

**MINUTES of MEETING of PLANNING, PROTECTIVE SERVICES AND LICENSING
COMMITTEE held in the COUNCIL CHAMBERS, KILMORY, LOCHGILPHEAD
on WEDNESDAY, 17 APRIL 2019**

Present: Councillor David Kinniburgh (Chair)

Councillor Rory Colville	Councillor Roderick McCuish
Councillor Robin Currie	Councillor Jean Moffat
Councillor Lorna Douglas	Councillor Alastair Redman
Councillor Audrey Forrest	Councillor Sandy Taylor
Councillor George Freeman	Councillor Richard Trail
Councillor Donald MacMillan	

Attending: Charles Reppke, Head of Governance and Law
Graeme McMillan, Solicitor
Lukasz Belina, Applicant.

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Gordon Blair, Mary-Jean Devon and Graham Archibald Hardie.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

3. CIVIC GOVERNMENT (SCOTLAND) ACT 1982: APPLICATION FOR GRANT OF TAXI OPERATOR LICENCE (L BELINA, BOWMORE, ISLAY)

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

APPLICANT

Mr Belina explained that he was applying for this licence for a mini bus as he would like to expand his business. He advised that he had already taken bookings that required a mini bus in case his application was approved. He indicated that the vehicle could accommodate up to 8 people including the driver. He referred to his previous hearing for his other operator licence when he produced facts and figures in support of his application. He said that last Friday there were no taxis available at all and that his driver had taken 5 or 6 calls as everyone was so busy. He advised that there was an additional scheduled flight between Edinburgh and Islay and that starting from the summer there would be a third flight between Glasgow and Islay. He indicated that the majority of their calls were to the airport and ferry terminals and that was why he was asking for his application to be approved.

MEMBERS' QUESTIONS

Councillor Redman referred to a huge industrial growth on Islay and sought and received confirmation from Mr Belina that it was safe to say that there was ample demand for his service.

Councillor Colville referred to Mr Belina already having two vehicles and asked why he could not just swap one of these for this larger vehicle or did he have another driver in mind for this additional vehicle. He also commented that if this licence was granted this would permit Mr Belina to operate throughout the Mid Argyll, Kintyre and the Islands area. He asked Mr Belina if it was his intention to restrict his operations to Islay. Mr Belina advised that he was based on Islay and that he sometimes organised transport over to Jura. He also advised that he had 3 additional drivers that worked on a roster 4 days on and 4 days off. He said that he has had to turn jobs down due to not having enough vehicles. He advised that some of his bookings were made to hire a taxi all day.

Councillor Colville referred to Mr Belina being a fireman and asked for his assurance that he would not work at night as a taxi driver after a full day's work as a fireman. He indicated that the job of a taxi driver was very important and that people were putting their lives in a taxi driver's hands. Mr Belina advised that when he worked as a fireman someone else was doing the driving. He said that they operated 24 hours per day in order to give people the opportunity to travel between Bowmore and Islay. He said that if he is working as a fireman during the day he would not be doing the night time runs. He advised that quite often in his role as a fireman he was on call so could not commit himself to do long taxi runs. He said that he would do the local runs and apart from that there was someone else who could drive.

Councillor Kinniburgh referred to Mr Belina already having bookings for this vehicle and asked if a private hire operator licence would be more appropriate. Mr Belina said that a private hire operator licence would be sufficient but it would now allow him to send a vehicle to sit at the taxi ranks or at the airport. He referred to people having to wait 20 to 40 minutes for a taxi to arrive. He advised of staff at the airport/ferry terminals giving people lifts for free as there were not enough taxis and that was why he was applying for a taxi operator licence.

Councillor Kinniburgh referred to Mr Belina establishing a need for taxis at the airport at the last hearing and asked him to expand on that. Mr Belina referred to doing observations before applying for the licence. He advised that during the quiet months of September, October and November, every second day there was no taxi and people were hanging about. He advised that the taxi companies were well advertised for people to call themselves.

Councillor Kinniburgh asked if it was the norm that people phoned for taxis to come and get them or did they approach taxis on the rank. Mr Belina said that quite often taxis would be waiting for people to get off the plane or they would be sitting on the stance. He advised that it can be quite busy in the summer when there are no vehicles as they are committed to full day hires. He advised that as there were now 4 flights a day working at the airport can be a full time job.

Councillor Kinniburgh asked Mr Belina if he got a lot of requests for full day hires. Mr Belina advised that so far he has had 5 and that he had another 6 or 8 booked. He said that he has also had quite a few requests for prices so was anticipating more

bookings. He advised that the tours involved picking up customers from the airport and taking them around the distilleries and waiting for them while they toured the distilleries. He advised that the customers hired the taxi for the day and were charged per hour.

Councillor Currie said to Mr Belina that he has always been impressed by his presentations and asked him if he would agree that having a taxi rank at the airport would be a good thing. He commented that 36,000 visitors came through the airport per year and pointed out that Stornoway always had rows of taxis waiting there. He also said that a lot of people arrived on the island and did not think about organising taxis in advance. Mr Belina agreed with Councillor Currie's observations.

SUMMING UP

Mr Belina asked if his application could be positively accepted as he felt it was important for his business to expand. He said that he wanted to honour the 6 bookings he had already made and that he hoped that more people would want to hire the bus for full day hires.

Mr Belina confirmed that he had received a fair hearing.

DEBATE

Councillor Redman indicated that he was a Councillor who lived on Islay and that he had witnessed huge economic growth on the island. He advised of recently attending the opening of a new distillery and commented on the island benefiting from flights between Edinburgh and Islay. He said that this was very much a growing economy and that it was his opinion there was a huge demand for taxis. He advised that Mr Belina was clearly an honourable man who knew his business inside out. He said that Mr Belina should be encouraged and that he recommended that the application be granted. Councillor Moffat seconded Councillor Redman's Motion.

DECISION

The Committee unanimously agreed to grant a Taxi Operator's Licence to Mr Belina.

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