

ARC21 JOINT COMMITTEE

Meeting No 108

MINUTES

Friday 28 August 2026

Using MS Teams

Members Present:

Councillor A Bennington (*Chair*)
Councillor M Goodman
Alderman O Gawith
Councillor U Mackin
Councillor A Skinner
Councillor G McKeen (*Deputy Chair*)
Councillor T Andrews
Councillor D Lee-Surginor

Antrim & Newtownabbey Borough Council
Antrim & Newtownabbey Borough Council
Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council
Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council
Mid & East Antrim Borough Council
Mid & East Antrim Borough Council
Newry, Mourne & Down District Council
Newry, Mourne & Down District Council

Members' Apologies:

Councillor H Cushinan
Councillor J Cochrane
Councillor C Blaney
Councillor E Thompson
Alderman S Copeland
Councillor M Collins
Councillor E McDonough-Brown
Councillor A Givan
Alderman M Morrow
Councillor C King

Antrim & Newtownabbey Borough Council
Ards & North Down Borough Council
Ards & North Down Borough Council
Ards & North Down Borough Council
Belfast City Council
Belfast City Council
Belfast City Council
Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council
Mid & East Antrim Borough Council
Newry, Mourne & Down District Council

Officers Present:

M Kelly
H Campbell (*Secretary*)
K Boal
J Green
M Lavery
G Bannister
K Patterson
S Leonard
G Patterson
W Muldrew
R Moore
C Hunter
M Baker
S Murphy

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Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council
Mid & East Antrim Borough Council
Mid & East Antrim Borough Council
Mid & East Antrim Borough Council
Newry, Mourne & Down District Council

Officers' Apologies:

T Walker
A McCann

arc21
Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council

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

The Chair welcomed the new Member, Cllr Skinner, to his first meeting.

Item 3 - Minutes of Joint Committee Meeting 107 held on 25 June 2026

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

Action: Agreed

Item 4 - Matters Arising

There were no other matters arising.

Action: Noted

IN COMMITTEE

The Chair recommended that the meeting would now move "*In Committee*" which was agreed. Proposed by Ald Gawith 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 107 held on 26 June 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 - Provision of Services for the Receipt, Storage and Transfer of Mixed Dry Recyclable Material - approved

OUT OF COMMITTEE

Proposed by Ald Gawith and seconded by the Chair.

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 operated well throughout June and July.

Performance

She provided an update on contractor performance across all the contracts 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

The incidents for June and July were noted and actions taken.

She advised that fire remains a significant issue and noted that a Health and Safety workshop for relevant council officers was scheduled for 8 September, involving arc21's external H&S adviser and some learning from contractors that we will report on lessons learned. She also noted ongoing work with recycling officers to identify additional communication measures.

Audits

She reported that the external H&S audit programme continued, with audits undertaken at NWP's Keady and Drumnakelly sites. No actions were identified, and she noted that the majority of issues raised through audits during the year had been addressed.

Rejected Loads

She reported that one rejected load was delivered to Bryson Recycling in June 2026 and a further rejected load in July 2026 due to mixed waste being found in vehicles. She noted that Councils continue to be reminded to raise this issue with their operational teams. She highlighted that, while the overall number of rejected loads remains very low in comparison to the volume managed, each rejection incurs associated costs and requires follow-up actions.

arc21 Contract Tonnages

Details of the tonnages delivered in June and July for the main contracts were provided, along with a comparison against the same period last year and these were discussed more fully in the Waste Tonnage Trends report.

Supplies

A summary of supply orders and deliveries for June and July 2026 was included in Ms Boal's report. She noted that there was one non-conformance during the period, with all other deliveries completed as planned.

Update on the position regarding the Collection of Flexible Plastics

She noted that flexible plastics had been included in the consultation on the future NI Waste Strategy, with mandatory collections originally proposed from 31 March 2027. Following correspondence with the Department, it was confirmed that there will be no mandatory requirement from that date, although councils are still being encouraged to collect flexible plastics separately. A copy of the Department's response was provided for information. She added that this will be taken into account during the development of the MRF contract, with flexible plastics included as an option.

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

Action: Noted

Item 11 - Waste Tonnage Trends

Ms Boal presented a report comparing tonnages of material received through the arc21 contracts, highlighting trends in increases and decreases over the reporting period.

She noted that:

- Total residual waste tonnages were slightly higher than the previous year, largely due to the inclusion of the NMDDC (legacy Newry) contract, which contributes approximately 2,000 tonnes per month.
- Organic waste tonnages remain largely weather dependent and have not reached the peak levels seen in previous years.
- Combined MRF tonnages were lower than in recent years during May but increased slightly in June and July. These tonnage figures will be used in forecasting for the forthcoming MRF contract, taking into account the potential impacts of the Deposit Return Scheme (DRS) and Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) reforms, which may reduce the volume of material collected through these contracts.
- Textile tonnages continue to show an upward trend, which may reflect reduced acceptance of material by charity shops.

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

Action: Noted

Item 12 - Outreach Support

Mr Kelly reported that arc21 had been invited to provide a letter of support for Phase 2 of the RESCUE Regulatory Science and Innovation Network, which seeks to explore regulatory and innovation pathways for the reuse, repurposing and recycling of wind energy assets.

The letter recognised the relevance of the proposed work to circular economy and sustainable resource management objectives and welcomed the collaborative approach being adopted by the consortium.

He noted that due to the funding application deadline, the Chair had approved the submission of the letter in advance. Members were therefore asked to retrospectively approve the submission of the letter of support for the RESCUE Regulatory Science and Innovation Network Phase 2 funding application.

Following discussion, the Joint Committee approved the recommendations. Proposed by the Ald Gawith and seconded by the Chair, and agreed by all.

Action: Noted

Item 13 - Vapes

Ms Boal presented a report outlining the current legislative position on vape disposal, including recent changes to producer and retailer responsibilities, vape-related waste statistics, battery fire risks, electric vehicle battery disposal, and awareness-raising initiatives.

She advised that vapes are now classified under a dedicated WEEE Category 15, with producers responsible for the full costs of recycling their products. Retailers selling vapes, both in-store and online, are also required to provide take-back facilities. Enforcement and monitoring responsibilities are understood to rest with the Office for Product Safety and Standards (OPSS).

She reported that in support of disposal Household Waste Recycling Centres (HWRCs) currently provide vape recycling facilities and that more than one tonne of vape-related material has been collected to date.

The report also included statistics from National Recycling by Collect and Recycle relating to disposable e-cigarettes, disposal methods for pods and disposable vapes, battery fires, electric vehicle batteries, and the marketing of vapes as recyclable.

Ms Boal highlighted a recent OPSS awareness campaign and ongoing discussions among arc21 recycling officers regarding future communications. Information has been circulated to officers and further work is planned to coordinate a joint awareness-raising approach across the arc21 area. Additional information is also being sought from the Department on any proposed national awareness campaign.

Ald Gawith inquired whether vapes can be disposed of in battery recycling points and requested clarification on this matter.

Cllr Lee-Surginor suggested that the OPSS could provide information to new vape retailers on their legal obligations.

The Chair queried whether councils' environmental health officers had any enforcement role or statutory responsibility in relation to vape take-back requirements. Ms Boal advised that she had been informed by one council that it was not currently undertaking enforcement activity and that she was uncertain as to councils' enforcement responsibilities. She also noted that she was unsure of the extent to which retailers were providing the required take-back facilities but would be happy to discuss the matter further with councils.

In terms of marking vapes as 'recyclable' Ms Boal expressed her concern at the householder disposing of them in the recycling bin, which is not appropriate and could exacerbate existing issues. She stressed the importance of increasing public awareness and noted that, while councils have a role to play, wider national support is also required.

She advised that she would seek further information and make contact with the OPSS.

Mr Kelly added that a letter had been sent to Katrina Godfrey, Permanent Secretary at DAERA, requesting a meeting to discuss opportunities for collaboration and joint action on the issue.

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

Action: Noted

Item 14 - Customer Survey

Ms Boal provided the annual customer survey results which included feedback from Members, officers and Chief Executives, along with an overview of the education programme and workshop evaluation forms for 2025/26 in relation to work carried out by the arc21 Waste Promotion Officer.

She reported that overall the results had been positive and any actions arising will be followed up internally with the Senior Management Team.

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

Action: Noted

Item 15 - AOB

There was no further business.

Item 16 - Next Meeting and AGM Thursday 24 September 2026 at 10.30am, hosted by Ards and North Down Borough Council in the Craig Room, Bangor Castle (City Hall), Castle Park Road, Bangor BT20 4TF

The Chair advised that the next meeting and AGM was scheduled to be held on 24 September and encouraged all to attend.

Action: Noted

Date: 24 September 2026

Chair: *A Bennington*