

ARC21 JOINT COMMITTEE
Meeting No 050
Virtual Meeting
MINUTES
Thursday 24 September 2020

Members Present:

Councillor M Goodman	Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council
Alderman R Gibson (<i>Chair</i>)	Ards & North Down Borough Council
Councillor F Ferguson	Belfast City Council
Alderman D Drysdale	Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council
Councillor S Lee	Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council
Councillor M Burnside	Mid & East Antrim Borough Council
Councillor I Friary	Mid & East Antrim Borough Council
Councillor H McKee	Newry, Mourne & Down District Council
Councillor K Owen	Newry, Mourne & Down District Council

Members' Apologies:

Councillor N Kelly	Antrim & Newtownabbey Borough Council
Councillor T McGrann	Antrim & Newtownabbey Borough Council
Alderman A Carson	Ards & North Down Borough Council
Councillor G Walker	Ards & North Down Borough Council
Councillor P McReynolds	Belfast City Council
Councillor JJ Magee	Belfast City Council
Councillor M Gregg	Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council
Alderman R Cherry	Mid & East Antrim Borough Council
Councillor W Clarke (<i>Deputy Chair</i>)	Newry, Mourne & Down District Council

Officers Present:

T Walker	arc21
G Craig (<i>Secretary</i>)	arc21
H Campbell	arc21
J Green	arc21
K Boal	arc21
M Laverty	Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council
D Lindsay	Ards & North Down Borough Council
N Martin	Ards & North Down Borough Council
B Murray	Belfast City Council
J McConnell	Belfast City Council
H Moore	Lisburn & Castlereagh Borough Council
J Parkes	Newry, Mourne & Down District Council

Officers' Apologies:

G Girvan	Antrim & Newtownabbey Borough Council
S Toland	Belfast City Council
P Thompson	Mid & East Antrim Borough Council
R Moore	Newry, Mourne & Down District Council

Legal Advisors in attendance for Item 8

Mr Colin Campbell, Belfast City Council, and Mr William Curry, Arthur Cox

The Chair welcomed all to the meeting and to the AGM and handed over to Mr Craig to brief members on the procedures.

He also welcomed back Councillor McKee from his recent illness and wished him good health.

Item 1 - AGM

Item 1(a) - Procedures

Mr Craig referred to the procedures presented in the papers for the position of electing a Chair and Deputy Chair for the forthcoming year. He advised the meeting that the Deputy Chair had sent his apologies to the meeting but that members could continue to elect him, in his absence, and that he was happy to continue in his position should he be nominated.

Item 1(b) - Election of Chair

Mr Craig then sought nominations for the position of Chair to serve the Joint Committee for the forthcoming year.

Nominated: Alderman Robert Gibson
Proposed: Councillor Harold McKee
Seconded: Councillor Kathryn Owen

It was resolved that Alderman Gibson be re-elected as Chair of the Joint Committee for the incoming year.

(Alderman Gibson in the Chair)

Alderman Gibson thanked the members for electing him as Chair of the Joint Committee for the forthcoming year and for their support and attendance at the monthly meetings. He also thanked the officers and arc21 staff for their ongoing support and help during what had been a challenging year with the outbreak of Covid-19 and the challenges facing the waste sector.

He stated that the next item of business was the election of the position of Deputy Chair for the forthcoming year.

Item 1(c) - Election of Deputy Chair

Nominations were then invited for the position of Deputy Chair of the Joint Committee.

Nominated: Councillor Willie Clarke
Proposed: Councillor Ian Friary
Seconded: Councillor Muriel Burnside

It was resolved that Councillor Clarke be re-elected Deputy Chair of the Joint Committee for the incoming year.

Item 2 - Conflicts of Interest Statement

Mr Craig read out the Conflicts of Interest Statement. There were no conflicts noted.

Action: Noted

Item 3 - Apologies

Apologies were noted.

Action: Noted

Item 4 - Minutes of Joint Committee Meeting 049 held on 27 August 2020

The minutes of the Joint Committee meeting 049 held on 27 August 2020 were agreed.

Action: Agreed

Item 5 - Matters Arising

Page 8 - Mr Craig reported that it had been suggested at the last meeting that consideration be given to writing to the Minister to express the concerns of the Joint Committee regarding the funding support needed by councils and advised that this would be discussed under item 12.

Page 11 – Mr Walker advised that a draft response to the discussion document on ‘future recycling and collection of waste’ would be discussed under agenda item 14.

The Chair advised members that the meeting would now go “*in committee*”, which was agreed.

Action: Agreed

IN COMMITTEE

Matters of a confidential and commercially sensitive nature were discussed under these agenda items.

Following discussion on the commercially sensitive matters, the Chair advised members that the meeting would now return to the main agenda but whilst “*in committee*” there were four matters discussed as follows:

Item 6 - Minutes of Joint Committee Meeting 049 held on 27 August 2020 ‘in committee’

Action: Agreed

Item 7 - Matters Arising

Action: Noted

Item 8 - Residual Waste Treatment Project

Action: Noted

Item 9 - Commercially Sensitive Procurement and Contracts Issues

Action: Agreed

The Chair advised members that the meeting would now return to the main agenda, which was agreed.

Action: Agreed

OUT OF COMMITTEE

Item 10 - Contracts and Operations Briefing Report

Ms Boal presented a report to advise the Joint Committee on the prevailing monthly situation pertinent to the operational performance of the service and supply contracts as well as providing an update on the contract tonnages.

She reported that all services were being provided, however, arc21 was mindful that the situation was in flux with both the ongoing issues with Covid and also the impact of Brexit.

She noted that all contractors had contingency plans in place.

Following discussion the Joint Committee agreed to note the report.

Action: Noted

A member advised that both SIB and BitC had made presentations recently at a NILGA event on the Circular Economy and waste streams, and enquired as to the impacts this may have for arc21 in relation to the proposal being showcased by SIB.

Mr Walker advised that he would contact Heidi Curran at SIB and Lisa McKee in NILGA to receive copies of the presentations and/or prepare a report for a future meeting.

Action: Mr Walker

Item 11 - Revenue Estimates 2021/22 to 2023/24

Mr Craig presented the Joint Committee with the proposed revenue estimates of arc21 for the three-year period from 2020/21 to 2022/23.

The key points from the report are replicated as follows:

Proposed revenue estimates of arc21 are presented setting out the costs of the Joint Committee in terms of its Establishment, Procurement and Operational activities and Waste Contract Services, Waste Contract Supplies and the Outreach Programme Services.

Steering Group Officers have been provided with, separately, the waste contracts information to enable councils to make budgetary provision specific to their own estimated tonnages and supplies requirements.

The decision on the Planning Application for the RWTP has yet to be made but, in the event of a positive outcome, budgetary provision has been made for the completion of the procurement process and the development of the comprehensive business case to enable councils to make a determination based on all the facts of the proposal. The proposed funding for the Project costs has already been earmarked in the Reserves and will be applied without the need to seek further contributions from councils.

Acquisition of the Hightown Quarry site and ancillary land required, councils have been asked to make financial provision using two options – Capital Contributions or Loan Charges.

Budgetary provision has been made in the past for the development of the facilities for the treatment of organic waste at Dargan Road, Belfast. With the contract variation having been agreed with the contractor, to treat the materials at another site, there is no longer a need to make budget provision. The balance of funds provided for this development are no longer required and will be applied in reducing the council's contributions.

Development of Waste Management Plan, the role of arc21 in the development of an 11 Council Plan has yet to be determined but to date earmarked Reserves have accumulated to £177k which can be used if required or returned to councils if not. Following discussions with the council chief executives, arc21 have been asked to undertake a review of an extension to the current Plan and the Reserves will be applied accordingly without the need to seek further contributions from councils.

Given the ongoing issues around the UK leaving the EU, it may still be appropriate for councils to do some contingency planning around waste management budgets and make some percentage provision to allow for any unforeseen cost pressures that may arise.

The council chief executives have been presented with the Revenue Estimates and have endorsed the approach adopted by arc21.

A member noted concerns in relation to the risks facing councils in relation to Covid, Brexit, rates, waste costs, demand around services, uplift in wages and asked if a reference could be made re the risks that councils face.

Mr Craig advised that initial discussions had taken place with the chief executives and councils to get guidance on what levels to pitch estimates at and councils would be taking this into account in their own budgets. He noted there is flexibility for councils to come back to see if there are any further adjustments to be made.

A member noted concerns regarding councils trying to give estimates during this very unstable time and suggested maybe a note regarding this be included.

They also requested clarity regarding funding for the RWTP including the completion of the planning and procurement process and Mr Craig advised that monies had been allocated to cover these costs in the arc21 reserves and councils would not be asked for any further contributions, should planning permission be secured.

In relation to the site acquisition, Mr Craig advised that this was not included in the estimates as it was of a capital nature and a separate report would be presented to councils in due course. He noted that the issue of funding for the land acquisition would be revisited when the planning application had been determined and arc21 would then be in a more robust position to progress with the purchasing of the land involved.

The Joint Committee was asked to consider and approve the revenue estimates presented in the report in order that partner councils can take the figures into account within their own financial plans.

Following discussion the Joint Committee agreed to approve the revenue estimates.

Action: Agreed

Item 12 - Council Covid-19 Waste Management Financial Losses

Mr Craig presented a report to update the Joint Committee on the waste management financial support sought from Government in regards to the losses being incurred by councils arising from the Covid-19 emergency.

He reported that it had been proposed at the last meeting that arc21 write to the Minister on behalf of the arc21 councils expressing concern at the level of funding support from the Department provided for the additional costs being incurred as a consequence of the Covid-19 emergency.

Preparations were under way to write to the Minister but, in the meantime, the Permanent Secretaries of the three key Departments involved with Local Government – Finance, Communities and DAERA – had agreed to meet a delegation led by SOLACE. As a consequence it was decided to defer writing to the Minister pending the outcome of that meeting.

Mr Craig provided an update on the current financial position in relation to monies owed to councils and payments made.

He noted that the current position was much more hopeful and positive than the position last month. There remains the opportunity to provide a robust business case by each council to justify all the additional costs incurred as a consequence of the Covid-19 emergency, including on those activities the Minister views as being not justifiable.

Engagement with DAERA, and DfC, continues to ensure that Government is kept up to date on the level of funding councils need to deal with the financial crisis caused by the Covid-19 emergency.

Following discussion the Joint Committee agreed to note the report.

Action: Noted

Item 13 - Waste Management Plan

Mr Walker provided a report on the current situation regarding the development of arc21's waste management plan (WMP) which expires in September 2021 with the rest of the councils in Northern Ireland in a similar position with the expiration of their plans in the following year. He advised that the plan is scheduled to last for six years and typically, previously it has taken approximately 2+ years to review and develop a new WMP.

He advised that discussion had been taking place in relation to working with the other councils to develop an 11 council WMP, however, with the impact of Covid and the diversion of resources progress on this had been slower than anticipated.

He reported that discussion had taken place recently with the Department which has proposed that, in light of the constraints being experienced and the pipeline of new national policies which would confound undertaking a complete redraft, that they would consider funding WRAP to review the existing WMPs to assess current levels of compliance and what might need further work.

In parallel, Mr Walker advised that he was looking at the timeline to deliver a refresh of the arc21 WMP and was engaging with Steering Group officers to determine the opportunities the DAERA/WRAP support could offer.

Following discussion the Joint Committee agreed to note the report.

Action: Noted

Item 14 - Future Recycling and Separation of Waste of a Household Nature in Northern Ireland - Public Discussion Document

Mr Walker presented the Joint Committee with the proposed arc21 response to the discussion document on "Future Recycling and Separation of Waste of a Household Nature in Northern Ireland - Public Discussion Document".

He reported that this had been discussed with council officers and some comments had been received which he intended to take into consideration before submission to DAERA by the deadline of 4 October.

The Joint Committee was asked to consider and approve the draft consultation response, subject to any final comments received from Members.

Following discussion it was agreed to endorse the response for submission.

Action: Agreed

Item 15 - Schedule of Meetings 2021

Mr Craig presented the Joint Committee with the proposed schedule of meetings to be held in 2021.

The following dates were proposed with the meetings starting at 10.30am. It was also proposed that the meetings continue to be held virtually for the foreseeable future.

Date:

- Thursday 28 January 2021
- Thursday 25 February 2021
- Thursday 25 March 2021
- Thursday 29 April 2021
- Thursday 27 May 2021
- Thursday 24 June 2021
- Thursday 29 July 2021
- Thursday 26 August 2021
- Thursday 30 September 2021
- Thursday 28 October 2021
- Tuesday 7 December 2021

The Joint Committee was asked to consider and approve the schedule of meetings proposed to be held during 2021.

Following discussion the Joint Committee agreed to endorse the meeting dates for 2021.

Action: Agreed

Item 16 - AOB

There was no further business discussed.

Item 17 - Next Meeting

The Chair advised that the next scheduled meeting of the Joint Committee is due to be held on Thursday 29 October and an MS Teams invite would be issued in due course along with the meeting invites for 2021.

Action: arc21

Date: _____

Chairman: _____