

LISKEARD TOWN COUNCIL

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The Mayor's Parlour
3/5 West Street
Liskeard
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17 June 2020

Dear David,

YOUR OBJECTIONS TO ENGAGING WITH BUSINESSES AROUND TOWN REOPENING

Your letter follows on from a number of emails you sent, to which you have already received responses. Since you have apparently not accepted the factual responses provided so far, and in case members of the Town Forum are interested, here is an account of how we have sought to engage with businesses around reopening.

As more businesses in town were looking to reopen it was clear that we needed to bring together people from the Town Council, Cornwall Council and local business groups to discuss how to welcome people safely back to the town and put forward a plan to Cornwall Council which would enable us to claim for materials and make highways changes.

As previously explained to you, this was not a meeting where representatives were going to take votes but a way to make sure a wide range of voices were heard and to develop a consensus on the way forward. Reopening funds cannot be claimed by individual businesses, so there was not an issue about businesses benefitting unfairly by taking part.

In Liskeard there is no one body that represents businesses in the town but, as usual, we invited the Chamber of Commerce and the Traders Association, who say they represent 30 and 20 businesses, respectively. We also included Liskeard in Bloom who play an important part in creating a welcoming environment in the town and have good business links. We invited the South East Cornwall Tourism Association. We did not initially invite a Town Forum representative as the Town Forum is not meeting at the moment and its business members were already coming. However, we did include you when asked to do so. I knew that there was a Facebook Group called Liskeard Business Network which involves about 40 local businesses and it seemed sensible to invite the business which had originally set this up, Olive & Co, as online communications in both directions with a large number of businesses is especially helpful at the moment.

I know you have seen a copy of the description of the Liskeard Business Network page so, despite the comments in your letter, are aware that it does not 'purport to represent' people or have a constitution etc. Instead it says: "This group is designed to be a noticeboard for Liskeard businesses, designed to share key information regarding the town and help us all get to know each other so we can work together for the good of the town."

I am not a member of the group and, to my knowledge, they have not been offered any support from the Town Council. Instead, we have looked to them, alongside other business groups, to help us in communicating our messages to business and getting responses to the reopening survey.

In the event, Olive & Co was not able to attend the virtual meeting because they were too busy preparing to reopen at Siblyback Lake. As you say, Councillor Cassidy then invited a different individual business, Tapenades, without letting us know. At the beginning of the meeting you were very rude to them, accusing them of trying to get preferential treatment by attending and demanding

that they be excluded. As the chair of the meeting I ruled that they should stay as all contributions to helping the town reopen safely were welcome. Mike Hinks from Tapenades later explained that that they were not able to reopen safely at the moment although they would be continuing with takeaways.

We had not issued a general invitation to local businesses because that would simply have been unmanageable in terms of potential numbers. However, faced with a single business which had given up time to attend, I was not going to compound your rudeness by excluding them.

I hope you will now issue an apology to both Olive & Co and Tapenades for claiming that they were trying to get preferential treatment when this is clearly not the case as neither can open premises in Liskeard at the moment. Instead I believe both businesses, along with very many others, want to contribute to our community at the same time as trying to work out how to survive in these very difficult times.

Given your description of how open and welcoming the Town Forum is, and how much you value the views of residents and businesses, when will you be enabling its members to meet remotely? The Town Forum AGM would have been today. What are the arrangements to hold this and conduct elections for officers for the coming year? In the last few months you have repeatedly put yourself forward as representing the Town Forum. It would be good for the Town Council to know that views expressed have come from the wider group and not just the Chair.

Yours sincerely,

Rachel Brooks
Mayor of Liskeard