

Committee: Public Relations and Economic Development Sub-Committee	Date: 8 May 2014
Subject: City of London Corporation 2014 Party Conference Activity	Public
Report of: Director of Public Relations	For Decision
<u>Summary</u>	
<p>This report sets out the background to the City of London Corporation's activity at the annual political party conferences and gives a summary of the proposed programme of activities in 2014 for the Labour Conference in Manchester, the Conservative Conference in Birmingham and the Liberal Democrat Conference in Glasgow. The report additionally considers dinner invitation lists, Member attendance, Officer attendance, and the additional funding required to deliver this programme of activities.</p>	
<u>Recommendations</u>	
<p>Members are recommended to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> i. note the overall programme for the 2014 conferences; ii. agree arrangements for Member attendance at the conferences; and iii. agree that a request for an additional £15,000 of funding for the 2014 conference programme should be submitted to the June meeting of the Policy and Resources Committee. 	

Background

1. The UK political party conferences date back to the beginning of the twentieth century. Originally they took place in London but then moved to provincial seaside resorts and recently to major urban centres. The conferences originally played a role in policy formulation but this function has declined significantly; the conferences now exist predominantly to provide platforms for leading politicians and as a money-making exercise for the respective parties.
2. The City of London Corporation began attending the major party conferences in 1994, initially with small, private dinners and then also with fringe meetings from 1997. This formula has continued over recent years with a fringe meeting on the Monday evening followed by a private dinner, which is attended by representatives of the Policy and Resources Committee and relevant Officers. The party conferences are a particularly useful part of the City Corporation's political contact programme as the majority of its key contacts are found in the same place at the same time;

the conferences also allow the City Corporation to maintain its presence in a number of strategically significant policy debates. The 2014 conferences are particularly important as they are the final ones before the UK General Election, which will be held in May 2015.

2014 Conferences

3. This year's Party Conferences run across three weeks from the end of September through to the beginning of October: the Labour Party Conference is taking place in Manchester, 21-24 September; the Conservative Party Conference is taking place in Birmingham, 28 September-1 October, and; the Liberal Democrat Conference is taking place in Glasgow, 4-8 October. Unusually, the Liberal Democrat Conference is taking place last because it was moved to avoid a clash with the Scottish Referendum.
4. The current programme of activity at the respective party conferences is as follows:

<u>Labour Conference, Manchester</u>		
Monday 22 September	PM	Members travel to Manchester by train.
	18:00- 19:15	Fringe meeting in partnership with the New Local Government Network in the Reception Room at Manchester Town Hall.
	20:00- 22:00	Private dinner at the Manchester Art Gallery in partnership with the key think tank, the Social Market Foundation. The dinner discussion will focus on future challenges for London.
Tuesday 23 September	AM	Members return to London by train.
<u>Conservative Conference, Birmingham</u>		
Monday 29 September	PM	Members travel to Birmingham by train
	18:00- 19:15	Fringe meeting in partnership with the key centre-right think tank, the Institute of Economic Affairs at the Jury's Inn Hotel.

Tuesday 30 September	20:00- 22:00 22:30 AM	Private dinner at Birmingham Town Hall. Option for Members to return to London by City of London car. Any remaining Members return to London by train.
<u>Liberal Democrat Conference, Glasgow</u>		
Monday 6 October	PM 18:00- 19:15 20:00- 22:00	Members travel to Glasgow. Fringe meeting in partnership with the key liberal think tank CentreForum. This meeting will take place in the Scottish Exhibition & Conference Centre. (N.B. owing to limited, suitable fringe space in Glasgow, this event will take place in the Secure Area – Members and Officers will need to have conference passes in order to attend.) Private dinner at the Hotel du Vin.
Tuesday 7 October	AM	Members return to London.

- The invitation lists for external guests at the City Corporation’s party conference dinners are drawn from various political audiences relevant to the City of London, including Government ministers; Opposition front bench spokespersons; Parliamentarians on relevant select committees; London MPs; London MEPs; MEPs on ECON Committee; London Assembly Members; representatives from the Mayor of London’s Office; London Borough Leaders and Borough Group Leaders; parliamentary candidates for London constituencies; parliamentary candidates with an interest in financial services; government advisers and party staffers, and; representatives from relevant think tanks. The details of the named individuals in each of these categories which it is proposed to invite are available to any Member of the Sub-Committee that requests them.

Attendance

- Members play a pivotal role as representatives and hosts at the City Corporation’s party conference activities, though this is balanced by the continuing desire that expenditure on activities is as cost-effective as

possible. In 2013 attendance was open to all Members of the PR-ED Sub-Committee, while, as in previous years, other Members attending party conferences in other capacities were also welcome to attend the dinners. The Sub-Committee is asked to agree the same arrangements for Members to attend the 2014 conferences.

7. Considerable effort continues to be made to minimise the number of officers attending the party conferences on behalf of the City Corporation. At present, three officers from the PR Office attend each of the party conferences; any reduction in the number of officers attending would have a significant impact on the City Corporation's ability to deliver its programme of activities. In addition, one Officer from the Remembrancer's Office attends in order to monitor the Conference proceedings overall, including the fringe events. The Town Clerk and Remembrancer typically attend at least two of the conferences.

Additional Funding

8. Efforts continue to be made to ensure that expenditure on party conference activities is as efficient as possible, while maintaining a high quality programme of activity. In 2014 (as in 2012 and 2013), the City Corporation is partnering with leading think-tanks to help deliver a successful programme of activities; this requires a payment of fees to the think-tanks in question. In 2012 and 2013, the Policy and Resources Committee agreed to provide additional funds to cover these costs. It will again be necessary in 2014 to seek an additional £15,000 to cover the expected fees for the four think tanks with which the City Corporation proposes to work; subject to the Sub-Committee's approval, it is proposed that a report be submitted to Policy and Resources Committee in June 2014 to seek these funds.

Conclusion

9. Members are asked to note the plans for the 2014 party conferences and to agree the recommendations concerning the attendance of Members and additional funding for the proposed programme of activities.

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