

WELWYN HATFIELD COUNCIL  
COUNCIL – 2 FEBRUARY 2022

NOTICE OF MOTIONS UNDER PROCEDURE RULE 16

To consider the following notice of motions submitted under Procedure Rule 16:-

**1. The following motion has been submitted by Councillor Max Holloway and will be seconded by Councillor Glyn Hayes:-**

This Council believes that healthy high streets are essential for employment, shopping and leisure but many shops and businesses were struggling even before the Covid pandemic.

This Council notes retail is among the sectors most affected by the coronavirus pandemic; the almost complete shutdown of non-essential shops between March and June 2020 and subsequent lockdowns have hit businesses hard.

High street retail employment fell in more than three-quarters of local authorities between 2015 and 2018 according to the Office of National Statistics and more than half of all UK consumers were shopping online before the pandemic.

This Council notes the impact being seen on our own high street and shopping districts.

This Council welcomes the willingness of Government to acknowledge the problems and come forward with initiatives in response to these challenges such as the furlough scheme and the Covid support business loans,.

However, as the Treasury Select Committee stated in 2019, the current system of Business Rates places an unfair burden on “bricks and mortar” businesses compared to online retailers, and the Business Rate system needs radical overhaul.

This Council resolves to:

- Write to the Government to urge it to consider replacing business rates with a system which is fit for purpose and which levels the playing field between bricks and mortar businesses and online retail giants.
- Explore what local action can be taken to support our high streets through working more closely with local businesses of all sizes to better understand their needs.