Councillor Grace Williams
Leader of Waltham Forest Council

Dear Business Owner,

Waltham Forest is an ambitious and energetic borough – a place that people want to live in, work in, study in and visit. Driving this success is the entrepreneurial and creative spirit which bursts from every shopfront, maker's studio, restaurant kitchen, market stall or home office. Thank you for everything you give to our borough.

At the same time, running a business has rarely been more challenging. We all continue to feel the strain of rising costs and economic uncertainty. These challenges are real; we understand the pressures you face and we're committed to standing with you.

The Council does not decide what business rates will be; we collect the rates on the government's behalf. The funding, shared between central Government, the Greater London Authority and the Council, goes towards essential services and improvements to local high streets.

Across Waltham Forest, we are working to create great places to live and work: places where businesses thrive, communities feel connected, and residents feel proud. This spirit of partnership underpins two new frameworks, 'Town Centre' and 'Evening and Night-time Economy', shaped with local people and businesses.

Waltham Forest is now officially recognised by the Mayor of London as an emerging area for its nightlife, with more businesses opening later and higher demand for evening cultural and social activity.

Walthamstow welcomes around 7m visitors a year – that's about 19,200 a day – and Leytonstone and Leyton together attract 4.9m visitors annually. More than 30 per cent visit these areas after 6pm. And the latest figures show a 2 per cent year-on-year increase in spend in north Chingford.

Community safety remains a priority. Through partnerships with businesses and the Metropolitan Police, we continue to tackle retail crime and antisocial behaviour, using targeted patrols and enforcement. As a result, acquisitive crime, including shoplifting, is down 16 per cent year-on-year.

If you're looking to recruit staff, our Connect to Work programme is committed to helping thousands of residents into stable employment. More information for businesses is available at **walthamforestjobs.org**.

Walthamstow: Our town centre is being transformed through the £17.2 million Local Regeneration Fund 'Culture for All' programme. This includes major investment in heritage assets, creating new business spaces at Hatherley Mews and a new creative enterprise centre at the Grade II*-listed Chestnuts House, Hoe Street.

The investment is transforming Walthamstow's High Street with new paving, lighting, planting and public art, with new routes and seating areas being introduced along the market. In 2026 you'll see more improvements, including new greening corridors, play

areas and better access to the underground station.

The Blackhorse Lane Creative Enterprise Zone, recently reaccredited, continues to strengthen the local economy: the area is now home to 180 creative businesses, making it one of London's most significant clusters of makers. Soho Theatre Walthamstow has already welcomed around 50,000 visitors (including 16,000 local residents) since we opened the building in May 2025. The theatre has created 107 jobs, the majority going to Waltham Forest residents.

Leyton: The new KERB Francis Road Market attracts huge crowds every weekend and is supported by brilliant local traders; the Francis Road Lates programme, meanwhile, supported by the Mayor's Summer Streets Fund, brought evening bustle to the area. Nearby, the Leyton Midland Harvest Festival – supporting a dozen local businesses – welcomed 700 visitors last October.

Leytonstone: We've made sure the former Luna Lounge, a cherished music venue, will reopen this summer under new local operators. Cultural events such as Shake the High Road continue to raise Leytonstone's profile as a cultural destination. Meanwhile, the brand new St John's Community Cinema is drawing audiences into the town centre.

Chingford: Improvements along Old Church Road, from new trees to lighting and seating, make the high street safer and more welcoming. In 2025 the first North Chingford Heritage Festival brought businesses, residents and visitors together for 16 days of events and exhibitions. The adoption of the Station Road Conservation Area in 2024 creates new opportunities for heritage-led investment.

Every achievement listed here – every restored building, new cultural venue, business support session or safety initiative – is the result of the Council, local businesses, partners and residents working together to make Waltham Forest a great place to live.

I encourage you to connect with your local business network or join our borough-wide platform, Waltham Forest Connected, to shape local projects, learn about opportunities and build relationships with other entrepreneurs. Learn more at: **bit.ly/networks_wf**.

Business Rates and reliefs available can be complicated. We will host a webinar early in the new financial year to explain Business Rates changes for 2026/27. Details will be shared in our Business Newsletter. Sign up at: **bit.ly/business_wf**.

Waltham Forest succeeds because of its people and its businesses, and I am proud to work alongside you as we build a fairer, stronger and more resilient local economy.

Yours faithfully,

Councillor Grace Williams
Leader of Waltham Forest Council
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Business rates support:
Our website offers a range of information and resources around business rates. For more information, visit:
walthamforest.gov.uk/business-rates

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