

**BALLYMONEY BOROUGH COUNCIL
COUNCIL MEETING NO. 841 – 5th June 2006**

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Ballymoney Borough Council

Minutes of Council Meeting No. 841 held in the Council Chamber, Riada House, Ballymoney on Tuesday 5th June 2006 at 7.30 pm.

IN THE CHAIR: Alderman C Cousley, Mayor

PRESENT: **Aldermen:**
F Campbell
J Simpson
H Connolly

Councillors:

A Cavlan	J Finlay
B Kennedy	M McCamphill
P McGuigan, MLA	D McKay
T McKeown	A Patterson
E Robinson	I Stevenson (Deputy Mayor)
R Wilson	

APOLOGIES: Councillor M Storey, MLA

IN ATTENDANCE: Chief Executive
Director of Borough Services
Director of Central & Leisure Services
Head of Corporate & Development Services
Committee Clerk

The Press were in attendance
A member of the public was present

841.1 COUNCIL MEETING No 837 – 2nd May 2006

It was proposed by Alderman Connolly, seconded by Councillor Stevenson and
AGREED:

that the minutes of Council Meeting No 837 held on 2nd May 2006, as circulated, be confirmed as a correct record.

841.2 COUNCIL MEETING No 838 – 15th May 2006

It was proposed by Councillor Finlay, seconded by Councillor Patterson and
AGREED:

*that the minutes of Council Meeting No 838 held on 15th May 2006,
as circulated, be confirmed as a correct record.*

841.3 Council Meeting No 839 – 30th May 2006 (Waste Management)

It was proposed by Councillor Robinson, seconded by Alderman Campbell and
AGREED:

*that the minutes of Council Meeting No 839 held on 30th May 2006,
as circulated, be confirmed as a correct record.*

841.4 Council Meeting No 840 – 1st June 2006 (Roads)

It was proposed by Alderman Connolly, seconded by Councillor Patterson and
AGREED:

*that the minutes of Council Meeting No 840 held on 1st June 2006,
as circulated, be confirmed as a correct record.*

* Councillor McKeown arrived, the time being 7.35 pm.

841.5 SEAL DOCUMENTS

It was proposed by Councillor Stevenson, seconded by Councillor Patterson
and **AGREED:**

*that the Seal of the Council be affixed to Grave Registry Certificate
numbers: 1011, 1012, 1013, 1014, 1015, 1016, 1017, 1018 and
Transfer Certificate 1010*

* Councillor Kennedy arrived, the time being 7.38 pm.

841.6 DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE REPORT NO 170 – 8TH MAY 2006

The Development Committee report was presented by Alderman Simpson.

It was proposed by Alderman Simpson, seconded by Councillor Stevenson and
AGREED:

*that the minutes of Meeting No 170 – 8th May 2006, as circulated,
be adopted and the recommendations therein approved.*

841.7 START A BUSINESS PROGRAMME EVALUATION RESPONSE (170.11).

The meeting considered the draft response to the evaluation of the Start a Business Programme, produced by BDO Stoy Howard (attached as Annex 1).

It was proposed by Councillor Kennedy, seconded by Alderman Campbell and
AGREED:

*that the response Annex 1, be endorsed and submitted on behalf
of Council.*

841.8 LEISURE & AMENITIES COMMITTEE MEETING NO 317 – 16TH MAY 2006

Alderman Campbell presented the report. The following items were discussed:

8.1 Play Area Provision (317.16)

At the request of Councillor Cavlan, the Director of Borough Services confirmed that the upgrading of Scally Park, Loughguile has been referred to the Leisure & Amenities Committee for further investigation.

8.2 Community Relations Grant (317.7)

At the request of Councillor Robinson, the Director of Central & Leisure Services outlined the criteria relating to community relations grants and confirmed that the action plan for its total use of £10,000 per year had not yet been approved. To date, £2,600 had been allocated.

8.3 Bus Shelter Provision (317.19)

At the request of Councillor Cavlan, the Director of Borough Services outlined the reasons for the selection of four areas in the borough to receive bus shelter provision and advised that, due to limited funding, other areas, including Ballyknock Road, would be considered in the future. Four locations were being progressed through planning following which, a decision on locations to be completed this year, will be made.

8.4 Date of Next Meeting (20th June)

Councillor Finlay requested that the date of the next meeting be changed from 20th June due to Member's other commitments.

It was proposed by Councillor Finlay, seconded by Councillor Stevenson and **AGREED:**

that a revised date be agreed between the Chair and Directors.

8.5 Adoption of Minutes

It was proposed by Alderman Campbell, seconded by Councillor Stevenson and **AGREED:**

that the minutes of the Leisure & Amenities Meeting No. 317 – 16th May 2006, as circulated, be adopted and the recommendations therein approved

MATTERS ARISING

8.6 Joey Dunlop Leisure Centre Projects Tender (317.3)

The Chairman referred to this item (317.3) regarding the Health Suite Extension and Refurbishment and provision of Children's Soft Play Area and said a decision on the select list for mechanical services had been deferred to Council meeting. He submitted a report as follows, a copy of which had been circulated to Members.

Mechanical Services

Following advertisement for applications for inclusion on a select list of contractors for the above project the Council's Consultants, Cogan & Shackleton recommended that the following two contractors be included on a select list –

- Vaughan Engineering Service Ltd. Aercon Works, Antrim Road, Newtownabbey, BT36 4RF
- R&F Mechanical Services Ltd. 13 Seymour Street, Ballymoney, BT 53 6JR

The Consultants further advised that with only 2 applicants for the project there is the potential for problems should one or both fail to return a bona fide tender. They recommended that consideration be given to either supplementing the list from a pool of contractors who have tendered for similar works in the past or to re-advertise the project.

Following further consideration of the two options it is recommended that the list be supplemented from a pool of contractors who have tendered for similar works in the past for the following reasons –

- The project can proceed in accordance with the timetable that was originally set, which minimizes disruption to the customers by having the works causing the most disruption, carried out at 'quieter' times.
- The additional cost of re-advertising will not be incurred.

The Consultants have suggested that the following contractors, in addition to the 2 contractors recommended above, form the select list for Mechanical Services –

- Rotary Services Ltd. 5 Trench Road, Mallusk, Newtownabbey, BT36 8XA
- Stothers & Co. Ltd. Radiant Works, Ravenhill Road, Belfast, BT6 8HR
- Litton Group, 38 Young Street, Lisburn, BT27 5EB
- Sharpe Mechanical Services, 57 Sydenham Road, Belfast, BT3 9DJ

It is recommended that the 6 contractors named above form the select list for Mechanical Services.

It was proposed by Alderman Campbell, seconded by Councillor Stevenson and **AGREED:**

that the six contractors named above form the select list for Mechanical Services.

8.7 Trinity Presbyterian Church

Permission has been requested by Trinity Presbyterian Church for the use of Riverside Park to enable an open air service to take place on Sunday 18th June at 6.30 pm.

It was proposed by Councillor Finlay, seconded by Councillor Stevenson and **AGREED:**

that permission be granted for the use of Riverside Park for an open air service on 18.6.06

841.9 FINANCE & GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE No 342 – 22ND MAY 2006

Alderman Connolly presented the Committee Report.

9.1 Amendment

Councillor Finlay presented an amendment to item 342.7 as follows, details of which he had circulated to each member.

It was then proposed by Councillor Finlay, seconded by Alderman Campbell and **AGREED:**

“To recommend that the committee structure remains as at present with the addition of the new Audit Committee ... and that the mid-monthly Council Meeting be designated as a Consultation Committee to deal with monthly consultation

with Planning Service and other consultees such as Roads Service, Water Service, NIHE, together with other delegations or presentations which are not appropriate to a service committee; the Consultation Committee to be granted full delegated decision-making powers in these areas and retaining full membership (i.e. all councillors), its meetings being open to the press/public.”

9.2 Adoption of Minutes

It was proposed by Alderman Connolly, seconded by Councillor Stevenson and **AGREED:**

that the minutes of the Finance & General Purposes Committee Meeting No. 342 – 22nd May 2006, as circulated, be adopted and the recommendations therein approved.

841.10 FINANCE & GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE MEETING NO 343 – 1st June 2006

Alderman Connolly presented the Committee report relating to composition of Standing Committees and Audit Committee and revision of Standing Orders.

Councillor Finlay responded to questions and explained that his party's suggestion of enlarging committee membership was to provide an opportunity for better representation.

It was proposed by Alderman Connolly, seconded by Councillor Finlay and **AGREED:**

that the minutes of Committee Meeting No 343 on 1st June 2006, as circulated by adopted and the recommendations therein approved.

841.11 HEALTH & ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES COMMITTEE MEETING NO. 316 - 23rd May 2006.

Councillor Finlay presented the Committee report.

11.1 Knife Amnesty (Item 30)

Councillor Stevenson advised Members that to date, only 12 knives had been handed in. As the amnesty is nearing its end date, Councillor Stevenson requested that the press again publicise this matter.

11.2 Waste Infrastructure Task Force: Consultation Outcomes (Item 4)

At the request of Councillor Robinson, the Director of Borough Services outlined the comments to be put forward to NILGA by Council following consideration of the consultation document.

11.3 Adoption of Minutes

It was proposed by Councillor Finlay, seconded by Councillor Stevenson and **AGREED**:

that the minutes of Health & Environmental Services Committee Meeting No.316 – 2nd May 2006, as circulated, be adopted and the recommendations therein approved.

841.12 NOTICE OF MOTION BY COUNCILLOR D MCKAY

Councillor McKay proposed the following motion, notice of which had been given

“That this Council writes to the Direct Rule Minister for Health regarding the acute shortage of intensive care paediatric beds and the staff needed to run them. This Council calls for this issue to be addressed as a matter of urgency”.

This was seconded by Councillor Cavlan.

Councillor McKay added, in support of the motion.

“There is an urgent need for the shortage in Paediatric beds here to be tackled. At present there are only seven Paediatric Intensive Care (PIC) Unit beds and two Paediatric High Dependency beds available in the North and these are all based at the Royal Belfast Hospital for Sick Children. The number of paediatric beds has not increased here for years and this lack of beds is clearly putting children’s lives at risk.

Using the present figure of 7 PIC Beds for the North and a population of under 16’s of 383,000, gives an estimate of 1.83 PIC beds per 100,000 of the population under 16 years. This is somewhat lower than the figures for both Scotland, which is 2.06 PIC beds per 100,000 and England and Wales, which are 2.23 beds per 100,000 of the population under 16 years.

In January, a young citizen of the district had her life put at risk because of the lack of PIC beds at the Belfast Royal Hospital for Sick Children and had to be airlifted to Scotland to receive urgent treatment.

This kind of indifference beggars belief and underlies the importance that more money is made available to provide more intensive care beds in our hospital.

We call upon the Minister responsible to address this issue as a matter of urgency.”

Councillor Stevenson proposed an amendment to the motion

“That Council write to the Northern Health & Social Services Council regarding the acute shortage of intensive care paediatric beds and the shortage of neonatal and paediatric nursing staff needed to run them, requesting that body to contact the Direct Rule Minister for Health accordingly.”

In support of his amendment, the Member said the Health & Social Services Council was appointed with representation of 10 council areas on the Northern Board. It was one of only four bodies and would provide more weight to the proposal. Councillor Stevenson, as a Council nominee to that organisation, felt that whilst agreeing with the importance of Councillor McKay’s motion, he should be permitted to undertake the duties involved in the role he had been nominated to.

This amendment was seconded by Councillor Patterson.

Councillor Kennedy proposed as an amendment “That Council writes to both the Direct Rule Minister for Health and the Northern Health & Social Services Council regarding the acute shortage of intensive care paediatric beds and the staff needed to run them. This Council calls for this issue to be addressed as a matter of urgency.

This was seconded by Councillor McGuigan.

The Mayor put the first amendment to the meeting with 7 members voting in favour and 6 members voting against.

The Mayor then put the amendment to the meeting as a substantive motion. 9 members voted in favour and none against.

The Mayor declared the motion carried.

841.13 PLANNING POLICY STATEMENT 14 – SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN THE COUNTRYSIDE

Following consideration at two workshops, Council is invited to endorse its response dated June 2006, to the consultative document, prepared by Farningham McCreadie (copy circulated).

It was proposed by Councillor Finlay, seconded by Alderman Connolly and **AGREED:**

that the response to the consultative document Planning Policy Statement 14 be submitted.

The Minister was unable, due to heavy diary commitments, to accept Council's invitation to attend Council to explain his statement on the draft policy. He did indicate officials would be available to discuss the draft PPS14 and his associated Ministerial Statement.

Other correspondence on PPS14, as detailed below, was circulated:

- ◆ Planning Service Letter 21/4/06, responding to issues raised by Council on operational matters.
- ◆ Rural Development Council letter, 23/5/06, inviting views and proposals regarding underpinning future development in rural areas.
- ◆ Elevate letter, 17/5/06, requesting Council to contribute to the "fighting fund" to enable a judicial review to proceed and their synopsis of the failings of PPS14 and the possible ground for legal challenge.
- ◆ NILGA revised draft response

The Chief Executive referred to the correspondence from Elevate, which sets out the case for judicial review. It was agreed that no action be taken on this.

Members also noted the NILGA revised response and agreed to send them a copy of Council's response.

Alderman Simpson expressed his support for PPS14, which he considered a sensible policy. In support of his argument, he referred to a statement by the Council for Nature Conservation in the Countryside, the Government's environmental advisory body. Quoting from their report on the review of the last three years of planning since activity in Northern Ireland, he said "It is evident that the last three years has seen the consolidation of one issue that poses a major and in some cases possibly terminal, threat to the countryside of Northern Ireland. This is the 'acne' of highly visible single dwellings that is spreading inexorably across the face of our landscape. Currently in Northern Ireland permissions for single dwellings in the countryside are being granted at a rate that is some four times that in England, Scotland and Wales combined – and the rate is accelerating.

There has been unwillingness to address the economic, social and environmental consequences of urban flight to the countryside, leaving in abeyance the Regional Development Strategy and also countryside stewardship policies of rural development regulations. It should also be noted that when the majority of the Northern Ireland population used to live in the countryside, they also worked there; previous generations of country dwellers built almost invisibly 'within' the countryside rather than parachuting large, highly visible house on to the landscape."

841.14 5TH REVIEW OF PARLIAMENTARY CONSTITUENCY BOUNDARIES

The Boundary Commission for Northern Ireland has published its revised recommendations for Parliamentary Consistency Boundaries.

A copy of the revised recommendations is available at Riada House Reception for public inspection. A reference copy has also been left in the members' room.

The Commission's website can be accessed via www.boundarycommission.org.uk, for an address search facility, which enables identification in which Parliamentary constituency, revised constituency, local government district, district electoral area, ward and townland individual addresses are located.

The deadline for representations to the Commission is 24th June 2006.

841.15 REVIEW OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION – HOUSING FUNCTIONS

The Housing Executive has written regarding the Secretary of State's announcement on the Review of Public Administration, which indicated that a number of functions would transfer to Councils in 2009. These functions are:

- Private Sector Grants
- Group Repair
- Houses in Multiple Occupation
- Unfitness
- Energy Conservation
- Travellers' Sites
- Supporting People
- Urban Renewal

He also indicated that, at some stage in the future when the new Councils are in place, fully operational and bedded in, consideration would be given to transferring housing functions to Local Government.

The announcement led to media speculation that the Housing Executive would be abolished in five years time. This has also led to a great deal of uncertainty about the future of the Housing Executive. David Hanson, MP, Minister of State for Northern Ireland, whose responsibilities include housing, has written to the Chairman of the Housing Executive.

"The Housing Executive very much welcomes the assurances received from the Minister, particularly that, in the meantime and for the foreseeable future, the Northern Ireland Housing Executive will be the Strategic Housing Authority.

Given the relationship the Housing Executive has with Council, it was thought it would be important to clarify the position regarding our future.

Whilst the Board is disappointed to see any functions transfer, our role now is to ensure that the transfer is implemented smoothly and that the high level of service is maintained. Northern Ireland Housing Executive will be working with the Implementation Team to achieve this.”

841.16 HOUSING EXECUTIVE – LATENT DEMAND TESTS

Last year, the Housing Executive developed a programme of ‘Latent Demand Tests’, as part of its rural housing policy ‘Places for People’. During the year Latent Demand Tests were undertaken in 30 locations throughout Northern Ireland. The results of these tests are included in a report, which is available.

841.17 PLANNING LEGISLATION

Planning Service have written to advise that following the making of the Planning Reform Order (Northern Ireland) 2006, this Department made the Statutory Rule 2006 No 218 and that it will come into operation 10th June 2006.

The Statutory Rule, made under the enabling powers contained in Article 24 of the Planning Reform (Northern Ireland) Order 2006, applies relevant planning subordinate legislation to the Crown, with modifications where appropriate. It also provides for permitted development rights for the Crown, including government departments, who undertake development as part of their statutory functions.

841.18 PUBLIC APPOINTMENTS – HEALTH & SAFETY EXECUTIVE FOR NI

The Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment, which is responsible for the appointment of members to the Board of Health & Safety Executive for Northern Ireland (the Executive) is seeking to appoint up to five new Board members from 1st October 2006.

Under Article 12(2) of the Health & Safety at Work (Northern Ireland) Order 1978, the Department is required to consult with Council, amongst others, to allow an opportunity to suggest the names of the individuals whom you regard as suitable and willing to serve as a member of the Board. The current Board membership, together with a draft copy of the proposed person specification is available.

841.19 POST OFFICE, DERVOCK, TEMPORARY CLOSURE

Post Office advises that an opportunity has arisen to completely redevelop the site on which the current Post Office Branch is located. As a result of the redevelopment of the current site, it is planning to relocate the above branch to new premises in early June 2006.

The existing Agent has secured suitable, temporary premises while work to the present site continues, enabling a Post Office branch to operate within the immediate locale at 209 Knock Road, Dervock, Ballymoney BT53 8BB. It is expected to maintain Post Office services from these temporary premises for about six months, while the Carncullagh Road site is being rebuilt, after which, it will be returned to a bright, new, fully modernised Post Office.

Regrettably, services at the current branch ceased on Monday 8th May prior to the new branch being operational.

841.20 POSTWATCH NI APPOINTMENTS

Postwatch NI has written to record thanks for the support and interest received from politicians and councillors through its first years of existence under the Chairmanship of John Stringer OBE. He also recorded their appreciation of their Chairman's excellent work and advice from Minister Barry Gardiner of Dr Maureen Edmondson as NI Chair from 10th April 2006.

841.21 TRANSFER OF FUNCTIONS LEGISLATION – EMPLOYMENT & LEARNING

DEL has advised of the making of the statutory rule – The Departments (Transfer of Functions) Order (NI) 2006.

This Order transfers to the Department for Social Development—

- (a) the functions of the Department for Employment and Learning under the Pneumoconiosis, etc., (Workers' Compensation) (Northern Ireland) Order 1979; and
- (b) the functions of the Department of the Environment under Article 31(5) of the Land Acquisition and Compensation (Northern Ireland) Order 1973.

841.22 INVITATION TO SOMME REMEMBRANCE PARADE & SERVICE

Carrickfergus Borough Council extends an invitation to Council to attend the 90th anniversary Somme Remembrance Parade and Service on Sunday 25th June at Knockagh War Memorial. The Parade will form up at the Memorial at 10.40 am followed by the service at 11.00 am. At the request of Councillor Robinson, the Chief Executive confirmed that there were no restrictions on the number of Councillors attending.

It was proposed by Councillor Finlay, seconded by Councillor Kennedy and **AGREED:**

to accept the invitation from Carrickfergus Borough Council to the Somme Remembrance Parade and Service on 25th June 2006.

841.23 ROADS SERVICE – STREETS WITH SPECIAL ENGINEERING DIFFICULTY

The Chief Executive outlined the proposals from Roads Service to designate certain streets as “streets with special engineering difficulty” in the borough of Ballymoney, in relation to work being carried out by utility companies.

Streets in the area are detailed on the following table. Council is requested to notify Roads Service within 35 days should there be any objection to these proposals.

Street
B67 Moyarget Road – 350m West of C100 for a length of 300m Westwards
C91 Vow Road – 360m South of U4135 for a distance of 30m Southwards
C81 Fivey Road – 360m West of U4066 for a length of 200m West
C81 Fivey Road – 780m West of U4066 for a length of 160m West
U4134 Bendooragh Road – 425m North of U4136 for a length of 135m Northwards
U4143 Gortahar Road – 850m East of B62 for a length of 230m Eastwards

841.24 RESOLUTIONS/REPRESENTATIONS

24.1. Larne Borough Council – A36 Larne-Ballymena Road

Larne Borough Council are seeking Council’s support for the following motion:

“That the Minister be requested to consider upgrading this route which has become increasingly important for traffic travelling to and from the North West of Northern Ireland and Donegal. There appears to have been little upgrading work undertaken on this road for some considerable time and Members believe that the situation must be redressed as soon as possible.”

It was proposed by Councillor Kennedy, seconded by Alderman Simpson to note the request.

Councillor Kennedy advanced the view that council should focus its representations on securing an upgrading of the A26 route and pointed to the fact that all roads improvements were competing for a limited budget.

As an amendment, it was proposed by Councillor Stevenson, seconded by Alderman Campbell that Council support the resolution.

The Mayor put the amendment to the meeting with 8 Members being in favour of supporting this and 1 against.

The Mayor declared the amendment carried.

*** Councillor McKay and Councillor McGuigan retired from the meeting, the time being 9.10 pm.**

24.2. Animal Aid – Ruddy Duck

Animal Aid are asking Council to sign up to a 'no cull' policy and to refuse to allow:

"Killing gangs on wildlife reserves and ruddy duck sites in Council's authority."

A copy of Animal Aid's letter giving background information relating to this request was circulated for information.

It was proposed by Councillor Cavlan, seconded by Alderman Connolly and **AGREED:**

that Council support Animal Aid and sign up to a 'no cull' policy of the Ruddy Duck.

*** Councillor Cavlan retired from the meeting, the time being 9.13 pm.**

841.25 REPORTS

The following documents were circulated to members.

DOE Guidance on transfer of land and buildings within the public sector

NIHE leaflet "Community Cohesion" -translating our good relations objectives into acts on the ground

NIHE good practice guide on flags and emblems and sectional symbols

UFU's new policy document on rural development "Freedom to Farm"
(summary)

NI Federation of housing associations perspective "Social Housing
Spring/Summer

841.26 SOMME PILGRIMAGE – 28TH JUNE 2006

Councillor Robinson expressed her disappointment at being unable to attend the Somme Pilgrimage on 28th June 2006 due to over-subscription. Councillor Storey, as Council's Somme representative, together with Councillor Stevenson, Deputy Mayor, will represent the Council at the Somme Anniversary. Councillor Robinson requested that every effort be made to enable her to fulfill her appointment to attend the Somme Anniversary.

It was noted that this year, the 90th Anniversary, the Pilgrimage had been substantially oversubscribed and a number of Councils had not got all places requested. While the Somme Association had been able to make arrangements to accommodate additional delegates, the situation had now been reached that no accommodation in the region was available.

This being all the business, the meeting closed at 9.25 pm.

Annex 1**Evaluation of the 'Start a Business Programme'
September 2001 to August 2005****General Comments: *(In no particular order of priority)***

- Ballymoney Borough Council welcomes the opportunity to respond to and comment upon the evaluation completed by BDO Stoy Hayward on the above programme.
- Council recognises that whatever form any future Start a Business Programme may take following this consultation will be the form which the new super-councils inherit when, post RPA, Councils take on a greatly enhanced economic development function, including the SABP from Invest NI.
- It is imperative that in the post RPA scenario whatever Invest NI resources are to be allocated to the SABP will transfer to Councils along with the delivery function of the programme.
- Council recognises the overall success of the programme (exceeding initial targets by 36%) and in particular values the success of the programme in the Ballymoney Borough area and the contribution that success has made to the GVA and employment figures for the borough with new-start businesses under the programme at over 200% of target.
- The programme has significant additional value to the region and addresses an increasing need as it increases awareness and direct experience of entrepreneurship amongst participants who are subsequently more likely to go on to another business venture and in doing so reduce dependence on the declining public sector for employment.
- Input costs of £15.9m by Invest NI, (excluding the contributions from the EU BSP and Councils) over the four years of the programme has resulted in an annual leverage outcome of 300% in terms of profit generation and almost 700% in terms of annual turnover by those businesses which have completed the programme. Consequently in these terms alone the programme must be considered a success.
- A gross contribution to jobs, company turnover and profit of almost 2,037, £113m and £44m respectively by businesses started as a result of participation in the programme is highly commendable.
- Council is of the opinion that at £1,055.00 per business created, the programme is good value for money.

- Although the report suggests that SABP participation offers made in the Ballymoney borough to businesses start-ups involved in Invest NI eligible activities were in the lower quadrant, offers in this area still exceeded the Invest NI target of 5%.
- Whilst the objective of assisting a proportion of new-starts to 'pull-through' to become Invest NI clients (with the associated sizeable sales and export requirements) is commendable and should be continued and encouraged, the significant contribution of micro and small business to the economy (including social economy) established as a result of the SABP must be acknowledged and not overlooked or sacrificed.
- The high levels of deadweight estimates of between 74 and 84% (i.e. the percentage of businesses which have commenced without participation in the SABP) within the programme are of concern. Comfort should be taken from the fact that, although not an exact like-for-like comparison, similar deadweight estimates were calculated in the equivalent Scottish Enterprise programme.
- However to make the figures more meaningful an indication of the sectors and geographic location of these 'dead weight' businesses would be valuable. It is conceivable that a great many are in the retail sector and outside recognised areas falling under the category of nTSN whilst a significant proportion of SABP participants were drawn from such areas.
- It is recognised that estimating deadweight is not an exact science and the increasing 'decay' of the perceived benefit of the programme over time and the potential for exaggeration of the impact of assistance by participants must be considered when determining a realistic deadweight figure for the programme.
- It must be acknowledged however that the SAB programme has made a considerable net additional impact on the number of business start-ups in Northern Ireland, in a region where one of the lowest levels of business start-ups is recorded in the UK.
- Increasing the level of additionality within the programme by attracting a higher proportion of participants less likely to start a business such as women and young people and focusing on businesses likely to generate future economic impact whilst commendable has inherent difficulties. How will these likely business start-ups be identified, how would their economic potential be assessed and if these suggestions were to be applied how would they marry up to the consensus that the programme remains a 'volume programme'? These issues need further consideration. There is also likely to be increased risk with such start-ups.
- The high degree of satisfaction (69%) with the programme amongst participants is reassuring however the high proportion of participants who recorded that some aspects of the programme had little interest/use to them is

an important indicator to the fact that certain aspects of the programme need to be amended.

- Whilst the pre-start support was welcomed by participants the lack of post-start support and mentoring was highlighted as a weakness of the current programme by the majority of respondents to the study, even though such support was to be offered post 1 April 2005 when the new contract was to be implemented. It is however recognised that the absence of post-start mentoring is a function of lack of available funds and is an issue Invest NI should address.
- The lack of attractiveness of the grant to many participants (75%) as a 'carrot' to participate is most interesting indicating either that the programme itself is sufficiently attractive or perhaps more likely that the grant was too small to make any appreciable contribution.
- Cognisance must be taken however to the fact that the absence of the grant on offer from the outset may have excluded a significant proportion of participants who have limited financial support from elsewhere.
- An additional aspect to the question of whether or not a grant should be awarded is the leverage effect the award of a post-participation grant may have in encouraging participants to complete the programme.
- As to whether the grant should be replaced by additional training or continued, Council believes that the grant should be continued and additional funding put in place as required to cover the additional training costs.
- The suggestion by many participants (41%) that they would even pay to participate on the programme should be viewed with caution because this statement has been made post participation, not pre, when attitudes might be very different within a fledgling business, and furthermore it carries the caveat that the programme needs to be more targeted if payment was to be considered.
- Although 78% of those SABP participants who responded to this study were still trading appears to record exceptional success, SABP participants however appear to have only 5% better chance of surviving for at least three years compared with all business starts in Northern Ireland. The reason for this, given the skills and competences developed as participants on the programme needs to be identified and amendments made to the training modules delivered if necessary and appropriate.
- 71% of all business starts assisted by the SABP programme are capable of generating sufficient profits similar to the average NI Private Sector gross employee salary of £15,597, indicating that whilst still at micro-level the business are capable of providing an initial income commensurate with the NI average. This is to be welcomed because it makes the case for establishing one's own business more robust.

- Whilst 79% of participants on the programme had not created any employed employment, those businesses in the Ballymoney borough, which participated in the programme, created on average 1.65 employed positions. The mean figure for all participants is 1.06.
- Ballymoney Borough Council would agree that the programme by necessity was and should continue to be a 'volume' programme (in line with EU and National Policy and Economic Research) with all sectors being eligible to participate. There may however be an argument that the level of support on offer to different participants on the programme could be set to reflect the level of added value of the various business sector represented, provided a counter-case could not be mounted on equity grounds.
- Given the outcomes of the study Council agrees that increased flexibility should be introduced into the programme and that participants should be able to choose from a menu of available elements as to what is relevant and/or appropriate to them, provided a minimum number of elements are completed. To permit selection this would therefore require additional training modules to be added to the programme.
- The introduction of participant selection of relevant modules could lead to increased participation, and perhaps less fall-out, as potential participants perceive the programme to be more directly relevant to them, and by default this would reduce the percentage of deadweight in future programmes.
- Council would also agree that the LEA's have, in the main, delivered the programme well and in a professional manner, although it would recognise and respect some participant's and council's concerns that in some Council areas the business advisors may have lacked experience.
- There is a viable argument for the involvement of the FE's in the delivery of future programmes however this should be on a skills training basis and not on a business advice basis.
- It is imperative that every effort is made to increase the efficiency of the delivery of the programme and it is considered that the increased use of online assessment and training support should be pursued. A movement in this direction is also sought by some potential and actual participants and may also increase participation and perhaps more importantly reduce fallout. Although in saying this cognisance should be paid to the fact that 90% of participants found significant benefit to be had from corporate attendance at the various training modules.
- The programme has been criticised for causing displacement of other businesses, however there is no empirical data to support this criticism, neither is there any anecdotal evidence of which we are aware. On the other hand Council recognises that for any area or region to achieve greater numbers of

growth companies it requires new starts and this is particularly the case in the Ballymoney borough area with the recent job losses recorded in the town and the associated closure of some of the manufacturing companies.

- Indeed the aggregate picture for Northern Ireland businesses throughout the duration of the SABP would be one of more start-ups than failures, indicating a net positive effect on business start-ups in the province by the programme.
- In going forward Council would agree that targets for any future programme should be based upon outcomes rather than just outputs, i.e. success should not be judged solely on the number of businesses started but also on the value added to the business sector including skills base enhancement.

Consideration of 'Options Going Forward'

1. Discontinue the Programme:

- Council would disagree with this option on the basis that it flies in the face of both UK Government and EU Policy. It is also difficult to argue for an economic development strategy which does not include a volume start-up programme, the current SAB programme has made a significant positive contribution and without a further programme there is a real risk that Northern Ireland business start-ups would fall further behind other areas of the UK.

Council position – this proposal is unacceptable.

2. Maintain the Status Quo:

- Whilst Council is of the opinion that the SAB Programme must continue the status quo is not perhaps the best way to go forward because although it is a proven volume-based programme which exceeded all targets, delivered right across the province to high levels of satisfaction, it does contribute to high levels of deadweight, has minimal post-start support, has little flexibility and has the potential for increased efficiency and reduced costs.

Council Position – In the absence of a viable alternative this option would be an acceptable position however it would benefit from amendment.

3. An amended Existing Programme:

Council would be supportive of this proposal on the grounds that it takes all the good points and core elements from the existing programme such as being volume-based with a successful province-wide credible infrastructure already in place to deliver any amended programme. However it also has the potential to be flexible, more proactive and to target sectors/participants, which might receive more benefit or growth potential from the programme as well as having the prospect of helping reduce deadweight and thereby increase efficiency. Issues for consideration however would include:

- Concern by council that the proposal recommends the removal of the grant aid – In the interests of inclusiveness and equality of opportunity Council could not condone such a move and asks that this be reconsidered.
- Likewise to introduce chargeable fees, without the parallel introduction of some other form of funding package to offset these costs such a move could prove to be a barrier to participation and as with the matter of the grant above would be deemed inappropriate.
- The existence of a small number of relevant 'loan' funds does not mitigate the risk of reduced uptake and the introduction of a barrier to participation of removing the small grant or charging for certain modules.
- Reliance on external not directly relevant funding as a financial buffer to the removal of the grant and charges for certain modules increases the complexity and risk in participating in the programme which would be perceived by many potential participants as yet further barriers.
- Specific sectoral (social and enterprise) targeting could be employed to include uptake by more marginalised groupings and in identified enterprise sectors and in addition emphasis should be placed on increasing the recruitment of social enterprises onto the programme, incorporating their specific needs in an enhanced training module suite. However enterprise targeting must be Council area specific otherwise it could lead to actual rather than perceived business displacement.
- Whilst the 'skewing' of support, beyond the core offering, to businesses with greatest growth potential is worth considering, careful consideration must be given as to how such businesses can be identified bearing in mind the likely start-up size of the businesses participating in the SAB programme and the fact that the assessors will lack detailed knowledge on the level of experience and ability of the individuals involved.
- Client identification of appropriate training modules should be encouraged as a means of increasing flexibility of the programme however mentoring guidance would be an essential in the choice process and a requirement determined for the minimum number of modules completed in order to qualify for the completion of the programme.
- An enhanced toolkit of online business diagnostic and training facilities including the development of the Points of Presence network, which provides an integrated support infrastructure for all stages in the enterprise lifecycle, is welcomed.

- Targeting one-to-one support to potential Invest NI clients could lead to the introduction of bias early on in the process. However it could prove to be an extremely valuable element of a package of post-start mentoring, the latter being an essential requirement of any amended programme and not only for growth potential companies. Post-start mentoring would ensure greater sustainability and growth of businesses and as a means of helping identify potential Invest NI client companies.
- Post-start mentors must be experienced business people with credibility in the relevant sector.
- FE Colleges have a role to play in skills-base development, not business mentoring for the reason stated above.
- Council would welcome Invest NI's proposal to detach itself from the direct operation and delivery of any future programme but to retain overall strategic directional control as the funder. However to ensure appropriate lines of communication between the funder, the deliverer and any other directly involved agencies a steering group, made up of representatives from such bodies, should be established which would also have input into the determination of the strategic direction of the programme.
- Council recognises the need for thorough yet appropriate record keeping of all interactions with programme clients to ensure traceability and audit trails including the confirmation of start-up, but only if a grant is paid out to the participant: It is however feasible that participation on the programme and the completion of a business plan concludes that the business proposal is a non-starter and consequently no business start-up would result. Participants who fall into this category are however likely to withdraw from the programme before completion.
- Council would agree that regular contact following start-up, and post-start mentoring should continue for the first few years of a businesses life to more accurately determine business survival rates and to identify the possible requirement for further assistance as well as to monitor for potential inclusion as an Invest NI client. Resourcing of such continued intervention could however prove to be a stumbling block.

Ballymoney Borough Council would trust that the comments above will be viewed as constructive and be given due consideration in the development of whatever form and structure the next tranche of the Start A Business Programme takes.

Council would also be keen to contribute to any further consultation on the matter, not only because of the enhanced role councils are likely to have in the delivery of the programme post RPA, but also because of the high success rate of past programmes in, and the significant contribution of resulting new-start businesses, to the borough.