



**BUSINESS LEADERS  
PARTNERSHIP**

Milton Keynes Business Leaders  
Partnership Summer 2019 update

# Business Voice

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

## THE VALUE OF MKBLP



**Nicholas Mann, who was elected as the new Chair of Milton Keynes Business Leaders Partnership in July, outlines his thoughts on the value of being a member of MKBLP.**

Milton Keynes Business Leaders Partnership (MKBLP) is undoubtedly an excellent platform for like-minded executives and entrepreneurs, working within the city, to come together and share their hopes and ambitions for the future, while networking for their prospective businesses.

However, scratch below this and there lies a plethora of skill sets which, when combined, not only offer invaluable insights into the cogs which keep the Milton Keynes business community thriving but also form the foundations for new initiatives which will drive the city into the future.

The diversity of members within MKBLP has helped develop the business interests of Milton Keynes. By working closely together, not only have many collaborations been formed, but a deeper understanding of the business needs across many different sectors has been recognised and best practice shared.

Take the announcement earlier this year that Milton Keynes College was chosen as one of the Government's 12 new Institutes of Technology. Board member Dr Julie Mills OBE, was, and continues to be, a driving force behind the development of this Institute, and she unreservedly acknowledges the influence that MKBLP members played in this by sharing their needs for greater digital skills.

While this £28 million investment within Milton Keynes signifies the impact the city has on the UK's business landscape, I would also like to think that our network has played a pivotal role in putting the city on the map.

Ranked number 8 in Management Today's '21 Best Towns and Cities for Business', we should celebrate the fact that Milton Keynes has one of the highest start-up rates in the country. These should be amongst the business owners, managers and directors that we need to reach out to and promote the benefits that being a member of MKBLP can bring.

Our mission is to develop the business interests of Milton Keynes and we can only continue to do this if we harness new talent to increase not only our diversity of skills, but our influence to create an even better business community.

The influence of our members is streamlined through MKBLP's board of directors, who actively work to project members' views to a wider audience, including local council and MPs. The MKBLP Board reflects our vast business community and includes men and women across key sectors. We are keen to increase this miscellany of skills further and encourage member participation and appointments to the Board so we can continue to lobby for business within Milton Keynes and ensure that the city remains a shining light for new business start-ups and a centre of excellence for a range of industry sectors.

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

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



## MKBAA 2020 SETS ITS SIGHTS ON A VISION FOR A HEALTHIER CITY

**Confirmed to take place on 12 March 2020, Milton Keynes Business Achievement Awards (MKBAA) will this year consider the overall health and wellbeing of our great city, its residents, businesses and workforce.**

The theme will focus on several health-related streams, including mental, physical, environmental and financial wellbeing, with the awards bringing businesses together to celebrate the achievements of a variety of Milton Keynes organisations across many different sizes and sectors.

Established in 2014 by Milton Keynes Business Leaders Partnership (MKBLP), in association with full service marketing agency Interdirect and event management experts Evolution Live, the awards have gained momentum and kudos each year and are now recognised as the highest accolade by businesses across Milton Keynes.

The support received from our many high profile sponsors is testimony to the awards' success and the value that MKBAA sponsorship provides to the businesses that continue to support it. KPMG, The Open University and MK Council have renewed their headline sponsorship and many other support packages are currently being processed.

Nicholas Mann, Chair of MKBLP and co-organiser of MKBAA, says: "We would like to say a huge thank you to our sponsors for their continued support, many of whom have been involved with MKBAA since it was established six years ago. Without the support of our sponsors and the wider business community in Milton Keynes the awards simply wouldn't happen.

MKBLP is excited about the theme of this year's awards, a significant and very relevant topic, which affects all of us, from company directors to employees.

Over 700 guests joined us at the new venue of the Arena MK for the 2019 awards and we look forward to welcoming even more in 2020".

The launch event for MKBAA 2020 will take place on Wednesday 4th September, which will coincide with entries opening.

# BOARD DIRECTOR OBSERVATIONS - DR JULIE MILLS OBE



**Dr Julie Mills OBE, CEO and Group Principal of MK College and driving force behind the new Institute of Technology, highlights the importance of bridging the gap between education and the workplace and the role MKBLP has played.**

In the current evolving economy, there is growing demand on colleges to understand what graduates are capable of and how they can help them translate these skills into jobs. With one in three graduates being 'mismatched' to the jobs they find after leaving college or university it is essential that colleges fully comprehend the skills local businesses demand and this is when being a member of MKBLP has been invaluable.

I have been a member of MKBLP for many years, as was my predecessor before me. While the high calibre of speakers at events and the networking opportunities has always been notable, having direct access to the business people of Milton Keynes has been instrumental in shaping the College that we have today.

Listening to the needs of businesses from Milton Keynes has influenced our course offering, for instance, demands for 'fit for purpose' digital skills ultimately helped build the case for the Institute of Technology.

Milton Keynes is quickly becoming one of the UK's top hotspots for enterprises and start-up companies. With so many of the younger generation coming through, it is vital that the skills they are learning match the needs of local businesses, so we can harness this talent and keep it within the city. This understanding, and the strong links with local businesses, has also enabled us to

place students on work placements to better prepare them for working life, while equipping them with the necessary skill set.

Up-skilling isn't just aligned to the younger generation though. Through MKBLP, the College has been able to understand the requirement to up-skill members of the local community who are currently in low skilled, low-paid roles. As a result, we are developing courses which will create workforce pipelines through to higher skilled positions which will help employees enhance their skill set and wage potential.

On the subject of talent, there is always a wide range of skills around the MKBLP table at any given time which often sparks creative thinking and this has led to Council consultations to create a better business environment.

The diversity of skills and different personalities coming together through MKBLP has quietly helped steer the City.

These collaborations have also helped businesses of all shapes and sizes overcome issues which they may, without the support of fellow MKBLP members, have not addressed. Business to business support can come in many different forms. For instance, our understanding of the Apprenticeship Levy has enabled many businesses to unlock funding they may otherwise have lost to the Government.

# MKBLP MEMBER Q&A - LAL TAWNEY



## **What challenges face the Milton Keynes business community?**

In the short term, I feel the Milton Keynes business community needs a stronger and broader voice to develop, influence and shape the future of Milton Keynes.

In the long term, the infrastructure needs to be in place to support Milton Keynes' growth ambitions. Low congestion and fast commuting times have always been key attractions for both residents and businesses, so in order to be attractive to both new and existing businesses Milton Keynes needs to ensure that this continues and that good public transport exists.

Central Milton Keynes also needs to be an attractive place to live, particularly as there has been a rise in the numbers of "younger" workers wanting to live in city centres. I've walked through Birmingham and Manchester recently – you can't miss the smart new high-rise apartments, new office blocks and cranes.

## **What makes Milton Keynes special for you?**

I've been in Milton Keynes since 1991 so it's definitely home! I've seen it continue to grow from strength to strength - it's always rated as one of the UK's fastest growing cities and this is an indicator of its future potential. We're at a critical point to help shape the future of MK - roll on the next 50 years!

The culture and arts ambition of the city is also coming to life, which is very exciting to see and I've started to play a very small part in this in my role as a Trustee of the Wavendon All Music Plan (or The Stables).

From a personal perspective, MK and the immediate surrounding areas have so many green spaces to enjoy. I'm part of the Broughton Cycling Group and through this I have discovered amazing surrounding countryside - and great places to have coffee and cake!

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

Both at personal and business level, know your strengths and play to them.

## **Why being a member is important?**

For me, it's about opportunity. I want to be part of the business community, learn from the people within it, and contribute to the development of Milton Keynes.

I am also keen to see our business, Whitecap Consulting, grow within the city and help local businesses and organisations prosper.

## **What do you bring to MK Business Leaders?**

Most importantly, I am passionate about Milton Keynes. I came to the City in 1991 expecting to be here for 2 years but I never left!

I have had a reasonably varied career over the years and have learnt a lot from different experiences. However, at heart, I'm a problem solver. So, helping a client navigate through an issue or a challenge is what makes me tick. There's nothing better than helping a client move forward, from not knowing how to tackle an issue, to understanding the challenge in more detail, through to evaluating options and making it happen.

## Success of MKBLP's Summer Drinks Event

With many of MKBLP's events being seated, the opportunity to circulate with a wide number of guests is often shortened. Therefore, in July, with the goal of increasing the diversity of events that we offer our members, we held our first Members' Drinks event.

The event, which was held on a wonderful summer's day at MK Gallery, offered a prolonged chance for our members to socialise and to get to know each other just that little bit better.

Kindly sponsored by Howes Percival, the drinks reception was the ideal end to the working day and received extremely positive feedback. We will therefore look to arrange more of this type of event in the future.

**HOWES  
PERCIVAL**



# MILTON KEYNES BUSINESS LEADERS TAKE TIPS FROM NORTHERN POWERHOUSE TO HARNESS FINTECH



**The UK's FinTech sector is undoubtedly driven by London. With its strong financial hub, access to investment and pool of technical talent, the Capital is undoubtedly the UK's, if not Europe's, FinTech leader.**

But, a revolution to drive up FinTech has been taking place across the UK's regions and, at a recent MKBLP event, local business leaders gathered to hear how FinTech has helped shape the Northern Powerhouse and how its success can be applied to Milton Keynes' businesses.

During a presentation at MK College's Brasserie, Julian Wells and Lal Tawney from Whitecap, an independent consultancy working with regional SMEs across the private, public and educational sectors, delivered a case study on its work within FinTech across the north to business leaders and how the success of the model can be exploited by companies with the Milton Keynes region.

Based in Leeds, a city which is often referred to as a FinTech centre of excellence, Whitecap has been heavily involved in the FinTech sector, including the co-founding of a thriving events-based community under the FinTech North brand. Significantly, Mr Wells detailed the company's work with Leeds City Council, who supported and invested within the city's tech sector, laying the foundations for Leeds to become a FinTech hub of the future.

"The UK is seen as the FinTech capital of the world, with the north becoming recognised as a key UK FinTech hub and an increasingly important contributor to the national and international FinTech economy." Explained Julian Wells.

Mr Wells likened the UK FinTech economy to a Formula 1 car, which will continue to drive forward quickly and set the global agenda.

As the application of using technology to improve financial products and services, FinTech is rapidly transforming the way companies across all sectors does financial business and companies within Milton Keynes need to take advantage of the technology.

Increasing its regional footprint, "We want to be everywhere but London," Mr Wells commented, Whitecap opened a Milton Keynes based office in 2017, headed up by Lal, to cover the Midlands and South regions.

In his capacity as a new member of MKBLP, Lal stressed his dedication to shaping the future of Milton Keynes and assisting SMEs harness the power of FinTech to enable them to prosper in the future. "It is vital that Milton Keynes companies adopt FinTech as it will continue to impact our lives at a fast pace as recent technologies develop."

MKBLP members acknowledged that, while Milton Keynes doesn't have the sizeable banking community that Leeds boasts, there was a compelling case for local companies to take advantage of the technology to shape their businesses.

# THE INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY SET TO CREATE GREATER CAREER OPPORTUNITIES FOR MILTON KEYNES



**With the digital industry moving on at breakneck speed, the news that Milton Keynes will open one of only 12 Institutes of Technology across the country, is set to offer significant career opportunities.**

Dr Julie Mills OBE, Principle and CEO of Milton Keynes College, was outlining the plans for the new Institute of Technology to business people from across the city at the July MKBLP event. "Salaries of the indigenous Milton Keynes population are much lower than those high skilled people that local businesses are currently bringing into the city to fill digital and technical positions. The workplace is becoming increasingly polarised between high and low skilled workers and the middle ground is disappearing."

"The Government didn't want another institution, deposited in the middle of a College and a University. It wanted a truly employee led establishment, specialising in delivering higher level technical STEM skills, with strong recruitment pipelines for those wanting to increase their employability and earning potential."

With the UK's digital economy currently outpacing the wider economy, the future is looking increasingly data driven. However, the European Commission believes there could be as many as 756,000 unfilled jobs in the European ICT sector by 2020 and, as the average digital salary in the UK is 44% higher than the national average, the skills gap needs to be bridged.

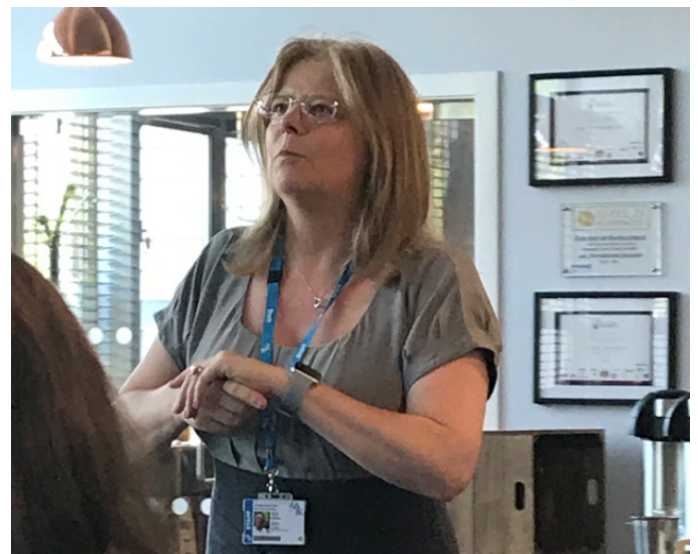
Following a £28 million investment from the Department of Education and with strong backing from leading digital organisations, including Microsoft, KPMG and McAfee, the Institute of Technology is set to play a pivotal role in bridging this gap within Milton Keynes and the surrounding areas.

Significantly, the curriculum at the Institute of Technology will be driven by employers and 40% of students, time will be spent within an industrial placement, applying theory to live, work environments. "Digital disruption is driving huge demand for access to skilled technology professionals. The IoT will be a regional hub for digital education and employers are central to the curriculum so we can deliver outstanding learning opportunities which provides a clear route to high skilled employment."

During the MKBLP event, held at the Brasserie at MK College, Dr Mills also summarised the redevelopment of Block D at Bletchley Park which will house the Institute of Technology. With building well under way and the first cohort of students expected in September 2021, Dr Mills acknowledged that the consortium behind the IoT is now on a mission to drive awareness. "The IoT is for anyone over the age of 18 looking to improve their skill-set beyond A' Levels or vocational courses, who do not necessarily want to go on to a traditional University, but still want fulfilling, high-skilled careers."

With an objective to have 1,500 students by year 5, the consortium also have to meet recruitment equality targets set by the Department of Education, including an aim for 45% of these learners to be female by 2025.

*"Between Cranfield University, MK:U and the Institute of Technology, we are creating opportunities and a wonderful pool of talent within Milton Keynes and beyond. And, if we get the IoT model right, we can roll it out across other industries in the future."*





**MKBAA 2020**

**Save the date: 12th March 2020**

## DIRECTORS OF MILTON KEYNES BUSINESS LEADERS PARTNERSHIP

**Nicholas Mann** Chair, Interdirect

**Dr Julie Mills OBE** Milton Keynes College

**Jean Gowin** CityFibre

**Simon DeMaid** Howes Percival

**Freddie Guilford** The Red Thread Partnership

**Jan Flawn CBE**

**Ruby Parmar**

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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## MKBLP EVENTS

Events are an integral part of being a member of MKBLP as they provide an opportunity to network with like-minded business people, and listen to quality guest speakers covering a diverse range of topics. These thought-provoking speeches, coupled with good food and great company, always make for interesting occasions. With the summer hiatus coming to a close, the remainder of 2019 promises to be a success for MKBLP with many events confirmed, and plans are already well under way for 2020.

Exciting new changes to our events programme are afoot, and we have some interesting speakers already lined up. Further details on these events will be incorporated into our regular communications, but below are dates for your diaries for the remainder of this year:



### Formal Dinner

Jurys Inn - Sponsored By CityFibre

5th September

Speakers: Richard Harrington, CEO Bucks & TV LEP on the Oxford/Cambridge Arc and Hilary Chipping - Chief Executive at SEMLEP



### Breakfast Briefing

MK Hospital

12th September

Speaker: Simon Lloyd, Chairman of the Milton Keynes University Hospital NHS Foundation Trust, on the new Cancer Centre



### Formal Dinner

Holiday Inn

10th October

Speaker: Nick Du Bois, Confessions of a recovering MP



### Breakfast Briefing

MK Brasserie

12th November

Speaker: Ken Tomkins, Kaizen Restaurants, McDonalds – A local success story