

A new chance to go back to the future

Theo Chalmers



MILTON Keynes Council chief executive David Hill has written to all councillors and other local and neighbouring bodies such as Aylesbury Vale District Council setting out the terms of a council resolution, made on June 8 2010. In it he reaffirms the council policy - from February 13 2007 and supported by 44 members - to create a new Development Corporation, with its focus solely upon Milton Keynes, and with the board being accountable to the cabinet of Milton Keynes Council.

He goes further and endorses the letter sent from the leader of the Milton Keynes Council Cllr Cec Tallack to Milton Keynes Partnership chair Dr Ann Limb, effectively asking her to at least partly fall on her sword and relinquish all MKP's planning authority to the council.

In this letter, Cllr Tallack also boldly challenges the "wasteful duplication" that has occurred during her tenure but pulls his punches when it comes to the appalling planning and other decisions made by the partnership. He also asks that MKP extends its current influence with neighbouring authorities, presumably to prevent such anomalies as the planned 5,300-home Salden Chase development which is set to be tacked on to the south-west edge of Milton Keynes with no support infrastructure of its own; with council tax revenue going to Aylesbury Vale; with no grid system extensions.

Wheels

To deliver the final coup de grace, Cllr Tallack - a Liberal Democrat - asks that the benefits of the future sale of MKP land goes to the people of Milton Keynes via its council. A sensible and moral solution, in this writer's opinion.

The reason for this sudden boldness appears to be the new national coalition government which contains members of Cllr Tallack's own party and which has stated in The Coalition - Our Programme for Government its intention to abolish regional spatial strategies and return decision-making powers on housing and planning to local councils. A point iterated by David Hill.

While that is very good news, it seems that other wheels within wheels are also turning. Following the passing of the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007, Milton Keynes Council

RESIDENTS might be forgiven for thinking that Richard Curtis, acclaimed director of the film *Love Actually*, had a hand in recent communications from Destination Milton Keynes and Milton Keynes Council. The city made the national headlines with news that we were rebranding as the Romantic Capital of Great Britain.

It was all in good fun, part of a new marketing campaign to attract visitors to Milton Keynes, alongside the launch of a new 'city brand'.

When Milton Keynes was created in 1967, few could have imagined that the hundreds of thousands of people who now live and work here would come to love it so much.

As we grow, many businesses and organisations want to encourage new residents, workers and visitors to discover what Milton Keynes has to offer. It means inward investment and cash in the tills for local businesses. It means more customers for restaurants and hotels; it means that we can show off the wonderful facilities of Milton Keynes.

The previous city brand was GO MK, developed more than ten years ago. Following research with residents, businesses and visitors about what makes Milton Keynes special, a toolkit of materials including a Milton Keynes city brand logo, images, and a selection of sample words in different categories was launched last month.

Organisations can use the materials, which can be found online at

www.amazing-mk.co.uk, to promote Milton Keynes in a consistent and positive light.

Too often Milton Keynes is jokily known as the 'home of concrete cows and roundabouts' and not much more. The marketing campaign and toolkit of materials is designed to challenge misconceptions. Hence the light-hearted start to the campaign, which highlighted how Milton Keynes has more bridges than Venice, hundreds of acres of leafy

outdoor space, and is actually a more romantic destination than you might think. We have also launched a competition to write a romantic short story set in Milton Keynes.

As a taster of what is available at www.amazing-mk.co.uk, here are some of the attributes of Milton Keynes that many of us love:

- Our city is unlike any other. It is designed for people who want more out of life. There is so much to experience here and, best of all, everything is close at hand;

Who makes these decisions? Why, we the citizens of Milton Keynes, of course. Before drawing up its proposals, the council has asked for people to e-mail their choice to executivearrangements@miltonkeynes.gov.uk by July 8.

I strongly urge you to vote for an elected mayor. Can you imagine someone like Pete Winkelman for instance (and he's not indicated a desire to stand as far as I am aware) putting up with the stuff we have all been forced to swallow in recent years?

It may well be that this former piece of government legislation, coupled with the change of national government, will mean that Milton Keynes gets a second chance to have a proper Development Corporation with its eye back on the ball for the first time since it was abolished in 1992 in favour of the Commission for the New Towns. It may also mean that, for the first time, the city has an elected mayor to make sure that it keeps its eye on that ball.

We can but pray. Cheerio.

Why all you need is love...

Carys Underwood (pictured), of tourism body Destination Milton Keynes, explains the thinking behind the new Milton Keynes brand.



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- Our city is unlike any other. It is designed for people who want more out of life. There is so much to experience here and, best of all, everything is close at hand;

- If you are a sports fan, you will love our adrenaline-pumping activities. If you love to shop, you will love our world-famous shopping centres with favourite high street names;

- Home is where the heart is. That is why so many people love living in Milton Keynes. There is so much to do and everything in our family-friendly city is within easy reach. Living life to the full is easy... Milton Keynes is a great place to call home;

- Milton Keynes is buzzing with opportunities to learn new things. The code-breakers of Bletchley Park brought innovation to our city and contemporary learning continues at the Open University. We also have great schools, colleges and universities, award-winning galleries, theatres and museums and stately homes steeped in history;

- Milton Keynes is alive with opportunity for businesses of all sizes. Our ambitious city is home to major international names like Santander and Mercedes Benz. We are ideally placed, close to London and have fast and easy transport links in and around our city.

The promotional campaign is designed to spread the word about the many enriching aspects of life in Milton Keynes. By logging onto www.amazing-mk.co.uk and using the new city branding, all organisations can get behind it.

As a song in another Richard Curtis film *Four Weddings And A Funeral* says: 'Love is all around us, come on and let it show...'

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