

Man who threatened to kill employee granted permission to run business in Edinburgh

A man who threatened to kill and burn the home of an employee who asked for extra Covid furlough payments has been granted permission to run a business in Edinburgh.

Keith Pham, owner of Saigon Memoire at 14 South St Andrew Street, was granted a personal licence at an Edinburgh Council committee meeting on Monday.

Pham, 58, pled guilty to breach of the peace at Edinburgh Sheriff Court in 2023 after threatening a furloughed employee at a business in the city he used to run.

According to a representative of Police Scotland, the employee had come to him asking for 100% of his pay to be compensated, rather than the 80% offered by the Covid furlough scheme.

In response, Pham pushed the employee against the wall, and told him “I will kill you” and “I will burn your house to the ground”.

At present, the restaurant is operating under the personal license of a friend of Pham's, who his solicitor Alistair Macdonald said was a “temporary” measure.

Macdonald said that, at the time Pham's legal action was

underway, he was living in Vietnam, having moved back there after a divorce and the loss of his businesses.

Pham used to run several different businesses in the city, including one at the current location of Saigon Memoire.

Macdonald said Pham had not intended to return to the running of businesses in the city at the time, which influenced his decision to plead guilty.

Pham also told councillors that his guilty plea was in part due to the expense of travelling from Vietnam to attend court hearings rather than an admission of guilt.

He said the cost of travelling back to Edinburgh for court hearings cost £1,000 each time, while he was told the fine he would face for the charge if he pled would be in the area of £400.

Macdonald said Pham had attended court on three different occasions, but that forward progress was not being made in the case due to either the claimant not being present or an interpreter not being available.

He also said Pham denies that the physical element of the altercation took place, but accepted some kind of argument took place.

He was fined £360 at Edinburgh Sheriff Court after his plea.

Liberal Democrat councillor Louise Young told Pham: "To know that a person can retain their composure under stressful situations and not rise to abusive behaviour is an important characteristic of a person who is in charge of a licensed premises. It is not insignificant.

"However, I also do recognise that Keith has had a clean record apart from this one incident, and that this incident was not actually alcohol related, but a matter of disagreement during this Covid salary situation.

“It was now some time in the past. I feel that those points for me more than balance out the concern.”

The council’s licensing board proceeded to agree Pham should be granted a licence by a vote of four to two.

By Joseph Sullivan Local Democracy Reporter