February**

- Advertise the opportunity to join the delegation to the Communications & Corporate Affairs Committee.
- Publish criteria and guidance for expressions of interest.

#### **February**

- Open the window for submitting expressions of interest, including details of relevant experience and skills.
- Provide support and clarification to applicants as needed.

#### **March – April**

- Close applications and collate submissions.
- Assessment panel (Chairman, Deputy Chairman, Vice Chairs, and Chairman of Communications & Corporate Affairs Sub-Committee) reviews applications with officer support.

#### **By end of May 2026**

- Policy Leadership and the Chairman of the Communications & Corporate Affairs Sub-Committee make the final decision.
- Notify successful applicants and begin to confirm passes and arrangements.

#### **May – June**

- Present an assessment of the process and outcomes to the Communications & Corporate Affairs Sub-Committee at its next meeting.

38. 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 were also invited to attend the dinners at party conference.

39. Last year, Business Day passes were purchased for the Policy Chairman and a senior Officer for the Liberal Democrat Party Conference, Labour Party Conference and the Conservative Party Conference. The Value for Money of



these passes is questionable as they are typically upward of £3,500 per pass. To decrease costs, it is suggested that one (1) pass is secured for the Policy Chairman at the Labour Conference in 2026.

### **Officer Attendance**

40. Officer attendance is necessary to support the delivery of the overall party conference programme, as well as to support the Policy Chairman. Officer attendance was capped and subject to a formal business case process for the first time in 2025, ensuring alignment with strategic priorities and value for money, with passes secured only for those whose roles required access to the secure zone. The Business Case process will continue for 2026.
41. One additional officer from the Remembrancer's Office attended each conference to monitor proceedings, including fringe events, and produce reports; additional attendance was limited to essential roles such as event delivery and stakeholder engagement.
42. Last year, for the first time, additional teams beyond the Corporate Affairs team and Remembrancers requested their officers were accredited. Accrediting additional officers will be considered through the Business Case process as it can dilute the strategic purpose of access, increase cost, and may create reputational risk by blurring the distinction between essential representation by Members and unnecessary presence.

### **Corporate & Strategic Implications**

43. Strategic implications – Engaging with political stakeholders, organising events around the 2025 party political conferences, and collaborating with think tanks and other third-party organisations to deliver events and policy reports provides a valuable opportunity for the City Corporation to reach key audiences on major global, national and local issues. This work also enables the City Corporation to demonstrate leadership and contribute meaningfully to policy debates. Political engagement and sponsorship activity will support delivery of the six outcomes in the new Corporate Plan.
44. Financial implications - The Corporate Affairs Team has an established budget for party conference activity and wider political engagement. Any sponsorship of ad-hoc policy projects continues to be funded via the Policy Initiatives Fund, subject to decisions by the Policy and Resources Committee.

Resource implications – None

Legal implications – None

Risk implications – None

Equalities implications – None

Climate implications – None

Security implications – None

## **Conclusion**

38. 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.
39. Members are asked to note the assessment of the City Corporation's involvement at the 2025 party conferences.
40. Members are asked to make a decision on proposals for 2026 party conference programme and discuss the approach to size of Member delegation.
41. Members are asked to make a decision on Business Day at conferences in 2026.

## **Appendices**

None

## **Background Papers**

None

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