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CLLR RACHAEL ROBATHAN
Leader of the Council

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13 March 2020

Rt. Hon Rishi Sunak MP
Chancellor of the Exchequer
1 Horse Guards Road
London
SW1A 2HQ

CEU.Enquiries@hmtreasury.gov.uk

Dear Chancellor,

Congratulations on your appointment and delivering your first Budget, I look forward to working with you in the years to come to realise our shared ambitions for the UK.

I am supportive of the measures you have proposed to help business by offering 100% business rate discounts for all retail properties with a rateable value of less than £51,000. This is a positive step but it is important to note that this policy change may not have the desired impact of supporting the fundamentals of the economy, particularly in a central London context.

Central London is the powerhouse of the UK economy with Westminster alone generating £53bn in GVA every year, equating to 3% of the UK's economy output. Underpinning this huge economic output, Westminster has around 39,000 business rate properties. Of these, 20,000 properties have a rateable value of less than £51,000 and only around 2,000 (5% of Westminster's businesses) are expected to be eligible for the enhanced retail discount due to the properties not meeting the requisite Retail Relief criteria, e.g. offices. This means that around 37,000 properties in the city will receive no assistance via the Budget announcements.

Under normal circumstances there is a logical link between high rateable values, the ability of businesses to generate revenue and therefore for them to pay their business rate bills. In the current exceptional circumstances this logic breaks down and businesses in high value areas of the country such as central London will be hardest hit.

I would therefore like to suggest that you actively consider establishing an alternative model for central London to safeguard the heart of the country's economy at this critical time. I would welcome the opportunity to meet with you to discuss how this could work in a way which is fair and equitable for London and the rest of the country. The possible options could include a potential instalment payment holiday for our businesses and/or a local relief scheme under existing NNDR legislation. However neither option is feasible without additional assistance from the Government.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Rachael Robathan'. The signature is written in a cursive style with a horizontal line at the end.

Cllr Rachael Robathan
Leader of the Council
Westminster City Council

Cc: Rt. Hon. Robert Jenrick, Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government