

Dear Business Owner,

As the Leader of the district council, I am writing to thank you for your tremendous support and resilience over the last few weeks, which I know have been very challenging.

I also want to make sure you are up to date with the work that has been underway to help local businesses weather the storm, outline our next steps, and invite you to share your thoughts on areas of concern for local businesses moving forward.

If your business is still operating, it is likely that – like the council – you are currently working in flexible ways in light of national guidance to keep customers and staff safe. Of course, some businesses will have had to temporarily close altogether. I would like to take this opportunity to thank those of you who have been able to support the council's response to the pandemic, for example by lending delivery vehicles, volunteer staff, and even food supplies for vulnerable people.

We fully appreciate that the global COVID-19 pandemic is unprecedented and is impacting significantly on businesses and our residents and we want to reassure you that the Council is taking steps to support the economic recovery in our district.

As a local authority, Breckland has been distributing financial grant support to small local businesses, and businesses trading in retail and hospitality, and we have now issued over £25.5m in grants to almost 2,500 eligible businesses. We have also reset business rates to £0 for around 800 additional eligible businesses. We know there are still some businesses who have not applied for this funding support and so we would encourage you to get in touch if you meet the eligibility criteria outlined on our website. We have also been continuing to offer advice and support to businesses and have engaged with over 3,000 businesses over the recent weeks.

Now, as we start to see an easing of the health challenges associated with Coronavirus, we are stepping up our efforts and support to mitigate the economic challenges, and mobilising more resource to make sure Breckland businesses are supported to survive and thrive. Over the next few days and weeks, we will;

- **Start providing an additional £1.5m of grants**, which we will be making available to priority small businesses who were not eligible for the initial retail / small business grants. You can find more details about the scheme on our website www.breckland.gov.uk/businesssupport
- **Support our Market Towns**, by working with the County Council and Town Councils to make sure that the infrastructure is in place to enable residents to return to our high streets with confidence, and will be helping to promote and celebrate local business. As part of a joint initiative with our partners in South Norfolk and Broadland, we will be giving people in Norfolk the confidence that they can safely shop on our high streets and encouraging them to support local businesses. The council's Regeneration Team will be in touch with high street traders in due course to discuss how you can get involved and I'm sure you will begin to see material in local press and on the high streets over the coming weeks and months.

- **Launch a new business support website**, which includes bespoke information and support, tailored to different types of business as well as all links to all the latest government advice and support available. This can be found at www.breckland.gov.uk/businesssupport
- **Increase our business support and advice offer**, with a dedicated “unlocked” service, to help advise and support businesses who are struggling to return to normal due to issues related to COVID-19. Details are available on our website. There are other ways in which we can help you too. We can also signpost you to additional COVID grants operated by the LEP or County Council and advice on how to implement social distancing in your workplace.

While work is already underway to help support businesses to bounce back from this period of uncertainty, we are keen to work closely with you to fully understand the requirements of our business community and together overcome any obstacles to your successful trading and growth.

Therefore, we have launched an online survey, which I hope you will complete as soon as possible.

This will give us a clear understanding of the effect that COVID-19 has had on local industry and ensure we have the right plans in place to support your recovery.

Take part in the survey at www.breckland.gov.uk/covid19-survey

These are of course very unusual and challenging circumstances and we appreciate that our businesses are having to adapt to changes as they happen. We will measure our success by the way that businesses and consumers can get back to normal as quickly as possible in towns, industrial estates, and villages and by how many jobs can be saved or even, created.

Please continue to provide your valued services, goods and works to the best of your ability during the emergency period and we will keep you updated on further developments. Your best efforts to support the Council, the district and our residents are genuinely and greatly appreciated.

To enable the council to keep in touch with you and promptly inform you of emerging support opportunities, I invite you to share your email address and/or mobile phone number with our Regeneration Team: regeneration@breckland.gov.uk

Yours Sincerely,



Cllr Sam Chapman-Allen
Leader Breckland Council

Hours of opening: Monday to Friday 9.00am to 5pm
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