

BUSINESS VOICE



A NEWS UPDATE FROM MILTON KEYNES BUSINESS LEADERS PARTNERSHIP

WINTER 2016

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2016 BLP events programme the best yet?

This year sees Milton Keynes Business Leaders host one of its most exciting and eclectic programmes of events.

BLP members have already made a visit to the Speaker's House at the Palace of Westminster (featured in this issue) and are looking forward to the MK Business Achievement Awards 2016 Dinner in March.

The quality of speakers earmarked for the Breakfast Briefings and Quarterly Dinners stand out with subjects close to home, including how to strengthen Milton Keynes' leisure and cultural offer; how community radio is 'keeping it local' with MKFM CEO Darren Dorrington; and looking at the role of Cranfield University in the region, with Professor Lynette Ryals Pro-Vice-Chancellor Cranfield University.

Widening the scope of Business Leaders' interests are talks and briefings covering UK infrastructure, British Military Intelligence and, a subject that remains a key focus for

us – the Skills Agenda. And for the first time we will be going inside HMP Woodhill to discover if a better working relationship can be formed between business and the Prison Service.

Speakers due to visit include the Rt Hon Lord Adonis, Chairman of the National Infrastructure Commission; Lt Col Phaedra McLean of the British Army; Skills Minister Nick Boles MP; Bernard Donoghue, CEO of the Association of Leading Visitor Attractions; and the Rt Hon John Redwood MP, whose subject is as yet unannounced but likely to be thought provoking and topical.

BLP Chairman Philip Smith said: 'This is a really exciting line-up and I feel it is a measure of Business Leaders' reputation for attracting some stand-out speakers to Milton Keynes. Invitations to these events will follow as we go through the year and I expect demand for places will be high.'

Business Leaders reaches the big 5-0

MK Business Leaders Partnership has reached an important milestone with the admission of its 50th member - Mark Walker, director of Ashridge Security Management.

Ashridge Security Management provides security consultancy and services to businesses, organisations and individuals in Milton Keynes and beyond. Mark, who founded the company with his wife Emma, said he was pleased to become a member of MK BLP.

He said: 'I had heard a lot about Business Leaders and felt that it represented a high level of business professionals in the city and is about more than just networking. As a member I feel I can bring something to it and, drawing on my own experience in the security sector, hope to help take forward the Business Crime Strategy.'

BLP Chairman Philip Smith said: 'I am pleased to welcome Mark at our half century and I am sure he will add to the wealth of experience and knowledge we already share between members.'



Mark Walker, director of Ashridge Security Management

Milton Keynes Business Leaders Partnership (MKBLP) is a not for profit business group of individuals from a broad cross section of backgrounds who utilise their skills and knowledge for the benefit of the wider business community

Business Leaders invited to join the party

MK BLP was invited to join the party by Lallie Davis and Shane Downer when they outlined the plans to mark Milton Keynes' 50th birthday.

January 2017 marks half a century since the 'new town' received its official designation. MK50 is the umbrella organisation for a year of golden anniversary festivities coordinated by Milton Keynes Council. Project Manager Lallie and Senior Heritage Officer Shane gave members an overview of the plans so far at a Breakfast Briefing and invited the business community to contribute. 'MK50 wants business on board,' said Lallie.

Shane said MK50 is not just about arts and culture, but how we make Milton Keynes a better place to live work and play. He said events like MK50, a bid for Capital of Culture 2023 and potentially gaining City Status should

counter a sometimes negative perception of Milton Keynes.

'Supporting MK50 is not just philanthropy but about benefiting your business, through your employees' involvement and encouraging those with skills you need to relocate to Milton Keynes. We want the business sector to be involved in the strategic thinking around MK50 and I invite those interested in getting involved to contact us,' he said.

Philip Smith thanked Lallie and Shane and said, 'January 23, 2017 is an important milestone for Milton Keynes. So much has been achieved, including business success, over almost fifty years. We are pleased a team is coordinating celebrations and support the business community getting involved.'

Business Leaders get sneak peek at IF:MK 2016

MK Business Leaders had an exclusive preview of the highlights planned for the IF: Milton Keynes International Festival 2016.

But they were told by festival director Monica Ferguson at a breakfast briefing that the unconfirmed part of the line-up was under a strict embargo. Monica said the biennial multi-arts event in July will build on the success of previous festivals and the proposed programme includes elements that have proved popular in the past with a host of new acts, artworks and events, some of them on an epic scale. What members and guests saw was impressive and should be truly spectacular.

IF continues to raise the bar for arts and culture in Milton Keynes said Monica and she invited Business Leaders members to get on board: 'Talk to us if you wish to take a role in the festival and about some of the business opportunities at IF. If we can continue to count on the support of the business community, it's going to be a hell of a ride in 2016.'

Philip Smith thanked Monica and her team for presenting what he said was a fascinating insight into what is planned and he is looking forward to IF. 'Clearly there are opportunities for business to get involved and I am sure we will want to hear more about them.'



Philip Smith with Monica Ferguson (left) and the team from IF: Milton Keynes International Festival 2016

Let's celebrate a new way to fund the arts and culture scene

Good things come in twos and it just so happened that the speakers who closed another year of fascinating MK Business Leaders Partnership Breakfast Briefings talked about related subjects.

In November we got an overview of MK50, the ambitious project to mark Milton Keynes' half-century in 2017. In December we had a preview of the IF: Milton Keynes International Festival. Both feature Milton Keynes' large and diverse music, arts and culture scene.

And because it was a mainly business audience, they welcomed business community involvement because music, arts and culture can also be good for business. It puts Milton Keynes on the map by raising its profile in a positive way and makes Milton Keynes attractive to potential investors and to potential employees with all sorts of skills and talents. Having your business associated with major events generates good PR and can be a platform for entertaining clients and rewarding staff. And there's the good feeling that you are supporting your community.

I am looking forward to the IF and MK50 which will be stand-out celebrations following on from the success of the Rugby World Cup in 2015. But what about business supporting arts and culture, particularly those smaller grass roots and under-funded projects, beyond these big events?

After the talks the discussion turned to those businesses that already generously respond to individual requests for money from arts, culture and community groups. I suggested it could be better if they moved away from ad-hoc funding and towards giving as part of a business strategy. And if the contributions from many businesses could be pooled that combined generosity can be more effectively targeted and requests for help referred to a single contact, freeing up businesses to do what they do best.

That in turn led to a discussion around a possible arts and culture subsidy on the business rates, which has happened in South Bucks. Now that might be a step too far at the moment, but a model for collective donating and effective distribution of charity funds already exists in Milton Keynes and which could be used to attract businesses into supporting MK50.

Milton Keynes Community Foundation manages 'named funds' where companies or individuals pledge to give to a fund aimed at a specific sector or meeting a need they have identified. MK Business Leaders has one supporting social enterprise and entrepreneurship and it is topped up with the proceeds of the annual MK

Business Achievement Awards, taking place again in March 2016.

I have already met MKCF chief executive Julia Upton to discuss whether this could happen. There are some hurdles to overcome but I am optimistic 2016 could see businesses in Milton Keynes more ready, more able and more willing to support the arts and culture scene across the city.

Philip Smith

**Edited version of an article in Business MK
January 2016**

Order, order! Business Leaders and Medical Detection Dogs are in the House

Speaker's House, the official residence of the Speaker of the House of Commons, was the splendid setting for a presentation and demonstration by the Milton Keynes based charity Medical Detection Dogs.

The charity CEO Claire Guest and President Betsy Duncan-Smith and Business Leaders members made up a party of around 50 plus half a dozen four-legged visitors and their

handlers for the combined trip to the historic chambers within the Palace of Westminster on February 3. The Speaker, the Right Hon John Bercow MP, was delayed by business in the House but was later able to talk to the group, learn about the charity's work and meet the dogs.



Philip Smith; John Bercow; Claire Guest, CEO Medical Detection Dogs; Betsy Duncan-Smith, President, MDD.

My MBE is also for Business Leaders says Chairman Philip Smith

MK Business Leaders Partnership chairman Philip Smith says he is delighted to receive an MBE in The New Year Honours List for services to business and the community of Milton Keynes.

'I feel that it is also recognition for the work of Business Leaders and the part our group plays in the evolution of the city,' he said.



Philip is a qualified accountant and a Rotarian and he has been a senior executive in a number of companies including ASDA Group and National Power. As well as MK BLP he is chairman of MK Business Council, MK Transport Partnership, and MK Sports Board and he chairs the board of governors of Milton Keynes Academy.

Philip is a director of Destination MK, The Stables, MK City Orchestra, Bucks and MK Sports Partnership and Biztech. He is a governor, member and a trustee of, respectively, the University of Bedfordshire, Buckingham University Development Board and the De Montfort University Students Union Trust. He was awarded an Honorary Doctorate in Business Administration by De Montfort University in 2010.

His sporting interests have included the chairmanship of Leicester City Football Club and he is also a patron of Willen Hospice, MK Community Foundation and MK City Orchestra.

Chairman's Report

Looking back at the list of places visited and people met over the past few months reinforces my belief that MK Business Leaders continues to reach out to an incredibly diverse and rich seam of individuals and organisations. Here are some of them:

November saw me attend meetings with the Milton Keynes-based employability education charity Worktree which links business and schools; with the Governor of HMP Woodhill Rob Davis; the chair of MK Development Partnership John Duggan; the chairman of Northants County Cricket Club; the Medical Detection Dogs charity and with Thames Valley Police. I also attended the Women Leaders' Gala Dinner.

December kicked off with the Sport MK Awards evening and I attended a reception for the new Vice-Chancellor of the University of Buckingham Sir Anthony Seldon, the SportsAid lunch and the LEAP Annual Awards. I had meetings with MK Business Resilience; MK 2050 Futures Commission; UK Military Intelligence and the

MK Transport Partnership. I also met Duncan Sharkey, Director of Place at Milton Keynes Council and also Chief Executive Carole Mills as well as meeting representatives of the Abu Dhabi government.

Into the New Year and January saw meetings with MK Council on the subject of International Sporting City and a meeting about the MK Business Crime Strategy. I also attended meetings of the Skills Forum, had a meeting with MK Museum, attended the Biztech AGM, a budget meeting with MK Council and accepted invitations to a Stables reception and to the Mayor of Milton Keynes' Burns Night Supper at the John Howard Barracks Army Reserve Centre.

During this time I have also attended MK BAA 2016 steering group meetings and have regularly appeared on MKFM community radio promoting this year's event, which takes place on March 10.

Philip Smith

For your diary

MK Business Achievement Awards Dinner at the DoubleTree Hotel StadiumMK - March 10 2016

Breakfast Briefing at HMP Woodhill - April 7 2016
The Prison Service and Business - a Better Working Relationship?

Quarterly Dinner at Holiday Inn CMK - April 28
2016 Speaker: Bernard Donoghue, CEO of the Association of Leading Visitor Attractions

Directors of Milton Keynes Business Leaders Partnership

Dr Philip Smith	Chair
Duncan Phillips	DP Leisure
Mike Robinson	PwC
Nicholas Mann	Interdirect
Dr Julie Mills	Milton Keynes College
Jan Flawn CBE	PJ Care
Jean Gowin	Jeanius Consulting
Julia Upton	MK Community Foundation
Martin Banham-Hall	Heald Solicitors

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.

Registered Office: Ashton House, 471 Silbury Boulevard, Milton Keynes, Buckinghamshire, MK9 2AH

Company Number: 06682673

Your contact details

Please remember to keep us up to date with any changes to your contact details, especially email address alterations. Email sandraoverbury75@gmail.com or call **01280 814848** or **07808 070386**

