



Subject:	Sunday opening hours for large retailers
Date:	14 April 2021
Reporting Officer:	Alistair Reid, Strategic Director, Place and Economy
Contact Officer:	John Greer, Director of Economic 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>

1.0	Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues
1.1	The purpose of the report is to provide an update to members on feedback from engagement with Trades Unions, retail representatives and relevant stakeholders following the Committee's decision at the 3 March meeting to support extended Sunday opening hours. The Committee decision is subject to relevant Northern Ireland Executive guidance and will operate on a temporary basis, to be reviewed on 5th July, 2021, as part of the efforts to manage shopper volume and support social distancing.
2.0	Recommendations
2.1	The Committee is asked to: <ul style="list-style-type: none">Note the feedback of following consultation with Trades Unions, retail representatives and relevant stakeholders on the council's decision to extend Sunday opening hours

	(in line with Northern Ireland Executive guidance) on a temporary basis, to the 5 th July 2021.
3.0	Main report
3.1	At its meeting on 3 March 2021, the City Growth and Regeneration Committee agreed a request from large retailers to support extended Sunday opening hours (in line with Northern Ireland Executive guidance) on a temporary basis, to the 5 July 2021, as part of the efforts to manage shopper volume and support social distancing. The committee asked that officers consult with Trade Unions, retail organisations and relevant stakeholders on the matter and report back on findings at the April meeting of the Committee.
3.2	Following the March meeting, officers have sought to engage with a range of stakeholders including representatives from USDAW, Retail NI, Northern Ireland Retail Consortium, Belfast Chamber, BCCM, Destination CQ BID, Linen Quarter BID, Belfast One BID, Victoria Square, CastleCourt Shopping Centre, the Kennedy Centre, Sainsbury, Tesco and Lidl.
3.3	Each of the BID representatives welcomed the temporary extension of additional opening hours on a Sunday. They noted that, with the increased footfall patterns over the last re-opening, extended hours had a positive impact on smoothing out potential peaks and troughs at specific pinch points across the city. The BIDs viewed the extended opening hours as just one of a number of interventions that will be needed to address the 80% drop in footfall that the city centre has experienced over the last year. They were supportive of additional investment including targeted promotional campaigns, focusing on shop safe messaging and encouraging visitors to avoid the traditional peak trading hours in order to ensure that they have a pleasant experience of the city centre and its unique offer.
3.4	The large retailers and shopping centres including CastleCourt, Victoria Square and the Kennedy Centre were also supportive of the decision, noting that the extension supports demand management and avoids any queuing at 1pm. They also offered customer feedback, suggesting that shoppers feel safe and comfortable to visit the retail outlets at a quieter time and that the extended trading hours on a Sunday make this possible. The Northern Ireland Retail Consortium's view was that the extension is needed while the lockdown and the effects of the pandemic continue in order to enable social distancing and to keep shoppers and staff safe. Their view was that, in the busiest stores, this makes a huge difference while making a noticeable difference in all retail premises that avail of the extended operating hours.

3.5	<p>The response from USDAW confirmed that, while they have been understanding and pragmatic around the decisions that local authorities have taken with regard to the enforcement of Sunday trading restrictions in their areas, their opposition to extended Sunday trading hours has not changed. They feel that it does not offer businesses any real benefits and that it has a detrimental impact on retail workers, their families and their local communities. USDAW considers that social distancing in stores can be best supported by putting in measures such as queuing systems, and deploying marshals to direct and support customers and that longer opening hours on Sundays are not the solution to keeping shops safe.</p>
3.6	<p>Members will be aware that, on 2 March 2021, the Northern Ireland Executive produced “Moving Forward: the Executive’s Pathway out of Restrictions”. This document outlines the first step in the Executive’s Roadmap to Recovery and sets out how it will approach the relaxation of restrictions. It includes nine pathways. These pathways cover areas such as Home and Community; Culture, Heritage and Entertainment; Travel and Tourism; Retail and Services and Hospitality. Each pathway has a series of five phases and movement from one phase to another will be informed by the Executive taking a risk-based approach, weighing up data across a range of factors including economy, health and community. The first formal review by the Executive took place on 16 March and there will be subsequent reviews every four weeks thereafter (the next review is scheduled for 15 April). The Executive has also confirmed that, while it will formally review and make decisions on restrictions every four weeks, the monitoring cycle provides them with the ability to move more rapidly on emerging priorities should the need arise before the next review point.</p>
3.7	<p>As part of the announcement on 2 March 2021, the Executive confirmed that, from 8 March 2021, it would permit a limited contactless click and collect service at baby equipment shops, clothing shops, footwear shops and electrical goods shops. Garden Centres have been able to offer click and collect from 1 April and the extension of click and collect more widely to other retail sectors will come into force on 12 April. These developments mark phase 2 on the Retail and Services pathway. Phase 3 will permit all non-essential retail to re-open and close contact services to resume, with mitigations. Phase 4 on this pathway will permit all close contact services to open without appointments and will end remaining mitigations. It will also support increased in-store capacity in all retail at this stage in the re-opening process. Finally, phase 5 will permit all retail and close contact services to open with reduced mitigations. This means that it is likely that the restrictions on capacity within retail and</p>

	<p>services will remain in place for some time in order to maintain some level of social distancing in indoor premises.</p>
3.8	<p>As part of this engagement work, officers have also engaged with colleagues across other council areas. Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council has extended the current approach to enforcement until the end of June 2021 while both Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council and Newry, Mourne and Down District Council have agreed open-ended extensions.</p>
	<p><u>Financial & Resource Implications</u></p>
3.9	<p>No specific financial or resource implications for council.</p>
	<p><u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment</u></p>
3.10	<p>No specific equality implications.</p>
4.0	Appendices – Documents Attached
	None