



## Belfast City Council

<b>Report to:</b>	Strategic Policy & Resources Committee
<b>Subject:</b>	Arc21 Residual Waste Treatment Facilities – Community Consultation.
<b>Date:</b>	23 January 2009
<b>Reporting Officer:</b>	William Francey, Director of H&ES – ext 3260

### **Purpose of the Report.**

To present for consideration recommended final draft documentation for use in the consultation with the Council's ratepayers on the possible transfer of lands at the North Foreshore for an arc21 residual waste treatment facility.

### **Relevant Background Information.**

At its meeting in 19 September, 2008 the SP&R Committee considered options for consulting the local community on the possible transfer of land at the North Foreshore to arc21 for the purposes of building and operating a Mechanical Biological Treatment (MBT) facility or an Energy from Waste (EFW) facility.

Following discussion, the Committee agreed to defer consideration of the matter to enable the proposed consultation process to be validated by a professional consultancy service and recommended that the proposals for the community consultation be considered at a Special Meeting of the Council. In accordance with this decision, the Consultation Institute was commissioned to review the proposed consultation process and Northern Ireland Environment Link was commissioned to review the content and balance of the information leaflet.

At the Special Meeting on 30 October, the Council considered reports from the Consultation Institute and Northern Ireland Environment Link, together with revised information material and a revised draft questionnaire and cover letter. The following recommendations to consult and engage the Council's ratepayers were also considered and adopted:

- “1. A postal survey to be sent to all household and business addresses in Belfast. A copy of the proposed questionnaire and cover letter has been circulated (subject to possible changes highlighted through testing of the form as part of a focus group)
2. Results to be segmented by area and other geo-demographic data as appropriate
3. The postal survey to include the information sheet as amended to explain the proposal and the issues and terms used. A copy of the information sheet has been circulated (subject to possible changes highlighted through testing of the form as part of a pre-consultation focus group)
4. A series of appropriately segmented Focus Groups to identify and explore in detail local perceptions, views and concerns.
5. A dedicated information webpage be set up on the Council website where people can provide their views by email and get more information
6. A series of informal information roadshows (staffed by Council employees) to be held at various times and locations across the city to enable local people to drop in and get more information, ask questions and provide more detailed comment about the proposals. The range of locations will reflect the input of elected Members and other stakeholders.”

The Council also approved the commencement of a tender process for the appointment of consultants to undertake the consultation process and granted delegated authority to the Director of Health & Environmental Services to appoint an appropriate consultant subject to a maximum cost of £100,000. Following discussion, the Council also recommended that a further report in relation to any proposed changes to be made to the questionnaire and the information sheet, following the pre-consultation focus group meetings and further consultation with the Party Groupings, be submitted for consideration to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee at the earliest opportunity.

In line with the recommendations to commence a tender process for the appointment of consultants and to develop the questionnaire and information sheet following meetings with the focus group and Party Groupings, the Waste Management Service engaged with the Party Groupings in order to develop the questionnaire and information sheet while also conducting a tender process using the Office of Government Commerce (OGC) Framework. Unfortunately, no consultants responded to the Council's invitation. In the meantime, the Service convened a reference group of Members and a series of meetings were held during which the content of the questionnaire and information sheet was debated and amendments were made prior to the appointment of consultants.

Following the setback with the OGC Framework, the Service undertook a local procurement exercise and received two submissions which, after review and interview, resulted in the appointment of Social Market Research (SMR) just before Christmas.

Within the first two weeks of January, SMR convened three pre-consultation focus groups to consider the amended questionnaire and information sheet and a further meeting of the Members' reference group was held on 16 January when the feedback from these groups was considered by the Members. Following consideration of the issues raised by the pre-consultation focus groups and discussions with the Members a final recommended draft of the cover letter and the questionnaire and information sheet is attached as Appendices 2 and 3.

Once approved by the Council, the draft questionnaire and information sheet will be printed and issued to all ratepayers within Belfast and a report will be presented to the SP&R Committee following receipt and analysis of the final results. Following discussions with SMR, it was recognised that the timescale for the roadshows could be condensed into a two week programme which would beneficially coincide with householders'/ratepayers' receipt of the postal questionnaire and information sheet if a tandem process was used whereby there were two events held per day (Mon-Fri) in separate locations across the city. These would be supplemented by an additional roadshow in a city centre location on the two Saturdays. These roadshows would be timed to coincide closely with when householders received the questionnaire and information sheet to maximise support and promote understanding.

Furthermore, considering the postal survey, SMR have recommended that the timetable for the receipt of responses be four weeks from the date of receipt of the questionnaire by householders/ratepayers. It is anticipated that all householders/ratepayers should have received their postal survey around 24 February.

#### **Resource Implications**

In line with the Special Council meeting, the consultancy SMR has been appointed within the budget allocated.

#### **Recommendations.**

The Committee is recommended to approve the draft questionnaire and information sheet for public consultation, as appended.

The Committee is also requested to approve the consultation programme as outlined above.

**Key to Abbreviations**

MBT – Mechanical Biological Treatment  
EfW – Energy from Waste  
SMR – Social Market Research  
OGC – Office of Government Commerce

**Appendices**

Appendix 1 – 30 October Special Council Minutes  
Appendix 2 – Cover Letter  
Appendix 3 – Draft Questionnaire & Information Sheet

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