



Cllr Georgia Gould  
Leader  
Camden Council

Thank you for the support that you and your colleagues at Camden Council have given to our businesses and employees throughout this pandemic. We appreciate the wide range of pressures that the council is under in this extremely difficult time, but we have seen nothing but positive professionalism from council staff throughout.

I would appreciate the opportunity to discuss with you an issue that a number of our smaller Fitzrovia business have raised with us over recent months. There is some concern about the lack of flexibility in the council's policy towards its commercial tenants during the pandemic.

The pandemic has had a very significant impact on the income of many businesses and it's the smaller ones that have had most trouble in managing this unique situation. Government business support schemes, such as furlough and the business rates holiday, have helped greatly with cashflow. The national moratorium on landlords pursuing rent arrears has also reduced occupier payments but we realise that this is building up large levels of arrears that will need to be paid sometime in the future.

Many of our district's private landlords have been actively working with individual tenants to reach realistic agreements both on the level of rents payable since March 2020 and on future lease terms. They appreciate that, in the long run, it is better to have a tenant paying what they can afford than to have empty units with little hope of attracting new tenants.

It is therefore highly likely that, as we come out of the pandemic, there will have been a structural change in the lease arrangements between most private landlords and their commercial tenants.

However, we have been told by a number of commercial tenants of Camden Council that the same is not happening with them. In many cases tenants will not be able to pay the full arrears when the moratorium is lifted and will not be able to continue to operate under pre-COVID-19 leases.

This will lead to the loss on many of the smaller, long term businesses that create much of the character that makes Fitzrovia so attractive for major businesses and visitors.

I am aware of the severe financial pressures that the council is under with falling income from charges and increased cost due to COVID-19 activities and I understand that that this is not an easy issue. But I would appreciate the opportunity to discuss this with you and your colleagues at a policy level to see if there is a way forward that maximises council revenues while protecting the long-term small businesses and the character of Fitzrovia.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Kind Regards

Lee Lyons