

## **PARTNERSHIP AIMS TO HELP BALLYMENA START UPS THRIVE**

Ballymena Business Centre and Ballymena Borough Chamber of Commerce and Industry have joined forces in a partnership which aims to support entrepreneurs in the Ballymena area. The partnership features a 1 year free membership of the Ballymena Borough Chamber of Commerce and Industry to businesses who have successfully completed the Go For It Programme. The free membership will offer access to vital events and activities such as networking and business training workshops.

Since 1989, Ballymena Business Centre has continued to play a pivotal role in creating an enterprise culture in the Ballymena area. Through the Mid and East Antrim Borough Council funded Go For It Programme the centre, each year, approximately, supports 90 individuals with mentoring, planning and advice on a one to one level. The centre's continued commitment to growing enterprise throughout 2016 was recently highlighted at an event attend by the Finance Minister, Mervyn Storey. Here they revealed their plans to support and deliver the council's Economic Strategy and Community Plan for business enterprise in 2016.

Membership of Ballymena Borough Chamber of Commerce and Industry provides much needed networking support for those starting and growing local business. It also provides businesses with access to a range of vital activities from workshops to networking to offers and much more.

Announcing the partnership, Chief Executive from Ballymena Business Centre, Melanie Christie Boyle said;  
*" We are delighted to announce a partnership with Ballymena Chamber of Commerce and Industry. Cross organisational partnerships such as this, which benefit local entrepreneurs, are vital for us to help support and grow enterprising people, business and community in the Ballymena area. This is part of our ongoing commitment to support and deliver Mid and East Antrim Council's 2016 enterprise plan where we will explore and maximise all partnership opportunities to the benefit of the business community in Ballymena."*

Chamber President, Alan Stewart, said;

*“Chamber is delighted to be working with Ballymena Business Centre on this exciting initiative. The business world can be a lonely place at times, especially for start-up businesses. Within Chamber there is a huge range of expertise and we are happy to share this expertise. Chamber runs a number of training, information and networking events throughout the year and we are confident that these events will be of benefit to these new businesses. I am delighted to welcome Daniel McCarry from Counter Digital as the first new member under this initiative and look forward to welcoming many more in the future.”*

Cllr. Audrey Wales, Chair of Economic Growth and Development for Mid and East Antrim Borough Council, welcomed this initiative saying;

*“Mid and East Antrim Council has very clearly placed economic development at the centre of its corporate plan going forward. Officers and local stakeholders have been developing an Integrated Economic Strategy where enterprise, entrepreneurship and partnerships are a high priority for the area. I welcome this joint initiative which will benefit local entrepreneurs in Ballymena and serve to create, develop and encourage a culture of enterprise and ultimately generate increased wealth for citizens throughout the Borough.”*

For further information on Ballymena Business Centre Go For it Programme visit [www.ballymenabusinescentre.co.uk](http://www.ballymenabusinescentre.co.uk) or follow Ballymena Business Centre on Facebook