

BUSINESS & ECON

Coping with the recession

Practical advice and support for Birmingham businesses from Birmingham City Council and its partners

Coping with the recession and looking to the future

Mike Whitby, Leader of the City Council



Everyone is affected when the economy takes a down turn. With our partners, Birmingham City Council is working hard to help local families and businesses. We are determined to support the business community through this recession.

At the same time it is vital that we plan for the future and prepare for the recovery and the new opportunities that global expansion will bring in the years ahead. I am confident that Birmingham will respond to these opportunities as it has always done, with dynamism, industry and invention.

The future looks good, with more than £20 billion worth of planned investment across the whole of the city in the next decade, £6 billion of this to be undertaken by the public sector.

The City Council is investing £193 million in a new Library of Birmingham and there is another £600 million committed to the redevelopment of New Street Station. £2.4 billion will be spent on “Building Schools for the Future” programme which will enable the city to rebuild or refurbish 89 secondary schools over the next 15 years, helping to continue the improvement in our schools and educate the workforce of tomorrow.

The Big City Plan will shape and revitalise Birmingham's city centre over the next twenty years, putting the city's sustainability, culture, creativity, technology and enterprise at the heart of its future plans, activities and development.

Birmingham is a global city with a local heart. Whether your business is small or large, global or local, the city council can help with your short term needs as well as providing the investment that the city needs to prosper in the future.

This booklet is designed to help you find the business support you need. For more information, please visit our website at

 www.birmingham.gov.uk/recession

Keep up to date with business news by subscribing to the free monthly Birmingham Business Bulletin delivered to your inbox.

 www.birmingham.gov.uk/businessbulletin

Advantage West Midlands, the regional development agency for the West Midlands, has set up **The West Midlands Taskforce** to ensure that public sector agencies and business support organisations are working together to provide more effective support to businesses, individuals and communities that are affected by the economic downturn.

Key areas of work for the taskforce include workforce retention and rapid response to lay off, job replacement and retraining following large scale redundancy, enhanced business support through Business Link and the Manufacturing Advisory Service and financial assistance for companies.

 www.supportwm.co.uk

Where can I get advice and help with the credit crunch or to start my own business?

Business Link West Midlands provides a comprehensive business support service to Birmingham companies. It offers a dedicated “credit crunch hotline”, seminars, advice, support and consultancy to local businesses facing financial difficulties.

They also provide important advice and support needed to start, maintain and grow a business.

 0845 113 1234

 Credit Crunch hotline 0845 002 0900

 info@businesslinkwm.co.uk

Business Insight, the business information arm of the library, is the UK’s most comprehensive business information service. Offering more than 40 services, Business Insight has the resources to help you set up and run your own business, with business advisors on hand to help you with start-up, forming a company, running a business, market research and much more.

 0121 303 4531

 www.birmingham.gov.uk/businessinsight

Birmingham Chamber of Commerce and Industry offers a comprehensive range of services for business including international trade development, business development and growth, consultancy and events.

 0121 454 6171

 www.birmingham-chamber.com

Advantage West Midlands has established a Transition Loan Fund to help small and medium-sized enterprises suffering short-term finance pressures. A variety of other schemes – such as the Fair Finance Consortium and selective Finance for Investment in England scheme – are available through them.

 www.supportwm.co.uk

The Government has launched three schemes to help businesses that are having difficulty in obtaining credit following the credit crunch. Each scheme is targeted at different types of company:

- **The Enterprise Finance Guarantee** is available to companies with a turnover of up to £25 million. It enables businesses to access loans of between £1,000 and £1m at the discretion of the banks participating.
- **The Capital for Enterprise Fund** allows companies to get credit by selling debt in exchange for an equity stake in their business. It will provide equity of between £250,000 and £2m to companies with a turnover of up to £50m which have viable business models and good growth potential.
- **The Working Capital Scheme** provides more capital so banks can lend and is available to companies with a turnover of up to £500m

 www.businesslink.gov.uk/realhelp/finance

Is your business supplying the City Council?

If you are a supplier of goods and services to the City Council we can help. We now routinely pay the majority of suppliers within 30 days. The council is very willing to discuss reducing payment terms offered by suppliers in return for an early payment discount or other benefits.

 0121 464 7299

 accountspayable@birmingham.gov.uk

 www.birmingham.gov.uk

Are you taking advantage of the sales opportunities from the public sector?

Our website provides full information and guidance on how to do business with the City Council, including a forthcoming contracts list. We are also working with other public sector procurers to help capture business for Birmingham companies. For example, the Council's recent procurement zone event offered almost a £1bn of sales opportunities from 8 major organisations.

Building on this success, we are planning to build a "Find it in Birmingham" online portal to encourage local procurement and supporting series of seminars to help Birmingham companies secure local contracts. Information lines will be available shortly. Subscribe to the Business Bulletin at www.birmingham.gov.uk/businessbulletin for the latest news.

 0121 464 8000

 www.birmingham.gov.uk

Are you claiming small business rate relief?

The City Council is supporting local small businesses to claim maximum business rate relief, which could be as much as 50%, as well as other support such as VAT relief.

 0121 303 5509/5510/5511

 www.birmingham.gov.uk

Information on **Small Business Rate Relief** can also be obtained from the government's business rates website:

 www.businesslink.gov.uk

Do you need help finding and training staff or supporting staff affected by redundancy?

Many companies are developing extra skills in their workforce using **Train to Gain** to keep their businesses competitive. From improving English and Maths, through accredited NVQs and apprenticeships, to leadership and management training. The service includes both impartial advice and funding from the **Learning and Skills Council** and can be accessed through **Business Link West Midlands**.

 0845 113 1234

 www.businesslinkwm.co.uk  www.traintogain.gov.uk

Job Centre Plus and the **Learning Skills Council** offer employers the opportunity to provide pre-redundancy support to staff under notice/threat of redundancy. This service covers all sectors of the economy and includes workforce skills analysis, bespoke job-focussed training and support into alternative employment.

 0121 255 8351

 www.jobcentrepplus.gov.uk

Regeneration

The Big City Plan is a masterplan that will create a greener, smarter, fairer and more appealing city centre, increasing the employment, training and leisure opportunities for future generations. It is a transformation that will benefit local people, visitors and businesses through the creation of an attractive, safe and prosperous city centre for all.

 www.bigcityplan.birmingham.gov.uk/big-city-plan

But regeneration is just as important in the city's local neighbourhoods, To highlight the opportunities for investment we have produced a series of Area Investment Prospectuses to capture the key strategic development and investment opportunities around the city.

The prospectus outlines Birmingham's plans to improve the economic environment and infrastructure required to support the growth generated by these opportunities.

 www.birmingham.gov.uk/regeneration

Marketing the City

To bring even more investment to Birmingham we are also expanding the national and international marketing of Birmingham, such as the recent Birmingham Built for Business campaign and building international relationships that will bring about stronger trade links and attract new inward investment to Birmingham – particularly in the new markets and investment centres of China, India and the Middle East.