

Development Directorate
Economic Development Team
E-mail: economicdevelopment@oxford.gov.uk

St Aldate's Chambers
Oxford, OX1 1DS

Switchboard: 01865 249811

www.oxford.gov.uk



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Dear Sir/Madam

National and local support for businesses impacted by Coronavirus (COVID-19)

I'm writing with the latest business support email from Oxford City Council. This update includes:

- 1. Details on how to access grants and business rate reliefs**
- 2. The Chancellor's statement on support for self-employed**
- 3. New guidance on the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme**
- 4. A new FAQ listing from Government**
- 5. Extra protection for commercial tenants**
- 6. Lobbying issues raised in our business support survey**
- 7. A new web listing on online ordering**
- 8. News of our new Activity Hub - advice on exercise, mental health, learning and cultural activities.**
- 9. Local and wider sources of support.**

This remains a rapidly evolving situation. We will monitor all developments, and will do our best to keep you updated and provide you with the latest information on ways to access any available support.

If you have any concerns or questions, please contact us directly by emailing economicdevelopment@oxford.gov.uk.

Yours Sincerely

Matt Peachey

Economic Development Manager



National and Local Support for Businesses Affected by Coronavirus (COVID-19)

1. Details on how to access grants and business rate reliefs

Oxford City Council has been working to quickly put in place the processes to pay two new Government grants aimed at helping businesses whose income has been impacted by Coronavirus. These include;

- Small Business Grant Fund - £10,000 cash grant for all businesses in receipt of Small Business Rate Relief (SBRR) or Rural Rate Relief
- Retail, Hospitality and Leisure Grant – up to £25,000 cash grant for all businesses in the sector occupying a business premises with a rateable value of up to £51,000.

To access the grants you will need to meet a number of criteria, including being a business rate payer that occupies a commercial property. Additional guidance on eligibility for both grants, including the sectors that are eligible, can be found [here](#).

We want to get this funding to qualifying businesses as quickly as possible. If, having read the guidance, you think your business is eligible for one of the grants, you should now provide us with the basic information needed to ensure prompt payment of the grant.

Please follow the link and complete our simple Business Grant Support Form at www.oxford.gov.uk/businessgrants

We need to capture this information in order to be able to pay the funding into your bank account. We will not be able to pay by cheque.

Payments will then start to be made in early April, and will continue until all eligible grants are paid (these will take 3 working days to reach accounts). From initial calculations, these grant payments are expected to amount to £27.4m across more than 1,700 businesses in Oxford.

Once you have read the guidance, if you have any questions at all, please contact us at brates@oxford.gov.uk and enter Business Grants in the subject line.

A 12-month business rate holiday will also be applied to the retail, hospitality and leisure sectors. Over the next week we will be automatically applying relief to qualifying accounts and sending adjusted Business Rates notices to confirm this. Eligible businesses do not need to do anything at this stage. For more information on which activities are eligible, please check the [guidance on gov.uk](#).

If you believe you are eligible, but have not received notification of your rate relief by 21st April, please contact us at brates@oxford.gov.uk and enter Retail Relief in the subject line.



2. The Chancellor's statement on support for self-employed

The Government will pay self-employed people a taxable grant worth 80% of their average monthly profits over the last three years, up to £2,500 a month.

It will be open to people across the UK for at least three months – and will be extended for longer if needed.

People will be able to receive the grant and continue to do business.

Some caveats:

- The scheme is open to anyone with trading profits of up to £50,000
- To make sure that only genuinely self-employed people receive the grant, the scheme will be open to people who receive the majority of their income from self-employment
- To minimise fraud, only those already in self-employment with a tax return for 2019 will be able to apply.

The Chancellor said 95% of people who are majority self-employed will benefit.

HMRC expects people to be able to access the scheme no later than the beginning of June. People will receive all three months of grant in one go.

If you are eligible, HMRC will contact you directly, ask you to fill out a simple online form, then pay the grant straight into your bank account.

For the self-employed who need money before June, the Chancellor said:

- Self-employed people can access Business Interruption Loans
- Self-assessment income tax payments that were due in July can be deferred to the end of January next year
- The Government has changed the welfare support system so that self-employed people can access Universal Credit in full

Full details can be found at <https://www.businesssupport.gov.uk/self-employment-income-support-scheme/>

Please note: *Now that the Chancellor has announced the new income support scheme for the self-employed, it is highly likely that a new wave of scam emails, calls and text messages claiming to be from HMRC will start to circulate. They will no doubt be offering financial help in exchange for your bank details etc. and probably contain a link where an email or text is concerned. The messages will be scams – do not respond, delete immediately. HMRC do not contact people out of the blue asking for these details.*



3. New guidance on the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme

The Government has now published additional guidance for businesses and workers on how to access the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme. Please use the following link to access the guidance:

www.gov.uk/guidance/claim-for-wage-costs-through-the-coronavirus-job-retention-scheme

4. A new FAQ listing from Government

We continue to encourage Oxford businesses to check the Government's business support website at <https://www.businesssupport.gov.uk/coronavirus-business-support/> which is regularly updated and now reflects more recent changes on loan scheme interest-free period durations, and VAT and self-assessment tax deferrals.

They have also launched a new FAQ section which can be found here:

<https://bit.ly/FAQsStayHome>

5. Extra protection for commercial tenants

Commercial tenants who cannot pay their rent because of coronavirus will now be better protected from eviction. This will be of interest to any commercial tenants who are concerned about meeting their rent payments. Details are found [here](#).

6. Lobbying issues raised in our business support survey

There are a number of responses to our survey of Oxford businesses which we are listing as lobbying issues. These are things that have been covered in Government announcements so far, or where the measures announced are unclear or not working for some. Where that is the case, we are working with partner organisations including the Oxfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership (OxLEP) and Experience Oxfordshire, business groups including Thames Valley Chamber of Commerce, the Federation of Small Businesses (FSB), B4 and others to raise the issues with the responsible agency.

7. A new web listing on online ordering

Thank you to those who contributed to the section of our business support survey about opportunities to support businesses with online ordering and delivery services.



INVESTORS
IN PEOPLE



To help promote the availability of those services among businesses in Oxford, and to flag them to city residents, we've added a section to our website. This provides a directory of providers that are open for business: <https://www.oxford.gov.uk/businessesopenonline>.

If you are listed but your circumstances have changed or you would like your online ordering service to be added, please let us know via economicdevelopment@oxford.gov.uk.

8. News of our new Activity Hub

Oxford City Council has launched an online Activities Hub with links to advice on exercise, mental health, learning and cultural activities, to help residents find supportive resources while social distancing measures are in place. Here are the details:

https://www.oxford.gov.uk/news/article/1367/city_council_creates_new_activities_hub_online_to_help_people_keep_physically_and_mentally_active

9. Local and wider sources of support

Oxford City Council's dedicated webpages: www.oxford.gov.uk/coronavirus

Oxfordshire County Council: <https://news.oxfordshire.gov.uk/coronavirus-information-from-the-government/>

Oxfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership: www.oxfordshirelep.com/

Thames Valley Chamber Business Guidance: <https://www.thamesvalleychamber.co.uk/covid-19-business-guidance/>

Federation of Small Business: [FSB](https://www.fsb.org.uk/)

Experience Oxfordshire: www.experienceoxfordshire.org

B4 Community Support: <https://www.b4-business.com/press-releases/b4-community-support/>

[Enterprise Nation](https://www.entrepreneur.com/resources/coronavirus) has collated key coronavirus resources, information and advice, following a Q&A session between experts and 630 SME business owners.

ICAEW Practical Business Guidance: <https://www.icaew.com/insights/coronavirus/uk-practical-business-advice-covid-19>

