

Agency is in rude health  
SPECIALIST recruitment agency National Locums has won new agreements to supply doctors to two additional NHS Frameworks – NHS Shared Business Services and NHS Commercial Alliance.

The Linford Wood-based firm has also earned 'Select List' preferred supplier status with the Isle of Man Department of Health and Department of Social Care and gained a 'Platinum' rating for the second year runnings.

Managing director David Cook said: "This is terrific news and a real testament to everyone who works for us."

**Restaurant is spiced up**  
The Mysore Spice Indian Restaurant in Newport Pagnell has been spiced up in more ways than one.

Under the new management of Mohammed Shahjahan, it has been refurbished and updated.

Diners are already enjoying the new menu at the restaurant, in High Street.

## Council names new chief executive...

MILTON Keynes Council has appointed its new chief executive to succeed David Hill.

Mr Hill departs after five years in post, to be replaced by Carole Mills *pictured*, currently deputy chief executive, corporate director for resources and chief finance officer at Nottingham City Council. Her appointment was confirmed at a meeting of the full council in May.

Council leader Cllr Andrew Geary said: "She joins us at a very exciting time in a period of sustained improvement, bringing very solid local government credentials as well as a sound business acumen to the organisation. Her experience as deputy chief executive at one of the country's Core

Cities will further enhance Milton Keynes' own ambitions to be in the top ten and Premier League of UK cities."

Ms Mills said: "I am really looking forward to taking up the role in the near future and settling down in a new home within the borough."

Milton Keynes Council's Labour group leader Cllr Peter Marland said: "We have found a new chief executive with great qualities to take the borough forward."

Liberal Democrat group leader Cllr Douglas McCall added: "She has a depth of knowledge and experience and will be a real asset to Milton Keynes."

• Theo Chalmers: page 13



## ...but controversy dogs appointment

THE DECISION to name Carole Mills as the new chief executive of Milton Keynes Council has not been without controversy.

As well as an interview by the council's cross-party Appointment Panel, she and three other candidates were earlier interviewed by separate panels made up respectively of senior business figures, council employees and community leaders.

The business panel unanimously did not recommend Ms Mills, Business MK has learned, nor did they recommend any other candidate.

One panel member expressed "disappointment" at her appointment.

The panels' role was to comment on the candidates and to highlight any issues for the Appointment Panel to probe further at final interview, said a council spokesman.

The final decision on which candidate to recommend was made by the Member Appointment Panel, which included the three group leaders.

The business panel, whose remit did not include due diligence nor references, raised with Ms Mills an investigation at Nottingham City Council when she was deputy chief executive and chief finance officer into the management of a £12 million

Future Jobs Fund, Business MK has been told.

Milton Keynes Council said in a statement that the issues "were historic, were not directly Carole's responsibility and were satisfactorily dealt with by Nottingham City Council at the time."

In a joint statement, group leaders Andrew Geary, Peter Marland and Douglas McCall said: "Carole Mills was appointed after a rigorous recruitment process, which involved an Executive Search and selection process undertaken by an independent third party and reference checks with her current and previous employers, as well as an intensive two-day final selection programme that incorporated panel sessions with a range of stakeholders, presentations to members of the council and final interviews with a cross-party Appointment Panel.

"All three group leaders - along with the other members of the Appointment Panel - were united in their feeling that Carole was by far and away the best candidate. That has not changed, we remain confident that we made the right choice, and we are still 100 per cent behind Carole's appointment.

"She was clearly the right candidate for the job."

Expanding horizons... As chartered accountancy practice Mercer & Hole celebrates its 25th anniversary in Milton Keynes, General Practice Partner Gary Farnes talks about his passion for travelling, sport and doing business in Milton Keynes.

## Globetrotter values his home comforts

WHENEVER possible, Gary Farnes likes to broaden his horizons. "I love to travel and there is so much of the world I still want to see," he says.

Next stop is Costa Rica, involving white water rafting and a trek into the rainforest. "That will involve coming down from the rainforest on 1.7 miles of zip wire," he says. "My wife, who travelled extensively before we met, gave me the bug and I love to take in different cultures. It's a great way to recharge the batteries."

It is a very different world from the working week, which Gary spends as General Practice Partner at Mercer & Hole. He has worked for the firm since 2001, having moved from the owner-managed business section at KPMG after a chance meeting with now Senior Partner Paul Maberly "which encouraged me to want to work at a Partner-led firm with a difference."

His wanderlust has taken him to many exotic parts of the globe, from safari in Zambia to Russia, Peru and watching leopards, bears, birds and crocodiles in Sri Lanka. "The most thrilling moment was coming across three lionesses and their cubs at a waterhole on safari in Zambia," he recalls.

"Quite a sight. I'd love to go back."

Today, Gary still specialises in working alongside firms with turnover of between £1 million and £25 million. "I like to work with decision-makers to advise them on their tax savings," he says. "I get a real buzz when I know I have given advice that can save a business both time and money."

Mercer & Hole runs as a cohesive team, encouraging cross-department conversation to bring each and every client the best service, advice and solutions possible. "We do this so our clients receive expert knowledge and an integrated service," says Gary. "For example, we integrate the accounting and tax departments. They are next to each other in the office and we treat them both as one team."

During his career, Gary has built up specialist knowledge in Solicitors' Accounts Rules. The provision of services to solicitor firms is an important area for Mercer & Hole and Gary heads the unit acting for solicitors across the firm.

He also acts for independent schools and charities, including Safety Centre (Hazard Alley), an education centre at Kiln Farm, Milton Keynes Christian Centre, Milton Keynes Family Mediation

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and the Milton Keynes Dons Sports and Education Trust, which works to promote active and healthy lifestyles across Milton Keynes.

He also manages clients including owner-managed businesses and UK subsidiaries providing audit, accountancy and business advisory. "When it comes to working with start-up businesses, I have a hands-on approach, guiding them through tricky growth phases," he says.

Mercer & Hole is the SET's auditor. It is one of several links the firm has with MK Dons, including being a sponsor of the club's end-of-season awards, which were presented in April, and a sponsor at MK Dons Friends of the Trust.

Sport is a major part of Gary's life away from the office. He coaches Shenley Falcons in the Milton Keynes & District Development League and his team reached the final of this year's under-14 Cup competition, with the final played at stadiummk.

"It is great that the Dons will give their pitch free for the weekend for the league finals," he says. "The club's support of the league is fabulous and for these young lads to play on a professional club's pitch is wonderful."

Separating work and home life is important, he says. But it is only when he is at pitchside encouraging his young footballers or fishing the lakes of Milton Keynes that he truly switches off.

Gary has lived and worked in Milton Keynes for 20 years.

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## Deals done

PLASTICS firm Essentra, which supplies mouldings, fibre and filter technology, has completed the purchase of Australian plastics supplier and distributor Kelvindale Products Pty. The deal by the Milton Keynes firm is for an undisclosed sum. Milton Keynes-based Blue Cherry Telecom, has bought London firm AdEPT Telecom plc.