



Subject:	Developing a framework for City Centre Parking
Date:	10 June 2015
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Is this report restricted?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
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	At their meeting in May, Committee agreed to the commissioning of a framework and action plan aimed at improving traffic flows into and around the city, and city centre car parking within the context of the emerging City Centre Regeneration Strategy and Investment Plan. It was also agreed that the scope of this work would be circulated to the Committee.
2.0	Recommendations
2.1	To note the scope of work for the development of the city centre car parking framework and action plan as set out in Appendix 1.
3.0	Main report
3.1	<u>Key Issues</u> Post LGR, Council now operates 30 off-street car parks with approximately 2,200 car parking spaces previously operated by the DRD. 15 of these car parks are within the city centre, which equates to approximately 1,300 car parking spaces mainly around the inner ring road. It is estimated that the Council now operates around 11% of the off street car parking spaces in the City Centre or around 6.5% of all city centre parking that is available (on and off-street, private and public).

3.2	<p>It has been estimated that more than 100,000 people commute into the city each day and approximately 50% of them use private cars or vans, and so require parking facilities. There has been little change in this pattern between the 2001 and 2011 census. There is a perception that city centre parking is expensive and limited. The situation is not helped by the variety of parking operators, different charges between sites and a lack of real time parking information on inner city parking facilities. This means that often parking is confusing, that occupancy of the total available spaces is relatively low but that parking spaces can be hard to find, leading to significant volumes of traffic flow as vehicles search between car parks for spaces.</p>
3.3	<p>The main factors that the city car parking framework needs to consider are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- The Economy – This further divides into the needs of shoppers, traders, and commuters. Shoppers and traders are both keen that it is as simple as possible to get from the car to the shops. Commuters are more concerned with the price of parking though it still needs to be within walking distance of their work. In simple terms, well designed parking is perceived as favourable for the economy. However the balance between making the city more accessible to those that are going to spend money in the city centre and contribute to the city and increasing the level of general traffic needs careful consideration.- The Environment – high levels of slow moving traffic are associated with undesirable environmental effects such as noise and air pollution and an unpleasant environment for people, particularly the inner city communities but also those visiting the city. Parking needs to be designed to reduce congestion and minimise unnecessary traffic flow such as that caused by having to search for parking.- Financial – There are costs and incomes associated with running car parks. The Council has an additional asset in the form of car parks but will need to determine the best use for these spaces and if its car parks are to be profitable, cost neutral, or subsidised to support other city objectives.- Regeneration – the role of car parking and car park assets to support regeneration and the economic vitality of Belfast. The location and nature of car parks may not necessarily be aligned to demand or in the optimum location in terms of recent or proposed development(s) Future land use planning and the delivery of major regeneration schemes will therefore need to be considered in this context.

Redevelopment proposals may also mean consideration of alternative use options for existing car parks in order that the regenerative impacts of particular development schemes are maximised, whilst ensuring alternative provision that best meets demand. In addition, any new regeneration schemes will need to be considered in the context of the demand and supply of car parking or alternative transport options in order to best support development proposals.

3.4

It should be noted that several studies/projects have already been completed on the current situation and various metrics are available. The development of a framework for city car parking will take account of the existing evidence base and where practicable, this information will be made available to the successful consultant. However, there are gaps in the availability/accessibility of information; for example, the Council currently lacks data about the usage patterns of the car parks that have transferred. Unless DRD are able to provide reports on usage patterns, the Council will need to gain experience in current usage before it can predict the impact of any changes. Engagement with key stakeholders is therefore critical throughout this study.

3.5

The work in all stages would need to be developed with input from key stakeholders such as the Department for Regional Development (DRD); Translink NI (Metro, NI Railways, and Ulsterbus); private operators and parking providers; local businesses; enforcement agencies and the public. Given the regional significance of the city and the need to ensure that the city's infrastructure delivers as the main gateway for the region, Tourism NI and airport/port operators should also be key stakeholders. As Council is estimated to have responsibility for only 6.5% of the city's car parking it is likely that the car parking framework will include recommendations that may need to be driven forward at the level of the NI Assembly. However, this should not constrain the recommendations being proposed especially if they will encourage people into the city and support local businesses and the development of the city.

3.6

During development of the framework, work will continue to ensure the smooth delivery of the Council's new off street car parking function including the development of options for the future of the enforcement contract with DRD/NSL. Work will also continue to identify any quick wins with regard to the use of the Council's car parks.

3.7

During the discussion at the previous meeting, Members raised wider issues including arterial route parking and residents parking schemes. These issues will be considered as

	part of a separate workstream.
3.8	<p><u>Financial & Resource Implications</u></p> <p>The cost of developing a parking framework and action plan is likely to be in the region of £50k and will be met from existing budgets.</p>
3.9	<p><u>Equality or Good Relations Implications</u></p> <p>Equality and good relations issues will be considered in the development of the framework and improvement plan. It is noted that the Shadow Council had previously passed a motion in relation to child and family friendly car parking provision which will be considered in the development of the framework. The Council's Consultative Forum has also been approached and suggestions have been made with regard to mobility considerations.</p>
4.0	Appendices – Documents Attached
4.1	Appendix 1: Scope of work to develop a city centre car parking framework