



Small Business Friendly Borough Awards 2019

The Small Business Friendly Borough Awards awards are a partnership between London Councils and the Federation of Small Businesses that celebrate the work that boroughs do to help local businesses thrive in their areas.

2019 Winners

The winners in each category were:

Best All-Round Small Business Friendly Borough

Winner: LB Croydon

Best Programme to Reduce Impact of Crime on Small Businesses

Winner: LB Lewisham

Highly Commended: RB Greenwich

Best Programme of Support for Small Businesses

Winner: LB Hackney

Best Small Business Friendly Procurement to Support Local Trade

Winner: LB Haringey

Below are summaries of all the shortlisted and winning submissions. Please note that these have been edited for length.

Best All-Round Small Business Friendly Borough

This award commends councils for successfully implementing wide-ranging policies to support and develop the local micro and small business community.

Winner: LB Croydon: This year London Borough of Croydon was crowned the Best All Round Small Business Friendly Borough for successfully supporting and developing its local micro and small business community – which make up 93 per cent of Croydon's businesses. These businesses have been supported by several council programmes following Croydon's

business-led Small Business Commission in 2017, which improved an already innovative business environment.

The council programmes include: 'Croydon Means Business', which held 175 events and workshops during 2018 with over 4,500 business delegates in attendance; 'Croydon Works', a free job brokerage that has placed more than 600 residents into work since September 2017 and the 'Croydon Enterprise Loan Fund', which gives local business access to finance.

Shortlisted:

LB Brent: Brent have undertaken a wide programme of work to support SMEs to start up, grow and succeed. Brent has identified several different approaches to ensuring that the voice of business is heard, including the recently established Business Board chaired by a local SME which brings together businesses, the council and key partners to inform the borough-wide approach to growth.

The council delivers a range of initiatives focused on providing support infrastructure, including:

- Affordable workspace units through S106 agreements.
- Superfast broadband roll-out.
- Networking and training opportunities for small businesses.
- Free job and apprenticeship recruitment service.
- Focus on priority town centres.

LB Harrow: Harrow demonstrated their commitment to the Council's corporate objective of 'Making a Difference for Business' through its integrated business-facing approach to borough provision, town centre initiatives, apprenticeship and skills, community learning, business rates, commissioning, planning, parking, public health, regulatory services and procurement.

Highlights include:

- Business engagement and welcome events, supporting 1,344 organisations on issues such as finance, marketing, GDPR and business planning.
- Innovative entrepreneurial space, including annual Business Den competitions and high street pop-up space.
- The creation of multiple affordable and subsidised artist, retail and restaurant units, as well as an affordable Business Hub for hot-desking.
- Improvements to the procurement process, with a focus on enabling small local providers.
- Town centre and tourist support.

LB Southwark: The borough works with its local business community through its Southwark Business Forum which includes the FSB, the Southwark Chamber of Commerce and all five local BIDs.

Southwark is committed to becoming a full employment borough and promotes this ambition through several programmes to help residents back in to work, and to support businesses to provide apprenticeships.

The borough has undertaken significant work to meet its ambition of creating 1,000

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new affordable workspaces by 2022 and have launched the Start-Up in London Libraries programme to promote self-employment. This is complemented by the £2 million Southwark Pioneers Fund.

LB Waltham Forest: Waltham Forest’s work focuses on the mantra ‘Keep, Seed and Grow’, and takes a multi-faceted approach, including building on its role as the first London Borough of Culture.

Highlights includes:

- Commercial Centres – a range of public realm improvements focused on key high streets and commercial areas.
- Workspaces – including the Central Parade incubator space and the creation of affordable and rent-capped studio and SME workspaces. This is supported by targeted rate relief for open workspaces, the first of its kind in London.
- Business networks – The borough supports two networks – Waltham Forest Connected, a grassroots SME network with over 200 members and the Argall Business Improvement District.
- Business support – including the Serious Impact Programme, a 12-week programme of bespoke workshops and coaching, and the Forge creative sector scheme supporting creative freelancers.

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Best Programme to Reduce Impact of Crime on Small Businesses

This new category celebrates efforts by boroughs to prevent and tackle crime effecting micro and small businesses.

Winner: LB Lewisham: Lewisham was recognised for Safer Lewisham Business Crime Reduction Partnership (@SaferLewisham), a membership scheme of 120 businesses working with the police, council, and other interested stakeholders to reduce crime, violence, anti-social behaviour, and other crimes that affect the profitability of businesses. The partnership acts as a business representative body as well as a link to the different authorities, and allows the sharing of real time information via a state-of-the-art digital radio network.

Highly Commended: RB Greenwich: Royal Borough of Greenwich was highly commended in this new category for its efforts to reduce the impact of crime on small businesses in Woolwich Town Centre. To address anti-social behaviour linked to street drinking, the borough has encouraged off-licenses to stop selling beers, lager or cider with an ABV higher than 6.5 per cent. At present there are 110 businesses signed up to the scheme, which has made has led to a 10 per cent drop in alcohol-related crime and anti-social behaviour in Woolwich since the campaign launch.

Shortlisted

LB Barnet: Barnet was shortlisted in recognition of its work tackling excessive street drinking, littering and anti-social behaviour in the Burnt Oak area. Following consultation with residents Barnet implemented a Public Space Protection Order (PSPO). Under the order, the Council and police officers can confiscate alcohol from anyone drinking publicly outside of a licensed venue in the area.

Those who refuse to hand over their alcohol face a £100 Fixed Penalty Notice or a summons to court, with a fine of up to £1,000. Recognising the multi-dimensional challenges to tackling anti-social behaviour, the borough works with a range of charities to support the local

community and has worked to physically regenerate the area. These actions have led to a noticeable reduction in anti-social behaviour and increased footfall.

LB Croydon: Croydon takes a strong collaborative approach to reducing crime and anti-social behaviour, working in partnership with Croydon Business Improvement District (BID), Croydon Council and the Metropolitan Police.

In response to significant increases in serious youth violence, Croydon worked with the stakeholders to deliver a four day 'Back to School' campaign. The campaign was designed to reduce the fear of crime by providing a high-visibility presence in the town centre to support businesses, while increasing the situational awareness of young people offering general crime prevention advice and engaging them on other key issues.

Police officers, Croydon BID team members, Croydon BID Ambassadors, Neighbourhood Support Officers, school pastors, the Whitgift and Centrale Shopping Centres security teams and other support staff were present in the town centre from 3pm - 7pm with the focus of providing uniformed presence, prevention, disruption and a deterrent against knife crime, robbery and ASB.

Best Programme of Support for Small Businesses

This award recognises programmes of support around a theme which have encouraged and supported the borough's micro and small business community.

Winner: LB Hackney: The Hackney Business Network provides a wide ranging, successful programme of support for SMEs in the borough, with accessible and clear routes to business support information. These include the website, investinhackney.org and its twitter account, [@hackneybusiness](https://twitter.com/hackneybusiness). Hackney also has five area specific business forums that take place three times a year, where businesses can network and meet face to-face, share area information and initiatives and present their services to peers. Its monthly newsletter shares information about business news, events, funding, support and training opportunities, and an approved workspace provider list that is assessed and compiled by Hackney Council.

Shortlisted

LB Islington: Ahead of the implementation of the government's 2017 revaluation of business rates, Islington worked alongside SMEs and business groups, to secure the support of over 14,000 local people for a petition opposing the increase in rateable values. The petition, which was launched by the Islington Chamber of Commerce, Angel BID and the Council, urged the government to freeze the implementation of the business rates valuation until after Brexit and called to extend 'transitional reliefs' for affected businesses. Soon after, the government announced an initial £300 million discretionary rate relief fund for local authorities.

Islington used its discretionary powers to deliver the relief in a way which prioritised and supported small businesses – targeting the fund and tapering it so that it was spread over several year.

Islington continues to campaign in this area on behalf of local businesses, combining practical support with policy and lobbying work.

LB Lambeth: 'Lambeth Works' describes itself as 'the most ambitious affordable workspace programme for start-ups, micro and small business in London'. The programme has involved:

- Use of council assets enabling new workspace projects – taking a whole council approach.

- Securing significant funding from the GLA and Strategic Investment Pot.
- Use of s106 process to secure workspace in new developments – with an Affordable Workspace Policy in the draft revised Local Plan
- Article 4 directions to halt losses of space in Brixton, parts of Clapham and 10 industrial areas.
- Partnership working with local BIDs, private and third sector workspace providers.

“The Haringey Dynamic Purchasing System is a procurement initiative which proactively supports local businesses to secure council contracts and other trade opportunities”

Best Small Business Friendly Procurement to Support Local Trade

This award celebrates council procurement activities that have enabled local micro and small businesses to gain access to public sector and other local contracts.

Winner: LB Haringey: The Haringey Dynamic Purchasing System (DPS) is a procurement initiative which proactively supports local businesses to secure council contracts and other trade opportunities. In 2018/19, the DPS helped Haringey businesses to win £24.5 million worth of contracts. Haringey’s strategy enables local businesses to increase trade and supply chain opportunities, increase revenue and profitability, and expand and generate new jobs for the local economy and residents.

Shortlisted

LB Croydon: Value Croydon was developed in 2017 to allow SMEs access to procurement opportunities within the borough. Following this programme’s success, the council have taken steps to continually improve this model and have created a feedback mechanism to support this through the Small Business Commission. This approach has led to the restructuring of the procurement team to include Supply Chain and Central Buying Teams, and the development of a dynamic series of campaigns and events.

LB Hammersmith & Fulham: H&F Brill4Biz Supply Chain is a local supply chain initiative led by Hammersmith and Fulham Council since February 2017. It provides support for local SMEs in the construction sector to help them win work on local developments and with the Council. It assists developers and main contractors to fulfil their local procurement obligations contained in the Council’s s106 agreements. It also assists the Council to maximise local economic and social value by greater use of local companies for the repair and maintenance of its properties.

Commentary

The awards demonstrate the breadth of activity and innovative work that boroughs are carrying out to support business in their areas. To accompany the awards London Councils published its review of London borough business engagement and support. The full report [Open for Business is available online](#) and highlights the wide range of good practice happening across London’s boroughs.

In total 28 boroughs responded to the survey which showed that:

- Over half of boroughs have an over-arching business board, with these boards typically high-profile, chaired by the Leader or a lead member.
- Three quarters of boroughs have topic or area specific business groups, e.g. town centre forums.
- There was a wide range of topics discussed by the boards, including employment and apprenticeships, procurement, business support and planning.

- Three quarters of boroughs conduct regular surveys of their businesses. These range from general business confidence to specific consultations, for example on planning and parking changes. Only one borough reported undertaking a business customer satisfaction survey around their regulatory services.
- Many boroughs provide regular business e-newsletters, sign-posting information and practical support on issues such as Brexit, hiring apprenticeships and business support training. One borough emailed over 12,000 businesses monthly, with a click-through rate of 28 per cent.

With local government funding becoming increasingly reliant on business rates, boroughs will need to work closely with businesses to develop an environment that supports business growth.

The awards are a partnership between London Councils and the Federation of Small Businesses



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