



Levelling Up, Housing and Communities Committee

Neil O'Brien MP

**Minister for Levelling Up, the Union and Constitution
Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities
2 Marsham Street
London SW1P 4DF**

29 March 2022

Dear Neil,

Supporting our high streets after covid-19

Thank you for the Government's response to my Committee's report on *Supporting our high streets after covid-19*. Following the Government's response, I am writing to clarify one of our recommendations, and to ask for an update on two covid-19 support measures that are due to expire this month.

Unsuccessful applications to Government funds

My Committee recommended that "For each competitive fund available for high streets, the Government should publish the full list of local authorities whose bids were unsuccessful in each round". We are grateful for your response to this recommendation and welcome the information that the Department published in relation to unsuccessful bids for the Future High Streets Fund on 3 December 2021. We note, however, that the release only includes those local authorities that were shortlisted and does not include those whose bids were deemed eligible but not shortlisted.

Furthermore, we wish to clarify that the Committee feels it important that this information is published for every fund that local authorities can bid for, in the past or present, for the benefit of their high streets. We note that unsuccessful bids for the Community Renewal Fund were also published on 3 December 2021. We would be grateful for confirmation that unsuccessful bids to the Levelling Up Fund and Community Ownership Fund will be made public.

Commercial evictions ban

The ban on evictions for commercial tenants ended on 25 March 2022. Meanwhile, the Government has introduced the Commercial Rent (Coronavirus) Bill to ringfence outstanding unpaid rent and introduce a system of binding arbitration for cases where landlords and tenants are unable to reach a resolution through negotiation.

- What is your department's assessment of the impact of the evictions ban expiring on 25 March 2022?
- What steps has your department taken to inform and advise high street businesses and landlords:



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- i. that the evictions ban is ending; and
- ii. about the provisions in the Commercial Rent (Coronavirus) Bill?

VAT for hospitality, accommodation, and visitor attractions

VAT for hospitality, accommodation, and visitor attractions is due to revert to 20% on 31 March, having previously been set at 5% from 15 July 2020 to 30 September 2021, and 12.5% from 1 October 2021.

- What is the Government's assessment of how the reversion to 20% VAT will affect businesses in the hospitality, accommodation, and visitor attractions sectors, particularly in light of the impact of the Omicron variant? Is 31 March 2022 still an appropriate date to make this change?

Thank you again for engaging with the Committee's recommendations and we look forward to the further policy developments highlighted in the Government's response to our report. I would be grateful if you could respond to these specific issues by 13 April.

Best regards,

Clive Betts MP
Chair, Levelling Up, Housing and Communities Committee