The Fitzrovia Partnership
Business Improvement Districts

Professional Networking Event – Member Summary

Prepared by The Fitzrovia Partnership

Event held on Thursday 23 October 2025, at Fora Douglas House, Great Titchfield Street

Overview

This networking session brought together Fitzrovia businesses to discuss recent national policy changes and their practical impact on employers. The focus was on employment law, business rates and National Insurance. The session also provided the opportunity to build business connections locally.

Speakers included:

- Alexandra Bonner, Partner, Seddons GSC
- Simon Green, Co-Head of Business Rates, Newmark
- Antonia Jennings, Chief Executive, Centre for London
- Moderated by Andrew Munk, Chief Executive, The Fitzrovia Partnership

Key Points Employment Law: Alexandra Bonner, Seddons GSC

The Employment Rights Bill is in its final stages and expected to receive Royal Assent shortly. The main change affecting all employers is the move to **"day 1" unfair dismissal rights**.

At present, employees need two years' service before they can bring an unfair dismissal claim. From 2027 (the exact date to be confirmed), this qualifying period will no longer apply, extending unfair dismissal protection to around 15 million additional employees.

An initial employment period is proposed, similar to probation, during which an employer will still be able to dismiss fairly if a light-touch process is followed. This may include an initial meeting and documented rationale. The proposed length of this period is **nine months**, though this is subject to consultation.

Key points to note

- Redundancy and reorganisation will not fall under the light-touch process; full unfair-dismissal rules will apply.
- Statutory redundancy pay will still require two years' service.
- Time limits for bringing claims are likely to increase from three months to six months from October 2026 onwards.

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Practical steps for businesses

- Review contracts to confirm the right to pay in lieu of notice.
- Align or adapt probationary periods to the new initial period.
- Update disciplinary and dismissal procedures.
- Introduce more structured performance monitoring for new staff.
- Provide line-manager training on early-stage feedback and documentation.

Key Points Business Rates: Simon Green, Newmark

- The next revaluation of non-domestic properties comes into effect on **1 April 2026**.
- The Transforming Business Rates – Interim Report identifies key areas for change: moving from a "slab" to "slice" system, updating small-business relief, extending improvement relief, reviewing valuation methods and shortening the valuation gap.
- For England, new legislation introduces multiple business-rates multipliers from 2026, including discounted rates for retail, hospitality and leisure below £500,000 rateable value and higher rates above that threshold.
- Based on modelling, the standard multiplier could fall (for example from ~55.5 p to ~50.4 p), but the introduction of extra multipliers adds uncertainty.
- A transitional relief scheme will accompany the revaluation but full details will follow the Chancellor's Autumn Budget.

For full detail, see: Newmark business-rates briefing

Practical steps for businesses:

- Review current and historic valuation
- Update forecasts
- Follow links for full analysis
- Seek professional advice where values or multipliers may shift significantly.

Key Points National Insurance: Antonia Jennings, Centre for London
What is changing from April 2025:

- Employer rate rises from 13.8% to 15%
- Threshold at which employer NI contributions begin drops from around £9,100 to £5,000

- Employment Allowance increases from £5,000 to £10,500

This means businesses will pay National Insurance on a greater portion of payroll at a higher rate, which will increase staffing costs and may influence decisions around recruitment, pay and staffing structures.

Impact varies by business size:

- Smaller firms may benefit from the higher Employment Allowance but still face cost pressures
- Medium-sized firms will see more noticeable cost increases per employee
- Larger employers in labour-intensive sectors such as hospitality and retail will experience the most significant impact

Practical steps for businesses:

- Review payroll budgets for 2025–26 to factor in higher employer contributions.
- Check eligibility for the **increased Employment Allowance** and ensure it is correctly applied.
- Assess staffing patterns — especially part-time and lower-paid roles — as these will now trigger employer NI costs earlier.
- Review contracts and outsourcing arrangements to understand full labour costs.
- Consider productivity or efficiency measures to offset increased fixed costs.
- Engage with landlords, peers and local partners, including the BID, to monitor shared pressures and explore collective advocacy where needed.