

Coronavirus (COVID-19) Update from Cllr Gareth Roberts 30 April 2020

Cllr Gareth Roberts: Hello, the Government has put in place various packages to support small businesses during the COVID-19, coronavirus pandemic and the Council warmly welcomes that support to our small businesses. However, we are all too well aware that there are businesses here in the borough who are falling outside of the eligibility criteria, to enable them to get the support they so desperately need. Whether it's the fact that they have got rateable value for their business which is higher than the threshold which has been set by government for the various support grants, perhaps they are paying their business rates as part of their overall business rent and therefore don't have a direct link with the business rates system, or perhaps they are one of those people who pay themselves a dividend for their small business and they are falling through the cracks that way. And these are just some of the examples which we have had. The Council is working with our sister organisation, London Councils to lobby the Government to change the system so that those businesses who need help, can get help and we are working with our MPs to ensure that they are also on board with this. People have asked whether the Council could step in and make up the money which the Government is unable to provide, and while we would like to do that unfortunately, we simply cannot afford to. The number of businesses in the borough who are falling outside of the system mean that we soon deplete our reserves entirely and we could find ourselves in very severe financial problems and not able to help those in our society who need help most. So, we are aware of the problems and we are working on it to make sure that those businesses get the support they need from Central Government. Thank you.