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Mr Barry Flynn
Democratic Services Officer
Belfast City Council
Belfast City Hall
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Your Ref:
Our Ref: DRD/COR/417/2012
Date: 29 May 2012

Dear Mr Flynn

Thank you for your letter dated 2 May 2012 regarding initiatives to encourage shoppers into Belfast. Minister Kennedy has read your letter and has asked me to reply.

You will be aware the Department has previously responded to the concerns of traders in Belfast by allowing limited free on-street parking in certain city centre streets during the Christmas period. In addition, it continues to promote Park and Ride to Belfast with major sites at Sprucefield, Blacks Road and Cairnshill and has a planning application under consideration for a further site at Ballyhenry. Furthermore, Translink continues to promote rail based Park and Ride to the city is endeavouring to expand parking around railway stations and halts. The proposals for a new Belfast Rapid Transit system will further enhance accessibility to the city centre. I hope you would, therefore, agree that the Department is very focused on getting people into Belfast.

The broad thrust of the Department's policy for parking in Belfast, set out in the Belfast Metropolitan Transport Plan 2015, is to encourage the turnover of short stay parking spaces, both on and off-street, and to discourage all day commuter parking. The objective of this policy is to help to improve the vitality of the city centre. On arterial routes, the policy is to restrict parking at peak times through the enforcement of urban clearways to ensure the free flow of traffic (public transport, goods vehicles and private cars) at peak times.

Where Roads Service charges for parking, the tariffs, and permitted time periods, are set to encourage the turnover of spaces and ensure that the recovery of the substantial costs associated with parking and parking enforcement. Failure to meet the cost recovery objective would result in the dilution of other key frontline services, which I'm sure Council would agree would not be an acceptable outcome.

Roads Service is always willing to listen to the views of Councillors and would be content to discuss this matter further. Mr John Irvine, Divisional Roads Manager Roads Service Eastern Division, will present his Spring Report to Belfast City Councillors on Monday 28 May at 4.30 pm. At this meeting, Mr Irvine will be happy to listen and consider the views of Council and provide a considered response in due course.

I trust that you find this helpful.

Yours sincerely

PP


MÁIRE CAIRNS
Private Secretary to Danny Kennedy MLA