

# MAYOR OF LONDON

**The Prime Minister**

10 Downing Street  
London SW1A 0AA

**Date:** 17 MAR 2020

*Dear Boris,*

It was useful to attend the COBR meeting yesterday and to be briefed on the latest action the Government is taking. It is absolutely right that the immediate priority is managing the health impacts of COVID-19. I would now expect the Mayor of London to be at all future COBR meetings, in light of the impact on our capital city and the disproportionate impact on London.

However, yesterday evening I convened a meeting of leaders from the business community and it was clear from what they said to me that much more rapid and ambitious action is required to support the economy. The action taken over the last week is welcome, including the measures set out in the Budget and the steps taken by the Bank of England, but without further immediate action in the coming days, we risk widespread job losses and business failures. Businesses of every size and from every sector are at risk as a result of this crisis.

Based on what businesses have said to me, I believe the next steps must include the following:

- A sub-group of COBR is convened urgently to coordinate cross government action to support business and the economy. Businesses told me that they are concerned that action across government is inconsistent and opportunities are being missed to act quickly. There needs to be a single Cabinet Minister responsible for dealing with the economic impacts of this crisis, and a single point of contact for business in Whitehall, rather than multiple points of engagement across many government departments. There needs to be a single portal that brings together advice for business, not just on the health aspects, but also on the legal, HR, insurance and banking implications of this crisis.
- Action is taken now to prevent widescale job losses and to keep people in work so they can support their families and maintain a decent quality of life. This will also be vital so businesses can recover quickly when the current crisis recedes. We can learn from international experience of support schemes to provide aid to businesses to help with payroll bills and to support workers who have to move to part or short time working. We need further extensions in support for statutory sick pay and benefits to ensure those who are unable to work, including the self-employed and freelancers, are able meet their living costs. Those working in the gig economy will also need special support from the Government.

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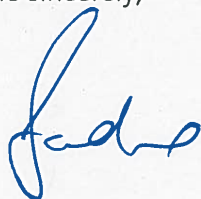
- Further action is needed to help businesses with their cashflow, particularly with many quarterly rent payments due next week. The Government needs to provide greater levels of assistance to businesses, large and small, which are facing financial difficulty. They need further help now, both through the tax system and in the form of cash grants. Later this week, councils will implement Direct Debit mandates for April business rate payments, so immediate action is needed if these are to be delayed to help with cashflow.
- The advice to avoid crowded places, such as pubs, clubs and theatres has left these businesses in limbo. Where insurance is in place to protect against loss of income, businesses are unable to claim on it, yet their doors are all but shut. The Government needs to make support available to cover the lost revenue as result of this advice.

London and the country are facing extraordinary challenges as a result of COVID-19. The Government needs to go much further in providing urgent aid and support to meet businesses critical needs if employers are to overcome that challenge. There must be a guarantee from the Government that no businesses, regardless of their size, will be allowed to fail.

I cannot stress enough the urgency of the need for these measures. There is no time to waste. We are facing not just a public health crisis but an economic one, and if the Government fails to act immediately, I fear thousands of businesses, and hundreds of thousands of jobs and livelihoods, may be lost, with severe and long-lasting social, economic and fiscal consequences.

If my officials and I can provide any further information, or help the Government's efforts in any way, please let me know immediately.

Yours sincerely,



**Sadiq Khan**  
Mayor of London

Cc: Rt Hon Rishi Sunak MP, Chancellor of the Exchequer  
Paul Scully MP, Minister for London