



# London Councils' Pledges to Business

**London Councils' Pledges to Business set out how boroughs are committed to work with local businesses to promote inclusive economic development. This briefing sets out the content of the Pledges and how London Councils will work with boroughs to support them in meeting the Pledges.**

## Overview

London Councils' Pledges to Business was formally endorsed at the London Councils Leaders' Committee in December 2019. The Pledges cover relevant borough services that affect businesses, including their regulatory services and placemaking activities. It also has a series of asks of local businesses, enhancing their roles as employers and reducing their environmental impact.

The Pledges to Business will only be successful if it brings about change and improvement in the relationship between boroughs and business. This will require senior political and officer commitment in each borough. Members are asked to review their borough activities considering the commitments within the Pledges.

## Background

London Councils' Pledges to Londoners has a specific section on business support and inclusive growth, including a commitment to co-design an action plan with the private sector. It is important that boroughs have a strong relationship with business and a detailed understanding of their business base to ensure evidence-based economic development, particularly given the impact of business rates on local government income. A strong relationship with and understanding of business supports the case for devolution of services to London boroughs, such as employment, skills, apprenticeships and careers advice.

London Councils has been developing the Pledges to Business during 2019. There has been consultation with borough officers and members, as well as the London Business Board<sup>1</sup>, which brings together key business representative bodies. Events and workshops have been held with economic development officers and Cabinet Members for economic development. The Pledges to Business were shared with borough chief executives and sent to relevant borough directors for comment.

<sup>1</sup>The London Business Board brings together the key business representative bodies in London: London First, London Chamber of Commerce and Industry, and the London branches of the Confederation of British Industry, Federation of Small Business and Institute of Directors.

# Analysis

## Vision

The Pledges have been developed with a focus on boroughs' offer to business, rather than boroughs' ask of business. It looks beyond councils' business support services to consider the wider role of boroughs as:

- **Placemakers and champions:** setting a framework for the future development of an area and coordinating investment to deliver this vision.
- **Convenors of business and local communities:** brokering local solutions and agreements.
- **Regulators:** protecting residents and demanding high standards, but also delivering a quality and joined-up regulation process for businesses using these services.
- **Providers of core infrastructure:** providing or helping to facilitate infrastructure.

## Pledges to Business

The Pledges are centred on:

- **Engagement:** ensuring effective engagement with business, including customer satisfaction surveys and consultation with those using borough services.
- **Making business simpler:** ensuring that businesses can get a more coordinated approach from boroughs, including enhancing digital access to borough services.
- **Cleaner, greener, safer:** collaborating with businesses in areas, such as community safety; waste reduction and recycling; air quality; and rough sleeping. This includes working with London's more than 60 Business Improvement Districts.
- **Night-time economy:** playing a coordinating role in supporting a safe and successful night-time economy.
- **Business rates:** continuing to lobby for a system that lessens the impact on London's economy.
- **Procurement:** supporting local suppliers and social value outcomes.
- **Developing a skilled workforce:** working with employers to ensure a local labour force with the right skills.

The Pledges also have a series of **asks of business**:

- **Becoming the best employer you can be**, through the adoption of relevant standards.
- **Ensuring an inclusive workforce** that reflects London's diversity, including engaging with local employment and apprenticeship programmes.
- **Engaging the next generation** by working with schools across London to open up the world of work.
- **Supporting sustainability** by showing leadership in reducing emissions and waste.
- **Becoming "business champions"** by supporting the public sector in making the case for your borough and London.

“The Pledges have been developed with a focus on boroughs' offer to business, rather than boroughs' ask of business. It looks beyond councils' business support services to consider the wider role of boroughs”

## Commentary

The Pledges will require effective processes to ensure businesses find it easier to navigate boroughs' different services. This will require a commitment from boroughs to engage with businesses, seeking feedback on how they feel the process currently works for them and how it can be improved. There are wider policy issues boroughs will need to consider, for example, balancing the requirements of their regulatory role with a desire to promote vibrant high streets.

London Councils is planning to launch the Pledges early in 2020, with an endorsement from the London Business Board. London Councils will also be holding a series of meetings for boroughs to discuss the Pledges, in partnership with the Sub-Regional Partnerships, as well as a meeting for cabinet lead members in spring.

London Councils is considering how best to encourage peer-based challenge and support between boroughs to help drive performance and business engagement, supporting boroughs to meet the Pledges. This will cover a range of borough services, including regulatory activities.

There are excellent examples of London boroughs working successfully with local businesses and Business Improvement Districts on a diverse range of issues, from aggressive begging to child protection and improving air quality. London Councils will work to highlight the best examples and run events to develop this network and share good practice.

London Councils will also continue to work with business groups in making the case for London, on issues such as the apprenticeship levy, business rates reform and the replacement for European funding from the UK Shared Prosperity Fund.

**Author:** Stephen King, Head of Business & Enterprise (T: 0207 934 9670)

[Click here to send a comment or query to the author](#)

### Links:

[Pledges to Business](#)

### This member briefing has been circulated to:

**Portfolio holders and those members who requested policy briefings in the following categories: Economic Development**