



Subject:	Request for reduced off-street parking charges during Christmas
Date:	09 December 2020
Reporting Officer:	Cathy Reynolds, Director of City Regeneration and Development
Contact Officer:	Sean Dolan, Senior Development Manager, City Regeneration and Development

Restricted Reports	
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"/>
Some time in the future	<input type="checkbox"/>
Never	<input type="checkbox"/>

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

1.0	Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues
1.1	The purpose of this report is to advise of a recent request received from Belfast City Centre Management (BCCM) on a proposal to reduce off-street parking charges in council run car parks during the Christmas shopping period.
2.0	Recommendations
2.1	The Committee is asked to:- 1) Note the request from Belfast City Centre Management for discounted parking charges at council car parks, and to consider declining the request at this time based on the feedback and information provided within this report; 2) Recognise that city centre accessibility is a key priority going forward in terms of encouraging people to use the city centre, and to that end, it is proposed that a joined up

	<p>approach is agreed for the New Year, in conjunction with Dfl, Translink, the Council, city centre businesses, Belfast Chamber, BIDs and BCCM.</p> <p>3) Agree, in accordance with Standing Order 47 (a) (2) (c), that the aforementioned decisions would not be subject to call-in, on the basis that an unreasonable delay could be prejudicial to the Council's or the public's interest.</p>
3.0	Main report
	<p><u>Key Issues</u></p> <p>3.1 Belfast City Centre Management Company (BCCM) recently contacted the Council with a proposal to discount charges in Council run off-street car parks in the lead up to Christmas. BCCM suggested the move would signal “a positive message to support these (retail and hospitality) sectors” amid ongoing uncertainty and lock-down measures.</p> <p>3.2 The letter also noted that off-street car park occupancy levels are well below what would normally be expected, mainly as a result of the home-working directives and that it was unlikely to cause the previous congestion issues that resulted after the discount incentive was introduced.</p> <p>3.3 Officers have consulted various stakeholders, including retail and multi-storey private car park operators, to gauge the levels of support for reducing off-street parking levies. The feedback is summarised below:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The private sector will not be introducing additional parking discounts as they are down on income already this year. They pointed out that discounts typically lead to congestion issues and they are not in favour of off-street car park charges being discounted. • A Dfl ministerial decision is required in relation to on-street car parking changes, although officials indicated that they are not supportive of the proposal due to previous congestion issues. Dfl has also removed substantial numbers of on-street spaces to date to accommodate safe distancing and promote active and sustainable travel. However, there are ongoing discussions between Dfl, Council and Belfast Chamber to discuss the ‘red barriers’ and the cordoned off on-street car parking. • Views expressed on behalf of businesses indicate they are not supportive of discounting public parking due to congestion issues and the potential impact on private MSCP operators. • Previously free parking on council car parks led to congestion, circulating traffic etc. and was therefore not subsequently encouraged. Council car parks are typically cheaper per

hour and have historically attracted all-day parkers although this user is likely to have changed.

- 3.4
- Translink normally introduce fare incentives to promote public transport at Christmas however it doesn't look like this will be financially supported this year although they are more supportive of promotion of public transport than supplemented car parking proposals.

3.5 The Council would need to consider how decisions on parking charges will sit within the context of public safety, and the messaging around this if a decision was made to make the car parks free or discounted.

3.6 Based on the engagement carried out to date officers recommend that the discounting of the council's off-street car parking facilities would be counter-intuitive and could have a negative impact on the public transportation provision, the private-sector car-parking provision and potentially lead to additional congestion and connectivity issues.

3.7 Members are asked to consider declining of the request for discounted or free off-street car parking provision at this stage, and to agree to officers undertaking further consultation with the City Reopening External Stakeholder Group and private car park operators to better understand the need, demand and impacts of reviewing the pricing structure for Council operated off-street car parking for 2021.

It is however recognised that city centre accessibility is a key priority going forward in terms of encouraging people to use the city centre, and to that end, it is proposed that a joined up approach is agreed for the New Year, in conjunction with DfI, Translink, the Council, city centre businesses, Belfast Chamber, BIDs and BCCM.

3.8 **Financial & Resource Implications**

The Director of Finance and Resources has advised that a loss of £62,721 to the annual off-street car parking income has been built into the revised forecast. If free parking were to be implemented, the projected loss to the Council will be £158,571 and the Council forecast deficit will increase by £95,850, as below:

Row Labels	Dec Original Budget	Dec Forecast @ Oct'20
60 York Street (Lancaster Street)	-3,041	-2,477
Ashdale Street	-1,246	-998
Charlotte Street	-16,023	-11,047

	Corporation Square	-11,264	-4,657
	Corporation Street	-8,166	-3,288
	Cromac Street	-10,224	-8,313
	Dunbar Street	-6,924	-4,966
	Exchange Street	-8,346	-5,733
	Hope Street North	-13,476	-9,717
	Kent Street	-8,115	-4,901
	Little Donegall Street	-10,219	-6,714
	Little Victoria Street	-22,791	-7,543
	Marlborough Avenue	-1,372	-1,056
	Smithfield Market	-22,721	-14,371
	Station Street	-14,643	-10,069
	Grand Total	-158,571	-95,850
3.9	<u>Equality or Good Relations Implications / Rural Needs Assessment</u>		
	None associated with this report.		
4.0	Appendices – Documents attached		
	None		