

Council

Thursday, 30th October, 2008

SPECIAL MEETING OF BELFAST CITY COUNCIL

Held in Adelaide Exchange on Thursday, 30th October, 2008
at the hour of 4.30 p.m., pursuant to Notice.

Members present: The Right Honourable the Lord Mayor
(Councillor Hartley) (Chairman);
the Deputy Lord Mayor (Councillor D. Browne);
the High Sheriff (Councillor McKenzie); and
Councillors Adamson, Attwood, Austin, M. Browne,
W. Browne, Campbell, Convery, Cunningham, Cush,
D. Dodds, N. Dodds, Ekin, Hendron, Humphrey, B. Kelly,
N. Kelly, Kyle, Lavery, Long, Maginness, C. Maskey,
McCann, McCarthy, McCausland, Moore, Mullaghan,
Newton, O'Reilly, Patterson, Rodgers and Stalford.

Summons

The Chief Executive submitted the summons convening the meeting.

Apologies

Apologies for inability to attend were reported from Councillors Crozier,
P. Maskey, Rodway and Smyth.

arc21 Residual Waste Treatment Facilities – Proposals for Community Consultation

In accordance with its decision of 1st October, the Council met to consider the
undernoted report on the proposals for community consultation in relation to the possible
provision of land for the arc21 residual waste treatment facility at the North Foreshore:

“Purpose of the Report.

**To present for consideration, an externally validated approach to
consulting on proposals to make Council land at the North
Foreshore available for an arc21 residual waste treatment facility.**

Relevant Background Information.

**At its meeting on 22nd August, the Strategic Policy & Resources
Committee (the Committee) considered a report on the proposed
transfer of land at the North Foreshore to arc21 for the potential
development of a Mechanical Biological Treatment (MBT) facility or
an Energy from Waste (EfW) incineration facility as part of the**

arc21 Waste Management Plan. At the meeting the Committee decided that there should be consultation with the local community to inform the Committee's decision and to establish whether the location of an EfW incinerator on the site would be appropriate.

Options for consulting local people, including a recommended approach, were subsequently brought to Committee on the 19th September. After 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 to the Council that the proposals for the community consultation be considered at a Special Meeting of the Council in October. This was to avoid undue delay to the arc21 site selection process and consequential liability for non-compliance fines. The Committee's decision was approved by the Council at its meeting on 1st October.

Following the Committee's decision, the Consultation Institute was commissioned to independently review the consultation process, whilst Northern Ireland Environment Link (NIEL) was commissioned to review the content and balance of the information leaflet.

The Consultation Institute (TCI) seeks to promote the highest standards of public, stakeholder and employee consultation by initiating research, publications and specialist events in order to disseminate best practice and improve subsequent decision making. TCI is designed to help all those engaged in public or stakeholder consultation absorb best practice, encourage innovation and improve its value to decision-makers. It has a network of approved partners – consultants or trainers with expertise and skills in a wide range of consultation and public engagement activities – and via these partners, offers consultancy and training to the private and public sectors. TCI engaged John Twitchen, one of its approved partners, to assist with this evaluation. John Twitchen is the founder of Sauce Consultancy, an environmental communications consultancy, which offers services in consultation, community engagement and public and media relations. John has over ten years experience as an environmental communications professional and has worked for a range of public, private and partnership organisations.

Northern Ireland Environment Link (NIEL) is the forum and networking body for organisations interested in the environment of Northern Ireland. It assists its members to develop views on issues affecting the environment and to influence policy and practice impacting on the natural and built environment of Northern Ireland. Its vision is to have a well protected and enhanced natural and built environment that is valued and cared for by people in

Northern Ireland. The aim of NIEL is to facilitate understanding of environmental issues and enhance the capacity of groups and individuals to speak and act in a co-ordinated way in the interests of the natural and built environment.

Key Issues.

**External Validation of the Proposed Consultation –
Summary of Key Issues & Recommendations**

The Consultation Institute was asked to review the initial consultation proposal as considered by the SP&R Committee in 19th September. TCI subsequently engaged Sauce Consultancy as one of its approved partners to lead the review in collaboration with Rhion Jones, TCI Programme Director, who will be attending the Council meeting should Members have any questions. A copy of the TCI report has been circulated.

The TCI report recommends that:

- The questionnaire should be sent to all residents in the City to ensure full coverage
- Additional geo-demographic data should be collected to enable the council to assess differences in opinion between interests and location etc.
- Businesses should be included as they may be equally impacted by a decision.
- The Q&A element is critical to making the questionnaire work and be meaningful and the questionnaire should make it clear that the consultee is required to carefully read the accompanying information before providing their views.
- The proposed approach should be made more robust by including a qualitative element through the use of focus groups
- Output from the focus groups should then be used to refine the questionnaire, information leaflet and roadshows and be used to tease out views from different groups and to ensure that the consultation identifies a range of views that can be considered by Elected Members in making a decision
- Websites should not be relied on as the sole or principal mechanism for providing additional information. Copies of relevant documents should be made available on request or for inspection at the roadshows, at Council offices etc.

- The roadshows should be held at a range of times and on different days. The locations and timing of the roadshows should be informed by the views of Elected Members and other stakeholders.
- Key disability groups, and any other groups that may have difficulty in attending the information sessions are contacted, in order to ensure these groups are able to participate in the consultation.
- A proactive relationship with the media is recommended.

TCI suggest that the council should also consider:

- Preparing a short video to summarise the issues and add to the information provided to consultees, in particular during the roadshows.
- Proactive communications with community groups and representatives is also strongly recommended in order to raise awareness of the consultation, improve response rates and avoid any misunderstanding about the nature of the consultation.

Information Leaflet

NIEL was asked to review and validate the information material to be provided to residents as part of the consultation process to ensure that the information provides an objective and balanced reflection of the issues. In particular, NIEL was asked to validate that the information was: factual and had not been misinterpreted; was presented in a balanced way; and, was as easily understood as possible whilst ensuring the integrity of the facts.

NIEL in their response expressed the view that the draft materials:

- required additional information concerning the MBT option;
- required greater clarity around what people were being asked to comment on; and
- since many people would only read the questionnaire, it was important that the information on both it and the accompanying information leaflet needed to be clear without the need to refer to other documents.

NIEL made substantial changes and additions to the draft documents, and their revised draft has been circulated to the Members.

NIEL also provided a short report to accompany their response, which included a statement on their position in relation to recycling, waste minimisation and residual waste treatment. This too has been circulated to the Members.

Resource Implications

It will be necessary to outsource the administration of the consultation process together with the data input and analysis due to the scope and volume of the project and to underline the objectivity and independence of the process. It would be intended that the roadshows will be arranged and conducted using internal resources and council venues where appropriate.

The estimated cost of the recommended consultation process is outlined below:

<i>Element</i>	<i>Estimated Cost</i>
Questionnaire:	
Printing Questionnaire, leaflet and freepost envelope	£26,000 (highest quote)
Envelopes	£3,850
Packaging	£5000
Postage Discounted 2nd class rate	£21,750
Freepost Returns: Cost subject to response rate 10% response = £3700 30% rate = £11,109	£4,000 – £12,000
Input & Analysis Estimate based on industry rates – cost subject to response rates & response to pen question	£18,000
Focus Groups Estimated at £2000 per focus group	£12,000 – 16,000
Total	£90,600 - £102,600

These costs are indicative at present. Cost savings may be possible, for example, in printing costs and by hosting the focus groups at Council premises.

In addition, following consultation with the Focus Groups, it is likely that a range of venues will be identified as being suitable for the roadshows. It is probable that these will consist of a mix of both Council-owned and other facilities and accordingly a cost of approximately £10,000 should be made available to cover any charges arising.

It is therefore recommended that the consultation process, excluding the roadshows, be outsourced. Members are asked to approve the use of external consultants up to a maximum cost of £100,000. The cost of the freepost questionnaire returns will be variable depending on response rates and will be met by the Council under a separate contract with Royal Mail.

Recommendations.

Members are asked to approve the following recommended approach to consulting and engaging with local people on whether to transfer land at the North Foreshore to arc21 for a residual waste treatment facility (either a MBT or an EfW facility):

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.

Members are asked to approve the commencement of a tender process for the appointment of consultants to undertake the consultation process as outlined above and to grant delegated authority to the Director of Health & Environmental Services to appoint an appropriate consultant subject to a maximum cost of £100,000. The evaluation would be based on a 20% cost and 80% quality ratio against the following criteria:

- 1) Total Cost
- 2) Understanding of the brief and proposed methodology
- 3) Previous experience of similar contracts, including work in the Public Sector
- 4) Calibre and experience of the project team
- 5) Quality systems including environmental management
- 6) Timetable for delivery of the consultation

Members should note that it proposed that the tender process be conducted through the Office of Government Commerce (OGC) Framework. Under this arrangement a tender competition would be undertaken involving those on the existing OGC framework. This will minimise advertising costs.

Key to Abbreviations

- TCI – The Consultation Institute
NIEL – Northern Ireland Environmental Link
MBT – Mechanical Biological Treatment
EfW – Energy from Waste”

After a lengthy discussion, the Council adopted the recommendations and agreed that a further report in relation to any proposed changes to be made to the questionnaire and the information sheet, following the 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.

Lord Mayor
Chairman

This page has been intentionally left blank.