



March 2025

Dear Business Leaders,

It's that time of year when we write to our local business community to share plans for the upcoming year and let you know about programmes you can get involved in.

We know the cost-of-living crisis continues to impact Lewisham's business and residents, and we remain committed to strengthening our local economy by supporting businesses to establish and grow in Lewisham.

Over the past year, Lewisham Council has made significant progress in delivering programmes that support businesses, create jobs, and enhance our local economy. Central to this is 'Inclusive Economy Lewisham', our five-year strategy focused on creating an economy where everyone can contribute and benefit. This plan prioritises investment in our young people, growing the local business base, supporting skills development, and regenerating our high streets to foster growth and opportunity. Together, we are building a unique, authentic and resilient economy in Lewisham.

This year, the Council delivered on a commitment to increase the availability of affordable workspace. Through our £920,000 affordable workspace fund, the Council has delivered 60,000 sq ft of affordable workspace, supported by 40 grant awards to local businesses. That's the equivalent of 25 tennis courts in new co-working and creative workspaces. This investment is helping to unlock the potential of previously underused spaces, creating environments where enterprise can grow.

We are also advancing the £24 million Lewisham Town Centre improvement programme, funded by the Government's Levelling Up Fund and the Council. This ambitious plan is delivering a permanent market canopy, a refurbished library to include a culture and business hub, and significant improvements to pedestrian access and public spaces. These changes will revitalise the high street and create new opportunities for businesses. If you have been through the area, you will see that work is well underway.

In the past year, we have awarded small businesses rates relief to 2,345 local businesses totalling £7.87 million. We also awarded an additional 75% discount to over 1,050 retail, hospitality and leisure businesses, putting almost £8.02 million back into their pockets.

In addition to these major projects, the Council continues to support the business community through a range of initiatives and achievements, including:

**Employment and Skills Programmes:** Lewisham Works, the Council's employment service, has supported an impressive 1,200 residents in since launching in Summer 2022. It is one of the top performing employment services in London, and the Council plans to grow this support further in 2025. This is great for residents looking to progress in work, but also a great resource for businesses looking to recruit skilled local talent.

**Business Support Programmes:** Council projects have assisted over 300 residents in either launching their own businesses or by providing existing businesses with access to free business support, providing essential tools, funding, and mentoring. Our business support programmes have helped local entrepreneurs develop new products, digitise their sales, connect to new

customers, build local supply chains and access local talent. We know operating a business requires flexibility. This is why our support is flexible and bespoke to your business needs. The Council continues to offer a free business support front door via [business@lewisham.gov.uk](mailto:business@lewisham.gov.uk).

**Back the Bakerloo Campaign:** The Council is taking the lead in championing the case for the Bakerloo Line upgrade and extension. Working with Southwark and Transport for London, the case has never been stronger for this crucial infrastructure project that supports future business growth and connectivity. Help us make the case for the Bakerloo line extension, for your business and our community by pledging your support at [businessforbakerloo.com](http://businessforbakerloo.com).

**Community and Business Engagement:** The 2024 Mayor's Business Awards saw record engagement with 10,000 residents voting. This year's awards recognised businesses for their contributions to Lewisham's economy. The size of engagement has tripled in the last three years, and we look forward to the 2025 awards at the Catford Broadway once again.

**Discover Lewisham Campaign:** The campaign continues to highlight the borough's unique businesses, cultural sites, and local attractions, driving footfall and revenue for local enterprises. We saw 500,000 impressions with our summer campaign and featured in the Evening Standard.

**The Mayor's Apprenticeship Programme:** As a Council we celebrated 15 years of delivering high quality apprenticeships in the Council and in the community. Over 70% of our apprentices stay with the Council or go onto further training, something we are incredibly proud of. We can also help you make success of apprenticeships in your business – accessing fully funded training and local talent. If you want to find out more, contact the Apprenticeship Team at [apprenticeships@lewisham.gov.uk](mailto:apprenticeships@lewisham.gov.uk).

These achievements demonstrate our ongoing commitment to create conditions for businesses like yours to thrive. We know the current economic climate is challenging and want you to feel supported every step of the way.

For information on the full range of business support available, including funding opportunities, affordable workspace, and employment services, visit [lewisham.gov.uk/business](http://lewisham.gov.uk/business).

To stay informed, you can also sign up for our fortnightly business newsletter at [lewisham.gov.uk/emailupdates](http://lewisham.gov.uk/emailupdates).

On behalf of the Council, thank you for your contributions to Lewisham's economy. Together, we will continue to build a brighter, more inclusive future for our borough.

Yours sincerely,



Brenda Dacres,  
Mayor of Lewisham



Cllr Ese Erheriene,  
Cabinet Member  
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