



**BUSINESS LEADERS  
PARTNERSHIP**



Milton Keynes Business Leaders  
Partnership Summer 2018 update

# Business Voice

[mkblp.co.uk](http://mkblp.co.uk)

## MKBLP Q&A with Roz Bird



### 1. Why being a member is important?

"It enables any business person to get to know the business community in Milton Keynes. Also Milton Keynes is a functional city of the Silverstone Technology Cluster and therefore important to the region as a whole."

### 2. What do you bring to MK Business Leaders?

"I suppose my perspective on the high tech activity in the area. Just to be clear – this is not just motorsport; it's a whole range of advanced engineering, electronics and software capabilities in the area which has the potential to grow and which government has described as having 'latent potential' and could therefore present new opportunities in Milton Keynes such as high tech companies developing relationships with universities or requiring professional services advice, and also the knock-on effect to new housing and an improved transport infrastructure."

### 3. What challenges face the Milton Keynes business community?

"The community should be cognisant of the changing requirements of all types of companies in relation to work space, the work life balance expectations of staff, the need to consider the environment and really practical matters like access to 5G and pure fibre broadband. This is driven by employees changing expectations, not just in terms of physical space but also working hours and issues like the impact their company has on the environment. I think it's exciting the way that society's priorities change through the generations and the very real and tangible impact these changes have on place and business."

### 4. What makes Milton Keynes special for you?

"It is a great central location in England; great connections to all points of the compass, and under 30 minutes into London. It has great potential for the future as part of the Cambridge-

## MKBLP Presents Grants to Local Organisations

Every year Milton Keynes Business Leaders Partnership supports business related organisations with small grants in recognition of the work they carry out. Previously, these cheques have been posted directly to the organisations, however, this year, at the MKBLP Quarterly Dinner in June, a number of these grants were personally presented. The twelve organisations selected by MKBLP were; MK Community Foundation, Young Enterprise, Action for Youth, MK College Awards, MK City Orchestra, MK Snap, Sport MK, Community Action, MK YMCA, Willen Hospice Business Club, Bright Sparc Awards and Women Leaders.



Milton Keynes-Oxford Corridor because of its central location and the opportunity to grow and attract new people. To me it's a futuristic city with a distinctive offer - massive park, fantastic shopping, amazing theatre, growing gallery, ski slope, Imax cinema.... the list goes on! Added together this is a really compelling place to live and work now, and in the future."

### 5. Your tip for success in business and/or life?

"Be customer focused and sensitive to different people's needs. Think twice and act once. It all comes down to three words: thoughtful, analytical and sensitive to need."

Using our skills and knowledge  
for the benefit of the Milton Keynes  
business community

# MKBLP Welcomes Puzzle Centre Charity Move

Milton Keynes Business Leaders Partnership has welcomed a planned move to Milton Keynes by the Puzzle Centre charity which delivers early intervention for young children with autism.

Anna Saunders, Fundraising Manager of the Puzzle Centre Trust and Chair of Trustees Graham Wylie were guest speakers at the latest MK Business Leaders Breakfast Briefing to talk about ambitious plans for a purpose-built nursery in the west of the city. It will also support parents and families of autistic children and be a centre of excellence for training autism professionals.

Anna and Graham were joined by Louise Gregory who gave a moving account of having a young son diagnosed with autism. She said she knew nothing about autism until the toddler faced challenges with his development. "He was not speaking, something wasn't right, he wouldn't look at me, wouldn't dress himself and then nothing functioned properly - as if someone had taken our son away in the night," Louise said.

She contacted Puzzle Centre. "I said 'I think my son has autism, I don't know where to turn'. Someone said 'don't worry Louise, we will call you back'. They did ring back and I was told about courses on behaviour issues, sensory processing and light therapy, and how fabrics and touch can help your child - and I signed up for the lot.

"Zachary is now four and waiting to go to nursery, he is making friends and he can now say 'my mum'. Puzzle Centre has just opened up our world" she said.

Anna said Puzzle Centre was founded in 2001 by Alex Stanyer, an internationally-known expert on autism.

Autism is a life-long neurological condition that affects 1 in 100 people in the UK who can struggle with communicating, interacting with others and have problems dealing with emotions and everyday activities. Autism costs the nation £32 billion a year.

Graham said there is a growing demand for Puzzle Centre's services and expertise and it has outgrown its current home at Middle Claydon. The charity has received a substantial donation towards building a new home and it is close to securing the



land in MK with construction due to start in around 18 months, he said.

"Our aim is to expand and raise the money to do it, but the most difficult money to raise is that which keeps our doors open and allows us to carry on what we are doing and give us sustainability," he said. Graham said they want to work with the Milton Keynes business community to raise awareness of and get support for Puzzle Centre's work.

Dr Philip Smith MBE, Chairman of MKBLP said he has visited Puzzle Centre. "I was very impressed with their work with children with autism at an early stage when it can be of great benefit to them and their parents. We are pleased to hear they are moving to Milton Keynes."

## Philip's Message

As we come to the end of the summer we can reflect upon our efforts over the past few months with some considerable pride. We have had some exciting dinners and breakfasts and one or two other events to whet our appetite. This will continue on through the autumn.

We now have over 75 members, doubling our numbers in just three years, a great achievement and we welcome all those who have just joined our forum and trust they have an enjoyable time with us.

Our AGM due next month will see the introduction of a new set of Articles of Association, giving us the flexibility to carry out our ever widening role in MK. We have also introduced a Privacy

Policy in accordance with GDR, and this can be found on our website – we will continue to safeguard our members privacy. The Business Achievement Awards reaches new heights in 2019 as we move the venue from the Ballroom at the Doubletree to the Arena, reflecting the maturity of the event as the premier business evening in the MK calendar. The theme will be Education and Skills, a subject close to our heart. We are also pleased to continue to provide the net proceeds of the evening to the MK Community Foundation, this year this amounted to £7,500.

Good health and good cheer.

**Philip**

# Supporting Milton Keynes with Broadband Infrastructure

Dubbed broadband's 'Forgotten City, Milton Keynes is, according to reports, the third worst connected city in the UK. Couple this with the fact that the UK is currently 35th in the world broadband speed league, trailing well behind our European counterparts, the future could look bleak for a city which boasts one of the UK's fastest growing economies.

With over 10,000 companies choosing to re-locate to Milton Keynes over recent years, and its growing reputation for innovation and technology, can the new Smart City live up to its name if it isn't underpinned by an equally smart infrastructure? No, according to Mr Pickering; "we will come to a grinding halt."

Mr Pickering went on to explain that, currently, there is a revolution happening. "Broadband is a foundation, like building a house, and we need a strong foundation to build our businesses upwards. Technology is moving at a scary speed and it is critical that we get the foundation right."

In a defiant move against BT, however, the news that CityFibre and Vodafone have just invested £40 million into Milton Keynes, will undoubtedly leave businesses sighing with relief. "While BT are still deciding on when to come to Milton Keynes, Vodafone and CityFibre are already here...and they are digging. They will be ready for the 2021 deadline."

Two years ago, fibre network specialist, CityFibre's goal was to go to cities outside of London and revolutionise their broadband infrastructure. Testament to their commitment in delivering communication technology services to Milton Keynes, dbfb invested £2 million in a partnership with CityFibre which would see the roll out of a ultra fast fibre network across the city over the next three years.

Putting it into context, Mr Pickering went on to explain how fast the download speeds are of the fibre-optic cable networks. "Using our current digital infrastructure, a video download took me 4 hours, but with CityFibre this was reduced by almost 200% to just 33 seconds!"

Consequently, by 2021, fibre for the home and business will be in across the whole of Milton Keynes with ultrafast gigabyte speed.

Dr Philip Smith MBE, Chairman of MKBLP, questioned whether, by 2021, Milton Keynes will be on par with the rest of Europe? The resounding answer from Mr Pickering was yes. "We are future proofing our businesses as we speak. Undoubtedly, technology will change over the next five years, but once the network is in the ground we don't need to dig again, we can simply blow more fibre through it."

Just 12 months ago we were labelled the third worst connected city in the UK but, I am pleased to say, that is changing. There are a lot of new entrants to the market, which was previously dominated by BT, and now the race is on, which means more speed for a better price."

"Ultimately, we live in a global world and we have to be able to use the global tools available to us, so getting the infrastructure right is absolutely vital to delivering success."

Mr Pickering also announced that dbfb are now registered suppliers of the Government's new Gigabit Broadband Voucher Scheme to help businesses in Northampton and Milton Keynes go ultra-fast with full fibre broadband, enabling them to get the necessary infrastructure in place. With no upfront costs the vouchers are worth up to £3,000 per business.



*dbfb, CEO, Simon Pickering with Dr Philip Smith MBE, Chairman of MKBLP*

# 'MP Trust and Integrity – Can we respect them?'

**As we navigate through the political 'mood music' of Brexit, will the integrity of MP's be restored, and will they once again be a beacon of trust to the British public?**

This hard hitting subject was the backdrop to the recent MK Business Leaders Partnership (MKBLP) Quarterly Dinner, as Dr Philip Smith MBE, Chairman of MKBLP, questioned why the country's perception of MP's today is only just above that of a second hand car sales man.

Is it the constant stream of televised debates and media coverage, coupled with the constant, and often reckless use, of social media? One only has to think of the aptly dubbed 'Twitter President' to realise the implications of this media platform. But, are our MP's misunderstood?

'MP Trust and Integrity – Can we respect them?' A tough subject for any MP to tackle, but The Right Honourable Dominic Grieve QC MP was certainly up for the challenge. Throughout his hour long address, to a room full of Milton Keynes Business Leaders, Mr Grieve lived up to Dr Smith's introduction: "I heard Dominic on the radio, he was articulate, intelligent, and spoke a lot of sense.....we needed him to come and talk to us."



**Dr Philip Smith MBE, Chairman of MKBLP with Dominic Grieve MP**

A British Conservative politician, barrister, Queen's Counsel and a Member of the Privy Council, Dominic Grieve MP was elected to the House of Commons for the Buckinghamshire seat of Beaconsfield in 1997, and has subsequently held the position of Shadow Home Secretary and Shadow Justice Secretary, along with Attorney General for England and Wales.

Mr Grieve admitted that the topic of MP integrity was a tough subject, and one which, in another constituency, he may have been hesitant to discuss, however, in Milton Keynes, with Mark Lancaster and Iain Stewart, who he considered to be outstanding MP's and colleagues, it wasn't a difficult decision to make.

While his political career spans two decades, Mr Grieve's history is entrenched within Parliament, as he pointed out: "I don't see politics through the rose tinted spectacles that many people, reflecting on the past, do today." His father represented his constituency from the early 60's, while closely following the career of his predecessor from 1945.

With his clear understanding of past politics, in the context of Parliament today, Mr Grieve, commented that the reason why people enter politics has not changed over the years: "The vast majority of MP's that come in to Parliament today want to be of public service."

Historically, MP's were left to get on with the business of talking to their party and debating in the Chambers of Westminster. "Remember, the word Parliament comes from the French verb parler, which means to speak." Mr Grieve pointed out. Today, however, The House of Commons is no longer the place of focus as MP's have a myriad of communication platforms to choose from in which to reach their public, and also express their views. However, as Mr Grieve commented, "communication can also be used as a tool of manipulation, and the possibilities of this today are unprecedented."

Unlike the era of his father's predecessor when cartoons on the pages of the institutional Punch magazine illustrated the political landscape and swayed voters, the channels of communication today are endless, and constant.

The orchestration of 'mood music', or the presentation of how information is communicated to the public by Government, is today down to a fine art, and engineered by media savvy people and 'spin doctors' which were brought in with the Blair Government. According to Mr Grieve, however, this can diminish complex issues to mere soundbites. "It reduces public confidence because it limits the opportunity to have honest discourse. The manufactured 'mood music' can create a counter pendulum swing too. Look at the Government expenses scandal in 2009. Through the press, the image left of this episode was a Parliament over-run with misbehaving MP's sponging from the tax payer, when in fact the vast majority did not abuse their position."

This lead to the subject of Brexit, which, as Mr Grieve pointed out, inevitably always comes up. The general mood music orchestrated in the run up to the referendum largely focused on the advantages and disadvantages of the EU as an institution which we, as a country, had no control over. However, this background noise drowned out the real dialogue. "The result has been paralysis for both parties, but this may, in a funny way, raise our standards. It will require a lot of courage, but honesty is the best possibility."



# MKBAA 2019 LAUNCH EVENT

This month, the sixth annual Milton Keynes Business Achievement Awards (MKBAA) was launched to once again celebrate the success of businesses across our region.

Organised by the Milton Keynes Business Leaders Partnership, in association with full service marketing agency Interdirect and event management experts Evolution Live, the 2019 Awards Ceremony will be held on Thursday 14th March.



The launch evening was kindly hosted by Milton Keynes College at the Business and Leadership Centre, Silbury. Guests included many local businesses, supporters, sponsors and previous winners and the 2019 categories, judges and sponsors were announced, with details on how to enter. Guest speakers included Lucian Hudson of The Open University and MKBAA 2018 award winners Cheryl Brimson, COO at Aero Tec Laboratories and Theresa Pope, co-founder of Dandi Patch.

The focus of the 2019 awards will be on how education, training and skills development underpin the need for the Milton Keynes economy and Milton Keynes businesses to increase levels of productivity to allow for successful competition in a post Brexit world. In fact, the Awards evening falls just two weeks before the UK formally leaves the European Union under the terms of exit agreed in Article 50. Dr Philip Smith MBE, Chair of Milton Keynes Business Leaders Partnership explains:



“This is an incredible moment in all our lives. For business, the focus must be even more on growth through trade with countries from around the world. To trade well means we need to trade competitively which in turn means businesses need to invest more in the training of their people.”

Arena MK was revealed as the brand new location for the 2019 Awards, an exciting move to a spacious venue which can welcome a larger capacity for this increasingly popular fixture in the Milton Keynes business calendar.



Popular broadcaster and voiceover artist Faye Carruthers was announced as the compere for MKBAA 2019. A journalist well known for her love of sport, travel, news and current affairs, Faye is also the voice of many big brands and narrates corporate videos, commercials and e-learning modules for blue-chip clients such as John Lewis, Sky, Amazon, Argos and Disney.



The guest speaker for the evening will be Baroness Martha Lane-Fox, Chancellor of The Open University.

This year sees the return of The Open University, KPMG and Milton Keynes Council as the headline sponsors and they were thanked wholeheartedly for their continued support.

In line with MKBLP's pledge, a cheque for £7,500 raised from MKBAA 2018 was presented to Ian Revell, CEO of MK Community Foundation. This donation was made to the trust fund established by MKBLP and the MK Community Foundation which assists start-up businesses in deprived areas of the city. This support will continue in 2019 in line with the MKBAA steering group's pledge to continue fostering the Milton Keynes business community.

# Directors of Milton Keynes Business Leaders Partnership

**Dr Philip Smith MBE** Chair  
**Nicholas Mann** Interdirect  
**Dr Julie Mills** Milton Keynes College  
**Jan Flawn CBE** PJ Care  
**Jean Gowin** dbfb Communications  
**Julia Upton MBE**  
**Rudy Parmar** PwC  
**Simon deMaid** Howes Percival

Milton Keynes Business Leaders Partnership is an independent organisation, funded through member subscriptions. MKBLP works to identify and develop interests, specific to the business community in the City.

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## Your contact details

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## For your diary

So far 2018 has been a great year of MK Business Leaders Events. From Breakfast Briefings to Quarterly Dinners, each of the events have featured quality guest speakers covering a diverse range of topics. These thought provoking speeches coupled with good food and great company make for interesting occasions, and there are many more scheduled in for the rest of the year.

If you have not yet attended a Business Leaders event, it is an integral part of your membership, so please do come along and see what you are missing. Book your places early and, if you subsequently cannot attend, PLEASE do let us know as soon as possible. If a senior colleague is able to attend in your place this is acceptable.

### Quarterly Dinner



Holiday Inn  
September 13th  
Speaker: Gary Turner,  
Managing Director Xero Accounting  
'Disruptive Technology'

### Breakfast Briefing



Double Tree Hotel  
September 20th  
Speaker: Charles McDonald, CEO  
MKDP  
'Land Development in MK – update'

### Quarterly Dinner



Holiday Inn  
November 8th  
Speaker: Rupert Soames OBE, CEO  
SERCO

### Breakfast Briefing



Holiday Inn  
December 11th  
Speaker: Lynette Ryals, Programme  
Director MK:U