

Committee: Public Relations and Economic Development Sub	Date: 19 September 2013
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Subject: City of London Corporation: Party Conference Activity
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Report of: Director of Public Relations	For Information
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Summary

Every autumn UK political parties hold annual conferences to debate issues, set out policy priorities, and engage with key stakeholders and party activists. The 2013 party conferences provide the City Corporation with an opportunity to engage with the mainstream political parties by promoting its work among a wide range of stakeholders; developing and strengthening the political contacts programme with both the local and national politicians; and enhancing internal understanding of the likely policy evolution of the different parties. In so doing, the City Corporation uses its existing partnerships with think tanks to host a high-quality programme of activities, including fringe events and policy-focused dinners.

As part of the City Corporation’s political contact programme, this involves the City Corporation hosting, in conjunction with partner think tanks, public fringe events and private dinners at the 2013 Liberal Democrat, Labour Party and Conservative Party conferences on issues relating to the role government plays in promoting economic growth, as well as how to increase skills in the labour market and redress levels of youth unemployment. Speakers and participants at these events include Lord Newby, the government deputy chief whip; Lord Adonis, the shadow Treasury Minister; Xavier Rolet, the chief executive of the London Stock Exchange; Andrew Tyrie MP, chair of the Treasury Select Committee and Parliamentary Commission on Banking Standards; and, Gerard Lyons, Economic Adviser to the Mayor of London.

Planning has also begun for the 2014 party conferences; bookings have been made at the relevant party conference venues and potential activities are being internally discussed. The 2014 conference season is likely to be one of the most important for a number of years, given that it falls a few months before the general election in May 2015.

Recommendation

The sub-Committee is recommended to note the information in this report.

Background

1. The City of London Corporation hosts events at the Liberal Democrat, Labour and Conservative Party conferences every year. This traditionally entails a public fringe event early on the Monday evening, and then a private dinner later on the same evening.
2. The events that the City of London Corporation hosts at the party conferences provide us with the opportunity to engage with a wide range of stakeholders, with some of whom we do not usually have the opportunity to engage regularly or at the same time.
3. The fringe events are typically attended by around 80 people, ranging from policy and industry experts, councillors, MPs and Party members, and have been held on a wide range of topics, including the economy, international affairs, and employment and skills. The panellists are populated by leading journalists, high-profile MPs and figures from the think tank and business worlds.
4. The dinners take the form of private discussions, sometimes with a theme with a guest speaker. Attendees include representatives from London Boroughs, MPs, MEPs, government and opposition front benches, London Assembly Members and senior figures from think tanks.

Party Conferences 2013

5. Liberal Democrat – Glasgow – 16th September

Fringe: The fringe event is being held in conjunction with CentreForum, a think tank with links to the Liberal Democrats. The theme is the role that government and business can play in supporting economic growth.

Title: “Supporting economic growth: the role of government and business”

Chair: Martin Kettle, The Guardian

Panellists: Mark Boleat (City of London Corporation)
Lord Newby (Government Deputy Chief Whip, House of Lords)
Neil Sherlock (PwC)

Dinner: The dinner will be held at Hotel du Vin Glasgow, and the discussion will focus on London issues.

6. Labour – Brighton – 23rd September

Fringe: The fringe event is in conjunction with the New Statesman, a well-known political magazine which is celebrating its centenary year in 2013. The theme of the fringe is youth unemployment and jobs for young people.

Title: “Jobs for young people – how do we solve the problem?”

Chair George Eaton (New Statesman)

Panellists: Mark Boleat (City of London Corporation)
Lord Adonis (Shadow Treasury Minister)
Xavier Rolet (London Stock Exchange)

Dinner: The dinner is being held at Hotel du Vin Brighton in conjunction with the Social Market Foundation, a cross party think tank who work across economic and social policy areas. The theme for the dinner will be NEETs, and the discussion will be led by Stephen Timms, MP for East Ham and Shadow Minister for Work and Pensions.

7. Conservative – Manchester – 30th September

Fringe: The fringe event is being held in conjunction with the Centre for Policy Studies, a free-market think tank founded by Margaret Thatcher and Sir Keith Joseph. The theme of the discussion will be economic recovery and growth, and the role of the government in these processes.

Title: “Economic green shoots – what the Government should or shouldn’t do”

Chair: Tim Knox (Centre for Policy Studies)

Panellists: Mark Boleat (City of London Corporation)
Gerard Lyons (Economic Adviser to the Mayor of London)
Fraser Nelson (The Spectator)
Andrew Tyrie MP (Chair of the Treasury Select Committee and Parliamentary Commission on Banking Standards)

Dinner: The dinner is being held at Manchester Art Gallery. There will be a general discussion on London and current political issues on individual tables, and the evening will be opened by Mark Boleat.

8. 2014 Party Conference activity

Preparations are already well underway for the 2014 Party Conference season. These party conferences will be particularly important given they are the last conferences before the 2015 General Election.

- Labour is holding its conference in Manchester; Manchester Town Hall has been booked for the fringe event and Manchester Art Gallery for the dinner (22 September).
- The Conservative Party conference will be in Birmingham; provisional bookings have been made at the Jurys Inn for the fringe event and Malmaison Birmingham for the dinner (29 September).
- The Liberal Democrats will be returning to Glasgow for a second year; the fringe event will be held in conjunction with CentreForum and the dinner at Hotel du Vin Glasgow (6 October). The Liberal Democrat conference has been moved to be the last of the conferences in 2014 due to the normal date (18 September) clashing with the Scottish Independence Referendum.

Conclusion

9. The party conferences are a vital and effective way of engaging with a wide range of stakeholders, including leading politicians and decision makers. The 2013 party conference season is set to be successful for the City of London Corporation, given the likely profile of our fringe speakers, dinner guests and because of the range of topics that we will be covered through these activities.

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