From: Anthony Carleton

McGoldrickE@BelfastCity.gov.uk

Dear Ms McGoldrick

Sunday Opening Hours – Large Retailers

Thank you for your letter of 14 July 2021 on behalf of the Belfast City Council to the Junior Ministers at The Executive Office, regarding the extension of Sunday opening hours for large scale retailers and the impact on retail workers. This has been passed to the Department for Communities (DfC) as we have responsibility for Sunday Trading legislation and co-ordinating the work of the High Street Task Force.

The Department appreciates the Council informing us that it has recently decided to extend its interim approach to Sunday opening hours for large scale retailers until 5 September 2021. We do, of course, recognise the very real challenges that many retailers have been facing as a result of the Covid pandemic and the need to likewise take account of the potential effect on retail workers of extending shop opening hours to assist businesses. We are also aware that a number of Councils have, at different stages over the past year and in response to the pandemic, temporarily relaxed the enforcement of some aspects of Sunday trading law under The Shops (Sunday Trading &c.) (NI) Order 1997.

With regard to the Council's proposal that the issue be considered at an urgent meeting of the High Street Task Force, as you know all Council members are already represented on this Task Force through NILGA. Local government Chief Executives are also represented through SOLACE and, specifically, by Belfast City Council's Chief Executive, Suzanne Wylie.

Having said that, the Department is happy to add this issue to the agenda for the Task Force's next plenary meeting once a date for it has been confirmed.

I trust you find this helpful.

Yours sincerely
pp Ciarán Mee

on behalf of **Anthony Carleton**
Director of Local Government and Housing Regulation