

# Pledges for Business



LONDON  
COUNCILS



# Executive Summary

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Boroughs have worked hard to support and keep safe communities and businesses through the unprecedented times of the Covid-19 pandemic. Boroughs forged extensive relationships with local businesses during the pandemic as they distributed grants to those that qualified and worked with all businesses to support the safe reopening of the economy. Recovering from the impact of Covid-19 makes the need for boroughs to have a strong working relationship with their businesses and employers even more urgent. It is an opportunity to forge deeper relationships, working across different council departments, building on the lessons from the pandemic.

The economic impact of Covid-19 will be felt for a long time to come, both in terms of economic growth but also job security and opportunities. Lockdown accelerated the challenges that our high streets face, while thousands of Londoners have lost their jobs. Many businesses successfully pivoted to online services and accessed new customers. Pillars of the London economy, such as financial services, demonstrated their resilience. But some sectors, such as cultural and hospitality businesses, face an uncertain future.

## Vision

London is the business capital of Europe and the most outward looking global city on the planet. All London boroughs are committed to nurturing that success and ensuring that all Londoners can share in the benefits of good growth.

Boroughs aspire to be the first choice of every London business when it wants a conversation and to work with London government.

These pledges demonstrate London boroughs' commitment to growing our city's economy for the benefit of all Londoners and sets out the boroughs' roles in achieving this.

## The role of boroughs

Boroughs have a central role in creating an environment where business can recover from the impact of Covid-19 and thrive.

- **Placemakers & Champions**

Boroughs set out an agreed vision for our area and communities and bring together the resources to deliver this. Through local political leadership, long term consultation and engagement with residents and business, and using local democratic processes, boroughs set and drive a vision for an area. This includes our local development plans and economic development strategies, where we can influence, inform and facilitate the economic development.

Boroughs are uniquely placed to secure and drive forward recovery plans, regeneration and local economic development, drawing together external funding and working with the private sector, boroughs can set and coordinate a vision for the economic renewal of an area. New ways of working, such as increased homeworking, will present new opportunities and challenges for London's high streets and town centres.

Boroughs via their support for cultural and leisure infrastructure enhance the attractiveness of their area for business and staff, as well as delivering safe and attractive public spaces.

Boroughs promote their local attractiveness, working with partners such as London and Partners, to ensure that the whole of the capital together maintains its “global city status”, as we look to the return of international travellers and investment.

- **Convenors of business and the local communities**

Boroughs play an important role in bring together partners, including the business community and local residents, developing a common vision for an area. During the pandemic boroughs have rapidly built on their existing engagement with business.

The at times competing needs of residents and businesses in a crowded city are best brokered at a local level. Boroughs are in a unique position to develop local solutions and agreements.

Boroughs uniquely have the local knowledge to bring together and connect with London’s diverse communities, working with regional and national delivery agencies to shape and influence local service delivery around skills, employment and business support programmes. Boroughs work to ensure that their diverse communities directly benefit from economic growth.

- **Regulators – ensure business friendly services**

Boroughs have an important role in ensuring effective regulation at a local level, protecting and balancing the needs and rights of residents, customers and businesses. We need to ensure that while not lowering standards for residents our regulatory functions, such as planning, licensing, environmental health and trading standards, deliver an effective service for business users. Boroughs have been working to support businesses to meet the demands of the Covid-19 regulations and protect customers and staff.

- **Providers of core infrastructure**

Boroughs play a central role in providing and maintaining core infrastructure, from roads and pavements, public transport, lighting, and increasingly in promoting digital services. Boroughs have been putting in place measures to ensure town centres and high streets are safe places to return to, while working to accelerate high quality digital connectivity.

# Section 1: Our pledges to Business

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## Engagement

Meaningful engagement with our business community is fundamental, to:

- Understand businesses' concerns.
- Effectively consult and respond to these concerns where we can.

Boroughs pledge to ensure that we effectively listen to our local businesses using a range of mechanisms, including forums, surveys and direct engagement. Boroughs commit to ensuring they have a Business Champion, at a senior political and officer level, to drive this engagement and oversee the delivery of the pledges.

## Making business simpler

Boroughs will work to improve the access to our services. This will include:

- Better engagement to understand the experience of the users of our services, such as undertaking regular customer satisfaction surveys for our business facing services, including our regulatory services such as licencing and environmental health.
- Committing to act on the results of these findings.
- Enhance our digital access to borough business services.
- Developing our single points of access for businesses, helping them navigate borough services.
- Undertake peer-reviews and share good practice to improve our services.

## Secure the right business spaces

Boroughs will continue to work to enhance the local business environment and respond to changing working patterns. We will:

- Promote access to high-quality business support and mentoring services, either directly or by supporting awareness of external providers to our business community.
- Secure affordable workspace across our boroughs using our planning processes to provide the right spaces for a modern economy, including micro-businesses and flexible working practices.
- Fight against the inappropriate loss of office space and lobby government to tighten the rules around permitted development rights.
- Protect our industrial land and work with partners to enhance and intensify use.

## Cleaner, greener, safer

Boroughs will collaborate with business to secure a cleaner, greener, safer borough. Boroughs will consider how they can help to deliver a green policies as part of the recovery from the impact of Covid-19. Boroughs will work with their businesses around areas of common interest, investing in our local areas to drive a better environment for business and residents. This will include working on:

- Community safety and tackling violence, including all boroughs to review the opportunities to directly support the establishment of Business Crime Reduction Partnerships.
- Rough sleeping and on-street begging, working with businesses via better sharing of information, collaborating around positive forms of enforcement, and support into services.

- Business space improvements, including public realm, industrial space and shop front improvements, developing local partnerships to drive these investments forward.
- Environmental impact: supporting businesses to put in place more sustainable practices, for example around ambitious recycling targets and reducing energy usage.
- Air quality: raising air quality standards including via freight consolidation, electrical vehicles and active travel.
- Parking: Ensuring boroughs have an open and transparent dialogue with businesses about changes in parking practices, including loading and unloading goods.
- Infrastructure improvements, including transport and digital connectivity working with the private sector to unlock the investment needed.
- Use of data: developing platforms and processes to enhance collaboration around using data.

London's network of Business Improvement Districts are important partners in enhancing our key business areas. We will work with BIDs including around enforcement, information sharing, promoting an area and coordinating of capital investment.

## **Evening and night time economy**

A successful evening and night time economy supports the economic and social vibrancy of our town centres and provide a wider range of local employment opportunities. Given the huge and ongoing impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on hospitality and cultural businesses boroughs will champion the appropriate night time economy, working with key partners such as businesses, residents, TfL and the police. Boroughs will:

- Regularly review their licencing policies to see where a pragmatic approach can deliver economic and social benefit.
- Work with partners to ensure support for night time workers, including safety and transport.
- Convene Night Time Economy Forums to develop the partnerships to ensure a successful and secure economy to drive forward practical interventions such as lighting, public realm improvements and data sharing.
- Continue to support the Night Time Borough Champions Network.
- Protect and enhance our entertainment and cultural venues as a matter of urgency.
- Continue to make the case to national government for appropriate resources to support the sectors most heavily impacted on by lockdown.

## **Business rates**

While boroughs collect business rates, policy and the multiplier is set at a national level. Boroughs recognise the impact of recent rises in business rates on London businesses which has been exacerbated by lockdown. Boroughs are committed to:

- Make the case for continued business rates relief for those sectors most impacted on by Covid-19.
- Having an open and transparent dialogue with business around business rates.
- Continuing to campaign against the disproportionate share of national business rates paid by London businesses, including demanding London has more control on how these rates are set, in the context of broader reform of business taxation and the funding of local services.
- Campaigning with business partners and others for greater local retention of business rates and alternative forms of taxation.

- Supporting business where appropriate to appeal against unfair valuations from the Valuations Office Agency.
- Engaging with local businesses to help manage the impact where we can, for example via staging payments where appropriate (e.g. payments after Christmas not before for retailers).

## Procurement

Boroughs remain major purchasers of goods and services. We will;

- Listen to local businesses and ensure our procurement practices support the local economy, increasing our spend with firms that support our approach to inclusive growth and the delivery of social value objectives.
- Set targets for the level of local spend and the weighting given to social value objectives looking at the best examples where in some London boroughs over 25% of their spend is with local firms.
- Offer training to local small businesses so that they are “fit to supply”, including an understanding of how to communicate their social value through the tender processes.
- Work collaboratively to deliver a more consistent approach to procurement across London and promote benchmarking around our levels of local spend.

## Developing a skilled workforce

Boroughs via local, sub-regional, and London-wide employment and skills programmes will help in ensuring that businesses have access to a talented local labour force and individuals facing an uncertain future have the skills to enter and progress in work. Boroughs will support Londoners made unemployed by the pandemic to have the skills to re-join the workforce. Boroughs will also help Londoners with the most complex needs to ensure they are not left behind.

Boroughs will:

- Consult and work with partners such as our FE sector, to ensure we understand and respond to businesses skills needs.
- Support 55,000 disadvantaged Londoners towards a job through the devolved Work and Health employment programme being led by the sub-regional partners of boroughs.
- Support 30,000 Londoners who have been unemployed for three months or more to find work, through the Work and Health Job Entry Targeted Support (JETS) programme.
- Support the delivery of the government’s Plan for Jobs, where appropriate, including the roll-out of the Kick Start programme, delivering quality work experience for younger Londoners.
- Support the delivery of the government’s Lifetime Skills Guarantee enabling learners to retrain for the jobs of the future.
- Work with businesses in helping low paid workers to develop their skills and progress in work.
- Lobby for reforms to the Apprenticeship Levy, including ensuring London retains more of its levy to spend meeting London’s needs, integrating with the city’s devolved Adult Education Budget.
- Support micro-businesses and SMEs to access Apprenticeship Levy funds.
- Support the delivery of the government’s Plan for Jobs, where appropriate, including the roll-out of the Kickstart programme, delivering quality work experience for younger Londoners, and the new Restart scheme, supporting the long-term unemployed.

## Section 2: Our ask from business

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We recognise the diverse range of pressures facing business and acknowledge that London is an expensive place to do business. The uneven economic impact of Covid has seen some key London sectors and their supply chains, particularly hard hit. Some groups of Londoners, such as young people, women and those already in low paid or insecure work, have also been disproportionately affected by the economic impact. We ask that businesses support the economic recovery 'missions'<sup>1</sup> agreed by the London Recovery Board as well as to continue to work closely with Boroughs. Borough and business interests vitally overlap and via better engagement we can better support the delivery of our mutual objectives. Boroughs can play a supportive role in providing the skilled workforce employers need and promoting diversity via supporting local young adults to be apprenticeship and employment ready. Businesses' enhanced employment practices drive not only inclusive growth but also improved staff recruitment and retention. A huge percentage of London's businesses are small or micro-scale firms, employing a handful of people, who would struggle to take on large numbers of apprenticeships and placements. We recognise each business will have to develop their most appropriate actions, but we call on all businesses to review where they can drive positive changes and support London's economic recovery.

### Becoming the best employer you can

We are asking employers to become the best employers they can be, striving to enhance their employment and recruitment practices, as well as nurturing their existing talent to promote real, inclusive growth, for the benefit of all London's communities. We ask businesses to engage with;

- a local business responsibility charter and / or the Mayor's Good Work Standard.
- using toolkits to look across your responsibilities as an employer including healthy workspaces and family friendly policies and action to reduce environmental impact.
- measuring your progress against these standards and toolkits.

### An inclusive workforce

We need businesses to ensure that they are recruiting for inclusive growth and ensuring diversity at all levels of their organisation. Too many sectors in London have a diversity problem, especially at senior levels, with a workforce that does not reflect the city's population. We ask that businesses are:

- Engaging with your local skills and employment programmes.
- Ensuring your recruitment practices are open and accessible to London's diverse population.
- Working with specific initiatives and charities that support underrepresented communities into your sector.
- Taking on local apprenticeships, as well as using your apprenticeship programme and levy, to promote in-work progression.
- Investing in training, supporting the development of their staff.
- Ensuring that inclusivity is built into the organisational culture, as well as championing good practice within your sector and/or supply chain.

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<sup>1</sup> These are: Helping Londoners into Good Work; Digital Access for All; High Streets for All and a Green New Deal.

## Engaging the next generation

All young Londoners should have access to understanding the world of work, and research shows that the more young people are exposed to the world of work, the more positive their employment outcomes are likely to be. Young people have been disproportionately adversely affected by the impact of the pandemic and are vulnerable to economic scarring from long periods of unemployment. We recognise that engaging with schools is not always straight forward and we ask employers to partner with boroughs and charities that deliver effective brokerage so businesses can:

- Engage with their local schools and for larger firms more widely across London, presenting to young people the huge range of jobs available.
- Provide a range of appropriate work experience and placement opportunities.
- Support undergraduates, and specifically those from disadvantaged backgrounds, to progress into appropriate graduate roles in a very tight labour market.

## Sustainability

We all have a responsibility to meet the global challenge of climate change. Boroughs are keen to partner with their business to support them to play their part and make tangible action on their environmental impact and mainstream environmental action into the recovery. We ask businesses to:

- Show leadership in reducing their emissions, including via their supply chain.
- Work with us in managing their waste better and driving up our recycling levels.
- Improve air quality via green transport and freight consolidation.
- Promote green and active travel where appropriate.

## Local champions

Boroughs and businesses have most influence when we work together. We are asking our businesses to partner with us to champion their areas. This includes:

- Contributing to our work to 'build back better' and support the economic and social recovery of London.
- Campaigning with us for infrastructure upgrades, including transport and digital connectivity.
- Working with us to make the case for London, including investment in public services and further devolution and control at a local level of this funding.
- Supporting local campaigns, for example tidy borough clean-ups.
- Working to deliver the affordable homes London's workforce needs as a key priority and continue to campaign for the financial freedoms to enable this.



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**design:** [pinsentdesign.com](http://pinsentdesign.com)  
**images:** iStock  
**publication date:** June 2021