

ARC21 JOINT COMMITTEE
Virtual Meeting No 065
MINUTES
Thursday 27 January 2022

Members Present:

Councillor A Bennington	Antrim & Newtownabbey Borough Council
Councillor M Goodman (<i>Deputy Chair</i>)	Antrim & Newtownabbey Borough Council
Councillor R Kinnear	Antrim & Newtownabbey Borough Council
Alderman A Carson	Ards & North Down Borough Council
Alderman A McDowell	Ards & North Down Borough Council
Alderman R Gibson	Ards & North Down Borough Council
Councillor P McReynolds	Belfast City Council
Alderman D Drysdale (<i>Chair</i>)	Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council
Councillor M Gregg	Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council
Councillor S Lee	Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council
Councillor D Reid	Mid & East Antrim Borough Council
Councillor K Owen	Newry, Mourne & Down District Council
Councillor D Murphy	Newry, Mourne & Down District Council
Councillor R Burgess	Newry, Mourne & Down District Council

Members' Apologies:

Councillor F Ferguson	Belfast City Council
Councillor JJ Magee	Belfast City Council
Alderman R Cherry	Mid & East Antrim Borough Council
Councillor I Friary	Mid & East Antrim Borough Council

Officers Present:

T Walker	arc21
G Craig (<i>Secretary</i>)	arc21
H Campbell	arc21
K Boal	arc21
J Green	arc21
T McArdle	arc21
L Daly	Antrim & Newtownabbey Borough Council
D Lindsay	Ards & North Down Borough Council
N Martin	Ards & North Down Borough Council
J McConnell	Belfast City Council
H Moore	Lisburn & Castlereagh Borough Council
S Holgate	Mid & East Antrim Borough Council
J McBride	Newry, Mourne & Down District Council

Officers' Apologies:

G Girvan	Antrim & Newtownabbey Borough Council
C Matthews	Belfast City Council
P Thompson	Mid & East Antrim Borough Council

The Chair welcomed Councillor Murphy, the new representative from Newry, Mourne and Down District Council, to the meeting.

Item 1 - Conflicts of Interest Statement

The Chair read out the Conflicts of Interest Statement. There were no conflicts noted.

Action: Noted

Item 2 - Apologies

Apologies were noted.

Action: Noted

Item 3 - Minutes of Special Joint Committee Meeting 063 held on 3 December 2021

Following discussion, the Joint Committee approved the minutes of the Special Joint Committee meeting 063 held on 3 December 2021.

Action: Agreed

Item 4 - Matters Arising

There were no matters arising.

Action: Noted

Item 5 - Minutes of Joint Committee Meeting 064 held on 7 December 2021

Following discussion, the Joint Committee approved the minutes of the Joint Committee meeting 064 held on 7 December 2021.

Action: Agreed

Item 6 - Matters Arising

There were no matters arising.

Action: Noted

Item 7 - Contracts & Operations Briefing Report

Ms Boal introduced the new arc21 Procurement and Contracts Manager, Mr T McArdle, and welcomed him to the meeting.

She reported that there had been a bit of spike with covid which was being managed by the operators and hadn't affected services. She noted that in general, there had been no issues with covid in relation to contingency arrangements, however, Bryson had implemented contingency arrangements for a day and half due to the volume of material. She reported that a number of the loads had been diverted and will be fed back into the facility once it quietens down.

She discussed the site visits and the health and safety audits which had been continuing and noted that the last one with ENVA, who do the collection of the glass banks, there had an issue in terms of the risk assessment for collecting bring banks on site. She advised that we had been working closely with ENVA to address this and hoped to have it completed by the end of the week.

Ms Boal noted that the general position with regard to site visits was different to pre-covid as we are trying to minimise the number of interactions on site, but are in regular contact with the contractors.

In terms of arrangements for Christmas and New Year, there were no service issues.

New performance tables were presented in the report showing contractor performance for December and highlighting issues for information and she noted that similar tables would be presented, in this way, going forward.

Ms Boal noted issues with turnaround at sites particularly with bulky trailers with running floors rather than the other method of tipping, which is taking slightly longer, but arc21 will not implement service credits where we consider there are mitigating circumstances.

In terms of reporting, she noted that there had been issues in the reports from Regen for the MRF who had been slow with the invoice for Nov. and Dec but the issues with their IT system had now been sorted.

She also noted that there had been issues in the haulage contract as they only have a five-day turnaround, where most contracts have 10 days, and hampered because they were not getting all the weighbridge tickets due to covid protocols.

Ms Boal also noted issues with capacity over the Christmas period with regards to servicing the glass and textiles sites, which reflects in peak times in trying to organise the collections. She reported that there had been some issues last year in relation to paper and this was addressed by ensuring that all the banks were emptied pre-Christmas, and resulted in no issues this year.

In terms of rejected loads, she noted that there were still issues with material coming to sites and that arc21 is working with councils on this to try and eradicate the vehicle misuse.

Ms Boal discussed the tonnages and noted that in general we are starting to see some of the contracts showing the same level of material as for the same period last year.

In terms of the biodegradable waste to landfill against 2019 NILAS targets, she reported that although some councils are nearer to their individual allowances, overall arc21 are well within the 2019 figures.

Ms Boal reported that in terms of the rising levels of contamination in the MRF contract, Lot 1, a meeting of council officers and Bryson had been held to focus on issues relating to contamination. Discussions also included the issues that have come about from the likes of particular shops collecting some plastics and sending the message out that they can be recyclable and therefore can go in the [recycling] bin, and to look at the possibility of picking up those items and focusing communications around these items.

One of the things coming out of this review was to identify the top 10 contaminants and this list has now been sent to officers to use in their communications as councils consider what they are doing in terms of either reducing the capacity in their residual bins, or changing frequency of collections.

Ms Boal reported that it was also intended to hold a similar review for NM&DDC who use Regen, and in addition arc21 are also holding a session in February with officers and NWP to cover the issues of contamination, the benefits and the CO2 implications of their processes etc and to also look at some ideas for bringing compost to residents in the area at a reduced cost. Ms Boal noted that she would report back on this at the February meeting.

Action : Ms Boal

In terms of the supplies contract, she reported that the number of orders had decreased and that arc21 is encouraging councils to consider their future order requirements, as there are some supply issues in terms of the amount of time taken and also in terms of prices which are fluctuating.

She reported that the ESPO Framework for supplies is due for renewal at the end of January 2022, and they have indicated that they are on track to have the new contract in place when the current one ends.

Ms Boal advised of a consultation out on digital waste tracking, which is something that may revolutionise the way councils track its waste and that she would be bringing an update on this at the February meeting in order to shape a response, along with providing an opportunity for discussions with council officers to present their views.

Action: Ms Boal

Ms Boal also discussed the changes that are coming in terms of persistent organic pollutants in soft furnishings. These materials are collected by councils as part of their bulky waste collections and changes which are emerging in GB are likely to effect the handling of these materials in terms of how they are identified as a separate waste stream and separately treated (incinerated). She noted that for NI, this poses major issues as there is no local infrastructure to deal with this waste stream and, in addition, for council sites where material has to be collected and stored separately. Further information from NIEA/DEFRA is awaited and discussions will be progressed with Steering Group officers in due course.

Following discussion the Joint Committee noted the report.

Action: Noted

Item 8 - Waste Tonnage Trends

Ms Boal discussed the various contract tonnages shown in a series of comparative graphs over the last five years.

She noted that the landfill tonnages were running on an upward trajectory from the pre-covid levels, which was not very positive, and that there were no signs that they would be moving back to these levels.

She reported that the Organics Type 1 lines were virtually the same for all of the years and had a close correlation with the exception of 2019/20, which was a bumper year in terms of summer period and highest period for that type of material ever collected.

In terms of the mixed food and garden waste, the line has fallen into the same trend as last year and the tonnages have increased because NM&DDC had come into the contract.

Ms Boal noted that the MRF had a similar trajectory to last year with some slightly lower tonnages in December, but there may be more tonnage in January dependent on how the collections fall.

She reported that the department are looking at the recycling rate and are concerned that target compliance is proving difficult to achieve and maintain which is contrary to their policy, so there had been regular liaison with them.

In terms of street sweepings, Ms Boal noted that the tonnage figures are lower but with covid arc21 is aware that some councils have diverted resources from street sweepings in order to maintain refuse collection services.

In terms of bring bank contracts, the tonnage figures remain at a low level when compared to the other main contracts.

Following discussion the Joint Committee noted the report.

Action: Noted

IN COMMITTEE

The Chair recommended that the meeting would now move “in committee” which was agreed.

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

Following discussion on the commercially sensitive matters, the Chair recommended that the meeting would now return to the main agenda, which was approved, but whilst “*in committee*” during this section of the meeting, there were nine matters discussed.

Item 9 - Minutes of Special Joint Committee Meeting 063 held on 3 December 2021 ‘in committee’	Action: Agreed
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Item 10 - Matters Arising	Action: Noted
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Item 11 - Minutes of Joint Committee Meeting 064 held on 7 December 2021 ‘in committee’	Action: Agreed
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Item 12 - Matters Arising	Action: Noted
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Item 13 - Residual Waste Treatment Project	Action: Noted
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Item 14 - Communications and PR	Action: Agreed
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Item 15 - Commercially Sensitive Contract and Procurement Issues	Action: Agreed
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Item 16 - Council Covid-19 Waste Management Financial Losses	Action: Noted
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Item 17 - HR Support	Action: Agreed
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OUT OF COMMITTEE

Item 18 - arc21 Consultation Responses

Mr Walker advised that there had been three consultations out over the Christmas and New Year period, two of which were fairly broad and one specific.

He noted that the Green Growth and Environment Strategies were designed to be pillars for future policy development but when investigated further it is apparent that there is a plethora of different strategies that the Department are planning to put in place or have already done so, and it is difficult to see how they will all integrate with one another. Unexpectedly, Mr Walker felt that these strategies, as currently drafted, are not ambitious enough to deliver the changes necessary to deliver their objectives (e.g. Net Zero) and the commitments are not sufficiently time bounded or detailed or clear enough as to what is being sought.

He reported that the other consultation was specific to Single Use Plastic beverage cups and food containers, and questioned whether this approach could be expanded to include other items.

He noted that the consultation process seeks to steer responses through their online portal which can be restrictive in terms of input enough detail into the space provided.

Following discussion the Joint Committee agreed to endorse the responses to the:

1. Draft Green Growth Strategy for Northern Ireland;
2. Proposals for the Reduction of the usage of Single-use Plastic (SUP) Beverage Cups and Food Containers; and
3. Draft Environment Strategy.

Action: Agreed

A Member enquired if there was any specific reference in the responses to the Residual Waste Project. Mr Walker advised that he had not been site specific but noted that he had advised that there needed to be increased investment in infrastructure in NI.

Action: Noted

Item 19 - AOB

Customer Survey - Ms Boal advised the Committee of the forthcoming annual customer survey which was being developed to be issued to Members and Officers in early February, and encouraged all to respond.

Committee reports - a Member noted the late receipt of some reports for meetings and asked that all Joint Committee reports be circulated at least two days in advance to enable sufficient time to digest them and prepare any questions for the meeting.

The Chair suggested that one of the things that had been considered by himself and the Audit Committee Chair was to look at setting up separate committees, similar to those in councils, to discuss the reports in advance of the full Joint Committee meeting. In this manner, the work is done prior to the JC meeting, but this proposal would be considered as part of the review of the organisation.

Contractor invites / conference - The Chair reported that he had received an invitation to visit the Regen facility prior to Christmas, which he had availed of, and he noted that at their site a lot of work is done by technology rather than people. He suggested that the Committee may want to consider inviting contractors to future meetings to present their technologies, or that a waste conference could be arranged to accommodate this later in the year which could also consider emerging possibilities.

Mr Walker advised that this was a good idea and highlighted that similar type events had been organised by arc21 in the past. He reported that CIWM was intending to hold a similar type conference in the middle of the year, the details of which was likely to crystallise shortly. He referred to Item 14 where he had noted a forthcoming proposed online inhouse seminar for Members and Officers of the arc21 councils which would specifically look at the issues coming down the pipeline, and that this could act as a useful informative until a bigger conference was arranged later in the year.

Ms Boal noted her concerns of inviting contractors to JC meetings when procurements are underway as this may cause legal difficulties if it was perceived that they were being accorded an unfair advantage.

Mr Green noted that arc21 welcome new technologies and that arc21 continued to review these, but we needed to be mindful of their suitability as a proven, reliable technology.

Members were keen to be kept informed on this issue.

Action: Noted

Item 20 - Next Meeting

The Chair thanked everyone for attending and advised that the next Joint Committee meeting would be held as scheduled on Thursday 24 February 2022 commencing at 10.30am.

Action: Noted

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'D. D. P.', is written over a horizontal line. The signature is fluid and cursive.

Date: 24 February 2022

Chairman: