

Small Business Commission Report

September 2017

Report prepared for the London Borough of Croydon

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Executive Summary

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The Small Business Commission, led by several Croydon business figures and independent of the Council, explored qualitative and quantitative methods to understand the opportunities and barriers to growth for Croydon businesses. In doing this the Commission, chaired by Andrew Bauer, Centre Director of The Whitgift Centre, provides a sound understanding of the economic conditions which SMEs are facing in order to inform key strategic decisions for stakeholders within Croydon that will support the borough's economic growth. The appointment of Commissioners took into consideration their ability to represent Croydon's diverse business community.

Key themes arising from the findings include:

- Increased taxes and rising costs restricting business growth;
- Confusion for businesses accessing finance;
- An underlying need to landscape future skills within the borough;
- Innovation of Croydon tech SMEs;
- Pressure on employment land; and
- Opportunities to access local and international markets.

Following the interim report which included a series of recommendations, businesses and stakeholders were invited to provide feedback which informed a dynamic deliverable plan of action outlined in this report.



The Small Business Commission Commissioners (from left-to-right: Malcolm Brabon; Sarah Luxford; Annabel Fogden; Andrew Bauer; Councillor Mark Watson; and Benedict Selvaratnam).

Introduction



Background and Context

Croydon has transformed over the past five years and is continuing to experience unprecedented growth with over £5 billion worth of investment already underway. With high levels of growth planned over the next few years, the Commission's aim was to work closely to support the local business community in order to help them to achieve their full growth potential.

SMEs account for 99.9% of all private sector businesses nationally, employing 15.7 million people (60% of all private sector employment in the UK). SMEs generate a combined annual turnover of £1.8 trillion, representing a 47% share of all private sector turnover in the UK¹.

99% of Croydon's business community are small- to medium-sized businesses². These businesses are consistently described as the backbone of the UK economy as they drive growth, open new markets and create jobs, and their contribution is therefore vital to unlock Croydon's full growth potential.

Small businesses are known as seedbeds for innovation as they encourage competition and bring fresh ideas that challenge the status quo. This stimulus in turn incentivises others to adapt and innovate.

Today, Croydon's business community is experiencing new challenges and opportunities, delving into the unknown of Brexit, rising costs, new markets to be explored and accessed, and pressures on productivity. It is ever more pressing that the public and private sectors work in partnership to ensure that Croydon continues to have sustainable growth, encouraging new and innovative businesses but also nurturing and supporting the existing local business community.

In order to promote sustainable growth success for Croydon businesses, the Small Business Commission, launched in January 2017, was set up as a business-led independent body, and chaired by Andrew Bauer, Director of The Whitgift Centre. The aim of the Commission was to research and report on the challenges and opportunities that Croydon SMEs face in order for the Council to look at the best way that the Council can work in partnership to create an enterprising culture that maximises on the entrepreneurial activities of Croydon's small business community.

Purpose of the Report

This report aims to provide a robust understanding of the barriers and opportunities that Croydon SMEs are facing, focusing on impartially reporting on current issues and areas that may impede or assist the growth of SMEs within the borough.

It aims to assist the borough in understanding the relationship that small- and medium-sized enterprises have within the Croydon economy, identifying areas of need where support should and could be implemented. The findings of this report provide a platform of information that help Croydon Council and other public bodies to strategically plan activities that will create an even

¹ Source: Federation of Small Businesses (2016).

² European Union definition of businesses employing up to 250 people.

better socio-economic climate for local SMEs, assisting Croydon's ambition for its businesses and residents.

Methodology

The Small Business Commission's approach included an initial quantitative exploration of SMEs within the borough. Working with the Croydon Business Network – a collaboration of business support organisations that represent 2,000 Croydon businesses – the Commission surveyed 1,495 businesses and received 155 responses, a sample which was felt to be representative of the 13,915 SMEs that are located within the borough (see Annex 1). This included descriptive data which would help to ensure that the sample was representing all sectors and focused on examining the businesses' understanding of the current opportunities and issues that they may be facing within today's trading climate. The survey also looked at where businesses were currently accessing business support and any areas where they felt that there was a lack of support.

In order to delve deeper into fully understanding the outcome of the survey a series of facilitated focus groups and individual interviews were carried out by the Commission across the borough, including the district centres to ensure that businesses located there were also represented. The aim of this qualitative data was to explore the key findings of the survey, areas of learning and best practice within the Croydon business scene. In total 5 focus groups, 2 of which focused around the tech sector and international trade, and 25 interviews were held which represented in-depth analysis of 141 companies.

Key Findings

OR

State of the Overall Economy

With rising costs, inflation and a weak pound, responses from the Small Business Commission showed that businesses felt that the overall economy was the second most prevalent barrier to their growth over the next year or so (39%). With businesses facing the uncertainty or opportunity of Brexit (depending on their individual perspectives), what is known is that businesses are unsure of the future of the economy and that uncertainty causes its own issues, especially if it stalls decisions or investment. Whilst on a national level it may be difficult to influence external factors as a borough, there has never been a more important time to create partnerships that maximise on supporting SMEs to take opportunities that are available to them.

Taxation

During the survey tax, national insurance, pay as you earn, and business rates were identified as the top barriers for growth for businesses. The qualitative data underpinned that business rates were seen definitively as the top issue for businesses within the borough, however it is important to note that the timing of this research coincided with the 2017 national revaluation exercise of the rateable value of commercial premises which has resulted in some businesses located in the London area seeing a significant increase in their rates bill. London operates a unique economic microcosm which has meant that London values have increased between 46.2% (Hackney) and 8.2% (Barking & Dagenham). In Croydon:

18.6%

average increase

11%

average increase
for retail
properties

18.8%

average increase for
industrial properties

17.3%

average increase
for office
accommodation

30.8%

average increase for other
types of property

7.4%

average cash impact on
businesses

1,156

businesses have seen their
rateable value increase by
over 60% (most are in the
metropolitan centre where
land values have increased
fastest)

The rise comes at a time when there are several other cost increases for small businesses such as:

- Apprenticeship levy³;
- Upswing in purchasing costs caused by Brexit;
- Recent fall in the value of the pound; and
- Introduction of pension auto enrolment.

³ A tax levied on organisations with a wage bill over £3 million per annum.

Currently, central government control the setting of business rates and income is shared between the Treasury, Greater London Authority and the London Borough Croydon. However findings from the Small Business Commission focus groups highlighted that businesses were unaware of the distribution of business rates and as Croydon Council collected the rates the perception was that the Council were responsible for the initiation and implementation of the rates increase. There was a lack of awareness on the distribution and use of money collected from the rates.

It is interesting to note that Croydon Council has been working with the Croydon business community to lobby national government for a change in the way in which business rates are calculated. In December 2016, the London Borough of Croydon introduced a new discretionary business rates relief policy to support inward investment and to increase/safeguard jobs in the borough. To date, 8 applications have been received.

Recommendations:

- Communication on rate distribution and support available for businesses on rate relief;
- Collective and coordinated lobbying for London to be treated in a fairer way when rateable values are set as it operates in a unique microcosm; and
- Research models of best practice of other Councils' use of retaining business rates for economic growth delivery.

Access to Funding

The findings of the Small Business Commission show that Croydon's small business community is confused and often unaware of funding available to them. Issues around raising finance are seen as a significant issue for businesses, with 36% emphasising this as a significant barrier to growth.

As entrepreneurial businesses grow and develop, the sources of finance they rely on changes so it is seen as critical that the right kind of capital is developed at the right stage in a company's lifecycle to ensure success.

Rangewell (who represent over 300 finance providers) asked the Commission to strongly consider:

- Recognising that Croydon partners are already market-leading and considered to be considerably more proactive than most areas;
- Continue to strongly support the services being provided locally whilst identifying further market sectors (e.g. scaling companies, innovative business sectors and growing micro regions) that require more detailed support;
- Encourage local advisors and local support networks to cross-refer more appropriately; and
- Explore ways to engage further and more deeply with all local companies, including those who are currently not aware or not involved in local initiatives.

Perceptions within the business community are that the financial landscape is confusing, time consuming and intimidating. However, the offering and advice network within Croydon is seen as significantly strong with impartial advice available from a variety of networks and advisors that can

support SMEs. This advice could be tailored to meet the needs of Croydon's diverse business community including those BAME businesses that may need to access information in different languages.

The qualitative data collected by the commissioners also emphasised that many businesses felt that there was a lack of grant opportunities within the borough. Those businesses who vocalised this need tended to be start-up businesses in the first three years of trading.

Finance to support accessing other market opportunities, such as international trade contracts and entering procurement chains of large companies, were seen as critical to being able to source these opportunities. Underlying research undertaken by the Commission showed a lack of awareness of alternative financial opportunities, such as the Croydon Enterprise Loan Fund, however, businesses highlighted the work that Croydon Tech City and Sussex Innovation Centre do to implement investor opportunities for innovative tech businesses.

Recommendations:

- Supporting and promoting jigsaw opportunities⁴;
- Croydon Enterprise Loan Fund to address funding gaps;
- Work with partners/providers to source a dynamic offering of funding opportunities;
- Utilise the Croydon Business Network to provide a communication network that signposts businesses to impartial and professional advice; and
- Promote investor opportunities within the borough by working with partners/providers, such as Sussex Innovation Centre, Croydon Tech City, Rangewell and Enterprise for London.

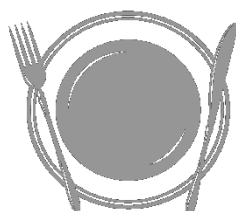
Employment and Skills: Access to Talent

The quantitative data that was collected placed recruiting skilled staff as the third highest barrier to growth. This was underpinned by qualitative data collected through the focus groups and interviews. 35% of the businesses that responded to the survey felt that a workforce development and management service would assist them in developing their business growth.

It is worth noting that Croydon has a relatively high employment rate compared to the London average, with residents more likely to be employed in lower-wage, lower-skilled jobs in the business administration, support and retail sectors. The largest employment sectors in the south sub-region are:



Health and
Social Work



Retail



Professional, Real Estate,
Scientific and Technical

⁴ A combination of grant and private funding to achieve the funding a business requires.



Administration and Support



Education



Information and Communications

Although Croydon’s unemployment rate is slightly lower than the London average, the employment rate is rising. It is important to note:

13,000

economically inactive working age adults in the borough

Over 55s

BAME groups, people with disabilities and women are some demographic groups more likely to be out of work and/or on benefits than others

Geographic

variations show that people in the north of the borough and in areas such as New Addington are more likely to be out of work and/or on benefits

Over 20%

of Croydon residents are in low-paid work

Over 25%

of jobs in Croydon are low-waged

23.2%

of children in the borough in 2015 were living in families affected by income deprivation

Businesses and employers are consistent in their message that many people presenting for interview do not have the skills, attitudes and aptitudes required for work; this is particularly the case for younger people:

- Croydon’s growth employment sectors are Science & Technology; Creative & Cultural; Retail; Hospitality; Leisure & Tourism; and Business & Finance; and
- There are recruitment challenges and skills shortages nationally and locally in health & social care and teaching.

The proportions of high skill and labour intensive roles in Croydon are below average, with middle skill and service intensive roles above average⁵. There are less professional jobs, with more administration and clerical, caring, leisure and other services, more sales and customer services and more elementary staff than average.

There are some local strengths such as care and service sectors, where there has been consistent regional growth in recent years. Developments in the borough are well aligned with forecast

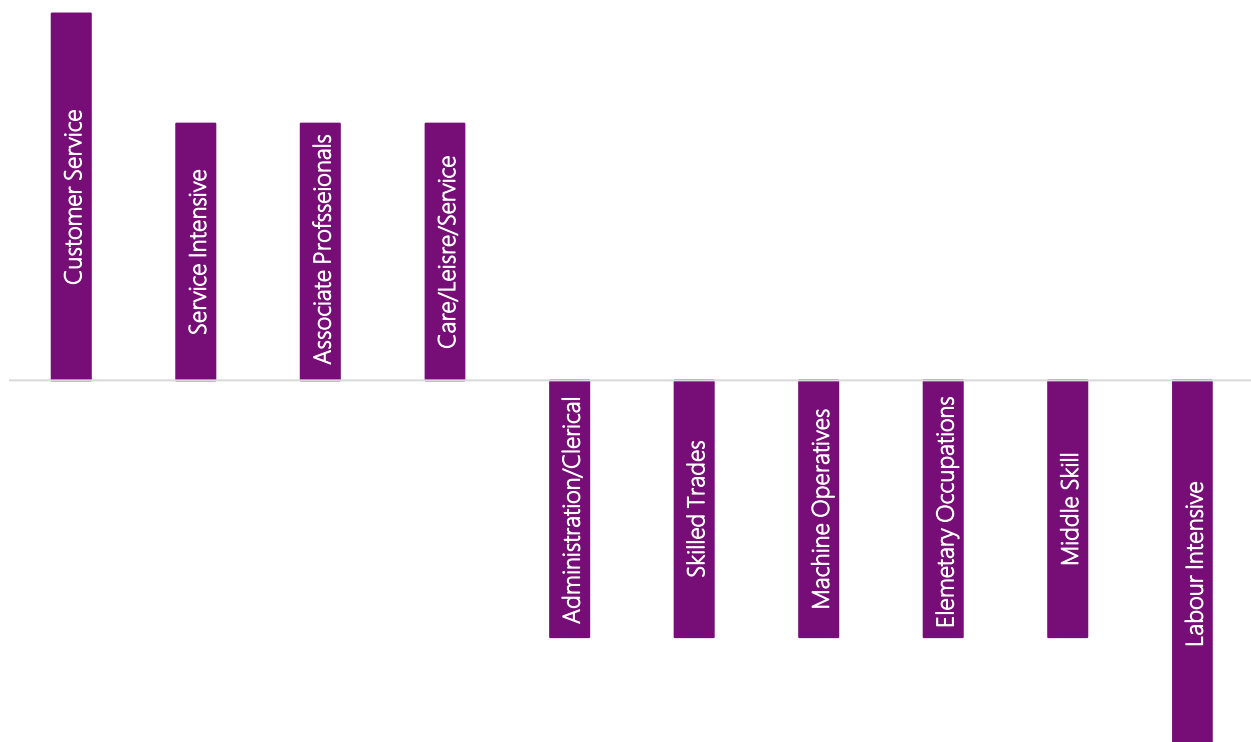
⁵ Source: UK Commission for Employment and Skills (UKCES).

growth in several sectors – culture at College Green, professional and business services at Ruskin Square, and retail at Boxpark and Westfield/Hammerson.

Croydon Tech City hosted a focus group that vocalised a feeling from those within tech industries that there was disconnect between the education system and skills needed within the industries (cyber security skills were highlighted predominantly).

Employment and Skills: Skills Shortages

The overall level of Skills Shortage Vacancies⁶ (SSVs) and Hard to Fill Vacancies⁷ (HFVs) in Croydon is slightly higher than the national average. There are, however, notable variations in the level of SSVs in different sectors/skill levels:



Where the proportion of SSVs is higher or significantly higher than average, this implies either a lack of suitably skilled candidates locally (or willing to travel to work in the borough) and/or a particular concentration of businesses in these sectors.

It should be noted that the sectors with high levels of SSVs correspond to growing sectors, so there is good reason to focus on these sectors when considering issues such as the area review, skills devolution, and more locally the focus of employment and skills activity in the borough⁸.

⁶ Vacancies difficult to fill due to candidates lacking suitable skills.

⁷ All vacancies difficult to fill.

⁸ Source: Croydon Local Authority Briefing – Employment and Skills (2017).

Qualitative data obtained from the focus groups also highlighted that digital skills are a requirement for greater growth. This includes:

- Digital skills for the general workforce – skills needed in a workplace and generally linked to the use of applications developed by IT specialists. While the digital skills needed by the workforce are likely to differ across sectors, there will be some minimum requirements linked to processing information that will be applicable across all sectors; and
- Digital skills for ICT and technology professions (digitally innovative and creative individuals, organisations and businesses) – skills needed to work across the diverse IT sector. They include digital skills linked to the development of new digital technologies, and new products and services.

Both of these sets of skills are needed if Croydon is to compare favourably with other areas in relation to talent and growth. This is especially true given Croydon's tech hub. Croydon is home to over a thousand digital, creative, and technology companies and without access to higher level digital and tech skills to support innovation and business development, this sector may struggle to continue its growth. Further work is needed to fully understand the specificities around the tech skills requirements, who is best placed to deliver this and how we can work in partnership to make it happen.

The Small Business Commission noted that whilst it was clear that businesses felt that the skills gap was creating an obstacle for growth it was difficult to get behind exactly which technical and soft skills were needed for them to achieve a more productive workforce. Customer service, communication and information technology skills were cited as the most popular skills that would be needed within the next 3-5 years to drive their businesses forward.

The Commission noted that businesses were interested in utilising the services of Croydon Works, a free job brokerage service which is run by the Council in partnership with Croydon College and Job Centre Plus. The survey showed that four businesses had already accessed the service, however, 36% said that they would like to be keen to use Croydon Works in the future.

The Small Business Commission findings noted that there was a need to look at highlighting job prospects in key industries. This could be met by opening up businesses to opportunities that might be found by offering work experience placements, internships and apprenticeships that could create a pipeline of local talent that would create socioeconomic value for residents and help businesses to retain local staff. It would also support young people so that they are not disadvantaged by a lack of opportunities in specific industries.

Recommendations:

- Promote the services of Croydon Works⁹ and other key employment support stakeholders;
- Working with the Employment & Skills Board to map future skills needs and provision within the borough;
- Best position Croydon to benefit from the devolution of the adult skills budget to be implemented 2019/2020;
- Increase the opportunities to showcase industries by enabling work experience placements and apprenticeships and upskill residents, creating socioeconomic value;
- Source further university or international programmes to look at creating further innovation centres;
- Investigate targeted interventions to support hard-to-reach groups into employment;
- Engage with programmes that can increase digital literacy in businesses; and
- Support and promote programmes that work with schools and businesses to better inform students of local career opportunities.

International Trade

In all the focus groups that were held by the Small Business Commission, links formed by Croydon's diverse population were seen as a fantastic opportunity to create further links when trading internationally. With the UK's second largest airport (Gatwick), a diverse workforce, and a variety of different sectors spread out across the region, the area already has the foundations in place to make this happen.

Firms new to exporting experience on average a 34% increase in productivity in the first year, and are 11% more likely to survive¹⁰. The current thrust of government growth policy has a heavy focus on trade and exporting. As part of the Growth Corridor, which connects Croydon to Brighton along the A23 (Coast to Capital), there are emerging opportunities for the area which could be significant for the future economic development of the region. The Coast to Capital area already boasts an export figure of £9.1 billion per year.

Combine this with a tourist income of £3.6 billion, the area is well known on the international stage for its business capability and willingness to trade across borders as well as accommodating visitors. There remains a large amount of potential for growth, which is why a key strategic aim of Coast to

⁹ Croydon Works is a job brokerage service, delivered by a partnership between Croydon Council, Croydon College and Job Centre Plus, to provide employability support and a free-to-use recruitment service for the residents and businesses of Croydon.

¹⁰ Source: Department for International Trade (DfIT).

Capital, London Economic Area Partnership (LEAP) and Department for International Trade (DfIT) is to increase international trade.

With organisations like South London Export Club, DfIT and Chamber of Commerce all ready to assist companies to trade internationally it is interesting to note that despite this support, there is a general feeling that businesses could be doing more to access markets abroad and may be missing out on exporting opportunities. Gatwick Airport is developing new routes, many in growth markets, and are continuing to build on their business traffic. Croydon Council supports the growth of Gatwick Airport and welcomes the economic benefits to Croydon.

Only 31 out of the 154 respondents to the business survey confirmed that they were already exporting. To ensure that the Commission understood businesses trading internationally, a further group of 34 businesses were brought together to look at opportunities and issues facing exporters and importers within the borough. These were identified as:

Opportunities	Barriers
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Great business support for exporters available within the borough;• Great transport links close to the City and three airports;• Good conference facilities;• Open and supportive SME culture with strong networks of support;• Croydon business culture;• High concentration of businesses within the borough; and• Skilled workforce.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Brexit;• Road infrastructure needs additional capacity;• Need more courses on how to export and trade;• Publicity and information (marketing);• Increase the support for small businesses to develop and grow by accessing new markets;• Parking;• No COBRA or business library resource;• Increase the positive promotion of Croydon to celebrate opportunities and areas of best practice in order to promote it as the place to live, work and do business;• Increase activity to promote Croydon as an attractive target for FDI companies;• More information about opportunities in sectors which need more input from the council in engaging with businesses; and• Communication on support activities is fragmented.

It is important to note that the Brexit effect was very keenly felt by exporters who were worried about the future of their businesses.

Recommendations:

- Working with Coast to Capital, South London Export, Department for Trade & Industry and Chamber of Commerce to deliver a series of international trade workshops, one to one support and international trade visits to support businesses trading abroad;
- Position Croydon as a key player within the international community - "open for business" working with partners and stakeholders such as Gatwick Airport;
- Promote information sources to support international trade;
- Promote contract opportunities available through DIT, South London Export, and Enterprise Europe Network (EEN); and
- Promote a positive image of Croydon through Croydon Urban Edge brand and other media channels.



Procurement

The Small Business Commission findings showed that small businesses needed more support to access the procurement opportunities available from public sector contracts and large private sector companies.

SMEs, whose presence in communities is vital for grassroots economies, strongly voiced their need for further support to enter into supply chains and stressed that it was felt that Croydon Council should be seen to lead the way.

SMEs were interested to understand more about the work already completed by Value Croydon – an initiative about Croydon Council working together with businesses, the community and other public sector agencies to provide social value in Croydon. The aim is that Croydon Council uses its purchasing power to support local businesses and generate jobs for local people. The Council will also work in partnership to maximise the social value for local communities from contractual relationships with external partners.

In practice, this means:

- A strong focus on supporting the creation of job opportunities for local people;
- Investing in local business growth; and
- Opening up more commissioning opportunities for local businesses, the voluntary community and the social enterprise sector to compete for council contracts.

Despite the award winning work of Value Croydon, many SMEs were unaware of the opportunities that were available to them through the programme. The findings of the Commission showed a need of further promotion of the Value Croydon project, combining showcasing contract opportunities with encouraging and enabling larger businesses to place their contracts onto the Value Croydon website – providing a one stop shop for SMEs to find information on potential new contracts. These should be supported with workshops that enable small businesses to write bids that will provide successful tenders.

Recommendations:

- Clarify and promote the Value Croydon offering for business use, to include promoting contracts under £100,000;
- Croydon Council to create a tier one improvement target of their procurement contracts to be issued to local businesses;
- Croydon Council to ensure that feedback is provided to SMEs when their tenders have not been successful;
- Create a dynamic programme of workshops to support SMEs in writing successful bids, develop their policies and develop meet the buyer events to broker relationships;
- Work with Gatwick airport to promote the opportunities of their annual meet the buyer event to Croydon companies;

- Work with large companies within Croydon Council's supply chain to encourage procurement opportunities to be accessed by local businesses; and
- Create a single platform to promote contract opportunities for local businesses.

Inward Investment: Brand Croydon

The Small Business Commission qualitative data collected clearly showed that most businesses felt that Croydon was a great place to do business in. However, there was a general feel that Croydon needed a coordinated marketing piece that negated the negative image that the borough receives nationally in order to create a positive brand image of Croydon. It was felt that Croydon Council should lead on this using the Croydon Urban Edge website as a showcase for working, living and doing business in the borough.

Croydon Urban Edge provides dedicated assistance and support to businesses seeking to locate, relocate or expand in Croydon. Businesses are allocated a customer-focused account manager as part of the Croydon Urban Edge concierge package to facilitate their search for premises borough-wide. The Croydon Urban Edge service is open to businesses of all sizes and are assisted closely from initial enquiry through to starting business operation to ensure this process is as seamless as possible. Since summer 2016, the Council has assisted over 100 companies, predominantly SMEs, with their search for new premises. This has primarily been within the commercial and retail sectors, but a leisure focus has also been prominent. During this time, large companies – including HMRC, Home Office, The Body Shop, Superdrug and EDF Energy – have located their headquarters in Croydon, exemplifying the attractive Croydon offer for businesses. The Commission noted that businesses within the borough were not aware of the range of information and support already in place.

Recommendations:

- Improve the visibility of information and support available from the Council;
- Work with appropriate organisations such as Coast to Capital Foreign and Commonwealth Offices, Overseas Business Networks, Foreign Direct Investment Group, London and Partners and Department for Trade and Industry to encourage foreign direct investment;
- Continue campaigns via MIPIM, London Real Estate Forum and London & Partners to promote the borough;
- Create a dedicated welcome business letter for the borough which can signpost businesses to a website that will provide support and information on the borough;
- Develop sector propositions to target and attract foreign direct investment; and
- Engage with overseas owned businesses through Overseas Business Networks and partners to provide support and encourage further and sustained investment in Croydon.

Employment Land

The Small Business Commission has identified several challenges related to employment space for SME growth and expansion in the borough. Whilst Croydon has several move-on spaces for SMEs, a number of businesses commented on the lack of affordable move-on space for those employing four or more people. SMEs felt that they could not benefit from economies of scale when upgrading from a per desk cost to a per office cost, hampering their ability to grow. Similarly, several businesses commented on the shortage of light industrial/warehousing supply. This threatens the Council's ability to attract and retain inward investment from businesses seeking such premises, and this issue is already known to the Council which is addressing this through planning policy. Businesses also commented on the longevity of lease contracts, stating that the minimum lease length (10 or more years) was too long and something small businesses are unable to commit to. It was noted by the Commission that landowners should consider the circumstances of small businesses more favourably as to not discourage this significant occupier market.

The Council has undertaken several studies into employment land space across the borough as part of the development of its new planning policy framework, the Croydon Local Plan. These studies have assessed the amount of business floorspace in Croydon and its change over time, informing the updated policies to be included in the borough's planning policy.

The Employment Technical Paper, published in January 2017, details issues and actions to ensure economic growth, highlighting areas of protection such as land for industry and warehousing; competition for inward investment from other areas in London and the South East; an increasing population with demands for housing and local jobs; and a growing number of vacant premises with poorly designed conversions to other uses.

The Council's draft planning policy addresses these employment-related issues through policies that presume favour of employment related development; retaining land and premises relating to industrial employment; promoting growth and expansion of cultural and creative industries; supporting measures to improve the borough's quality stock of retail and office; and promote and support the development of new and refurbished office floorspace in Croydon Metropolitan Centre. Article 4, which restricts permitted development rights in Croydon Metropolitan Centre, has also reduced the amount of conversions of employment land to residential.

The conversion of commercial premises to residential units through permitted development rights, however, has resulted in a significant loss of commercial floorspace in the town centre, which has been reflected in increasing commercial rental values. This was reflected in the survey results with an average score of:

6.2/10

availability of business accommodation in
Croydon

5.9/10

cost of business accommodation in
Croydon

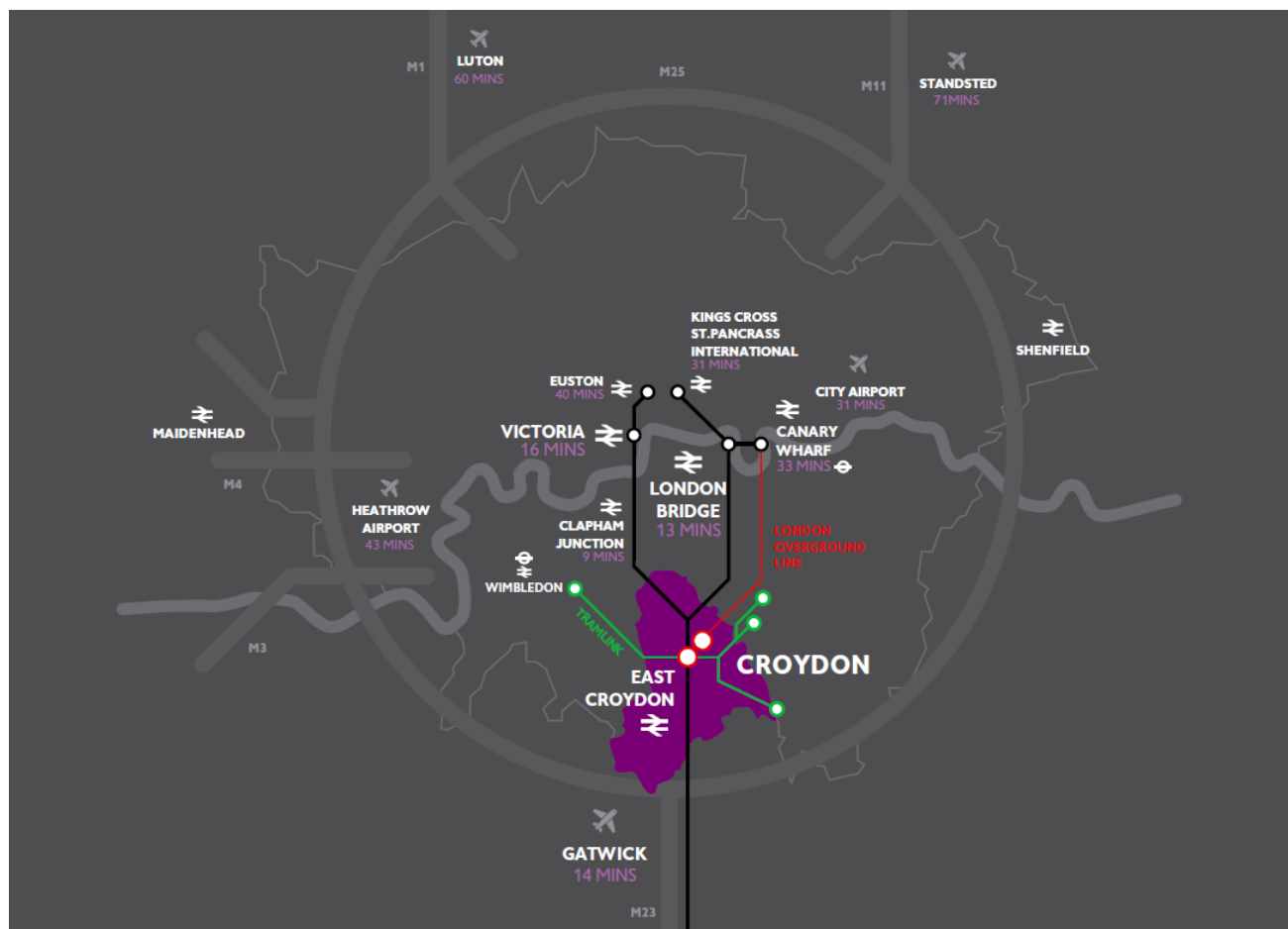
Whilst other developments in the town centre, such as Westfield and Boxpark, were commented upon positively, concern was expressed over the impact of such developments on increasing rental values. Approximately 88% of respondent's intend on keeping their businesses in Croydon but several businesses commented upon using rent views and lease breaks as opportunities to reconsider Croydon as a business location. The Council recognises that occupier demand supersedes current supply and that major developments may increase commercial rental values locally, and will encourage commercial landowners to retain rents at affordable levels for Croydon businesses.

Recommendations:

- Croydon Council to undertake a market assessment to look at the feasibility of utilising its suitable vacant assets to create affordable and flexible move-on space for SMEs employing three or more people;
- Develop a consortium of SME friendly landowners to encourage the provision of affordable business floorspace in the borough to ensure Croydon remains one of the most affordable business locations in London;
- Croydon Council to seek to adopt the amended draft employment-related planning policy into the final Croydon Local Plan; and
- Croydon Council to track the level of commercial, retail and leisure development more closely to identify what premises will become available and when.

Transport and Infrastructure

Transport is seen as a significant contributor to why Croydon is great for business, with good road, rail and airports links. Croydon is seen as a gateway into London without the central London prices for houses and office space. However, the focus groups highlighted issues with move-on space (as emphasised previously).



Croydon's transport connections.

Quantitative and qualitative data also placed broadband as a barrier for business growth. Further clarification was sought to get behind the problems businesses were facing, however, this was difficult and the Small Business Commission would recommend that further research is needed on coverage and quality of the broadband for businesses within the borough to ensuring that the offering is fit for purpose.

The tech focus group vocalised their concern that a substandard broadband service would have a detrimental impact on tech business growth and if Croydon was to achieve the ambitions it was placing on its tech reputation, then it was felt by the group that Croydon Council should be asked to look at delivery options across the borough.

Recommendations:

- Croydon Council to map broadband provision and overall connectivity within the borough.

Markets

Markets play an important role in the ambience of the Croydon town street scene, with the historic Surrey Street Market having undergone a major refurbishment in Spring 2017 to regenerate the market area and increase the footfall within the area.

Traders were invited to contribute to the Commission by survey, of which the findings were as follows:

Opportunities	Barriers
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regeneration of the market environment (completed June 2017); 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Decrease in footfall caused by a decline in people within the Surrey Street area; and • Increase in parking charges.

Concerns were raised that a partnership approach should be taken to increase footfall. This could be through a series of events within the marketplace or by creating a street scene ambience that would attract clients to the area, such as street entertainers, therefore creating a cultural vibe.

Recommendations:

- Croydon Council to work with traders to create a programme of events throughout the year to increase the footfall within the market; and
- Croydon Council to work with partners to increase the cultural attractiveness of the market, using music/art to attract more footfall to create a better visitor experience within the market area.

District Centres

Thriving district centres are just as important as a vibrant metropolitan centre, with a myriad of businesses located in the region and all facing challenges within the area. Focus groups and in-depth interviews with Purley and New Addington BID and an emerging Coulsdon Business Partnership emphasised that many independent retailers were seeing more demands on increased costs than ever before. Rising business rates, auto pension enrolment and a rise in costs for goods were putting a pressure on profits with many independents only just breaking even (this is also reflective of independents within the metropolitan centre).

The district centres also found challenges around wayfinding signage (including signage to car parks) and parking costs and availability of parking spaces. In areas such as Coulsdon and Purley, it was felt that there was a lack of footfall because of the bypass/gyratory and lack of signage for parking meant that people were just driving through the towns rather than stopping to shop. The Coulsdon focus group also emphasised that an option to pay for additional parking within the town would be beneficial to them (this would be a one hour free parking with an option to pay for an additional hour). A suggestion for increasing cycling opportunities (cycle lanes) was offered as an alternative to creating further parking spaces and also promote health and wellbeing within the borough.

Attracting the correct mix of shops in order to create the right offering for the public was seen as critical for the district centres. Representatives from the independent retail community felt that there needed to be a more proactive approach for this although it was recognised that this was very difficult to achieve in some areas. Suggestions included a website to promote Croydon's district centres. There was also a general feel by representatives that Croydon districts needed some positive marketing messages.

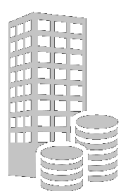
Recommendations:

- BIDS, relevant business forums and Croydon Council to look at ensuring wayfinding signage is fit for purpose within the district centres;
- BIDS, relevant business forums and Croydon Council to look at ensuring parking signage is fit for purpose within the district centres;
- To add an option for visitors to pay for an additional hour's parking on top of the already available one hour free parking within the relevant District Centres. This will create the option for visitors to be able to park for two hours;
- Croydon Council to work with partners to promote the district centres on the Croydon Urban Edge website; and
- Croydon Council to create and promote an online business directory to encourage residents to buy local and promote all businesses within the borough.

Business Support

Advice and support is critical for SMEs at every stage of their business journey. The differing needs of start-ups to growing businesses means that the Council needs to ensure that its Croydon business network is offering support at all levels. Whether it is networking, leadership and management, financial planning or marketing training the Commission wanted to investigate the quality of support available and how businesses were accessing it.

Croydon has a very active business support network which includes Croydon Chamber of Commerce, the Federation of Small Businesses; Business Improvement Districts; Croydon Tech City; Start-Up Croydon; Shaking Hands; and Sussex Innovation Centre (plus many more). Although it was interesting to note that in the business survey the top four ways that businesses accessed support were:



Accountant



Website/
Own Research



Friends and/or
Relatives



Solicitors/
Legal Advisers

Businesses over 10 years old were the most prevalent at accessing support, which could be an indicator of why they have achieved longevity in their respective industries (see Annex 2).

Croydon businesses had a variety of opportunities to access new markets and increase business contacts through networking, however, the focus groups indicated that there was a lack of awareness for these opportunities. It was felt that the Council could provide an impartial conduit through the Croydon business network to communicate support opportunities to the business community. It was felt that this would also show that the Council was “open to business”.

The survey did highlight that it was felt that training masterclasses, especially in marketing and social media for SMEs, would provide opportunities for their businesses.

Recommendations:

- Croydon Council to create an email newsletter for businesses, to be sent on a bi-monthly basis which highlights opportunities for grants, funding, networking and information that will support SMEs. This will be informed through the Croydon Business Network;
- Croydon Council to work with the Croydon Business Network to run a series of bi-monthly training opportunities for businesses; and
- Explore increasing the accessibility of the Good Employer accreditation for all SMEs to ensure that SMEs can be represented as ‘Good Employers’.

Technology

With the support of organisations like Sussex Innovation Centre and TMRW Hub, Croydon is now seen as London's fastest tech start up cluster. To support this ecosystem the Commission ran a focus group with 34 attendees, specifically designed to look at the opportunities and issues that the tech sector were facing:

Opportunities	Barriers
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Transport connections;• Tech support organisations such as Croydon Tech City, TMRW Hub and Sussex Innovation Centre;• Collaborative workspace such as Sussex Innovation Centre, TMRW Hub and My OutSpace;• Networking;• The Tech vibe; and• Croydon is open for business – development and regeneration.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Parking costs;• Lack of information when starting a business in Croydon;• Available open data;• Negative images from the national media of Croydon;• Skills shortages;• Access to Funding;• High business rates; and• Cost of commercial premises.

The group emphasised the need for an organisation to take 'ownership' of the tech sector within Croydon. It was felt that the Croydon tech scene was now at a stage where it needed further facilitation to help it achieve its ambition and that the Council should work with Croydon Tech City and Sussex Innovation Centre to progress this for the future.

Recommendations:

- Croydon Council to create a welcome to Croydon pack for new businesses (this could be electronic);
- Croydon Council to work with Croydon Tech City and Sussex Innovation Centre (SINC) to look at appropriate ways to support tech community in a facilitated way;
- Croydon Council to work with stakeholders such as Croydon Tech City & Sussex Innovation to create a dedicated targeted campaign to the top 50 tech companies in the UK to encourage them to come to Croydon;
- Croydon Council to work with stakeholders in order to facilitate relationships with existing larger companies and the tech community to enable projects that encourage collaboration and innovation;
- Croydon stakeholders to create a marketing campaign which would include creating a video to highlight the tech scene and promote Croydon as the place to be - open for opportunity; and
- Croydon Council to work with partners to provide open data which will assist Smart City innovation.

Creative Industries

Creative industries accounts for 15.4% of businesses within the borough¹¹. With this in mind it is an important sector to consider when looking at creating sustainable growth. The creative industry based here in Croydon are mainly comprised of micro-businesses, employing up to 50 staff. It was therefore a significant sector for the Small Business Commission to consider when evaluating support opportunities, especially when considering the Council are placing heavy emphasis on expanding cultural opportunities in the borough.

The feedback from the sector highlighted very similar issues and opportunities as the technology sector.

Opportunities	Barriers
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Transport connections;• Collaborative workspace such as Sussex Innovation Centre, TMRW Hub and My OutSpace;• Networking;• Croydon is open for business – development and regeneration; and• International trade opportunities – Brand Britain	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Lack of information when starting a business in Croydon;• Negative images from the national media of Croydon;• Skills shortages;• Access to Funding;• High business rates; and• Cost of commercial premises.

Recommendations:

- Croydon Council to work with stakeholders to look at appropriate ways to support creative industries in a facilitated way.

Culture and the Night Time Economy

With the development of a Cultural Quarter and Fairfield Halls regeneration (due to complete 2018), culture and the night time economy is vital when looking at the vibrancy of Croydon's offering. The Commission recognises the challenges that the night time economy are currently facing. The Mayor of London has also recognised these challenges in their Culture and the Night Time Economy Draft Paper (April 2017):

- London has 103 fewer nightclubs and live music venues than 2007 (a decline of almost one third);
- According to the Campaign for Real Ale, London continues to lose pubs at a rate of 140 every year;
- Permitted development rights are putting pressure on premises;
- Sustaining existing venues and providing new facilities; and

¹¹ Source: ONS and NOMIS, Growth Team District Centres & Regeneration – April 2017

- Broadening the range of evening and night time activities.

Anecdotal evidence tells us that the footfall in the evening/night time economy in the borough of Croydon is falling. The Commission recommended that the opportunities and barriers for the evening and night time economy were explored further. This was mainly due to ensuring that full representation of the industry was received and recommendations fully supported the current economic climate.

Recommendations:

- Croydon Council to work with stakeholders to look at appropriate ways to support the evening and night time economy in a facilitated way.

Social Enterprise

The Small Business Commission would like to recognise the importance of Croydon's social enterprises and the social value that they create for the community. For the purpose of this report the challenges and opportunities that social enterprises faced were not highlighted separately as the feedback showed that the issues that they faced were reflective of the business community as a whole. However, the Commission has suggested that Croydon's Social Enterprise Network is used to engage and deliver the recommendations shown in the action plan and facilitate best practice in the borough of Croydon.

Recommendations:

- Croydon Council to work with stakeholders to look at appropriate ways to support Social Enterprises through the Croydon Social Enterprise Network.

Conclusion and Next Steps

04

The Small Business Commission concludes that Croydon's SME business community are dynamic and innovative and Croydon is seen as a borough with ambition and opportunity. However, the pressures of doing business in today's competitive global market as seen within this report and a combination of rising business rates and increased costs mean that Croydon must not be complacent. Its stakeholders must work together to create the right economic climate for businesses and residents to thrive.

The development plan attached to this report is designed to bring together key stakeholders within the community to create and deliver the action needed to help Croydon SMEs develop and grow. The aim of the plan is to ensure that the work of the Small Business Commission delivers an action-orientated approach that provides a legacy that ensures engaged support for the Croydon business community. The progress of the delivery of the plan will be monitored through the Croydon Business Network (CBN)¹². The CBN will work together to collaborate on delivery of the attached action plan.

¹² *The Croydon Business Network is a group of independent business representatives and membership organisations that represent businesses in Croydon.*

Action Plan

Recommendation	Action	Owner	Complete
Taxation			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Communication on rate distribution and support available for businesses on rate relief. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Revise website business pages to provide relevant information on website. Provide information to the Croydon Business Network in order to support businesses 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Croydon Council 	October 2017
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Collective and coordinated lobbying for London to be treated in a fairer way when rateable values are set as it operates in a unique microcosm. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Facilitate and action lobbying campaign. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Croydon Council Croydon Business Network BIDs Relevant partners 	Ongoing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Research models of best practice of other Councils use of retained business rates for economic growth delivery. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Investigate other councils' use of retained business rates. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Croydon Council 	November 2017
Access to Funding			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Supporting and promoting jigsaw opportunities that combine grant and private funding mix. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work with partners provide information on funding mix. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Croydon Council Rangewell Coast to Capital LEP 	Ongoing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Croydon Enterprise Loan Fund to address funding gaps. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work with partners to promote Croydon Enterprise Loan Fund opportunities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Relevant stakeholders 	Ongoing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work with partners/providers to source a dynamic offering of funding opportunities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Revise website business pages to provide relevant contact on website. 		September 2017

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Utilise the Croydon Business Network to provide a communication network that signposts businesses to impartial and professional advice. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create social media content to be aimed at promoting funding opportunities to businesses in the borough. • Create a newsletter for businesses to promote available grant and funding opportunities. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Croydon Business Network • Croydon Council | <p>Starting September 2017</p> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote investor opportunities within the borough working with partners and providers such as Sussex Innovation Centre, Croydon Tech City, Rangewell and Enterprise for London. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create information events for access to funding to businesses in Croydon. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Croydon Council • Croydon Business Network • Partners | <p>January 2018</p> |

Employment and Skills: Accessing Talent

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote the services of Croydon Works and other key employment support stakeholders | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Raise profile of Croydon Work's internal and external events and networking. • Create media campaign with partners. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Croydon Council • Croydon Business Network • JCP • BIDs • Relevant partners | <p>Ongoing</p> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Map future skills needs and provision within the borough. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Programme of events with relevant businesses to focus on skills gaps and needs. | | <p>February 2017</p> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Best position Croydon to benefit from the devolution of adult skills budget to be implemented 2019/2020. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with stakeholders to better benefit from devolution | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Croydon Council/Stakeholders | <p>Ongoing</p> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase opportunities to showcase industries by enabling work experience placements and apprenticeships and upskill residents creating socio-economic value. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create a campaign to promote the benefits of work experience placements and apprenticeships to businesses. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Croydon Council/Stakeholders | <p>October 2017</p> |

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Investigate targeted interventions to support hard to reach groups into employment. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Map provision and create a strategy that engages targeted interventions to support hard to reach groups into employment. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employment & Skills Board, Croydon Council | December 2017 |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engage with programmes that can increase digital literacy in businesses. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Map provision of programmes available to provide digital literacy in businesses (business surgeries). | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employment & Skills Board, Croydon Council, • Croydon Business Network | December 2017 |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Source further University or International programmes to look at expanding/creating further innovation centres. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Working with stakeholder's source University or international programmes to the borough. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employment & Skills Board | 2018/2019 |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support and promote programmes that work with schools and businesses to better inform students of local career opportunities. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Map and organise events and needs within the borough and work with stakeholders to ensure that a dynamic programme of support is delivered. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Schools/Businesses/Enterprise Advisor Network/Croydon Business Network/Employment & Skills Board | Ongoing |

International Trade

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Working with Coast to Capital, South London Export, DIT and Chamber of Commerce to deliver a series of international trade workshops, one to one support and international trade visits to support businesses trading abroad. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create, promote and deliver events, training, missions and support. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • South London Export • London Chamber of Commerce • Croydon Council • Croydon Business Network • Overseas business Network | Ongoing |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Position Croydon as a key player within the international community that is "open for business/opportunity" working with partners and stakeholders such as Gatwick Airport. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deliver Croydon campaigns such as MIPIM, London Real Estate Forum through the Croydon Urban Edge brand. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coast to Capital • Gatwick Airport | Ongoing |

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promote contract opportunities available through DIT, South London Export and EEN. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create Communication tools that promotes contract opportunities for businesses (e-newsletter and Value Croydon). | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Croydon Council South London Export Chamber of Commerce London & Partners Enterprise Europe Network Croydon Chamber | October 2017 |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promote a positive image of Croydon through the Croydon Urban Edge brand and other media channels. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Deliver inward investment activity as per campaigns. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Croydon Council London & Partners | Ongoing |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promote information sources to support international trade. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Map sources of information, support and opportunity and promote to Croydon businesses | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Croydon Business Network Croydon Council EEN/Coast to Capital/OBN London Chamber | Ongoing |

Procurement

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Clarify and promote the Value Croydon offering for business use to include promoting contracts under £100,000. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Website and online app to be produced | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Croydon Council | February 2018 |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Croydon Council to create tier one improvement target of their procurement contracts to be issued to local businesses. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Croydon Council to create a tier one improvement target of their procurement contracts to be issued to local businesses. | | April 2018 |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Creation of a dynamic programme of workshops to support SMEs in writing successful BIDS, develop policies and meet the buyer events to broker relationships. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create a dynamic programme of workshops to support SMEs in writing successful bids and meet the buyer events. | | January 2018 |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work with Gatwick airport to promote opportunities of their annual meet the buyer event to Croydon companies. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promote Gatwick Airports meet the buyer event to Croydon companies | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Croydon Council Gatwick Airport Croydon Business Network | September/October 2017 |

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with large companies in Croydon Councils supply chain to encourage procurement opportunities to be accessed by local businesses. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with large companies within Croydon. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Croydon Council | Ongoing |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create a single platform to promote contract opportunities for local businesses. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop Value Croydon offering. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Croydon Business Network | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Croydon Council to ensure that feedback is given to SMEs when tenders have not been successful. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop Value Croydon website. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Croydon Council • Croydon Business Network | May 2018 |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create process for delivering feedback to SMEs. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Croydon Council | January 2018 |

Inward Investment

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve the visibility of information and support available from the Council. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Revise and update relevant sections of the Croydon Urban Edge and Croydon Council website | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Croydon Council • London & Partners • DTI | November 2017 |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with appropriate organisations such as Coast to Capital Foreign Direct Investment Group, London & Partners and Department for Industry and Trade to encourage foreign direct investment and continue campaigns via MIPIM, London Real Estate Forum and London & Partners to promote the borough. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with relevant partners and Inward Investment Team Croydon Council to continue to promote the borough • Campaigns via MIPIM • Complete pilot with London & Partners to promote the borough | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coast to Capital • Relevant stakeholders | Ongoing |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create a dedicated welcome business letter which can signpost businesses to a website that will provide support and information on the borough. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create a dedicated welcome business letter for the borough. • Create a website to provide information on the borough and business support. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Croydon Council & Stakeholders • Croydon Council/Croydon Business Network/Coast to Capital | December 2017 |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop sector propositions to target and attract foreign direct investment. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with stakeholders to create sector propositions. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Croydon Council • Overseas Business Networks | March 2018 |

- Engage with overseas owned businesses through Overseas Business Networks and partners to provide support and encourage further and sustained investment in Croydon.
 - Create a network of communication through OBN.
 - London Chamber of Commerce
 - South London Export Club
- Ongoing

Transport and Infrastructure

- Croydon Council to map Broadband provision and overall connectivity and identify business needs within the borough.
 - Croydon Council to map broadband provision and identify business needs within the Borough to understand issues and develop strategies to improve access and capacity across the network.
 - Croydon Council
- May 2018

Employment Land

- Croydon Council to undertake a market assessment to look at the feasibility of utilising its suitable vacant assets to create affordable and flexible move on space for SMEs employing three or more people.
 - Undertake market assessment and viability of utilising vacant assets.
 - Croydon Council
- March 2018
- Develop a consortium of SME friendly landowners to encourage the provision of affordable business floorspace in the borough to ensure Croydon remains one of the most affordable business locations in London.
 - Working with Develop Croydon, develop consortium.
 - Croydon Council/Develop Croydon
- February 2018
- Croydon Council to seek to adopt the amended draft employment related planning policy into the final Croydon Plan.
 - Adoption of employment related planning policy.
 - Croydon Council
- TBA

- Track the level of commercial, retail and leisure development more closely to identify what premises will become available and when.
 - Create processes that identify available premises
 - Croydon Council
 - Croydon Business Network
- Ongoing

Markets

- Increase the attractiveness of markets within Croydon in order to increase footfall.
 - Create a programme of events throughout the year to increase the footfall within the market.
 - Increase the cultural attractiveness of the market, using music/art to attract more footfall creating a better visitor experience within the market area.
 - Croydon Council
- November 2017

District Centres

- Increase the profile of the each district centre's offering.
 - Use Croydon Urban Edge website to promote the district centre offering
 - Create a social media campaign to promote district centre offerings and events.
 - Create and promote an online business directory to encourage residents to buy local and promote all businesses within the borough.
 - Croydon Council
 - BIDs
- March 2018
- Ensure that way and parking signage is fit for purpose
 - Renew way finding and parking signage and develop future strategy.
 - To look at the option of a paid for hour of parking in addition to the free hour of parking available within the car park. To
 - Croydon Council to look at the implementing an additional paid for hour of parking to be added to the

create a two hour parking option in relevant areas.

free hour creating a two hour parking option.

Business Support

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engage businesses and increase the profile of business support available within the borough. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create an email newsletter for businesses which highlights opportunities for grants, funding, networking and Information that will support SMEs. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Croydon Council | <p>September 2017</p> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Working with partners create learning opportunities and networks for SMEs. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Training programme for SMEs created | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Croydon Business Network Croydon Council Partners | <p>December 2017</p> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Explore increasing the accessibility of the Good Employer accreditation for all SMEs to ensure that SMEs can be represented as 'Good Employers'. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support created for SMEs accreditation to the Good Employer Charter. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Croydon Council | <p>November 2017</p> |

Technology

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|---|--|--|---------------------|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide relevant information to support tech businesses within the borough. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create a 'Welcome to Croydon' pack for new tech businesses (this could be electronic) showcasing support available. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Croydon Council TMRW Hub Croydon Tech City SINC | <p>January 2018</p> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support tech clusters to reach their full potential. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work in partnership to explore the best way to support the tech community in a facilitated way. | | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create a dedicated targeted campaign to 50 top tech companies in the UK | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop and implement inward investment campaign. Create marketing campaign to highlight the tech scene and promote Croydon as the "place to be" – open for opportunity | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Croydon Tech City Sussex Innovation Centre TMRW Hub Croydon Council | <p>March 2018</p> |

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase opportunities for large companies and tech community to enable projects that encourage collaboration and innovation. • Create open data to assist smart city innovation. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create a stakeholder group that facilitates relationships and opportunities. • Croydon Council to work with partners to provide open data. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Croydon Tech City • Sussex Innovation Centre • Croydon Council | January 2018 |
| | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Croydon Tech City • Sussex Innovation Centre • Croydon Council • Croydon Business Network | March 2018 |

Creative Industries

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|---|---|---|------------|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create a plan to provide appropriate support to the creative industries in a facilitated way. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a programme of support working with stakeholders to identify needs. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Croydon Business Network • Croydon Council | March 2018 |
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Culture, Evening and the Night Time Economy

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create a plan to provide appropriate support to the evening and night time economy in a facilitated way. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a programme of support working with stakeholders to identify needs. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Croydon Business Network • Croydon Council • Croydon, Purley, New Addington BIDS | March 2018 |
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Social Enterprise

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|--|---|--|---------------|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create a programme of support through the Croydon Social Enterprise Network. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a programme of support working with stakeholders to identify needs. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Croydon Social Enterprise Network • Croydon Business Network • Croydon Council | December 2018 |
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Meet the Commissioners

05



Andrew Bauer

Chair of the Small Business Commission and Centre Director of The Whitgift Centre

Andrew holds thirty years' experience in retail and estate property management. With significant shopping centre management experience, Andrew takes an active role in local regeneration issues, and has been a Croydon BID board members for the past nine years and its chairman for the past four. Andrew also initiated the Croydon Business Crime Reduction Partnership (CBCRP) and remains an active member of the CBCRP Board.

Andrew is a strong advocate of retaining the benefits of Croydon's regeneration as far as possible for the local population to create a virtuous circle of opportunity, employment and a sustainable local economy. It is for this reason that he is engaged in the Small Business Commission as he sees local entrepreneurial businesses being a vital component of Croydon's future economic growth into the regional powerhouse for South London.



Annabel Fogden

Head of Branch Chambers Team, London Chamber of Commerce and Industry (LCCI)

Annabel has over 25 years' experience of helping SMEs grow both locally and internationally. In her role with Croydon Chamber of Commerce over the last four years, Annabel has developed a strong connection with the Croydon business community through networking events and business services she provides.



Benedict Selvaratnam

Owner, Freshfields Market

A keen businessman since the age of 16, Benedict has grown a wine merchant business into south London's leading supplier of wines, craft beers and spirits. After introducing local fresh fruit and vegetables into his outlets, he expanded operations to encompass wholesale division that now caters for a significant number of restaurants, bars and pubs in the Croydon area. In April 2015, Benedict opened Freshfields Market in Central Croydon, an independent supermarket with a strong emphasis on freshly sourced produce.

Benedict has been nominated for several awards, including Best Beer Retailer in the South (2016) and Convenience Drinks Retailer of the Year (2017). This recognition led to him working closely with Croydon Council to organise Croydon's 1st Craft Beer Festival, Purley's 1st Craft Beer Festival, Croydon's 1st Pride Fest and numerous other projects.



Councillor Mark Watson

Lead Cabinet Member for Economy & Jobs, Croydon Council

In his role as Cabinet Member for Economy and Jobs, Councillor Mark Watson has a key role to play in spreading opportunities for Croydon's economy. He moved to Croydon in 1991, and was first elected to the Council in May 2002. He has held key positions, including Cabinet Member for Equalities and Community Partnerships, Cabinet Member for Community and Safety, and was eGovernment Champion.

He has worked as Chief Operating Officer for the BioRegional Development Group – an international environmental charity – and One Planet Products, an award-winning social business. His professional memberships include the Institute of Directors, the Chartered Management Institute, and the Royal Geographical Society.



Malcolm Brabon

Head of Services, Coast to Capital LEP

As the Head of Services, Malcolm is responsible for delivering strategies to manage the business navigator growth hub service, as well as increase business enterprise and international trade across the Coast to Capital area. Previously Malcolm was Business Support Manager.

Malcolm has worked with companies of all sizes from start-up firms to multinational organisations. Prior to joining Coast to Capital, Malcolm led his own consultancy, specialising in connecting UK and overseas business service providers with potential clients. He was also Partnership Manager for Business Link London, based in Croydon. A keen advocate of entrepreneurship, Malcolm is also 'Start Up Britain Champion' for Croydon and a committee member of the South London Export Club.



Robert O'Sullivan and Laurence Grant

Founders, Shaking Hands

Croydon-born Robert founded Shaking Hands with the intention of giving back to his community. Six months into a publishing contract, Laurence was approached by fellow Croydonian Robert to join Shaking Hands. Together with their wide array of skills, Robert and Laurence utilise these to benefit the Croydon business community.



Sarah Luxford

Director, Croydon Tech City

Sarah is an innovator, connector, business founder and advisory board member with a passion for technology, talent and community. Sarah is one of the Co-Founders of Croydon Tech City, which inspires and champions tech businesses, skills and opportunities in South London. She is voted in the Top 50 Most Influential Women in Tech in the UK and Top 4 Power 100 UK Entrepreneurial Influencers.

Appendix

06

Annex 1: Sectoral Breakdown of Responses



- Arts, Creative & Culture
- Engineering & Manufacturing
- Life & Medical Sciences
- Retail & Wholesale Services
- Catering & Hospitality
- Financial & Professional Services
- Multiple
- Construction
- Information Technology
- Other

Annex 2: Age of Business by Business Support Provider Used Survey Results

	<12 months	12-24 months	2-5 years	5-9 years	10+ years	Grand Total
Accountant	3	7	8	14	44	76
Website/Own research	6	8	10	17	32	73
Friends/Relatives	3	6	9	15	24	57
Solicitor/Legal Adviser	1	4	1	9	24	39
Chamber of Commerce	2	4	5	8	19	38
Federation of Small Businesses (FSB)		2	2	8	23	35
Bank Manager	1	3		6	25	35
Trade/Professional Association	1		4	7	22	34
Start Up Croydon/Croydon Business Venture	1	2	3	6	12	24
Croydon Council		2	3	5	13	23
Shaking Hands	2	4	2	3	7	18
Other	1	1	2	3	5	12
Property Agents				2	8	10
Croydon Tech City	1	3	1	2	3	10
Sussex University Innovation Centre (SINC)		1	2	2	4	9
Government Helpline				3	4	7
University/FE Institution			2		3	5
Croydon Works		1		2	1	4
TMRW Hub			1	1	2	4

