

# Power in Place

## District Councils' Five-Point Manifesto for Recovery

In market towns and new towns, in cathedral cities, coastal communities and the countryside, our district councils hold the statutory, regulatory and licensing levers to rebuild the national economy one local economy at a time.

We have the power to get growth going again. To get the pubs and restaurants cooking again. To get plumbers, electricians, bricklayers, tilers and roofers building again. We have the power in place to help the businesses of tomorrow to stabilise, adapt and grow.

The economy cannot rebuild without the full participation of our 187 districts which, collaborating with our county councils, Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) and other local agencies, are uniquely able to adapt our whole place effort into helping businesses pivot towards a jobs-positive recovery in the most responsive, comprehensive, and efficient way possible.

This is because we know our local economies like no one else. We know businesses with plans to expand. We know every house builder and what they need to get sites going. We licence every cinema, restaurant, pub, hotel and taxi firm, helping adapt to a new normal.

We are embedded in the community. We are custodians of the public realm in high streets, shopping centres, parks and commons. Our work is crucial to building better lives and stronger economies, and our local approach brings maximum reach, with minimal cost.

Our recovery will take an enormous national effort, but much of our national mission needs local execution. In this short pamphlet, we set out our five-point plan for enabling our power in place.



# 1 CLEAN, SAFE SPACES AND PLACES

Nobody should feel afraid to leave their home to go about their business. As guardians of the public realm, districts, with partners, are planning to create clean, safe and secure places that businesses will need to adapt and grow. Including:

- Adapting the public realm across our town centres with marshalling movements, distance barriers and more
- More frequent street cleaning, providing hand sanitiser posts, adapting public seating and conveniences
- Reimagining market spaces to get traders trading safely
- Targeted help for public-facing businesses in the most impacted retail, hospitality and tourism sectors
- Creating outside space and adapting environmental health for restaurants, cafes and pubs to increase capacity
- Adapting car parks, tariffs and payment methods to encourage our communities back into the high street
- Targeting risk areas and times, transport interchanges, school movements
- Communication and marketing online, via leaflets, on street advice from staff/volunteers
- Marshalling and troubleshooting shoppers at peak times



# 2

## STABILISING EMPLOYMENT, HELPING BUSINESS PIVOT WITH JOBS-POSITIVE HELP

As billing authorities, planning authorities, licensing authorities, and in administering business grants, districts have the levers to help employers keep staff in work for today, whilst helping them to pivot towards a new future tomorrow. Including:

- Giving business the vital cashflow that they need to adapt by rescheduling business rates
- Pivoting the planning balance in favour of accelerated delivery, revisiting pre-commencement conditions, adapting to desktop surveys
- Flexing licensing muscle, supporting adaptation and businesses to reach new customers, licensing taxis to take public transport slack
- Helping cashflow by reprofiling S106 and Community Infrastructure Levy payments
- Leveraging our spending power with local procurement that is jobs-positive
- Bringing local business together across crucial local sectors to aid adaptation and developing a new customer base
- Job-matching, helping people made unemployed by the crisis move into jobs for the recovery either temporarily or permanently
- Moving quickly to re-shape empty shops to foster business adaptation and new start-ups, increase housing or deliver services
- Delivering grants to businesses, working with LEPs and all sectors important in local economies







# 3

## REVITALISING HEALTH IN THE COMMUNITY, KEEPING PEOPLE OUT OF THE HEALTH AND CARE SYSTEM

As providers of leisure and health services, as community champions, as housing authorities, as administrators of benefits, the hardship fund and more, districts will promote mental and physical health, helping people back on their feet and preventing increased pressures on our stretched health and care system. Including:

- Revitalising leisure, parks, sport, and promoting modal shift towards walking and cycling to promote healthy communities
- Collaborating with county and health services to support track and tracing of the Covid-19 virus
- Working with community and faith groups enabling safe reconnection with worship, friends and families at community events
- Adapting homes to support positive ageing and health in the community rather than expensive health or social care systems
- As social landlords and working with private landlords, identify and help tenants to ride out difficult period, protect and grow incomes, and manage tenancies
- Continue to use the Hardship Fund alongside other measures to support people that need it
- Solving problems and promoting independence for rough sleepers and the homeless



# 4

## TAKING THE OPPORTUNITY TO GROW A NEW FUTURE

As planning authorities and guardians of place, districts are not only planning for today but also looking towards tomorrow making the decisions and investments creating green, resilient and inclusive growth and jobs in the years to come. Including:

- Reshaping the public realm with projects that remake and re-energise town centres
- Exploiting new patterns of transport in designing the public realm, incentivising the modal shift towards more sustainable transport
- Enabling roll out and innovation with the use of digital infrastructure by businesses and residents
- Taking opportunities to invest in local assets to protect businesses or grow new ones
- Using leverage where districts are commercial landlords to support businesses to grow
- Building homes that are supporting local SME builders, high quality, environmentally friendly, and plugging gaps in the market
- Investing in culture, tourism and the uniqueness of each place to build identity, attract visitors, and grow hospitality economy





# 5

## LEADING OUR PLACE AT PACE

As leaders, enablers, and conveners in place, districts will renew the vision for each town, city and coastal community working with our residents, businesses and crucial public service partners including county councils. Including:

- Promoting local community and business ownership responsibility to adhere to national guidance on the measures needed to beat the crisis and reboot the economy
- Joining-up all our partners in place, working with county councils, Local Enterprise Partnerships, and all agencies from Homes England to the Arts Council, from Job Centres to Sports England
- Harnessing community power at street level and pivoting our volunteer goodwill towards recovery and renewal



# TO ENABLE THE POWER IN PLACE, THE GOVERNMENT SHOULD WORK WITH US TO PRIORITISE:

- Flexibility – explore general powers of forbearance allowing districts to adapt how they discharge their 86 duties to support recovery, and remove restrictions on funding streams allowing districts maximum freedom to adapt and target spending to take opportunities quickly
- Regulatory clarity – empower councils to adapt national strategy to places, involve them in developing guidance and detail, share crucial information, for instance on local businesses that have furloughed staff
- Investment – bring forward investments from infrastructure fund, shared prosperity fund, towns fund and local growth – particularly where there are shovel-ready projects – and with maximum flex and freedom for councils to meet local need
- Certainty in planning and construction – protect local planning by suspending 5-year land supply alongside allowing extension of permissions, and enable council house building to support SME builders, including by lowering PWLB interest rates for building.
- Funding – and critically, ensure adequate resources for districts to sustain vital services and deliver the recovery in the years ahead, for example ensuring financial incentives to build homes and grow business rates, flex on use of capital receipts, and reviewing the HMT Green Book



For more information visit  
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