

City of London Corporation and London Port Health Authority Case Study

Key points

General

- The City of London Corporation is very business focused overall, however there has been limited joint working to date between regulatory services and economic development.
- A new Supporting London Group should facilitate coordination of activity at a strategic level.
- The Port Health Authority has been working with businesses from the planning stage on major projects.
- Both Economic Development and LARS teams have been working with local businesses to support the night time economy.

Benefits to the corporation

- There are savings for the Corporation from being involved in major developments from an early stage.
- Closer working will give teams the opportunity to promote the services of their colleagues through better knowledge of what can be offered.
- Joint activity to reduce inappropriate business activity including 'boiler room scams' to preserve the solid reputation of the City.

Benefits to businesses

- Easy access to a range of relevant business support information and services from across the authority, and including Twitter feeds.
- Targeted initiatives relevant to the City, including Codes of Practice for construction and licensed premises
- Savings from early involvement of regulatory services in major developments, so that hygiene and health and safety considerations can be built in properly from the start, relevant to the needs of the development.

Introduction

The City of London is unusual in that it has only 9,000 residents but 350,000 workers within its area. Traditionally it has been characterised by its concentration of businesses, particularly in the areas of banking, finance and allied services, along with service industries that cater for the workforce during and around working hours. The City Corporation has a remit that encompasses, but goes beyond, that of a traditional local authority. Its three main aims are to:

- Support and promote the City as the world leader in international finance and business services.
- Provide modern, efficient and high quality local services and policing within the Square Mile for residents, workers and visitors.
- Provide valued services to London and the nation as a whole, including through being one of the most significant arts sponsors in the UK and offering support for economic regeneration in the surrounding boroughs.

Port Health and Public Protection Service

Because of its history as a business district, the City Corporation's regulators have always been fully signed up to the need to work closely with businesses in the City and to support economic growth, while also recognizing their duty to protect those who live and work there. This proactive approach to business support encompasses a number of projects and initiatives including:

- The development of a Code of Practice for Construction and Deconstruction (<http://www.cityoflondon.gov.uk/business/environmental-health/environmental-protection/noise/Pages/construction-and-noise.aspx>) that helps businesses to meet their responsibilities from the planning stages onwards. The intention of the Code is to allow businesses to get on with the job without the distractions of dealing with complaints while, at the same time, minimising negative impacts on residents and other businesses.
- Working closely with banks and other big institutions, particularly on health and safety issues, such as falls from height and legionnaires disease, attending meetings at the business premises to give advice. They also participate in the London Banks' Health and Safety Forum.
- Supporting food businesses to meet hygiene standards.
- Hosting seminars and courses for businesses in a range of sectors, for example for importers and exporters, in addition to officers providing organisations with individual support - including, on occasions, making overseas visits.
- Running courses for other LAs on Animal Health (for which they are the Lead Authority for London) and providing speakers at conferences and trade seminars all over the world.
- Attendance at events run for businesses - for example, an annual event at the City Business library - to make contact with local businesses and provide free advice.

The London Port Health Authority

The London Port Health Authority is the largest port health authority in the UK, covering the tidal Thames from Teddington Lock to the Thames Estuary. Constituted in 1872, it forms part of the City of London's Department of Markets and Consumer Protection.

Jon Avern, Port Health and Public Protection Director, believes that engaging with businesses at an early stage in new developments saves time and money in the long run, both for businesses and regulatory services. The London Gateway Port is a new container terminal in Essex that has been in development for 12-15 years. The Port Health Authority has worked with the overseas backers since inception, ensuring that they have the correct permissions and facilities (eg food inspection and storage areas) right from the design stage. The Authority has also helped them meet UK and European Commission requirements so that they are in a position to start trading as soon as work is completed (October 2013). The Authority was very proactive, contacting the owners as soon as the project was first mooted and explaining the benefits of them being involved in the early stages to support them with compliance requirements and helping the owners to 'future proof' the business. Jon Avern reports that they have had very positive feedback from the business about the support they have received at all levels, from local officers to those at strategic and political level. It is envisaged that the Port will eventually be the top facility in the UK, one of the largest in Europe, and that is in part down to the support received from the Port Health Authority, who are now also providing training to new employees at the Port.

Economic Development

According to Paul Sizeland, the Director of Economic Development in the City, retaining the City's role as the world's leading financial centre means working closely with businesses to secure the best financial regulatory environment. However, the City also takes its responsibilities in promoting corporate responsibility and contributing to the regeneration of deprived neighbouring boroughs very seriously, and this involves encouraging businesses to work well with their local communities. This is done in part through the City's membership of Central London Forward, a partnership of seven inner London boroughs (Camden, City of London, Islington, Kensington and Chelsea, Lambeth, Southwark and Westminster). The partnership's aim is to work together on issues of concern to central London although, even within this grouping, the unique nature of the City can mean that issues there differ from the rest of London. Where possible, the City is keen to encourage local procurement and to encourage organisations to recruit locally (from neighbouring boroughs) and, for Paul Sizeland, this approach both reinforces the competitiveness of the City and generates more sustainable economic activity.

As well as the traditional City organisations, the City of London is keen to encourage new businesses and has had success in attracting creative and technical industries to locate there. To further this aim, Innovation Warehouse was founded in 2010, by a group of entrepreneurs, investors and the City of London Corporation to support early stage, high growth, technology start-ups at a site at Smithfield Market. More than 50 start-ups are now based at Innovation Warehouse.

Developing the night-time economy

The City is changing in other ways too. The aim is for the City of London to be recognised as an ideal location to work, live and be entertained. This has meant encouraging an active night time economy in the City with a consequent increase in food businesses and licensed premises. There has also been considerable growth in the number of retail premises in the area as well as occasional and regular street markets. Regulatory services have needed to play their part through a supportive, proportionate and risk-based regulatory response. A Code of Practice for licensed premises outlines the expectations that the City has for such premises to make a contribution to a safe and vibrant night time economy.

(<http://www.cityoflondon.gov.uk/business/licensing/alcohol-and-ntertainment/Pages/Licensing-policy.aspx>)

Supporting London Group

Regulators and economic development teams are increasingly recognising more opportunities to work together. Although regulators in the City have always seen part of their role as being supportive of good businesses, Jon Avern's thinks even more could be achieved and that a recent reconfiguration of some of the City's groups will help facilitate this. A former Chief Officers' Group has been reconfigured as the Supporting London Group (SLG) with a remit to consider matters relating to the City of London Corporation's engagement and relations with London's government and communities with specific responsibility for developing and coordinating the City's London-wide activities. This includes consideration of

- Education.
- Employment, employability and enterprise.
- Housing.
- Public Health.
- Capacity building within voluntary and social enterprise.

- Supporting SMEs.
- Impact of planning issues.
- Open/green spaces.
- Culture and heritage offer.
- London Infrastructure.
- Strategic developments programmes.

As both economic development and regulatory services will be represented on the group, there will be increased opportunities for coordination at a strategic level. This group will liaise closely with the Economic Development Chief Officers Group (EDCOG) whose remit is to consider and report on all matters with the potential to have an impact on the City Corporation's unique position and role as a local authority, and its status as the leading international financial and business centre. In particular it will pay close attention to property, planning and other infrastructure issues and relations with the wide range of City stakeholders.

Making the most of promotional opportunities

Going forward, both regulatory services and the economic development team are keen to identify more opportunities for joining up, particularly at officer level, where sharing intelligence or signposting each other's services might be useful. One area that concerns both teams is the issue of some organisations using a City address (through a mail-forwarding service) as a front to lend a veneer of respectability to fraudulent activities to sell non-existent products to members of the public - so called 'boiler room scams'. As well as protecting the public from such scams, the City sees these activities as posing a reputational risk that could impact adversely on legitimate businesses. Sharing of intelligence in this area could help with identification and protection.

The regulatory team could see benefits in encouraging businesses to see them as being a source of information on areas outside the focus of a visit, for example, being able to refer them to the economic development team when a business is considering expansion or relocation in the City. Tony Macklin, Assistant Director Public Protection, does advise some caution however as many businesses are keen to focus on compliance issues during a visit and other ways of getting the message across at a different time may be more appropriate. The City's website has been redeveloped to make it easier for businesses to navigate and find the information they want. In addition, the City has invested in a contact centre for business. The City Business Library (CBL) offers business advice, free access to databases of business information and a wide range of free-of-charge business skills training and development events. It also publishes a series of factsheets which signpost to further information and resources; which are also available to download. The City of London is also making more use of social media, with both economic development and public protection having a number of Twitter feeds - eg Health and Safety, Food Safety and Trading Standards - and the Health and Safety Team producing material for the City Corporation's YouTube channel.