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# Better Regulation of the High Street

Report for the Better Regulation Delivery Office Business Reference Panel

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Produced by  
Charnwood Borough Council  
Loughborough Business  
Improvement District



Leicestershire Chamber of Commerce  
and

Leicestershire Better Business  
For All Programme

with the support of the  
Better Regulation Delivery Office



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October 2014

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## Executive summary

The future of Britain's High Street has become a widely debated topic. The impact of the recession and the growth of internet shopping have put further pressure on trading conditions, which in turn has led to the Government commissioning a series of reviews to explore what, if anything, can be done to support the High Street.

The Department for Communities and Local Government has been leading the Government's response, and following the Portas Review, established 27 Portas Pilots and 333 Town Team Partnerships to test different models to re-energising the high street.

In the Portas Review, recommendation five highlighted the need to:

*"Make it easier for people to become market traders by removing unnecessary regulations so that anyone can trade on the high street unless there is a valid reason why not."*

**In a recent 'think piece' by Mary Portas 'Why Our High Streets Still Matter', published in May 2014, Mary believes that this is an area which continues to be of interest and requires a partnership approach to find innovative and practical solutions.**

The Better Regulation Delivery Office (BRDO), a unit within the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills responsible for improving the delivery of regulation experienced by business on a day-to-day basis, agreed to commission a short piece of research into the regulatory environment on the High Street.

As part of the process, it was agreed that Loughborough in the East Midlands would be an ideal place to undertake a High Street Audit as the town was both a Portas Pilot area and had a well-established Business Improvement District (BID) in place.

As part of the exercise, 47 businesses from a variety of retail outlets shared their experiences of the regulatory environment and the challenges of operating a business on the High Street.

The report has established that there are a number of common issues which do present challenges, especially to small and micro businesses, that need to be addressed. However, it was concluded that there were no significant issues that disadvantaged businesses operating on the High Street.

The report provides a summary of the issues raised by businesses and makes 12 recommendations with practical solutions to address some of these key issues.

# Better regulation of the High Street

## 1. Aim of the report

To identify any regulations that may be adversely affecting the sustainability and / or the growth of retail businesses on the High Street. The report is designed to provide a response to one of the key recommendations in the Portas Review: An independent review into the future of our high streets.

<http://www.bis.gov.uk/assets/biscore/business-sectors/docs/p/11-1434-portas-review-future-of-high-streets.pdf>

## 2. Overview

When the Portas Review published its findings in 2012, it suggested that there may well be a series of regulatory barriers that impact on retail businesses operating on the High Street and that this warranted further investigation by the Government.

The Portas Review made 28 key recommendations, where recommendation 5 stated:

***“Make it easier for people to become market traders by removing unnecessary regulations so that anyone can trade on the high street unless there is a valid reason why not.”***

In response to this recommendation the Better Regulation Delivery Office's Business Reference Panel, a group of over 80 trade associations and sector-based business representative organisations providing the Government with a business perspective on issues impacting on the regulatory environment, agreed that this issue was worth further investigation.

The Panel felt that it would be helpful to identify if any of these potential issues were local and / or national, with a view to finding appropriate actions to alleviate any unnecessary burdens on business.

It was also recognised that it may not be the actual regulations themselves which are at fault, but the way in which they are interpreted and / or enforced. If this is the case, then it was hoped that practical solutions could be identified to address these issues. This approach is consistent with both the Government and the BRDO's objective of improving the day-to-day experience of regulation, and its implementation.

## 3. Background to Portas Review

The Portas Review is a report compiled by the retail expert Mary Portas which examines the future of the nation's High Streets. In response to the review and its recommendations, the Prime Minister asked the Department for Communities and Local Government to lead on the Government's response. As part of this response, 27 Portas Pilots and 333 Town Team Partnerships were established to test a range of different initiatives to help re-energise the High Street.

The 27 areas designated as Portas Pilots went live in summer 2012, with the Government providing £2.3m of funding and a range of initiatives designed to support the process. One of the areas awarded Portas Pilots status was the town of Loughborough, in the East Midlands.

As Loughborough had both Portas Pilot status and a well-established Business Improvement District (BID), it was nominated as an ideal location to start the conversation with businesses about the regulatory environment on the High Street.

*(In the recent 'think piece' paper by Mary Portas 'Why our High Street still matter', she makes reference to Loughborough as an interesting example and a model of good practice, especially in relation to the BID.)*

#### **4. Partnership approach to better regulation of the high street**

After an initial request from the BRDO Business Reference Panel to consider taking on the project, it was agreed that the Better Business for All (BBfA) partnership in Leicester and Leicestershire would be the ideal vehicle to provide an effective framework for managing this piece of work.

##### **Better Business for All (BBfA)**

BBfA is a well-established partnership between local businesses and regulators which aims to create the right conditions to support economic growth in a defined LEP area. BBfA was set up in November 2011 as part of Leicester and Leicestershire Enterprise Partnership's Economic Growth Plan and now forms part of its new Strategic Economic Plan.

The BBfA programme in Leicester and Leicestershire was one of two national pathfinders, which aimed to reduce both real and perceived regulatory barriers to business growth. To help demonstrate this partnership working, BBfA published a charter which sets out how businesses and regulators can work together. The partnership developed a single point of contact making it easier for businesses to access the local regulatory system.

As part of the programme, BBfA has run business awareness training which has allowed regulators to spend time with local businesses to better understand the challenges they face on a daily basis. There have been a number of highly successful task and finish groups to take forward a range of projects, all with the single aim of bringing regulators and business together to develop practical solutions.

<http://www.llep.org.uk/betterbusinessforall>

To take this pilot forward BBfA engaged with the following local partners:

##### **Charnwood Borough Council (CBC)**

CBC is the local authority that covers the Loughborough area. As one of the more progressive local authorities, CBC enjoys an extremely positive working relationship with both the BID team and the local business community. CBC is also actively engaged in supporting the local economy, especially the retail offer in Loughborough.

The Borough has a population of over 171,000 people and is one of the largest borough councils in the country, in terms of the number of residents. The Borough sits centrally between the three cities of Nottingham, Derby and Leicester, extending from the town of Loughborough in the north to the edge of Leicester to the south.

Charnwood is described as a Borough of contrasts and cultural diversity. Just over one third of the population live in the thriving university town of Loughborough, an important centre for business, commerce and retailing which also has a strong reputation for further and higher education and expertise in engineering, pharmaceuticals and (increasingly) in advanced technologies. The remainder of the residents of Charnwood live in a broad mix of countryside, villages and small towns that reflect a varied and thriving heritage.

As CBC is responsible for regulatory services including licensing, food hygiene, health and safety, waste, car parking, and planning, it was considered to be an ideal contributing partner for this project.

### **Charnwood Borough Council's Regulatory Services**

CBC's regulatory services are currently piloting a new concept of a business champion for the BBfA programme, where a designated regulator acts as the single point of contact for local businesses. When a concern is raised by a local business, the regulator will take ownership of the issue and will try to resolve the problem by ensuring that the business is referred to the correct regulatory agency.

This proactive approach to working with local businesses made both the CBC and its regulatory service team an ideal partner to help take this project forward.

### **Loughborough Business Improvement District (BID)**

In 2011 the business community in Loughborough's town centre voted to establish a BID. In the designated BID area there are over 570 businesses, with the vast majority being in some form of retail. In the BID model, each business pays an annual levy to fund a variety projects and schemes to improve the town centre and its trading environment.

The BID is a company limited by guarantee and is run by a Board of Directors comprising of 18 businesses from the BID area and three local authority representatives. There are also three co-opted members of the Board – the Students' Union, the Showman's Guild and the Loughborough Chamber of Trade and Commerce.

As well as delivering a programme of activities and improvements in the town centre, the BID team represents the interests of their business cohort by lobbying and responding to relevant local and national consultations.

In 2012 the BID led a successful application to become a Portas Pilot Town. This attracted a £100,000 grant from the Government to test a series of different initiatives and to establish whether they might have a wider application. Two of the initiatives are designed to develop the skills of business owners. One provides a series of retail master classes, backed up by mystery shopping and one-to-one support. Another provides one-to-one support, training and mentoring for business owners looking to use social media to develop and market their products and services. The final project concentrates on dealing with vacant units in the town centre.

To oversee the delivery of these initiatives the BID has set up the Love Loughborough Partnership – a town team with a wide range membership from interested bodies and organisations, landlords, and local community representatives.

As the BID team already had well established channels of communication with the local retail businesses, they were seen as the natural partner to conduct the consultation exercise.

### **Leicestershire Chambers of Commerce**

The Leicestershire Chamber is the City and County's leading business representative organisation. As a founding partner of BBfA, the Chamber was ideally placed to provide both practical support and advice in helping to facilitate this project.

As an organisation that represents the interests of the wider business community, it was important to call on their knowledge and experience in dealing with the regulatory system.

## 5. Project methodology

Partners agreed to use a variety of different approaches to ensure meaningful engagement with a selection of businesses in the BID area. It was agreed that a mixture of focus groups and surveys would provide the best method for capturing views, but also recognising that the results would only provide a snapshot in time.

The high street audit covered the following areas of regulation:

- Fire safety
- Licensing
- Consumer protection (trading standards)
- Food safety and hygiene (environmental health)
- Planning
- Waste

The audit excluded employment law and general taxation, though important issues for local businesses, it was considered to be outside the scope of this project and could potentially distort the findings.

The BID team organised a focus group with local businesses on 24<sup>th</sup> July 2013 to discuss the approach to the consultation and to gather some initial views on the potential issues likely to be raised. This led to a survey being conducted in the BID area. The survey was also supported by the Loughborough Chambers of Trade & Commerce, using the surveymonkey website tool. The survey questions are outlined in Annex 1.

BID Board members also conducted a series of one to one interviews with a number of businesses operating on the High Street, to explore in more detail any evidence of regulatory challenges. In total, 47 businesses from a wide range of retail, hospitality and catering were consulted.

A follow up focus group meeting was convened at Loughborough Town Hall on 18<sup>th</sup> September 2013 for both businesses and business representative organisations to discuss initial findings.

## Summary of findings – what did the local businesses say?

From the various interactions and the results of the survey, a number of key themes started to emerge:

### a) Business rates

One of the largest financial outgoings for many SMEs is the annual payment of business rates. Often SMEs, especially those in retail, have very seasonal patterns of trade which impacts on their cash flow and their ability to pay significant bills at certain times of the year.

Businesses reported that information is not readily available on the Council website about different methods of payment. They also commented that there is very little attempt to communicate with businesses that payments can be made on a more flexible basis, as long as full payment is made by the end of the fiscal year.

### b) Valuations and rateable value

In Loughborough, at the time of writing this report, businesses were being adversely affected by the construction of the new inner relief road. For many high street businesses, road works can create significant disruption which can have a detrimental impact on their trade. In some cases this can lead to the actual closure of the business.

In the past, businesses have tried to communicate with the Valuation Office to secure some form of relief on their business rates. This was reported to have been very difficult and unproductive. It was only when the BID Manager made an approach on behalf of a number of businesses in the affected area was an appropriate response forthcoming.

The Valuation Office is administered by HMRC and not the local authority and this may have created some confusion for businesses about who to approach / complain to when an issue arises.

It was reported that businesses who had contacted the Valuation Office were given a variety application forms which they found difficult to understand, and therefore made very little headway in starting a review process.

It was also established that one of the reasons engagement was proving difficult was the fact that the details of the named businesses, recorded on the Valuation Database, were often not up to date. This resulted in applications being rejected. From what retailers have reported there appears to be a lack of coherence in the system. Businesses believe that this is a large system failure which needs addressing both locally and nationally.

It was noted that applications can be made to the Valuation Office for business rates relief for many different reasons. However there are no forms / templates to complete to cover all of the reasons, making the process very difficult for businesses to know which type of relief to apply for and what form to use.

### c) Planning system

Businesses reported that this was a key area of concern for many SMEs. It was generally felt that the planning system can create a number of challenges for small businesses. It was pointed out that for many small businesses they will only interact with the planning system once in their business lifetime. It was considered that this lack of knowledge and awareness creates an issue for many small businesses, who then find it difficult to navigate the system.

Businesses also stated that they recognise that planning regulations are important and can be used to avoid issues such as the saturation of an area by certain categories of businesses. It was generally felt that if applied in the right way, planning can be good for growth if delivered in a proportionate, targeted and consistent manner.

One business in the BID area cited an example, where a council customer service officer helped them (in good faith) to complete the planning forms for a change of use, but in fact gave incorrect advice. This created a 16 week delay and nearly cost the business its grant funding.

A guest house proprietor gave a recent example of his experience in applying for a change of use to accommodate his new business. He found the process very difficult to navigate and felt that it created an unnecessary "fear factor".

Other businesses commented that these type of barriers, perceived or otherwise, are particularly challenging for start-up businesses and are clearly off putting.

Another issue identified was the difference in timing for submitting licence applications to the Highway Authority and the local Planning Department, to provide tables and chairs outside catering establishments. The fact these were out of sync creates an unnecessary burden on business which is both costly and inconvenient.

A positive example was cited where an estate agent commissioned a local artist to design an advertisement for a building. On completion, this resulted in a complaint by a member of the public. In response, the local authority took a pragmatic approach by asking for the advertisement element of the design be removed, but leaving the rest of the artwork in place as it enhanced both the building and the street.

#### **d) Advice and support**

In discussing the general provision of business support and guidance, businesses stated that they welcomed the Better Business for All model of a single point of contact. They also found the start-up brochure very helpful, providing key information and relevant contact details for all the regulators they are likely to come into contact with.

Businesses felt that where advice is given it should be well informed and consistent. One business highlighted an example of inconsistency with inspections following advice on product labelling from the County's Trading Standards Service. The business felt that it had received good advice, which it then adopted for all the labels on its various products. However, it was surprised when two Trading Standards Officers inspected its premises to test the scales and check the labelling on all its products. The business was concerned and asked why the Trading Standards Officers were reviewing all product labels as they had been approved by their colleagues. It was clear that the officers had not reviewed the business history before carrying out the inspection.

One retail business gave an example of the events leading up to an inspection from the Fire Service. His lack of knowledge and the concern as to whether or not his business would be compliant, resulted in the engagement of a fire prevention consultant to provide advice and guidance to help remove the "fear factor" from the forthcoming inspection. Unfortunately, he did not feel that he was able to approach the Fire Service directly for advice prior to the visit.

Several catering businesses gave details of their positive experiences with the Environmental Health Services. They felt that the Food Hygiene Rating Scheme was effective and had enabled businesses to improve, especially when seeing their competitors gaining a five star rating. However they were disappointed with the withdrawal of health and safety training for small businesses by the council as this was seen as an important service.



## **e) Car parking**

It was recognised that not all businesses in the BID area operate at the same time of day. Some businesses operate during the day whilst others fall under the hours of the early evening / night time economy. Businesses who are part of the night time economy felt that a more flexible approach to parking would make a difference to their potential to trade. For example, businesses operating takeaway outlets where double yellow lines are in place are at a disadvantage as customers are unable to park outside the establishment to collect their goods.

One business estimated that customers not being able to collect goods from outside his premises resulted in 35 per cent less trade than a similar business in locations where on street parking was available. Businesses felt that restrictions were appropriate during the day due to the volume of traffic, however at night, these restrictions were not necessary. Businesses concluded that this created an unnecessary barrier to the night time economy and therefore has an impact on their trade.

## **f) Licencing**

Businesses reported a general confusion about the number of different types of licences required, ranging from a licence for table and chairs on the pavement to license for an A-board display. Businesses were frustrated that they were being asked to approach different departments within the Council e.g. Highways and Planning, to apply for licences. This was felt to create confusion, delays and ultimately a cost for businesses.

One business reported that the number of licences required for a small / medium sized catering establishment was excessive and bureaucratic, requiring multiple applications to the same licencing authority. This was felt to be both costly and time-consuming for businesses.

## **g) Provision of public amenities**

Businesses reported that the inconsistency in the provision of public amenities (toilets) during normal trading hours and festivals / market days is a problem. They believe this is acting as a deterrent for visitors to the town centre and impacts on trading conditions.

## **h) Empty property rate relief**

This issue was raised by a number of businesses during the consultation. However, since the consultation was conducted, the Chancellor of the Exchequer has addressed many of these concerns raised and provided a number of incentives for the re-use of empty properties.

## **Conclusion**

In carrying out this piece of research it was always recognised that this would only be a snapshot in time and would give an indication as to whether businesses trading on the High Street face any significant regulatory barriers to prosperity. It was noted that throughout the exercise the delivery of local authority regulatory services such as Trading Standards, Environmental Health, Fire Service and Waste Services did not represent a significant concern for businesses operating on the High Street.

It was therefore concluded, based on this piece of research, that there are no significant regulatory barriers for retail businesses operating on the High Street. However, what has become clear is the need for a series of actions by both local and national regulators to improve the overall experience of the regulatory system, supported by a number of measures to encourage economic growth.

## Business response – practical solutions

### a) Business rates

Business rates are one of the major financial outgoings for small businesses, especially those that occupy premises on the High Street. The availability of more flexible terms of payment is very important in helping these businesses manage their cash flow and to ultimately survive and prosper.

Section 69 of the *Localism Act 2011* provides a new discretionary power for billing authorities in England and Wales to reduce the business rates of any local ratepayer. Previously, relief could only be granted in circumstances specified in legislation. The new power applied from 1 April 2012. Therefore, local authorities should be mindful of local trading conditions and be willing to make local interventions to support areas in distress.

As a result of this project, business views have been passed onto CBC to review and update their website with relevant information and improve local information for businesses.

**Recommendation 1 – Local authorities (billing) should be required to provide information on flexible payment terms for business rates. As a minimum, local authorities should be expected to actively promote the availability of flexible payment terms on their websites and include details in the annual posting of the businesses rates bill.**

The Government has recently launched a discussion paper on the administration of the business rates system: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/business-rates-administration-review-discussion-paper>

It is suggested that a copy of this report should be submitted for consideration as part of the Government's review.

### b) Valuation and rateable value

Businesses have consistently asked for much more transparency on how the business rating system works and how their bills are calculated. The Government has responded to many of these concerns and in March 2014, DCLG issued a consultation *Checking and challenging your rateable value*. This consultation is intended to examine the future of the business rates appeals system in England and Wales.

Business have stated that the current system is perceived as dysfunctional, with a significant number of appeals outstanding which has added to the appearance of a lack of transparency. Key to this issue is the Valuation Office's current position of not revealing the rental information it uses to arrive at Rateable Values.

The Government has proposed changes to be implemented from 1st October 2014 in an attempt to alleviate this situation.

Based on the experience in Loughborough, there is an opportunity for BIDs to play a co-ordination role to support retail businesses in submitting appeals to the Valuation Office. This is particularly relevant when areas are adversely impacted by major road schemes, redevelopment/regeneration work etc.

**Recommendation 2 – BIDs (and other business representative organisations) be asked to take on a co-ordination role to support retail businesses submit rating appeals during time of economic distress. The Valuation Office to be issued with a ‘duty to co-operate’ order to ensure meaningful engagement.**

### **c) Planning system**

It is recognised that the vast majority of small businesses will only experience the planning system once in their business lifecycle. Therefore the system needs to be designed in a way that accommodates the needs of small businesses and is user friendly.

Since the survey and focus groups with business, their feedback on Planning has been referred to CBC to review advice and information provided to business customers. Furthermore in 2014, BBFA programme started work with Planning Services in Leicester and Leicestershire to improve the business experience. <http://www.llep.org.uk/bbfaplanning>

*(In the recently published ‘Why our High Streets still matter’ the paper refers to the impact of planning on the High Street and suggests that there is a need for local authority planning services to be more proactive in identify local business needs.)*

**Recommendation 3 – As a minimum planning departments need to ensure that well trained and competent staff are available to assist small businesses with the completion of the necessary planning application forms.**

**Recommendation 4 – Planning departments should consider introducing a fast track approach for small and start-up businesses, with appropriate delegated authority for local planning officers.**

**Recommendation 5 – Planning departments should work with local businesses to develop a series of templates for planning applications, which can then be used to help small businesses understand what information is required and how it should be presented.**

**Recommendation 6 – Pre-planning advice should be made available to all small and start-up businesses free of charge.**

**Recommendation 7 – Planning Services should work with local business to help identify current needs to help shape the delivery of services**

Businesses also stated that a ‘one stop shop’ approach to business support and advice was needed, and this should be applied to the planning system. The creation of Growth Hubs represents an opportunity to address this clear need and is discussed in the next section.

### **d) Advice and support**

Businesses expressed their support for the concept of the single point of contact for business information and guidance. Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEP) are in the process of developing Growth Hubs to help address this recognised need. It is intended that these Growth Hubs will act as the single portal for all business advice and support across a LEP area.

In the LLEP area, the proposed Growth Hub will incorporate the Better Business for All principles and will use a single number and website, so that businesses with regulatory issues can be directed to the right agency / organisation. Sources of information and advice, for example, health and safety training, could also be incorporated to help direct local small businesses to where support is available.

It was noted that some of the business experiences in relation to advice and support occurred approx. 2-3 years ago. Since this time, Leicestershire County Trading Standards and the Leicestershire Fire and Rescue Services have become part of the BBFA programme. In doing so, they have reviewed how they offer help and advice to businesses; this includes business awareness training and business communication training to help deliver an improved and a more focussed advice service.

In terms of helping to improve communication between local regulators and small businesses, the BBFA is supporting a Fire Safety Working Group. This group consists of fire officers, representative from local breweries and the Beer and Pub Association. The aim of the group is to find ways to help improve the communication between the Fire Service and small businesses, especially those in the licenced trade, so that they understand the arrangements they need to put in place to ensure that their customers and staff are safe from the risk of fire. This is a potential model for other local regulators.

The BRDO is currently rolling out the BBFA programme nationally with 17 LEPs committed to implementing the model. This programme will support local regulators to work together to simplify the local regulatory system and to make it easier for businesses to access advice and support.

Greater Manchester and Derbyshire & Nottinghamshire (D2/N2) LEPs have already piloted their Growth Hubs, where they have developed links into various levels of regulatory advice and support. A further 10 LEPs are currently developing their Growth Hubs where it is strongly recommended that links to regulatory advice and support is included.

**Recommendation 8 – As a minimum, all Growth Hubs should provide links to the provision of regulatory advice and support. In terms of technical information, guidance and advice, business suggested that they would like more sector based information, for example the regulatory information needed to set up a dry cleaners or to establish and operate a sandwich shop. Businesses pointed out that this type of information was not easily accessible and certainly not in one place. This makes compliance for business more difficult.**

**Recommendation 9 – Growth Hubs and local authorities should be able to direct local businesses to a consistent source of sector specific information and guidance. The Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS) has introduced a Small business: GREAT ambition strategy. This has included setting up a new website as the single Government source of information for business. This could be further developed to bring together regulatory information and guidance. The Government has also extended its successful Primary Authority scheme to enable small businesses that are part of sector based trade associations to be able to access tailored sector specific regulatory advice, further take up and development would also support small businesses seeking this type of advice and support.**

<http://www.greatbusiness.gov.uk/>

#### **e) Car parking**

CBC, like many other local authorities, has recognised that parking in and around the town centre is a critical factor in the success of many local retail businesses. In partnership with the BID, CBC has introduced reduction in fees to encourage visitors into the town centres on Fridays and during evening, to help stimulate the early evening economy.

Local retail businesses have welcomed this initiative, but feel that this scheme doesn't go far enough and a more radical approach to parking is needed. This is particularly important for businesses operating in the early evening / late night economy. The Free after 3 and Free Sunday parking will be continuing during 2014. CBC is keen to ensure a balanced approach to car parking strategies for shoppers and people working in the towns etc. *(This approach was cited in 'Why our High Streets still matter'.)*

With regard to yellow lines and having flexibility to support night time economy, it is understood that the Government are considering proposals to allow for a 10-15 minutes allowance unless there is a clear safety issue. In addition there is the ability to review Traffic Regulation Orders (TROs) which is a Highway Function under the remit of the County Council. It is understood that enforcement is flexible to assist businesses.

Since the survey, these issues have been taken on board, resulting in the BID involvement with Leicestershire County Council Highways as part of the inner relief road construction. The BID has recently been consulted on changes to the TROs, which includes delivery times and locations in the Town centre as part of the Loughborough Inner Relief Road construction.

**Recommendation 10 – Local authorities should consider relaxing enforcement on areas covered by double yellow lines during off-peak times.**

#### **f) Licencing**

Licencing is proving to be a complex area for many business, which in part is due to the number of licences that may be required to either operate the business or provide certain services. The fact that businesses may have to apply to different departments in a local authority is compounding the problem.

In February 2014, the Local Government Association (LGA) published a paper *Open for business: rewiring licencing*. This papers sets out the LGA's call for the wholesale reform of the current licencing framework. The LGA states that it believes this will deliver a deregulatory approach that will free up business and council time, while maintaining important safeguards for local communities and businesses.

[http://www.local.gov.uk/web/guest/publications/-/journal\\_content/56/10180/5884676/PUBLICATION](http://www.local.gov.uk/web/guest/publications/-/journal_content/56/10180/5884676/PUBLICATION)

**Recommendation 11 – The Government consider implementing the recommendation set out in the LGAs paper *Open for business: rewiring licencing*.**

#### **g) Amenities**

The provision of amenities is an issue which requires local authorities to solve. There are no shortages of toilets in out of town retail centres and this puts the High Street at a disadvantage.

**Recommendation 12 – As minimum, local authorities should consult with local retail businesses on the provision of amenities in town centres. A partnership approach is required to find local solutions to a pressing issue that has the potential damage the High Street.**

*(Mary Portas makes a number of recommendations in her recent paper which includes long term support for Town Teams and the simplification of the process in forming BIDs. It is suggested that a strong partnership approach with Local Authority Regulatory Services, including Planning Services, through the Better Business for All programme could also support this agenda of revitalising the High Street.)*

## Annex A

### Better Regulation of the High Street – Have your say!!

The Loughborough Business Improvement District (BID), Leicestershire Chambers of Commerce, Charnwood Borough Council Regulatory Services, and the Better Regulation Delivery Office (BRDO) would like to hear your views on the current regulatory barriers you face whilst operating your business.

The main purpose of this survey is to identify any regulations that may be affecting the growth of your business. The key findings of this survey will be used as the basis for discussions with focus groups made up of BID members, who will examine these potential regulatory barriers and will seek to identify possible solutions working with local and national partners.

On conclusion of this process, a report will be prepared and sent to the Business Minister.

We would, therefore, be really grateful if you could take approx. 5-10 minutes to answer the follow questions:

Business trading as: *(optional)*

Business address: *(optional)*

Business activity e.g. retail-furniture:

Length of trading (months/years):

Number of employees:

- 1 Have you experienced any challenges or problems with regulations while operating your business within the last 2 years? Please circle

YES/NO

If Yes, please provide some detail about the specific problem you encountered.

- 2 Can you tell us more about these challenges/problems? Is this affecting the growth of your business?

- 3 Has the problem been resolved? Please circle

YES/NO

- 4a If yes, how was this resolved?

- 4b If no, has the problem escalated?

- 5 Has your business been visited by an inspector/regulator within the last 2 years? Please circle

YES/NO

If yes, please specify which area of regulation was dealt with and what organisation they were from? Please select (you can tick more than one)

Fire Services

Trading Standards

Environmental Health

Licensing

Waste

HMRC

Other? (Please specify):

- 6** Did you find the inspection or visit useful/valuable? Please circle  
YES/NO
- 7** To help us improve services, please can you tell us about your experience of the inspection or visit?
- 8** The BID, Leicestershire Chamber of Commerce, Charnwood Regulatory Services and BRDO are working together to help local business grow. We would like to hear your suggestions for improving the regulations and local regulatory services that are affecting your business.  
  
Please provide any suggestions:
- 9** Relaxation of rules and their enforcement may not always be the solution to improving the business environment. Therefore, are there areas where you think rules need to be tightened up and/or greater enforcement is needed, and if so, why?
- 10** Do you have any additional comments that you would like to share with us about what would assist business growth in Loughborough?

THANK YOU FOR TAKING THE TIME TO COMPLETE THIS SURVEY