

**MINUTES of MEETING of PLANNING, PROTECTIVE SERVICES AND LICENSING  
COMMITTEE held in the COUNCIL CHAMBERS, KILMORY, LOCHGILPHEAD  
on WEDNESDAY, 24 JUNE 2015**

**Present:** Councillor David Kinniburgh (Chair)

Councillor Gordon Blair	Councillor Donald MacMillan
Councillor Rory Colville	Councillor Roderick McCuish
Councillor Robin Currie	Councillor Alex McNaughton
Councillor George Freeman	Councillor James McQueen
Councillor Alistair MacDougall	Councillor Sandy Taylor
Councillor Neil MacIntyre	Councillor Richard Trail
Councillor Robert G MacIntyre	

**Attending:** Charles Reppke, Head of Governance and Law  
Kate Connelly, Solicitor  
Ms MacEachen, Applicant  
Mr MacKay, Applicant's Representative

**1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

There were no apologies for absence.

**2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Councillor Neil MacIntyre declared a non financial interest in this application as a family member was involved in the taxi business in Oban. He left the meeting and took no part in the determination of the application.

**3. CIVIC GOVERNMENT (SCOTLAND) ACT 1982: APPLICATION FOR GRANT OF TAXI OPERATOR'S LICENCE (T MACEACHEN, OBAN)**

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and introductions were made. Thereafter he outlined the procedure that would be followed and invited the Applicant to speak in support of her application.

**Applicant**

Mrs MacEachen advised that she had thought about working in the taxi business for a few years and when the opportunity came up to apply for a Taxi Driver Licence she had took it and has loved driving taxis ever since. She advised that she was aware of someone giving up his plate due to ill health and that she was interested in applying for her own plate which would bring greater security to herself and her family. She advised that work was steady if you were prepared to wait at the rank.

She referred to the 2013 survey which had stated that there was no demand for more taxis. She advised that although there was a lot of taxi licences issued a considerable number of the plate holders only drove their taxis on Friday and Saturday nights and that there were a lot of licences not being used full time. She referred to more houses being built in the outlying areas leading to a greater demand for taxis. She advised

that any overspill at the taxi rank moved quickly. She advised that it was important to provide this service to tourists to encourage them to stay in Oban which in turn would generate more business for other tourist services.

### **Members' Questions**

Councillor MacDougall referred to the survey and referred to difficulties he had experienced getting a taxi back to the ferry and advised that he did not agree with the statement that there were too many taxis. Mr Reppke replied by advising that consultants carried out this study and it was established that there was no significant unmet demand. He referred to a lot of business being carried out via telephone requests.

Councillor Trail referred to the survey advising that taxis had to wait as long as 25 minutes for a fair at the rank and asked Mrs MacEachen to comment. Mrs MacEachen advised that you did get quiet days but usually she did not have to wait any longer than 10 or 11 minutes. She confirmed that she was quite steady when she was at the rank.

Councillor Taylor sought and received confirmation from Ms Connelly that there were currently 47 operator licences issued in the Oban area. Mr Reppke advised that it was at the Members' discretion to depart from the findings of the survey and that he would expect them only to do this with sound reasons.

Councillor Freeman sought and received confirmation from Ms MacEachen that she bought her taxi a month ago.

Councillor Currie sought and received confirmation from Mr Reppke that to grant an operator licence would mean more taxi vehicles on the street but not more drivers.

Councillor Blair asked what the gender balance was of taxi operators. Mr Reppke advised that he did know of the exact split but there were more men than women.

Councillor Trail sought and received confirmation from Mr Reppke that this application was advertised in the Oban Area Office. Mr Reppke confirmed that this application and another recent application for a taxi operator licence had not been objected to.

Ms MacEachen confirmed to Councillor Robert MacIntyre that this would be a full time job for her.

Ms MacEachen confirmed to Councillor Kinniburgh that she was granted a taxi driver licence on 14 April 2015.

### **Summing Up**

Mr MacKay advised that he was a founder partner in Lorn taxis and has been in business for 8 years. He stated that he had lost 12 taxis and was now unable to cope with the demand. He advised that he struggles every day to allocate his drivers and that sometimes he has to seek assistance from other companies and in doing so loses business. He advised that he needed more taxis in his company or it would fail and he hoped that Ms MacEachen could be granted her licence as this would hopefully help his business to improve.

When asked both Ms MacEachen and Mr MacKay confirmed that they had received a fair hearing.

### **Debate**

Councillor McCuish advised that of the 47 taxis they were very rarely seen unless it was a Friday or Saturday night. He confirmed that there was a need for more service and more taxis and that he supported the application. He stated that things had moved on for the better in Oban since the survey was carried out in 2013.

Councillor Robert MacIntyre advised that Ms MacEachen had a clean licence and that he had no objection to granting this application and that she should be given a chance.

### **Decision**

Agreed to grant a Taxi Operator Licence to Ms MacEachen and noted that she would be advised of this in writing within the next 7 days.

(Reference: Report by Head of Governance and Law, submitted)