

Full results Business Survey 2018/19

Introduction

82 completed surveys were received, 64% more surveys than were received than in 2017/18. The survey was distributed amongst a number of local businesses and was also made available on Boston Borough Council website and social media. The survey went live on 16th November 2018 and closed on 25th January 2019.

Headline Results

- The majority of responses – 20%, received were from the Retail Sector
- The majority of response – 69%, received were from businesses who have been operating for 10 or more years
- 53% of respondents employ below 10 employees, with only 6% of respondents employing more than 100 employees.
- 41% of the businesses that responded have a turnover of less than 250,000 per annum with 14% having a turnover of over £10million.
- 44% of respondents reported that they had performed either a lot weaker or slightly weaker than in the previous year.

Top three issues identified as obstacles to business growth

1. 44% - Business rates may impact on business growth
2. 36% - Price pressures on raw materials may impact on business growth
2. 36% - Licensing and regulation
3. 35% - Availability of suitable workforce may impact on business growth

Top three issues identified as having the greatest impact on business

1. 34% - Improved digital infrastructure
2. 24% - support to access suitable workforce
2. 24% - Help to improve process efficiency
3. 23% - Improved road efficiency

Full Results

Q1. Which sector does your business operate in?

The majority of respondents operate in the retail sector (20%), the manufacturing and processing (including food related) sector (17%) and agriculture sector (15%). This compares to the 2017/18 survey where 32% of respondents were from the manufacturing and process sector. Full details can be found in appendix 1, Table 1.

A number of other sectors were also given, please see appendix 1 (Table 1) for a full list.

Q2. How long has your business been operating in the borough of Boston?

Years	n*	%
0-5 years	15	19%
6-9 years	10	13%
10-14 years	5	6%
15+ years	50	63%

69% of respondents have been operating in the borough for 10+ years, (10-14 years 6% and 15+ years 63%). This compares to 76% in 2017/18.

Q3. How many employees do you have within your operations here in the borough of Boston (full time or part time/casual)?

Number	n*	%
Self-employed with no employees	10	13%
1-5	31	39%
6-10	11	14%
11-20	8	10%
21-50	7	9%
51-100	7	9%
101-250	1	1%
250+	4	5%

39% of respondents have less than 5 employees, this compares with 12% who responded in 2017/18 a smaller number of responses were received this year from businesses who employee 100+ employees, 6% compared to 30% in the previous year.

Q4. What is your approximate business annual turnover?

£ turnover	n*	%
Less than £100,000	21	27%
£100,001 - £250,000	11	14%
£250,001 - £500,000	12	15%
£500,001 - £1million	5	6%
Up to 5m	9	11%
Up to 10m21	1	1%
£10m+	11	14%
Prefer not to say	9	11%

The majority of respondents have less than £100,000 turnover (27%), in 2017/18 38% of responses were received from businesses with an annual turnover of £10m+ compared to 14% in 2018/19.

Q5. How has your business performed over the last 12 months compared to the previous 12 months?

Performance	n*	%
A lot weaker	11	14%
Slightly weaker	23	30%
About the same	21	27%
A little stronger	19	25%
A lot stronger	3	4%

29% of respondents reported performance being a little stronger or a lot stronger in the last 12 months, this is a drop from 2017/18 when 62% of respondents reported performance being a little or a lot stronger. During 2017/18, 2% respondents reported performance being a lot weaker but in 2018/19 14% reported this.

Q6. Looking forward over the next 12 months, your business performance will be?

Performance	n*	%
A lot weaker	9	12%
Slightly weaker	12	16%
About the same	30	40%
A little stronger	23	31%
A lot stronger	1	1%

Looking forward the majority of respondents expect to perform about the same (40%). 28% expect to perform a lot weaker or slightly weaker in the next 12 months, comparing to 17% expecting to perform slightly weaker in 2017/18.

Q7. What do you perceive are the main obstacles that will impact on your business growth? (Please tick in order of priority 1 = Major priority, 12 = least priority)

Main obstacles (responded with 1-4)

- 29% of respondents indicated that accessing finance may impact on business growth.
- 35% of respondents indicated that availability of suitable workforce may impact on business growth.
- 30% of respondents indicated that availability of Broadband or next generation wifi (4g) may impact on business growth.
- 36% of respondents indicated that increased transport costs may impact on business growth.
- 44% of respondents indicated that Business rates may impact on business growth.
- 31% of respondents indicated that increasing production costs may impact on business growth.
- 19% of respondents indicated that lack of training may impact on business growth.
- 36% of respondents indicated that licensing and regulation may impact on business growth.
- 24% of respondents indicated that planning policy may impact on business growth.

- 10% of respondents indicated that power availability or capacity may impact on business growth.
- 36% of respondents indicated that price pressures on raw materials may impact on business growth.
- 23% of respondents indicated that suitable premises/facilities may impact on business growth.

Identified as less of an issue (responded with 9-12)

- 48% of respondents indicated that accessing finance may have less of an impact on business growth.
- 38% of respondents indicated that availability of suitable workforce may have less of an impact on business growth.
- 44% of respondents indicated that Broadband or next generation wifi (4g) may have less of an impact on business growth.
- 44% of respondents indicated that increased transport costs may have less of an impact on business growth.
- 31% of respondents indicated that business rates may have less of an impact on business growth.
- 40% of respondents indicated that increasing production cost may have less of an impact on business growth.
- 48% of respondents indicated that lack of training may have less of an impact on business growth.
- 35% of respondents indicated that licensing and regulation may have less of an impact on business growth.
- 39% of respondents indicated that planning policy may have less of an impact on business growth.
- 55% of respondents indicated that power availability or capacity may have less of an impact on business growth.
- 42% of respondents indicated that price pressures on raw material may have less of an impact on business growth.
- 49% of respondents indicated that suitable premises/facilities may have less of an impact on business growth.

A full list of obstacles impacting on business growth see Table ?, appendix 1.

A number of other issues were also given, including a number mentioning Brexit, see appendix 1 for a full list.

Q8. What type of support would have the greatest impact on your business productivity and growth?

	n*	% (multiple responses)
Help to access suitable funding	12	15%
Support to access a suitable workforce	20	24%
Support to access workforce skills and management training programmes	10	12%
Help to improve process efficiency	20	24%
Improved digital infrastructure	28	34%
Improved road infrastructure	19	23%
Networking events or trade shows	13	16%

34% of respondents felt that support with improved digital infrastructure would have the greatest impact on their business productivity and growth. A number of comments were also received, see appendix 1.

Q9. Do you find it challenging to recruit to certain roles within in your business?

	n*	% (multiple responses)
Entry level (operative or junior roles)	18	22%
Supervisory/middle management	9	11%
Senior management/executive	6	7%
Technical/professional (entry level)	13	16%
Technical/professional (senior level)	15	18%
No, we have no trouble recruiting	30	37%

37% of respondents said they do not have any trouble recruiting to any roles, this is an improvement on last year as only 19% said they had no trouble recruiting in 2017/18.

Q10. Would you be willing to support initiatives that connect business with education providers at all levels?

	n*	%
Yes	29	38%
No	24	32%
Happy to have a conversation about it	23	30%

Q11. Do you anticipate moving to larger premises over the next:

	n*	%
12 months	1	1%
24 months	7	11%
5 years	5	7%
No	63	83%

19% of respondents anticipate moving to larger premises over the next 5 years, this is a smaller number than in 2017/18 where 50% felt they may move over the next 5 years.

Q12. Do you export goods/services abroad?

	n*	%
Yes	17	22%
No	59	78%

If yes, where: -

- Brazil
- Canary
- China
- Denmark
- Germany x 4
- EU
- Europe x 4
- France x 3
- India x 3
- Ireland x 4
- Italy x 4
- Netherlands x 4
- Norway
- New Zealand
- Spain x 5
- Switzerland
- USA x 3
- Grain exported sometimes