

**MINUTES of MEETING of PLANNING, PROTECTIVE SERVICES AND LICENSING
COMMITTEE held BY MICROSOFT TEAMS on WEDNESDAY, 22 JANUARY 2025**

Present: Councillor Kieron Green (Chair)

Councillor John Armour	Councillor Daniel Hampsey
Councillor Gordon Blair	Councillor Fiona Howard
Councillor Jan Brown	Councillor Dougie Philand
Councillor Amanda Hampsey	Councillor Peter Wallace

Attending: Stuart McLean, Committee Manager
David Walker, Solicitor
Calum Fox, Applicant

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Audrey Forrest, Graham Hardie, Mark Irvine and Andrew Kain.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

**3. CIVIC GOVERNMENT (SCOTLAND) ACT 1982: APPLICATION FOR
GRANT OF 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 audio call and Calum Fox joined the meeting by telephone.

Before proceeding the Council's Solicitor, Mr Walker, provided an update to the Committee to advise that with reference to paragraph 2.1 of the report, Mr Fox had now been granted a taxi car licence.

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 had been a taxi driver for around 10 years and had previously held a taxi car licence on 2 occasions. He said that the reason he was applying today was down to an oversight that he did not renew his existing licence on time.

He advised that he was an experienced person and that he knew the town well and how it worked.

He took the opportunity of raising some concerns as a taxi driver. He referred to the recent increase in fares that was out for consultation and advised that due to his taxi driver

licence and taxi car licence expiring he'd not had the opportunity to contribute his thoughts to that process. He referred to the previous increase, which he said, was then followed by COVID and Brexit, and advised that both of these events had caused a significant impact to rising costs in the local community. He said that he felt everyone was sleep walking into a shortage of taxi drivers and taxi cars. He said he was not sure of the exact number of plates that have been approved and advised that there were no more than 10 cars currently in operation. He said that was not a problem at this time of the year but during the summer months there would be an issue. He referred to people coming off buses and trains, having to wait up to an hour for a taxi. He said there was no shelter except at the bus stop and if people sheltered there, they lost their place in the taxi queue.

He pointed out that when he started taxi driving 10 years ago, many of the cars on the road were brand new and he said he was now seeing cars that were 4 or 5 years old, with high mileages, being used and abused as taxis. He said this was down to rising costs. He asked if there could be a Council intervention in terms of exploring if there was a way to have all taxi cars electric and to have an electric power point at the rank. He said that most of the taxis were diesel and they were second or third hand and therefore cheaper, as well as cheaper to run.

He also referred to lots of different taxi companies in the town, which, he said, could lead to confusion for tourists and locals. One taxi company may be busy, with some regulars unable to book a taxi and not having the contact details of another company. He asked if the Council could take back the control of taxis with one central number for the whole town. He also referred to two or three companies looking to develop Apps like Uber, which, he said, could also lead to mess and confusion.

MEMBERS' QUESTIONS

Councillor Armour said that the Applicant had raised some interesting points and although not for today, suggested that the points raised could be looked at in the future.

SUMMING UP

Applicant

Mr Fox referred to carelessly letting his licences lapse and asked if consideration could be given to alerting licence holders to advise when their licences were about to expire.

Mr Fox confirmed that he had received a fair hearing.

DEBATE

Councillor Daniel Hampsey agreed with Councillor Armour that the Applicant had raised some good points and said he hoped that the Members could consider taking these on board. He also referred to the administration error in respect of the Applicant allowing his licences to lapse and advised that depending on the impact on resources, he hoped that this was something the Officers could look into going forward.

Councillor Green agreed that the information the Applicant had provided was useful and he hoped that Officers would be able to consider these. He advised that he did not have any problem with the application and, in view of the issues the Applicant had raised, in terms of demand for taxis, he hoped that by granting this licence that would improve the situation.

DECISION

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

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