



Subject:	<b>Motion - Public Transport/Parking for Health Workers, Patients and Visitors – Responses from the Ministers for Health and Infrastructure</b>
Date:	23 <sup>rd</sup> October, 2020
Reporting Officer:	John Walsh, City Solicitor
Contact Officer:	Jim Hanna, Senior Democratic Services Officer

<b>Restricted Reports</b>	
Is this report restricted?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?	
After Committee Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
After Council Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sometime in the future	<input type="checkbox"/>
Never	<input type="checkbox"/>

<b>Call-in</b>	
Is the decision eligible for Call-in?	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>

<b>1.0</b>	<b>Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues</b>
	To consider responses from the Ministers for Infrastructure and Health in relation to a motion on Public Transport/Parking for Health Workers, Patients and Visitors
<b>2.0</b>	<b>Recommendations</b>
	The Committee is asked to consider the responses and take such action there on as may be determined.
<b>3.0</b>	<b>Main report</b>
	<u>Key Issues</u>

The Committee will recall that the Council, at its meeting on 1<sup>st</sup> September, passed the following motion:

"This Council greatly values and appreciates the role of health workers, especially given their efforts during the COVID-19 pandemic; and believes that proper investment in our health service is necessary to facilitate the incredible effort of health workers.

As such, this Council supports all healthcare workers to be paid a fair and living wage that compensates them appropriately for the critical work they do for all of us in society.

This Council also recognises the negative health inequalities created by air pollution across Belfast, primarily caused by transport emissions, and is supportive of initiatives to ensure that all healthcare workers and patients can avail of active and sustainable travel alternatives.

This Council will write to the Minister for Infrastructure and the Minister for Health:

- to support the extension of the provision of free public transport for all healthcare workers beyond this crisis period due to Covid 19;
- To support the extension of free or reduced cost public transport for those in receipt of PIP and/or Universal Credit;
- To support extensions of the rail and bus networks and active travel infrastructure to improve access to hospitals; and
- To ask for a review of the categories of acute conditions that currently can avail of free car parking to ensure access to those patients most in need.

Responses have now been received from both the Minister for Health and the Minister for Infrastructure (copies attached).

In her response, Minister Mallon has outlined the measures which have already been put in place in relation to free travel for healthcare workers and which will remain in place until further notice. In addition, the Minister also highlights the concessionary fares which are already available.

In his response, the Health Minister refers to the policy on car parking provision and management in the Health and Social Care Sector which was introduced in 2012 and which sets out the direction for car park management, including charging. That also includes the criteria for free and concessionary parking for patients. Minister Swann further refers to the Hospital Travel Costs Scheme which helps people on low incomes or income-based benefits who may be entitled to reclaim car parking charges or other travel expenses for hospital treatment. He concludes by stating that he has no plans to review his Department's policy on car parking provision at this time.

#### Financial & Resource Implications

None associated with this report.

#### Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment

None associated with this report.

<b>4.0</b>	<b>Documents attached</b>
	Copies of responses from the Minister for Infrastructure and the Minister for Health.