

Cllr Kieron Williams
Leader of Southwark Council
Camberwell Ward

Rt Hon Alok Sharma MP
Secretary of State for Business,
Energy and Industrial Strategy
BEIS
1 Victoria Street
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Via email

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Southwark Council
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Ref: KW-29

Dear Secretary of State,

Support for businesses in London

As we head into another national lockdown, we are writing this joint letter as the Leader of Southwark Council, the Cabinet Member for Jobs, Culture & Skills, and the Chairs of the five Business Improvement Districts in our borough, to ask that you expand on the Government's strategy on engaging and supporting businesses in London. In particular we ask that you give consideration to the following points:

Clarity on timing and support for planning: If many of our business are to survive a further period of national lockdown, support to help firms to plan more effectively and proactively for the medium to longer term is essential. While we appreciate the need to respond quickly to changes in circumstances that require a fast-paced implementation of Covid-19 restrictions, the manner in which changes are communicated with local authorities and businesses is both destabilising and hampers effective planning for the longer-term. We welcome the most recent extension to the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme to the end of March 2021, but a lack of clarity on support that is available for ongoing business resilience means that many of our companies are struggling with both the here and now, and the ability to plan effectively for the longer term.

More effective communication with our business community, and a Government backed plan for the support of medium to longer term business sustainability is crucial. We would also welcome a discussion on the review of business rates, and in the short term, we urge the Government to extend the business rates holiday and the 5% VAT rule for hospitality and tourism. We also ask that you act now to extend the Job Retention Scheme to the end of the year so businesses have time to get going again following this lockdown and plan for successor support arrangements

Rateable Value Threshold review: To be effective and to ensure London based businesses are treated equitably, the cost of doing business in London should be fully considered when determining business support thresholds for schemes such as the

Local Restrictions Support Grant and Additional Restrictions Grant. As a central London borough, many of our micro and small businesses have rateable values far in excess of £51k per annum, and as such the levels of support do not accurately reflect the cost of doing business in central London. We ask that support for businesses that is made available through this lockdown and beyond are designed so as to truly reflect the cost of being a business in central London.

A collective partnership approach: We recognise the challenges Government faces in applying restrictions that will impact on the local economy, and so we offer our support in helping to engage and support businesses in central London more effectively. In Southwark we are extremely proud of our track record of establishing close working relationships between our business community including our BIDs, the local authority, and our wider partnerships including the GLA, TfL and Network Rail. By utilising the strength of these local partnerships, we can support Government to ensure that communication with business is as effective as it can be and that the support that is made available more truly reflects the needs of the business community in central London.

Yours sincerely,



Cllr Kieron Williams
Leader of Southwark Council



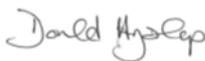
Cllr Stephanie Cryan
Southwark Council, Cabinet Member for
Jobs, Culture & Skills



Govert Deketh
Chair, South Bank BID



Professor Simon Howell
Chair, Team London Bridge



Donald Hyslop
Chair, Better Bankside



Michael Johnson
Chair, We are Waterloo BID



Jack Shah
Chair, Blue Bermondsey BID