

Update from your Candlewick Ward Common Councilmen

May I first say that Kevin and I hope you and those you love are safe and healthy and that continues to be the case. These are difficult and uncertain times the likes of which we have not seen before; none of us have had to contend with such a changed working lifestyle whilst also dealing with such restrictions on our freedom to move around and meet family, friends and neighbours. Indeed, even in the midst of the Blitz, the theatres, cinemas, restaurants, pubs and indeed schools were still open. This brings considerable anxiety, stress and worry which, in many cases, will be exacerbated by concerns about your business as well. This is particularly true of those of you in the retail and hospitality sectors but I am aware that larger professional services firms are not immune.

Your Civic Team

We are here to help if we can so do contact us if there is anything we can do to help. City of London Corporation business is continuing and we are continuing to hold Officers to account through the Committee system, which is now working virtually. Most importantly Kevin, as a senior Common Councilman and Deputy Chair of the Establishment Committee, is a member of the COVID19 response sounding board group.

Support for business in this crisis

The UK National Government has introduced a wide range of measures including deferring VAT and Income Tax payments, a Statutory Sick Pay relief package for SMEs, a Business Interruption loan scheme (loans up to £5m via the British Business Bank), a Bank of England support mechanism for larger firms, and the provision of the Small Business Grants Fund and a Retail, Hospitality and Leisure Grant Fund.

Details of these initiatives can be found at <https://go.janushenderson.com/e/138921/es-during-coronavirus-covid-19/2ky652/413692691?h=ZZrKoGz3MiFTJbum04tz2x3y2Ezs8xaHnooS5amKrv8>

The City of London Corporation has also been active including:

1. Direct Debits for businesses eligible for 100% relief have been cancelled
2. The enhanced 100% Retail and Leisure Relief is being applied to all eligible businesses.
3. New bills showing a zero balance have been issued this month.
4. Distribution of UKG Small Business and Retail, Leisure and Hospitality Grants. These have commenced and most payments should now have been made following earlier information requests.
5. On request, the Corporation is agreeing longer payment arrangements.

Details of these initiatives can be found at <https://go.janushenderson.com/e/138921/-19-advice-for-businesses-asp/2ky654/413692691?h=ZZrKoGz3MiFTJbum04tz2x3y2Ezs8xaHnooS5amKrv8>

If you are in a serviced office, it is usual for the landlord to pay the business rate bill. Consequently, the City Corporation's revenues team does not have details of individual businesses where this applies. My understanding is that where a small business is operating from a serviced office and is eligible for Small Business Rates Relief (SBRR) they will be able to qualify for this money. The City Corporation is aiming to ensure that these payments are made to individual businesses and not the serviced office provider. If your business has not claimed SBRR, and the City Corporation will consider retrospective claims. For more information contact businessrates@cityoflondon.gov.uk

Transport for London Return to Work Survey

Transport for London has asked the City of London Corporation to encourage businesses to complete a survey to help inform its plans to assist with the return to work after the COVID-19 restrictions are eased.

Transport for London is planning to get London moving and working again, safely and sustainably. As part of a phased return to work once the current COVID-19 restrictions begin to be lifted TFL will need

to manage demand on the network and protect the journeys of key workers and other essential journeys. To help them, they are seeking insight into the challenges and opportunities for your business and employees. We should be very grateful if you could kindly spare 3-5 minutes [to complete this short business survey](#). Your response will be anonymous and held in confidence. This survey closes at 17:00 on Thursday 14 May 2020.

Advice from Transport for London

The advice for Londoners is as follows:

- If you can work from home, please continue to do so. Social distancing on transport will not be possible unless people who can work from home continue to do so
- Do not expect to return to the transport network you were used to before. The number of people we can safely transport on buses and trains is severely constrained to enable social distancing
- If you must travel, please reimagine how to do so. Walk and cycle if you can. New walking and cycling space is being created to support this
- Shop locally and use local leisure facilities to help keep demand on buses and tubes down
- If using public transport, or taxi and private hire services that we regulate, please:
 - travel outside of peak times
 - use a facial covering
 - carry a hand sanitizer
 - wash your hands before and after you travel
- The latest Government advice is that, although face coverings are unlikely to prevent you from getting the virus, they could help prevent you from giving it to others. Face coverings are particularly important where 2m social distancing is hard to maintain
- Further measures to prevent crowding through new queuing systems will be in operation, and advice on maintaining social distancing will be supplied across the transport network
- Please respect each other's space and try to maintain social distancing wherever possible
- Our hardworking staff are there to help: please act on their instructions and respect them at all times
- If you absolutely must drive, avoid peak times and obey speed limits and traffic laws

Other critical activities

The City Corporation is continuing to provide all its essential services including support for vulnerable residents, adult and children social care, education provision and, most importantly for Candlewick Ward, support for rough sleepers. Since 1 March 2020 72 people have been helped by City Corporation officers and found accommodation and given welfare support. Fortnightly counts of rough sleepers on the streets of the City are continuing and support is being provided. A Task and Action group has been formed and is meeting weekly and liaising closely with an equivalent Greater London Authority Task force. The City of London Police, which leads nationally on fraud, is focusing on identifying and closing down the alarming number of scams that have appeared, in addition to the ongoing protection of the physical City.

City Bridge Trust, the City of London Corporation's charity funder, has pledged £1 million to a new emergency support fund to help London's community and voluntary organisations affected by the impact of the COVID-19.

London Bridge Partial Closure

Not that it affects many of you at the moment while we are all remote working but some essential maintenance work is being undertaken on London Bridge and will continue until the ends of the year. This involves replacing the waterproofing, which protects the concrete bridge deck and reinforcement from water, and the Bridge bearings, which support the bridge deck and allow it to move. These works involve removing the existing surfacing over the carriageway and footways, repairing the concrete deck, applying and testing the waterproofing system and then resurfacing the bridge. 24 of the bridge bearings will be replaced at the same time. This is the first time this maintenance has been needed since the Bridge was opened in March 1973.

During the works:

- pedestrians will be able to use the east footpath or a combination of the west footpath and a dedicated section of the east carriageway;
- buses, taxis and cycles will be able to use a contraflow on the bridge;
- general traffic will be diverted via Tower, Southwark and Blackfriars Bridges; and
- bus stops on the bridge will be suspended.

Inevitably this means, once we are all back at work, pedestrian routes over London Bridge will be busier than usual. Surrounding roads will also experience higher traffic, as all traffic (except buses, taxis and cycles) in both directions will be diverted away from the bridge. The diversion route will pass along Cannon Street so there will be some increased traffic in Candlewick Ward. Officers at the City Corporation are working with Transport for London, who manage the road network on London Bridge, to ensure that alternative travel options are clearly communicated during the closure.

Regular newsletters with updates throughout the works are being produced. If you would like to receive these please email: helen.mcconnell@fmconway.co.uk.

Stay safe and stay well.

Best regards

James and Kevin

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