

ARC21 JOINT COMMITTEE
Virtual Meeting No 82
MINUTES
Thursday 26 October 2023

Members Present:

Councillor E McLaughlin	Antrim & Newtownabbey Borough Council
Councillor A Cathcart	Ards & North Down Borough Council
Councillor B Smyth	Belfast City Council
Councillor P Kennedy	Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council
Councillor G McKeen (<i>Deputy Chair</i>)	Mid & East Antrim Borough Council
Councillor C Enright	Newry, Mourne & Down District Council
Councillor K Murphy	Newry, Mourne & Down District Council

Members' Apologies:

Councillor M Goodman (<i>Chair</i>)	Antrim & Newtownabbey Borough Council
Alderman P Michael	Antrim & Newtownabbey Borough Council
Councillor C Blaney	Ards & North Down Borough Council
Councillor J Cochrane	Ards & North Down Borough Council
Councillor T Kelly	Belfast City Council
Councillor E McDonough-Brown	Belfast City Council
Councillor A Givan	Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council
Alderman S Skillen	Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council
Councillor R Quigley	Mid & East Antrim Borough Council
Councillor A Wilson	Mid & East Antrim Borough Council
Councillor T Andrews	Newry, Mourne & Down District Council

Officers Present:

T Walker	arc21
H Campbell	arc21
K Boal	arc21
B McKeown	arc21
M Lavery	Antrim & Newtownabbey Borough Council
D Lindsay	Ards & North Down Borough Council
N Martin	Ards & North Down Borough Council
B Murray	Belfast City Council
R Harvey	Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council
J Knox	Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council
P Thompson	Mid & East Antrim Borough Council
D Carey	Mid & East Antrim Borough Council

Officers' Apologies:

J Green	arc21
C Matthews	Belfast City Council
J McConnell	Belfast City Council
A Cassells	Newry, Mourne & Down District Council

Councillor McKeen chaired the meeting in Councillor Goodman's absence.

Item 1 - Conflicts of Interest Statement

The Chair read out the Conflicts of Interest Statement, and none were noted.

Item 2 - Apologies

Apologies were noted.

Action: Noted

Item 3 - Minutes of Joint Committee Meeting 081 held on 28 September 2023

An amendment was made to the minutes on the attendance names and councils as follows:
J Knox – Mid & East Antrim Borough Council changed to Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council

The Joint Committee approved the minutes. Proposed by Councillor Kennedy and seconded by Councillor Smyth and agreed by all.

Action: Agreed

Item 4 - Matters Arising

Declaration of Interests forms – raised under AOB

Site visits – Mr Walker encouraged all to register their interest to visit the facilities which had previously been highlighted to (i) the Biffa landfill site and/or (ii) the Warrenpoint and ReGen facilities to get an understanding of the scale and scope of what arc21 is dealing with, and requested that anyone wishing to visit the sites should advise arc21 accordingly asap.

Action: JC Members

Future meetings – discussed later in the meeting.

Antrim & Newtownabbey Borough Council (ANBC) correspondence – Mr Walker reported that responses are in the process of being completed and it was hoped to issue in due course.

Action: arc21

IN COMMITTEE

The Chair recommended that the meeting would now move “*in committee*” which was agreed. Proposed by Councillor Enright and seconded by Councillor Murphy and agreed by all.

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 five matters discussed.

Item 5 Minutes of Joint Committee Meeting 081 held on 28 September 2023 ‘*in committee*’ (*approved*)

Item 6 Matters Arising (*noted*)

Item 7 Residual Waste Treatment Project (*noted*)

Item 8 Commercially Sensitive Contract & Procurement Issues (*approved*)

Item 9 Revenue Estimates 2024-25 (*approved*)

OUT OF COMMITTEE

Proposed by Councillor Murphy and seconded by Councillor Enright and agreed by all.

Item 10 - Governance

1. Audit Committee

Mr Walker reported that in order to deal with the inability to form an Audit Committee and to ensure that arc21 can continue to demonstrate effective governance arrangements, it was proposed that four times a year, the Joint Committee, in addition to their main business, would receive the governance reports that would have previously gone to the Audit Committee. The reporting officers would endeavour to provide the Joint Committee with a succinct update on these governance reports in order to minimise the prospect of the regular meeting being unduly prolonged.

An appendix with the details was presented to the meeting.

He advised that it was hoped that this would only be a temporary arrangement for 2023/24 and that, once Members had become more familiar with arc21 business, arc21 would seek to revisit this decision at the end of a year in order to form an Audit Committee for 2025/26, in line with best practice.

2. Consultations

Mr Walker reported that at the last Committee meeting, it was agreed that arc21 would not respond to consultation exercises which were eight weeks or less, except in particular instances and in these cases any response would be agreed with the Chair in advance of submission and presented to the Joint Committee for retrospective approval.

Consequently, he advised that two consultation exercises had been received as follows:

1. Approach to 10x Technologies and Clusters – opened on 29 September and closes on 24 November 2023. As this is an 8-week consultation, in line with the points made last month, he advised that arc21 would not be responding to this consultation exercise.
2. UK-Wide Consultation on a proposed ban on the manufacture, supply and sale of wet wipes containing plastic – consultation was launched on Saturday, 14 October and runs for six weeks until 25 November 2023. As above, due to the limited consultation timescale, he advised that arc21 would not be drafting a response.

As per the discussion following last month's paper, he advised that arc21 would write to the relevant Departments and inform them of our decision not to respond, along with the rationale.

3. Policy Forum for Northern Ireland – Next Steps for the Development of a Circular Economy for Northern Ireland Conference

Mr Walker reported that this conference is to be held in early 2024 and that the Chair had brought it to his attention and asked him to bring this to the Members' attention to ask if his [the Chair] attendance could be ratified.

Given the relevance of the conference, Mr Walker proposed that the Joint Committee should approve the attendance of the Chair and Deputy Chair (or their nominees) to this conference along with the Chief Executive (or his nominee).

The Joint Committee were asked to approve the recommendations as follows:

1. four times a year, the Joint Committee, in addition to their main business, receives governance reports that would have ordinarily gone to the Audit Committee;
2. arc21 would not respond to the two consultations listed but instead would write to the relevant Departments and inform them of our decision, along with the rationale; and
3. Members approve the attendance of the Chair and Deputy Chair (or their nominees) to the Northern Ireland Circular Economy conference in January, along with the Chief Executive (or his nominee).

The Joint Committee approved the recommendations. Proposed by Councillor Enright and seconded by Councillor Murphy and agreed by all.

Action: Agreed

Item 9 - Contracts & Operations Briefing Report

Service Status

Ms Boal reported that all services were operational during the month of September 2023 and none of the contractors needed to draw upon any of their contingency measures.

Performance

She reported that turnaround times had been reviewed and in all cases, where issues were noted, contractors provided adequate reasons for these and therefore service credits were not applied.

She noted that overweight vehicles for the Landfill and Organics contracts were still high and councils' officers were asked to liaise with their operational teams or contractors working on behalf of the councils and relay this data to reduce the numbers going forward. She advised that there had been some reporting issues with ReGen in that arc21 did not receive some reports when required, and therefore service credits were applied.

In terms of the Bring banks, she reported that there was 1 x Bottle Bank sites (LCCC) and 1 x Paper Skip (BCC) that did not have the specified capacity available. The contractors were notified, and these banks were serviced as soon as possible. There were no service credits applied this month.

Health and Safety

Incidents

Ms Boal reported that during September 2023, there were 4 x Health & Safety incidents reported to arc21 by contractors and councils. She advised that there were some trends appearing over the last 12 months and that arc21 is considering the best way to respond to these and to ensure that the councils and contractors are fully engaged with us in terms of the things happening on site.

She noted that council officers had been asked to liaise with their H&S officers and operational managers, including those of external contractors, to ensure that operational teams understand their Health & Safety obligations and abide by the relevant site rules at each site.

External Health and Safety Audits

She reported that there had been no external Health and Safety audit visits in September. She noted that a review of the issues log for the current year showed that there is only one outstanding action remaining from previous audits to do with signage and that arc21 is following up on this.

Rejected Loads

Ms Boal reported that there were no loads rejected at any of the sites in September 2023.

arc21 Contract Tonnages

The contract tonnages for September 2023 were presented and Ms Boal highlighted the following in comparison to the same period the previous year:

- an increase of 9.3% for MDR material delivered into Bryson;
- a 7.1% decrease for MRF Lot 2 for MDR material delivered to ReGen;
- a minor decrease of 0.2% for Type 1 material for the Organics Contract;
- an increase of 23.7% for type 2 material for the Organics Contract; and
- a 28.3% decrease for the Landfill Residual Waste Contract. No residual waste was sent direct to landfill by BCC in September 2023.

Supplies

Ms Boal provided a summary of the aspects pertinent to the supplies contract and noted that there had been no non-compliances.

Following discussion, the Joint Committee noted the report.

Action: Noted

Item 11 - Waste Tonnage Trends

Ms Boal presented a report showing the waste tonnage trends for materials delivered into the arc21 contracts and highlighted the following:

- Landfill – down to around 8.5k tonnes with the BCC tonnage extracted and following a similar trend to the 2022/23 year. She advised that a graph for the BCC contract tonnage had now been included in the report and a starting point to start comparing the trends;
- Organics – Type 1 (garden waste from civic amenity sites) had dropped from the bumper August levels and at the same point of the 2022/23 year, and for Type 2 – (food and garden waste through kerbside collection schemes) was significantly higher than the 2022/23 year.

The other contracts were also presented in graph form for information.

Following discussion, the Joint Committee noted the report.

Action: Noted

Item 12 - WRAP Report - Behaviours, Attitudes and Awareness Recycling Tracker Survey in Northern Ireland -Spring 2023

Ms Boal presented a report to provide Members with an overview of the information contained within a recently issued WRAP report on behaviours, attitudes and awareness in relation to recycling.

She advised that the report highlighted that recycling has become a normalised behaviour and that the public largely recognise the recycling logo. It identified specific waste streams such as tin-foil, glass perfume / aftershave bottles, aerosols, plastic trays and plastic pots and tubs where more could be captured, and that whilst there is high engagement in participating in food waste collections smell, leaks and maggots were barriers to participation.

She noted that the report also highlighted that the public had less certainty in terms of Extended Producer Responsibility and the Deposit Return Scheme.

She also noted that the report looked at two key areas of the recycling: dry recycling and food waste recycling.

She advised that over the next couple of months, arc21 would be bringing an update on the consultation which is expected to come out from DAERA on future recycling which will be significant in terms of the next steps and direction of travel.

Following discussion, the Joint Committee noted the report.

Action: Noted

Item 14 - Customer Survey

Ms Boal presented the results of the arc21 annual customer survey. She advised that in normal circumstances this would be sent to the Joint Committee, along with the CEXs and Steering Group officers. However, due to the timing of the survey and the break for elections and the formation of a new committee, it was considered more appropriate to focus on the Chief Executives and Steering Group Officers only and then do the next survey to include all around May/June 2024.

She noted that the number of respondents was low and therefore had had an impact on the results.

She reported that, generally, the satisfaction levels were good but there were some areas which looked as if they could be improved. She advised that the arc21 SMT will be working on to change the “*don't know*” or “*dissatisfied*” levels and will be exploring other areas to provide further information as requested. However, she noted that comments either in the responses or at a recent Steering Group meeting had not identified any specific issues that could be addressed.

She advised that the next stage would be that the results will be considered, along with stakeholder feedback that is currently being gathered as part of the development of the next Corporate Plan by the SMT.

The Chair suggested that arc21 should take it as a positive sign on the low returns meaning generally good levels of satisfaction.

Following discussion, the Joint Committee noted the report.

Action: Noted

Item 15 - Schedule of Meetings 2024

Mr Walker presented a report on the proposed schedule of Joint Committee meetings for 2024.

He reported that on approaching the councils to consider a more suitable day for members attendance, Thursday still appears to be the best option. However, Members were asked to consider whether a different time of day would be more suitable.

Discussion ensued and it was agreed that Thursday morning remained the most suitable time, starting at 10.30am to enable Members to travel to venues, if required.

Councillor Cathcart noted that he was only available for online attendance, but was happy with the hybrid option for those able to attend.

Mr Walker advised that to hold a hybrid meeting, arc21 would need attendance levels confirmed a couple of weeks in advance to make the necessary arrangements, and with low attendance confirmed, less than 6, we would revert to solely online.

Councillor Enright advised that attending a meeting in person, although he saw the benefits in this, would be difficult when considering the travel time either side and that it was easier for Members to attend for a couple of hours online with their other commitments.

The Chair suggested that arc21 consider the option to offer a hybrid once a quarter and for arc21 to progress accordingly.

Mr Walker also advised that additionally, from time to time, there may be a requirement to call a Special Meeting of the Joint Committee and it is anticipated that this ad-hoc arrangement be continued if and when necessary, and Members notified accordingly, should such circumstances require.

It was recommended that the Joint Committee approve the dates, the dates are forwarded to Members Services of the participant councils to help avoid meetings being scheduled in councils during these dates and times, and arc21 to progress with the option to hold hybrid meetings once a quarter.

Dates

Thursday 25 January - hybrid

Thursday 29 February

Thursday 28 March

Thursday 25 April - hybrid

Thursday 30 May

Thursday 27 June

July – no meeting

Thursday 29 August - hybrid

Thursday 26 September

Thursday 31 October

Tuesday 3 December - hybrid

The Joint Committee agreed to the recommendations. Proposed by Councillor Enright and seconded by the Chair and agreed by all.

Action: Agreed

Item 16 - AOB

Mr Walker reported that there were still a number of Declaration of Interests forms outstanding, and reminded Members to complete and return to Ms Campbell asap as they are a fundamental aspect to our governance arrangements and a point of comment and criticism from both internal and external auditors.

Action: JC Members

Item 17- Next Meeting Tuesday 5 December 2023 using the MS Teams platform

Date: 5 December 2023

Chairman:

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Michael Godwin". The signature is written in a cursive style with a horizontal line underneath the name.