

Private hire driver may be suspended over homophobic comments

An Edinburgh private hire driver was recorded making “incredibly homophobic” remarks and as a result he is facing possible suspension of his licence.

Ruhul Amin was reported to the council after a passenger secretly recorded comments which “could be characterised as both misogynist and displaying prejudice to members of the LGBT+ community”.

City officials concluded after reviewing the evidence he was “no longer a fit and proper person” to hold a licence, but councillors will make a final decision next week.

At the meeting Mr Amin will also face questions about using a different vehicle to the one he registered for private hire use to drive passengers.

A complaint was initially made in April to Bolt, a taxi booking app through which he operates his business, from a customer who alleged that statements made in conversation during a journey were “incredibly homophobic” and “outlandish”.

When called in for an interview about the incident by the council it was claimed by the driver that “the passenger had initiated the relevant conversation” and although he

“expressed his views” denied using the offensive language described by the complainer.

But the next day officials were handed evidence including an audio recording of the conversation taken by the complainant which suggested Mr Amin “engaged in highly inappropriate behaviour for a person working as a licensed driver”.

In a follow-up interview after being summoned back to the council’s offices his wife said he was “incorrect to deny using the language described by the complainer” and “did now admit to saying some of the things in the initial complaint”.

A report, published ahead of Tuesday’s licensing sub-committee, said: “Mr Amin confirmed that it was his voice in each of the three recordings, but said that he had not really understood what he was saying, and that the customer was encouraging him to say these things.

“Mr Amin repeatedly apologised during the interview and asked forgiveness for the statements recorded

“It is the view of council enforcement officers that the comments could be characterised as both misogynist and displaying prejudice to members of the LGBT+ community.

“Mr Amin’s explanation is that these comments were encouraged by or coaxed from him by the passenger. However, it is officers’ view that they are sufficiently serious to call into question his continued fitness to hold a licence, and hence the request for suspension of the licence.

“It is recommended that the licence is suspended on the grounds that Mr Amin is no longer a fit and proper person to be the holder of the licence.”

Councillors will vote on whether to take no further action, issue a warning to the licence holder, suspend or revoke his licence.

Furthermore they will consider a separate breach of Mr Amin's licence conditions, after it was confirmed he had been taking bookings "using a vehicle that was not the one registered with Bolt".

by Donald Turvill, Local Democracy Reporter.

The Local Democracy Reporting Service (LDRS) is a public service news agency. It is funded by the BBC, provided by the local news sector (in Edinburgh that is Reach plc (the publisher behind Edinburgh Live and The Daily Record) and used by many qualifying partners. Local Democracy Reporters cover news about top-tier local authorities and other public service organisations.



City Chambers Edinburgh