

BUSINESS VOICE



A NEWS UPDATE FROM MILTON KEYNES BUSINESS LEADERS PARTNERSHIP

SUMMER 2015

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Working with business can help MK Council achieve the city's ambitions in the face of change and challenges, chief executive Carole Mills tells Business Leaders

The partnership between business and Milton Keynes Council has never been more important, the authority's chief executive has told city Business Leaders.

Carole Mills said working together would help take forward the city's ambitions as the council meets the challenges of reduced funding, increasing demand and what she called 'a massive period of change'. She was speaking at the latest Breakfast Briefing event.

Carole said that in 25 years in local government she had not come across a period with such a sense of change. There was the challenge too of reduced funding, with £68 million of savings achieved in the past three years and around £54-55 million to find in the next three to four years. More creative solutions were required to deliver this.

She said this was happening as Milton Keynes' population grows as MK's pioneers from the 60s-70s get older and inward migration creates more children. There are demands too from health inequalities, demands for housing and demands on infrastructure as well as devolution, localism and people's expectations.

Carole said the council was adapting and changing, with smarter ways of working and fewer staff. "We must negotiate how we can use our limited resources to the best effect," she said.

She said the council already has partnerships with other local authorities, central government, agencies like the NHS, the fire service and police, and the citizens who used and accessed its services. The council works closely with SEMLEP and influential groups like MK Business Leaders as well as MK Business Council, MK City Centre Management and MK Transport Partnership she said.

"We need to foster a sensible, practical and understanding relationship with business in the city, talk to the right people, listen to business leaders and get the right advice.



Carole Mills and Dr Philip Smith

Partnerships have never been more important - working together to help take forward our city's ambitions," Carole said.

The Council was encouraged to develop a long term vision for a greater Milton Keynes which business could help define.

Members and guests were keen to question Carole on issues including a vision for the next 50 years, official city status, business rates and competition from neighbouring towns.

MK Business Leaders' chairman Dr Philip Smith said members were aware of the challenges facing the council. "It is not going to get easier. We can criticise the council but that does little to help solve the problems. The business community has an important role to play through partnership working, to see our way through these difficulties in the best interests of the whole community" he said.

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

The business of care needs passion - and compassion says Jan

Jan Flawn CBE, the founder and chair of PJ Care, recently joined the board of MK Business Leaders. We asked her what women can bring to the table - and can compassion play a part in business?

Jan, who originally trained as a nurse, founded PJ Care in 2000 to meet the needs of people with neurological conditions. She has seen it grow into an independently owned provider of neurological nursing care employing more than 500 staff, with centres in Milton Keynes and Peterborough.

PJ Care is a private company but has 98 per cent of its patients funded by the NHS and is subject to comprehensive regulatory control - perhaps some of the most rigorous in any sector. Jan says dealing with real people's complex and unique care needs presents major challenges alongside those of maintaining a sustainable and secure business.

"The only income we get is from the beds we sell to purchasers including the NHS, so we have to be very careful and know our costs. You could say that each ward within our units are little businesses and we look closely at any variance in the income and expenditure that can make or break a company," she says.

"Our core message - Compassion, Commitment and Care has been with us since we started. They are not just words but are the bedrock of the company. When new staff join they are told about them and that they apply not only to our patients but also to how they treat their colleagues."

Each word is important, but what about compassion?

"As an employer you must be compassionate to the needs of your workforce and to your purchasers, customers and clients as they are what keeps a business going. Compassion can play its part in making business decisions."

Jan wears many hats, including as the chair of an international medical charity, President of the Rotary Club of the Brickhills and as an ardent supporter of MK Dons Sport and Education Trust. Through Women Leaders MK, and as winner of the prestigious 2013 First Women of Business Award Jan is recognised for putting women at the centre of business and public life.

Female ability to juggle tasks and manage lots of projects and issues is an enormously important contribution to business success she says. "Men bring different skills to business. At PJ Care my CEO Johann van Zyl's business approach is different to mine and together we make a formidable team. What is important



Jan Flawn CBE - PJ Care

is that every individual has a different view, but that individual should not be shut out because they are a woman."

Jan says she is pleased to join the board. "From what I have seen, Business Leaders is there to support the economic growth of Milton Keynes and I hope it continues to engage with businesses of all sizes and sectors. I am looking forward to learning more about the organisation and making my contribution."

Business generates some passion from election hopefuls

It seems a very long time ago now but in late April MK Business Leaders co-hosted, with Milton Keynes College, a very successful General Election hustling.

And there was more than a little unanimity between election opponents at the Business-themed 'Question Time' event, which was ably chaired by MK College Deputy Principal Nick Isles

In their opening and closing statements speakers pledged to support Milton Keynes' growth and prosperity, declared that Milton Keynes was a place of economic opportunity and recognised that 80 per cent of MK SME businesses employed 10 people or less.

Questions, from an audience comprising Business Leaders' members, invited guests and college students and staff, covered issues including: the role further and higher education should play locally to improve skills; meeting

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housing needs, particularly of young people; that infrastructure must come before further development across the city and unsurprisingly; an EU referendum.

Closing the event MK College Principal and Chief Executive and Business Leaders' Board Member, Dr Julie Mills said it had been fascinating to hear views on really important topics from candidates who were each passionate about Milton Keynes."

Philip Smith said afterwards the event went particularly well and suggested that the model of having key people talk about issues affecting Milton Keynes in front of an audience could be repeated, perhaps with local councillors on a panel.



New Business Leaders website to launch in the autumn

As we look forward to well-deserved summer holidays can I brief members about significant developments to come soon, hopefully after the summer break.

Some of you will have heard about the plans to update and improve the MK Business Leaders website. We now intend to create a more effective 'shop window' showing online visitors what we do to support business interests within the city and regionally, and provide a more engaging web experience that should better serve members by keeping them properly up to date about our activities.



The aim is to provide an exciting and creative site to reflect our now well-established position within the Milton Keynes business community. As a result, things will change from this autumn with the launch of the new site, which has been designed and developed by Interdirect.

Also, after a recent membership drive we are pleased to report a membership now approaching fifty members. This is a target we set ourselves some time ago and our recent successes and the positive exposure due to the Milton Keynes Business



John Cridland CBE

Achievement Awards are helping us attract new members of a continuing high calibre.

And we are pleased to announce the appointment of Jan Flawn CBE of PJ Care to the MK Business Leaders Board (Jan is featured in a profile article in this edition of Business Voice). I would also like to thank both Keith Straughan and David Newstead who are stepping down from the Board after several years of valuable input and support. We are now seeking one new board member and we would be delighted to hear from any member who is interested in sitting with us.

Thank you to all those who responded to the Members' Survey. The results were interesting and valuable in shaping MK Business Leaders going forward and it is reassuring that we seem to be moving in the right direction. An area which figured in the survey was our evolving programme of events and an example of the high calibre of our speakers is John Cridland CBE, Director General of the CBI, who will give an Economic Update at our Quarterly Dinner on August 27.

Chairman's Report

It has been another busy period with MK Business Leaders represented at a host of meetings and events across the city and beyond, through April and May.

I took part in the recruitment panel for two Business vacancies on the SEMLEP Board with both new appointees being women. Later in the month I attended the Skills Dinner at SEMLEP and it was interesting to see how the skills agenda is developing in the South East Midlands area.

Following our successful Business Leaders Breakfast Briefing back in January, where the MK Business Crime Strategy was unofficially launched by Supt Gez Chiariello the Milton Keynes police commander, I chaired an initial meeting of our members and the police to discuss the strategy and its implementation. It was agreed that the membership of the group will be expanded and it was announced that from April 1 Thames Valley Police would begin collating business crime data. The group will be concentrating on the Prevention of crime.

I was pleased to be present at the annual Charter Day for The Open University which was well supported and attended by the new Vice-Chancellor Peter Horrocks CBE.

Other meetings attended during the period included those with MK Athletics, Destination MK, the University of Buckingham, Cranfield University, MK Transport Partnership and a number of meetings with potential sponsors of the MK BAA 2016 event.

Lunches, dinners and breakfasts are inevitably a significant part of networking and I had the pleasure of attending those for and with MK City Orchestra, MK Rotary, Concrete Cattlemen's Club, SportsAid, as well as The Stables reception for the IF event, and a visit to the Ride High charity.

I was joined by Nick Isles Deputy Principal of MK College at a meeting with the Chief Executive of MK Council Carole Mills to discuss taking forward the skills agenda – a key area which Business Leaders continues to promote. The skills agenda needs to be business led and this was stressed to the council.

Philip Smith

For your diary

Quarterly Dinner - Economic Update

John Cridland, Director General CBI

Venue: Holiday Inn CMK, Sponsored by The Open University

Breakfast Briefing - September 10 2015

The Greening of MK David Foster CEO The Parks Trust Venue: Bletchley Park

Quarterly Dinner - -- October (tbc)

Scientific Evolution The Government Chief

Scientific Adviser (tbc)

Venue: Jurys Inn, Sponsored by Cranfield University

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

Vacant seat

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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