

Dear Ranil,

Give a #BusinessBooster to save our high streets, towns and city centres from extinction

A letter has been sent to the Prime Minister, Chancellor of the Exchequer and the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy by British BIDs, the Association of Town and City Management, trade associations representing high street businesses and over 100 destinations across the UK representing retail, hospitality, personal care and leisure businesses to urge the Government to provide a #BusinessBooster and urgent assurances that financial support will be provided to the business community.

On behalf of the business community in Fleet I am writing to you to request your support for businesses in Fleet. It is imperative that the Government acts quickly by offering financial assistance and other necessary interventions to those experiencing disruption following rising cases of the Omicron variant and the impact of "Plan B" measures. With consumer confidence plummeting amid growing speculation of an impending lockdown, the time for action is now.

The announcement of Plan B restrictions on 8th December 2021 and subsequent speculation has had a devastating impact on our local businesses. The critical Christmas trading period is in tatters leaving many businesses, particularly those within the hospitality, retail, personal care and leisure sectors teetering on the brink of financial ruin and set to lose £4bn in sales nationally. While we appreciate risks to health due to the Omicron variant, we cannot and should not forget the businesses who want to continue trading safely but have been effectively shut down.

In Fleet we are seeing an increase in hospitality, leisure, wellbeing and personal care businesses, reflecting how the high street is changing. These sectors are vital to our economic recovery but the current measures in place do not reflect the current concerns faced by businesses.

We urge you to support our call for the Government to act in order to save our high streets from extinction with:

- **BUSINESS RATES RELIEF:** provide businesses in the retail, hospitality, personal care and leisure sectors with 100% Business Rates Relief for up to and including 31st March 2022 followed by a 50% Business Rate Relief from 1st April 2022 to 30th June 2022. The current Business Rates Relief was designed for an open economy, post Covid. The rise of the Omicron variant, increased restrictions and their impact on hospitality, leisure, personal care and retail require a response from Government that mirrors lockdown support.
- **VAT EXTENSION:** extend the current VAT reduction for the hospitality sector of 12.5% through to 31st March 2023 to allow the sector to respond and support the re-emergence of the UK economy. This should also be introduced for the personal care sector who, like the hospitality sector, rely on in-person service which cannot be replicated online. This would allow businesses to achieve cost savings and, most importantly of all for the economy and consumer confidence, not to pass increased costs on allowing for the economy to recover once more in Spring 2022.

Fleet Business Improvement District (BID) Company Ltd.

Registered Office: c/o Kirk Rice LLP, Victoria House, 178-180 Fleet Road, Fleet, GU51 4DA

Company registration number: 10707923. VAT registration number: 276 9820 52

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- **PROVIDE GRANTS:** introduce grants up to £15,000 by rateable value to businesses within the hospitality, retail, personal care and leisure sectors to enable them to survive in light of a festive trading period in tatters, a bleak outlook for the new Year and the impending rent quarter date of 25th December 2021.

We appreciate the pressures facing Government economically but failing to act will not only see thousands of businesses go to the wall but there will be a real prospect that billions of previously allocated Government funds will go to waste simply because we did not act to save our economy.

We are therefore urging you to support this request to prevent the economic crisis faced by our local business community.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Tracey Shrimpton', written over a light blue horizontal line.

Tracey Shrimpton

BID Manager

Fleet Business Improvement District

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