

MINUTES of MEETING of PLANNING, PROTECTIVE SERVICES AND LICENSING COMMITTEE
held ON A HYBRID BASIS BY ATTENDANCE IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER, KILMORY,
LOCHGILPHEAD OR REMOTELY BY MICROSOFT TEAMS
on WEDNESDAY, 17 AUGUST 2022

Present: Councillor Kieron Green (Chair)

Councillor John Armour	Councillor Fiona Howard
Councillor Jan Brown	Councillor Andrew Kain
Councillor Amanda Hampsey	Councillor Liz McCabe
Councillor Daniel Hampsey	Councillor Luna Martin
Councillor Graham Hardie	Councillor Peter Wallace

Attending: Patricia O'Neill, Governance Manager
Sheila MacFadyen, Senior Solicitor
Fiona Macdonald, Solicitor
Calum Fox, Applicant

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Audrey Forrest, Willie Hume, Mark Irvine and Paul Kennedy.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

3. CIVIC GOVERNMENT (SCOTLAND) ACT 1982: APPLICATION FOR GRANT OF A TAXI CAR LICENCE (C FOX, OBAN)

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting. In line with recent legislation for Civic Government Hearings, the parties (and any representatives) were given the options for participating in the meeting today. The options available were by video call, by audio call or by written submission. For this hearing the Applicant opted to proceed by way of audio call and joined the meeting by telephone.

The Chair then outlined the procedure that would be followed and invited the Applicant to speak in support of his application.

APPLICANT

Mr Fox advised that he has been a taxi driver since 2016 and that following the pandemic there has been a shortage of drivers for various reasons. He said that some had died, others had changed careers, and others had handed back their licences. He said that he had never known the taxi industry to be as busy as it was now. He advised that every taxi company was struggling and were not keeping up with the demand. He said that he wanted to help out with the shortage of numbers. He said that his dad ran A2B taxis and was struggling with the demand despite having 7 or 8 drivers.

MEMBERS' QUESTIONS

Councillor Hardie asked if there had been an influx of tourists to Oban this summer since the Covid restrictions had been lifted. Mr Fox said there had definitely been an increase in the past year. He advised that as a whole, people he had spoken to, particularly tourists, were having difficulty finding accommodation in town with a lot of people staying out with, as far as Ledaig, which was 10 to 15 miles away from Oban. He also referred to rail issues and that many of the hires were for people looking to catch ferries from Mallaig and looking for transport to Glasgow Airport.

Councillor Amanda Hampsey sought and received confirmation from Ms Macdonald that when the Argyll and Bute Taxi Unmet Demand and Private Hire Overprovision Survey was carried out in 2019 by LVSA, there were 52 taxi licences in the Oban, Lorn and the Isles Area and that now there were 49, with 3 taxi licences lapsing, 2 being granted and 2 being surrendered during the intervening period.

SUMMING UP

Applicant

Mr Fox said that he thought he had covered most of what he needed to say. He pointed out that with the continuing rise in the cost of fuel and issues with car supplies, there were a lot of aging cars on the road, some with an excess of 200,000 miles on the clock. He said that it was not feasible for a lot of drivers to get new cars. He referred to the 49 taxi licences in the area, and advised that there were only about 20 cars, even on a Saturday evening, in use at any one time. He said that a lot were not being used.

Mr Fox confirmed that he had received a fair hearing.

DEBATE

Councillor Amanda Hampsey advised that on the basis that there were now fewer taxis licences in Oban than there were in 2019, she would be happy to grant this licence.

Councillor Green said that he was fully in agreement with that point.

DECISION

The Committee unanimously agreed to grant a Taxi Car Licence to Mr Fox and noted that he would receive written confirmation of this from Legal Services within 7 days.

(Reference: Report by Head of Legal and Regulatory Support, submitted)