

ITEM 3
ARC21 JOINT COMMITTEE
Meeting No 103
MINUTES
Thursday 26 February 2026
Using MS Teams

Members Present:

Councillor A Bennington (<i>Chair</i>)	Antrim & Newtownabbey Borough Council
Councillor E Thompson	Ards & North Down Borough Council
Councillor J Cochrane	Ards & North Down Borough Council
Alderman O Gawith	Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council
Councillor A Givan	Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council
Councillor T Andrews	Newry, Mourne & Down District Council
Councillor D Lee-Surginor	Newry, Mourne & Down District Council

Members' Apologies:

Councillor M Goodman	Antrim & Newtownabbey Borough Council
Councillor H Cushinan	Antrim & Newtownabbey Borough Council
Councillor C Blaney	Ards & North Down Borough Council
Councillor M Collins	Belfast City Council
Councillor E McDonough-Brown	Belfast City Council
Alderman S Skillen	Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council
Councillor G McKeen (<i>Deputy Chair</i>)	Mid & East Antrim Borough Council
Councillor R Quigley	Mid & East Antrim Borough Council
Alderman M Morrow	Mid & East Antrim Borough Council
Councillor J Brennan	Newry, Mourne & Down District Council

Officers Present:

T Walker	arc21
H Campbell (<i>Secretary</i>)	arc21
K Boal	arc21
J Green	arc21
M Lavery	Antrim & Newtownabbey Borough Council
G Bannister	Ards & North Down Borough Council
K Patterson	Ards & North Down Borough Council
S Leonard	Belfast City Council
W Muldrew	Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council
D Carey	Mid & East Antrim Borough Council
S Murphy	Newry, Mourne & Down District Council

Officers' Apologies:

A McCann	Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council
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Item 1 - Conflicts of Interest Statement

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

Action: Noted

Item 2 - Apologies

Apologies were noted.

Action: Noted

Item 3 - Minutes of Joint Committee Meeting 102 held on 29 January 2026

The Joint Committee approved the minutes. Proposed by Ald Gawith, seconded by Cllr Thompson, and agreed by all.

Action: Agreed

Item 4 - Matters Arising

Any matters arising were dealt with under the main agenda items.

Action: Noted

IN COMMITTEE

The Chair recommended that the meeting would now move "*In Committee*" which was agreed. Proposed by Cllr Givan and seconded by the Chair.

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*", there were five matters discussed.

Item 5 - Minutes of Joint Committee Meeting 102 held on 29 January 2026 '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 - Tender Report – Supply of Services Relating to the Treatment and Energy Recovery/Disposal of Residual Waste Arisings - Dynamic Purchasing System, Lot 3 - Contract H - approved

OUT OF COMMITTEE

Proposed by Ald Gawith and seconded by Cllr Thompson.

Item 10 - Contracts & Operations Briefing Report

Ms Boal presented a report to provide the Joint Committee with an update in relation to contracts and operations.

Service Status

She stated that all services had performed well throughout January, with ReGen continuing to use their site at Derryboy Road to accept waste from several arc21 contracts.

Performance

She provided an update on contractor performance across all the contracts in January and highlighted where some service credits had been applied for turnaround times, the number of overweight vehicles, reporting issues by contractors, and the bring contracts rectification requests issued and serviced.

Health & Safety

Ms Boal reported that during January there had been one health and safety incident relating to a potential fire issue. She advised that council officers had been requested to coordinate with their health and safety officers and operational managers, including those from external contractors, to ensure that all operational teams are aware of their health and safety responsibilities and comply with the site rules at each location.

She mentioned that arc21 had recently met with the recycling officers to discuss communication strategies regarding what items should be placed in bins. Additionally, there was a request for clearer information for service providers on battery collection, specifically concerning which types of batteries can and cannot be collected. Alongside addressing issues that may lead to fires, she noted that there was an effort to identify target materials that may not be collected as frequently as anticipated based on the composition of incoming materials.

She noted that arc21 aims to increase awareness about compost and food waste during Compost Awareness Week, while being mindful that this topic has already been prioritised within the NCAP program.

Audits

Ms Boal reported that the external health and safety audit programme continues with a recent visit to Bryson Recycling at their site in Mallusk.

She noted that the report had been shared with the contractor with some actions identified and arc21 was working closely with all parties to complete these as soon as possible.

Rejected Loads

She reported that in January there were no rejected loads.

arc21 Contract Tonnages

Details of the tonnages delivered in January for the main contracts were provided, along with a comparison against the same period last year.

Supplies

A summary of the orders and deliveries of supplies for January 2026 was included in Ms Boal's report and she noted that there had been one non-compliance in regard to a delivery arriving a day late.

Following discussion, the Joint Committee noted the report. Proposed by Cllr Givan and seconded by Ald Gawith.

Action: Noted

Item 11 - Waste Tonnage Trends

Ms Boal presented a report showing the tonnage comparisons for material received through the arc21 contracts over the last four years, and she discussed the increases and decreases in the tonnage trends.

She highlighted the following:

- the total residual is approximately where arc21 anticipated, with the majority of the material being redirected from landfill;
- the organic waste tonnage (type 1) was slightly lower than it was in January of last year; and (type 2) great similarity across the years which is an indication of the amount of food waste. She noted that there will be interest in the findings of the compositional study currently being conducted by the Department to determine the extent of food waste present in bins;
- the quantity of material delivered to Bryson was slightly lower in December and January when compared to previous years, and for MRF Lot 2, the figures were similar to those of two out of the last four years. She also mentioned that arc21 anticipate a decrease in tonnages due to the effects of Extended Producer Responsibility, and the implementation of DRS in 2027, which will influence some of the more higher value materials and these will be considered in our upcoming contracts;
- for street sweepings she noted that there had been a significant fall off against what we were collecting in 2023/24 and similar to 2024/25;
- the textiles had spiked and of concern to the contractor and something they are trying to manage.

Following discussion, the Joint Committee noted the report. Proposed by the Chair and seconded by Cllr Thompson.

Action: Noted

Item 12 - Rethinking Our Resources: Northern Ireland Resources and Waste Management Strategy Consultation

Ms Boal presented slides with an overview of progress with the proposed arc21 consultation response.

She also provided an overview of the Strategy discussion at the recent Government Waste Working Group meeting for information as follows:

- the consultation had been extended from 8 April to 6 May which had been generally welcomed by councils, as some were finding it challenging to process all the information required for committee approvals;
- it was clarified that the high-level strategy did not include infrastructure development or enforcement and certain aspects mentioned would depend on revised legislation, which raised uncertainty about whether the legislation could be established before setting the targets. As a result, she noted that it was possible that some targets may not be achievable due to the absence of the necessary legislative framework;
- the Group addressed ongoing considerations regarding data collection across various waste categories, noting that reliable data for commercial, industrial, and agricultural waste remains lacking. This data is crucial for determining how targets will be met;

- an intention to launch an eight-week consultation related to a waste prevention programme, coinciding with the consultation closure date of May 6. However, councils expressed concerns about timing in relation to their internal cycles, leading to a potential extension to a 12-week consultation period, which the Department acknowledged;
- in reviewing the recent Northern Ireland Audit Office recommendations concerning waste, particularly the Waste Strategy, it was noted that they recommended that the Strategy should support stakeholders in making timely, cost-effective decisions and align any targets with other environmental objectives, such as achieving net-zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050. However, it was unclear how effectively these principles were reflected in the current document;
- there was mention of a lack of long-term plans prioritising waste prevention and tracking performance against waste prevention targets. The consultation did not present substantial actions in this regard. It was recognised that a review of the waste prevention programme should have been conducted to evaluate its performance, but many targets were not clearly quantitative, complicating performance tracking;
- recommendations included a continued emphasis on waste prevention within the new Strategy by establishing clear, measurable targets;
- collaboration was identified as another important recommendation, but it appeared that this had not been sufficiently prioritised in the high-level strategy;
- in considering further context, reference was made to the WRAP report published in 2020, which suggested how a municipal recycling rate of 65% could be achieved, indicating that a public sector target of 58% would be necessary, with the rest needing to come from other sources. It was noted that the draft strategy had still not set targets for each sector and that achieving targets would require new policy measures to incentivise and facilitate the necessary changes in practice;
- commitment to funding support for change was noticeably absent;
- the initial analysis focused on evaluating the targets, considering their measurability, and the division of responsibilities related to those targets.

She advised that there were a number of items that arc21 might have expected to see in this Strategy which appear to have been omitted and which has informed our thinking when working through the report with the Steering Group officers.

She noted that there had been two engagement sessions to date with the Steering Group officers and some of the high level themes coming out of this included:

- no further clarity on requirements for councils in relation to targets and activities regarding household waste and the non-household municipal waste;
- interface with councils Local Area Development Plans and the arc21 Waste Management Plan;
- requirement to understand targets and to have clear objectives. It was noted that a number of target dates in the document had already passed or will have passed by the time this document comes out;
- issue of guidance - only really going to be useful if it is statutory as opposed to it being guidance, could potentially lead to challenge;
- the strategy has been drafted in the absence of up-to-date information on tonnage streams and composition;
- absence of any plan to fund change;
- the role and effectiveness of the Waste Management Plan;
- lack of direction in terms of enforcement and monitoring;
- lack of priority within the document, argument that focus should be on where the biggest gains could be made but main focus still seems to be on councils;
- going forward, it does not seem to rely on information from Digital Waste Tracking;

- absence of market analysis regarding capacity for recyclates etc. noting target to collect flexible plastics in the absence of a market;
- role of export not articulated or justified within the strategy, concern on interface with other policy positions in terms of self-sufficiency and proximity; and
- interface with other programmes.

Ms Boal noted that arc21's intention is to continue to engage with the Steering Group officers to prepare a draft response, with the intention to bring a final draft to the April Joint Committee meeting for consideration ahead of submission.

The Chair noted that she had asked Mr Walker to draft a strategy for the arc21 councils for guidance and a strategic way forward and advised that it would also need to reflect the issues raised in Ms Boal's report.

Following discussion, the Joint Committee noted the report. Proposed by the Cllr Andrews and seconded by Cllr Givan.

Action: Noted

Item 13 - AOB

Mr Walker reminded Members of the arc21 annual webinar, scheduled on 31 March 2026 from 10-12.30.

He stated that he had assembled speakers who will address topics including an update on Extended Producer Responsibility, Circular Economy, and the management of specific waste streams or planning for future infrastructure needs, and encouraged all to attend.

He noted that further details would be circulated shortly and asked all Members to note their diaries accordingly.

The Chair suggested that the councillors from all 11 councils should be invited, and Mr Walker indicated that he would do so accordingly.

Action: Mr Walker

Item 14 - Next Meeting (hybrid) Thursday 26 March 2026 at 10.30am to be hosted by Newry, Mourne and Down District Council, in The Council Chamber, Downshire Civic Centre, Ardglass Road, Downpatrick BT30 6RA

The Chair advised that the next meeting was scheduled for Thursday 26 March 2026 hosted by NMDDC and encouraged all to attend and to confirm their attendance with Ms Campbell in advance of the meeting.

Action: ALL

Date: 30 April 2026

Chair:

A Bennington