ARC21 JOINT COMMITTEE
AGM and Meeting No 099
MINUTES
Thursday 25 September 2025
Hosted by Ards and North Down Borough Council
in The Signal Centre, Bangor

Members Present:

Councillor A Bennington *(Chair)*	Antrim & Newtownabbey Borough Council
Councillor E Thompson	Ards & North Down Borough Council
Councillor J Cochrane	Ards & North Down Borough Council
Councillor A Givan	Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council
Councillor G McKeen *(Deputy Chair)*	Mid & East Antrim Borough Council
Councillor T Andrews	Newry, Mourne & Down District Council
Councillor D Lee-Surginor	Newry, Mourne & Down District Council
Councillor K Murphy	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 A Groogan	Belfast City Council
Councillor E McDonough-Brown	Belfast City Council
Alderman O Gawith	Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council
Alderman S Skillen	Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council
Alderman M Morrow	Mid & East Antrim Borough Council
Councillor R Quigley	Mid & East Antrim Borough Council

Officers Present:

T Walker	arc21
H Campbell *(Secretary)*	arc21
K Boal	arc21
J Green	arc21
B McKeown	arc21
L Daly	Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council
D Lindsay	Ards and North Down Borough Council
G Bannister	Ards and North Down Borough Council
J McConnell	Belfast City Council
A McCann	Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council
G Richardson	Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council
W Muldrew	Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council
D Carey	Mid & East Antrim Borough Council
S Murphy	Newry, Mourne & Down District Council

Officers' Apologies:

M Laverty	Antrim & Newtownabbey Borough Council
S Leonard	Belfast City Council
S Morely	Mid & East Antrim Borough Council

Item 1 - AGM

Procedures

Mr Walker referred to the procedures for the election of a Chair and Deputy Chair for the forthcoming year.

Election of Chair

Nominations were sought for the position of Chair to serve the Joint Committee for the forthcoming year.

Nominated: Councillor Alison Bennington
Seconded by: Councillor Kate Murphy

It was resolved that Councillor Bennington be elected as Chair of the Joint Committee for the incoming year [2025/26].

(Councillor Bennington in the Chair)

Election of Deputy Chair

Nominations were then invited for the position of Deputy Chair of the Joint Committee.

Nominated: Councillor Gregg McKeen
Seconded by: Councillor Alan Givan

It was resolved that Councillor McKeen be re-elected as Deputy Chair of the Joint Committee for the incoming year [2025/26].

Nominations were then invited for the replacement of Cllr Enright on the Audit Committee and Cllr Thompson nominated himself, and this was agreed by all.

The Chair welcomed Cllr Lee-Surginor, who replaced Cllr Enright from Newry, Mourne and Down District Council, to his first meeting of the Joint Committee, and thanked Cllr Enright for his service to the Joint Committee.

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 098 held on 28 August 2025

The Joint Committee approved the minutes. Proposed by the Chair, seconded by Cllr Murphy, and agreed by all.

Action: Agreed

Item 4 - Matters Arising

Any matters arising were dealt with under the main agenda. **Action: Noted**

Mr Walker advised that due to the August meeting becoming inquorate towards the end of the meeting, the outstanding items would be discussed under the main agenda, including the Consultations and Annual Report.

Action: Noted

IN COMMITTEE

The Chair recommended that the meeting would now move "*in committee*" which was agreed. Proposed by Cllr Thompson and seconded by Cllr Murphy.

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 four matters discussed.

Item5 - Minutes of Joint Committee Meeting 098 held on 28 August 2025 'in committee' - approved

Item 6 - Matters Arising - noted

Item 7 - Residual Waste Treatment Project - noted

Item 8 - Commercially Sensitive Contract & Procurement Issues - approved

OUT OF COMMITTEE

Proposed by Cllr Thompson and seconded by the Chair.

Item 9 - Contracts & Operations Briefing Report

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

<u>Service Status</u>

She reported that all services were operational and running well during the month of August 2025.

<u>Performance</u>

She provided an update on contractor performance across all the contracts and highlighted where 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

i. Incidents

The two Health & Safety incidents in August were discussed and the actions taken.

She advised that there had been an increase in the number of fires reported, which was potentially due to the single use vapes, but noted that there was no evidence as yet. She advised that it was hoped to hold a workshop with council H&S officers or supervisors before Christmas, if possible, to look at the trends and good practice, and information gathering was currently underway.

ii. Audits

She reported that a site inspection of Belfast City Council's Transfer station at Dargan Road, used by ReGen Waste Limited to bulk and transfer residual waste, had been undertaken by the auditor. Some minor actions were identified and these were being actioned.

NIEA Enforcement Notices

An update was provided on a further Enforcement Notice issued by the NIEA in respect of the Greenacres Composting Facility. She noted that this was used as a contingency site by NWP, but they had used this facility since July 2025 when they were made aware of the first Notice.

She advised that she would be discussing this with NWP at the next contractor meeting.

Rejected Loads

Ms Boal reported that there had been two rejected loads in August, one was delivered to the MRF operated by Bryson Recycling and the other to a site operated by NWP.

arc21 Contract Tonnages

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

Supplies

A summary of orders and deliveries of supplies for August was presented and she noted that there were no non-compliances in respect of deliveries.

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

Action: Noted

Item 10 - 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 discussed the increases and decreases in the tonnage trends.

She also presented an analysis of current performance against future landfill and recycling targets using information from Waste Data Flow (2025/26 unvalidated). She noted that all arc21 councils were sending less than 10% to landfill in the first quarter of 2025/26.

Cllr Andrews noted that the reduction was good news and Ms Boal noted that this level was probably static now although there may be some further slight reduction where landfill plays part of a solution She highlighted that there was a genuine question for NI PLC in terms of contingency, and the risks with no landfill as backup.

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

Action: Noted

Item 11 - Consultations: Public Consultation on the Plastic Pollution Plan for Northern Ireland; and Northern Ireland's draft Climate Action Plan 2023-2027

Mr Walker presented Members with the proposed arc21 responses to two consultations: The *Plastic Pollution Plan for Northern Ireland*, and *Northern Ireland's draft Climate Action Plan 2023-2027*.

He noted that there was a further consultation in train on the setting of Northern Ireland's Fourth Carbon Budget (2038-2042) in which he was considering a response.

He reported that the deadline for the *Plastic Pollution Plan for NI* was Wednesday 24 September, and a response was submitted in liaison with the Deputy Chair.

He noted that the deadline for the response to Northern Ireland's *draft Climate Action Plan 2023-2027* consultation was 8 October and a proposed response was presented for Members' consideration.

Cllr Givan noted the fragility of Northern Ireland's waste disposal options and inquired if there were any facilities left in the arc21 area where landfill sites could be opened in the event of an emergency. Mr Walker advised that there were not at this time, but highlighted that previously when issues arose from introducing the Montreal Protocol which had ramifications for fridges, these were stockpiled in a number of quarries and other appropriate locations but, having found disposal points, this then took something in the order of four to five years to unwind.

In relation to residual waste, he advised that if there was a failing in the system it could be expected that there would have to be a temporary arrangement for baling waste and storage using existing licenced storage facilities, or exemptions or emergency licensed facilities being authorised and the waste stored in bales until there was an outlet.

The Chair suggested that it may be prudent for arc21 to consider undertaking a SWOT Analysis or risk assessment in the event of a catastrophic failure.

Mr Walker advised that he would bolster the response with the issues raised.

It was recommended that the Joint Committee:
- retrospectively approve the arc21 response to the *Plastic Pollution Plan for NI*; and
- consider and approve the arc21 response to Northern Ireland's draft *Climate Action Plan 2023-2027*, further to any final comments to him by Friday 3 October.

Following discussion, the Joint Committee agreed to approve the recommendations. Proposed by Cllr Thompson and seconded by Cllr Givan.

Action: Approved

Item 12 - Annual Report 2024/25

Mr Walker presented Members with the final arc21 *Annual Report* for the year to March 2025 reflecting the progress made in the first year of arc21's *Corporate Plan 2024-2028*. He noted that no comments had been received since August's Joint Committee meeting and therefore he was presenting again for approval.

Following discussion, the Joint Committee agreed to approve the Annual Report 2024/25. Proposed by Cllr Andrews and seconded by Cllr Thompson.

Action: Approved

Item 13 - Impact of pEPR on Materials to Market

Ms Boal reported that, following a query raised at the last meeting, she had located some packaging data for the 2023 and 2024snoting however that these would not provide the up to date information that was being sought as it was not yet available.

Looking at the trends during this year she noted that the biggest change was that packaging had generally fallen by 8% in what's being reported as packaging data. There were big increases in fibre composites from 38%, but noted that the starting point was starting at a low base. 'Other' packaging was reported increasing from 17 thousand tonnes to 24 thousand tonnes but she noted that it was unclear from the data what materials were included in the category.

She noted that other trends included glass which seemed to have fallen to just under 5%; paper and cardboard to just under 8%; and plastic by just under 12%. Reusables were up by 63%, but again starting at a low base figure.

She advised that the definition of what counted as fibre composite had changed meaning it could be defined as that provided there was no more than 5% plastic content.

She noted that following discussions at a recent Engagement Forum on looking at this reported packaging information it was made clear by Defra that there were people not inputting to the data at all, referring to them as 'free riders', so unsure how valid the figures are.

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

Action: Noted

Item 14 - Schedule of Meetings 2026

Mr Walker presented the proposed schedule of meetings to be held in 2026 as follows, all commencing at 10am.

<u>2026</u>
Thursday 29 January - online using MS Teams
Thursday 26 February - online using MS Teams
Thursday 26 March - hybrid, to be hosted by Newry, Mourne and Down District Council
Thursday 30 April - online using MS Teams
Thursday 28 May - online using MS Teams
Thursday 25 June - hybrid, to be hosted by Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council
July - no meeting
Thursday 27 August - online using MS Teams

Thursday 24 September – AGM and meeting, hybrid, to be hosted by Ards and North Down Borough Council
Thursday 29 October - online using MS Teams
Tuesday 1 December - hybrid to be hosted by Belfast City Council

It was recommended that the Joint Committee:

- approve the schedule of meetings presented and the format of meetings in order that arrangements can be confirmed with councils; and
- the dates are forwarded to Members Services of the constituent councils to help avoid meetings being scheduled in the Councils during these dates and times.

Mr Walker took the opportunity to raise the level of attendance, as highlighted in the Annual Report 24/25, and noted that it had been lower than ideal with the difficulties of achieving quorums at times.

He noted his thanks to the regular attenders, and appreciated the difficulties other Members may have in terms of other jobs/duties etc. However, given the level of monies, schedules, the pressures the organisation was under, and the decisions that needed to be taken, he re-emphasised that attendance was important and greatly appreciated.

Members were asked to consider both individually and through their Parties how best this issue of attendance can be alleviated.

Following discussion, the Joint Committee agreed to approve the recommendations. Proposed by Cllr Thompson and seconded by Cllr Murphy.

Action: Noted

Item 15 - AOB

<u>Financial Accounts to March 2025</u>

Mr Walker reported that at the last Audit Committee meeting the Financial Accounts to March 2025 were presented and discussed with Internal Audit and the NIAO, and these required to be signed off and submitted by end September.

However, due to the former Audit Committee Chair, Cllr Enright, having stepped down, it was considered appropriate that Cllr McKeen in his role as the Deputy Chair and a member of the Audit Committee, sign off the Accounts. He noted that this had been discussed with NIAO and, under the circumstances, they had confirmed this as being an appropriate approach to adopt.

Members were asked to endorse this approach which was agreed. Proposed by Cllr Andrews, seconded by the Chair, and agreed by all.

Action: Agreed.

Item 16 - Next Meeting Thursday 30 October 2025, using MS Teams

The Chair advised that the next meeting was scheduled to be held on Thursday 30 October 2025 using MS Teams and Members were asked to confirm their attendance with Ms Campbell in advance of the meeting.

Action: ALL

Officers were asked to leave the meeting for the final report under Item 17. Given the timing of consideration of this item at the AGM and in the absence of the Chair having been briefed in advance of the meeting, Mr Walker presented the governance paper and then retired from the meeting prior to any discussion amongst the Members.

IN COMMITTEE

The Chair recommended that the meeting would now move "*in committee*" which was agreed. Proposed by Cllr Thompson and seconded by Cllr Murphy.

Matters of a confidential and commercially sensitive nature were discussed.

Following discussion on the commercially sensitive matter, the Chair recommended that the meeting would now close, which was approved, but whilst "*In Committee*" during this section of the meeting, there was one item discussed.

Item 17 - Governance Report - approved

OUT OF COMMITTEE

Proposed by Cllr Andrews and seconded by Cllr Murphy.

Date: 30 October 2025 **Chair:** A Bennington