

Committee: Public Relations and Economic Development Sub	Date(s) 21 November 2013	Item no.
Subject: City of London Corporation: Update on Party Conference Activities		
Report of: Director of Public Relations	Public For Information	
<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Summary</u></p> <p>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 provided 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 used its existing partnerships with think tanks to host a high-quality programme of activities, including fringe events and policy-focused dinners.</p> <p>As part of the City Corporation’s political contact programme, this involved 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 the fringe events included Lord Newby, Lord Adonis, Xavier Rolet, Andrew Tyrie MP, and Gerard Lyons. Attendees at the dinners included Lord McNally, Mike Tuffrey, Stephen Timms MP, Jules Pipe, David Lidington MP, Greg Clark MP, and Sir Edward Lister.</p> <p>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.</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><u>Recommendation</u></p> <p>The sub-Committee is recommended to note the information in this report.</p>		

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. These events provide the City Corporation 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.
2. The fringe events are typically attended by around 50-100 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 typically comprised of leading journalists, high-profile MPs, and figures from the think tank and business worlds.
3. 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

4. Liberal Democrat – Glasgow – 16th September

Fringe

The fringe event was organised in conjunction with CentreForum, a think tank with links to the Liberal Democrats; its theme was 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)

The fringe was attended by 50-60 people and featured a good discussion . The room was not perfect but there is limited available space near to the conference venue. The hotel performed well in terms of the arrangements and once again CentreForum proved a good partner.

Dinner

The dinner was held at Hotel du Vin Glasgow and featured a discussion that focussed primarily on London issues. Hotel du Vin worked well as a venue, both in terms of food and arrangements.

The following Liberal Democrat politicians attended the dinner:

- Cllr Anood Al-Samerai (Leader of Southwark Liberal Democrat Group)
- Cllr Ian Bond (Deputy Leader of Redbridge)
- Cllr Stephen Knight AM (Londonwide Assembly Member and Leader of Richmond Liberal Democrat Group)
- Baroness Ludford MEP (MEP for London)
- Cllr Ashley Lumsden (Leader of Lambeth Liberal Democrat Group)
- Lord McNally (Leader of the Liberal Democrats in the House of Lords)
- Lord Marks (Co-chair, Liberal Democrat Parliamentary Committee on Home Affairs, Justice and Equalities)
- Baroness Northover (Government Spokesperson on International Development)
- Cllr Terry Stacy (Leader of Lambeth Liberal Democrat Group)
- Mike Tuffrey (Chair of London Liberal Democrats)

5. Labour – Brighton – 23rd September

Fringe

The event was held in conjunction with the New Statesman, the well-known political magazine which is celebrating its centenary year in 2013; the event's theme of the fringe was 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)
Luke Herbert (Jaguar Land Rover)

Although the fringe raised significant issues and generated a thoughtful discussion among its speakers and attendees, it was relatively poorly attended with a total audience of around 40. This was due, in part, to the

fact that The New Statesman had advertised the event on the wrong day in the official conference fringe guide (though, to compensate, they did take out additional advertising at no extra cost to the City Corporation). However, with hindsight, The New Statesman probably had too many events at the Conference; the room and the service provided by the Thistle Hotel were poor.

Dinner

The dinner was held at Hotel du Vin Brighton in conjunction with the Social Market Foundation (SMF), a cross party think tank which specialises in policy research across the socio-economic spectrum. The dinner's theme was youth unemployment; the discussion was led by Stephen Timms MP, Shadow Employment Minister, and Baroness Steadman-Scott, the Chief Executive of Tomorrow's People, and was chaired by Mary Ann Siegart, the journalist and SMF chair. The dinner worked well – the food was good, even though the service was a little slow. In general, there was a productive discussion; however, the acoustics in the room were not ideal and in certain areas it was difficult to follow the discussion. The SMF proved to be a good partner organisation.

The following Labour politicians and third sector guests also attended the dinner:

- Dame Anne Begg (Chair of Work & Pensions Select committee)
- John Biggs (London Assembly Member for City & East London)
- Tom Copley (Londonwide Assembly Member)
- Dan Corry (Chief Executive of New Philanthropy Capital)
- Lizzie Crowley (Senior Researcher for the Work Foundation)
- Lottie Dexter (Director of Million Jobs)
- Peter John (Leader of Southwark)
- Rhian Johns (Policy Director of Private Equity Foundation)
- Cllr Claire Kober (Deputy Chair of London Councils)
- Lord Liddle (Labour Spokesman on Europe)
- Guy Nicholson (Hackney Cabinet Member for Regeneration)
- John O'Brien (Chief Executive of London Councils)
- Lib Peck (Leader of Lambeth)
- Jules Pipe (Chair of London Councils)
- Gareth Thomas MP (Shadow Deputy Minister for London)
- Sir Robin Wales (Mayor of Newham)
- Catherine West (Leader of Islington)

6. Conservative – Manchester – 30th September

Fringe

The fringe event was 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 was 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 (Editor, The Spectator)

Andrew Tyrie MP (Chair of the Treasury Select Committee and Parliamentary Commission on Banking Standards)

The fringe produced a good discussion and was attended by over 80 people; Manchester Town Hall again proved to be a good venue and the Centre for Policy Studies was a good partner organisation.

Dinner

The dinner was held at Manchester Art Gallery. There were discussions on individual tables, each of which included Members and Officers, after some introductory remarks from the Policy Chairman. The dinner worked very well both in terms of the food and the arrangements.

The following Conservative politicians attended the dinner:

- Annesley Abercorn (European Parliamentary Candidate for London)
- Tony Arbour (London Assembly Member for South West London)
- Bob Blackman (Member of Communities & Local Government Select Committee)
- Nicholas Botterill (Leader of Hammersmith & Fulham)
- Victoria Borwick (Deputy Mayor of London)
- Greg Clark (Financial Secretary to the Treasury)
- James Cleverly (Chairman of LFEP)
- Richard Cornelius (Leader of Barnet)
- Robert Davis (Deputy Leader of Westminster)
- Roger Evans (London Assembly Member for Havering & Redbridge)
- Peter Golds (Leader of Tower Hamlets Conservative Group)

- Ravi Govindia (Leader of Wandsworth)
- Claire-Louise Leyland (Leader of Camden Conservative Group)
- David Lidington (Minister for Europe)
- Sir Edward Lister (Chief of Staff to the Mayor of London)
- Gerard Lyons (Senior Economic Adviser to the Mayor of London)
- Michael Mitchell (Leader of Southwark Conservative Group)
- Oonagh Moulton (Leader of Merton Conservative Group)
- Bob Neill (Vice-Chairman (Local Government), Conservative Party)
- Matt Pencharz (Senior Adviser to the Mayor of London on Environment & Energy)
- Kay Swinburne (ECR Group Co-ordinator on ECON Committee)
- Andrew Tyrie (Chairman of the Treasury Select Committee)
- Michael White (Leader of Havering)
- Marina Yannakoudakis (MEP for London)

Budgets

7. The total cost of the City Corporation's activities at the 2013 Liberal Democrat, Labour, and Conservative Party Conferences was £45,056.02.

The breakdown of expenditure across the three conferences was as follows:

- Fringe events - £10,682.88
- Dinners – £11,344.56
- Accommodation - £9,121.68
- Conference Venue Passes - £9,555
- Travel – £4,351.90

The estimated expenditure for the 2013 conferences had originally been £43,500 (£30,000 from the PR Office budget, plus a £13,500 additional contribution from the Policy & Resources Committee) and is broadly in line with previous expenditure on party conference activities (in 2012 it was just over £40,000).

The overspend of £1,556.02 on activities at the 2013 Party Conferences was due to the continued inflation in the cost of passes; a higher than anticipated number of attendees at the dinners hosted by the City Corporation at both Labour and Conservative Party Conferences; and the increased number of Members attending the Conservative Party Conference.

Party Conferences 2014

8. 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). We are yet to decide on the partners for the fringe meeting and dinner.

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, though we are additionally looking for other imaginative venues to mirror the success of the dinner this year at the Manchester Art Gallery (29 September). We are yet to decide on the partner for the fringe meeting.

The Liberal Democrats will be returning to Glasgow for a second year in a row; we plan to work with CentreForum on the fringe event and plan to organise 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 remain a vital and effective way of engaging with a wide range of stakeholders, including leading politicians and decision makers. The 2013 party conference season was broadly successful for the City of London Corporation, given the profile and range of our fringe speakers and dinner guests and because of the spread of topics that we covered through these activities.

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