

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM

City Hall
The Queen's Walk
London SE1 2AA
Tel: 020 7983 4362

Sadiq Khan
Mayor of London
[By Email]

10th June 2020

Dear Sadiq,

Re: Concerns for London's Charity Shops

As we know, many businesses and organisations are facing unprecedented challenges in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic. I wanted to write to you about some specific concerns I have for charity shops, a staple of our high streets in London.

Charity shops provide essential revenue for charities in London and across the UK. They are important for all charities, but particularly important for those smaller charities who rely heavily on the income from their charity shops. Furthermore, charity shops provide an affordable place for many people to shop in London and are a lifeline for many in terms of purchasing goods they would otherwise be unable to afford.

An often-underrated benefit of charity shops is also that they are a greener and more environmentally sustainable way to shop – promoting the reuse of items, whilst providing a profit for good causes.

The challenges facing charity shops in light of COVID-19 are significant. There are two main challenges for charity shops in the coming weeks and months as lockdown is eased. The first of these is the expected deluge of donations charity shops are beginning to receive, which is only expected to grow as lockdown is eased further and high street shops re-open. As we know, the lockdown has meant many people have had a clear out of their home, which is partly why we saw such huge demand for the re-opening of refuse and recycling centres in London last month. The BBC did a recent piece on expected donations to charity shops, with Robin Osterley, Chief Executive of the Charity Retail Association saying that shops were expecting to be "full to bursting" and his advice to people was to "be thoughtful about the sorts of things you are donating."¹

Many councils are working with businesses to help with queuing systems and social distancing on high streets across London as more and more businesses re-open, but a build-up of donations outside charity shops will cause additional challenges to boroughs and people who are shopping, which is a huge concern.

The second key challenge for charity shops is how they will ensure that products are cleaned and stored safely for the specified 72-hours before they can be displayed for

¹ <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/business-52822055>

sale. Many shops have a small amount of storage space and will be rightly concerned for their, mainly voluntary staff, and customers.

Considering the above, and your own concerns for charity shops in the weeks and months ahead, I would be grateful for your answers to the following key questions:

- What thought has been given to how you, as Mayor, can support and help charity shops in London as we move out of this crisis?
- Have you spoken to the Charity Retail Association or any London charities to further understand the challenges charity shops have, or expect to have in London?
- How are you working with and supporting boroughs on the specific issues facing charity shops, including thinking creatively about how charity shops can manage and help support donations in a safe way?
- Will you use your platform as Mayor of London to share key messages to Londoners on both how they should donate to charity shops over this period and how they should use them when they re-open?

I look forward to receiving a response to this letter at your earliest convenience.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Caroline Pidgeon', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Caroline Pidgeon AM
Liberal Democrat Assembly Member