



PRESS RELEASE

Brooks Newmark MP

Member of Parliament for Braintree

**At the inaugural Braintree Business Summit Brooks produces a plan for businesses to beat the recession.
Monday 16th March 2009**

On Thursday 12th March Brooks chaired the first Braintree Business Summit to discuss the effects of the recession on local businesses and potential strategies for alleviating its effects.

Brooks organised the summit to bring together local stakeholders for the first time since the recession hit.

As a follow-up to the meeting, Brooks has produced a seven-point plan:

- Surveys will be conducted on local businesses;
- Meetings will be arranged with key local businesses;
- Encourage people to spend more locally;
- Brooks will try to arrange meetings with the key banks in the area;
- Councillors will be extra-vigilant regarding pensioners who are facing hardship to ensure they are all receiving their full entitlements;
- Braintree District Council will ensure awareness continues to grow about the availability of business rate relief;
- Brooks will be organising a follow-up meeting for everyone who attended the business summit for July this year.

Brooks said, *"I have been particularly troubled by the closure of many of our local stores and businesses. As taxpayers, we all now own a large stake in the banking system, so the banks do have a duty to use the capital we have invested in them in a fair and responsible way. Many of our local businesses are viable – they are unfortunately just struggling at the moment due to the withdrawal of credit lines or a drop in custom.*

I called this summit to try and gather together community stakeholders in one place before the recession really bites, in order for us all to gain a fuller appreciation of the challenges we will face in the coming months and to discuss strategies for weathering the economic downturn.

I think we engaged in some very constructive dialogue and I am looking forward to some real and positive action emerging from the summit, which will hopefully lead us to finding a workable solution.

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I want to give the people in my constituency the best possible opportunity in these difficult times, and I would urge anyone else who has concerns about businesses in our local area to contact me as soon as they can.”

Graham Butland, Leader of Braintree District Council, said, “*As a local council, we need to make our towns as attractive as possible to new business. We need to narrow the gap between those that work in the towns where they live and those that commute to London to pursue higher career prospects.*”

Brenda Baker, Chairman of the Braintree Chamber of Commerce, said, “*One of the biggest challenges that is being faced by local business is how to get liquidity. Despite heavy investment from the taxpayer, the banks are still too frightened to lend, even to some very viable businesses. It is so bad that as Manager of the Newland Centre in Witham, I couldn’t get a £17,000 short-term loan to buy CCTV. It’s just crazy.*”

Paul Hart, Manager of Braintree Citizens Advice Bureau, said, “*We have never been so busy. Our telephone calls are up 50% over the last 6 months. We open at 10am and there are usually people queuing at the door. The people we are helping now are people who have never been to Citizens Advice before and never thought they would need to.*”

A follow-up meeting is planned later in the year. Anyone wishing to find out more information can email Brooks Newmark direct at newmarkb@parliament.uk or write to him at Brooks Newmark MP, House of Commons, London, SW1A 0AA.

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