

people watching

Rounding up the latest
appointment news from business

New directors join museum board

PROFESSIONALS from the British and Victoria & Albert Museums, business leaders and politicians are among a number of new appointments to the board of Milton Keynes Museum.

The new chair is Guy Hawking *pictured*, who previously worked for the now defunct

South East England Development Agency on inward investment to Milton Keynes. Deputy chair is Debbie Gockelen, director of business, enterprise and employability at Milton Keynes Academy. Also on the board are former British Museum curator Joe Cribb and Poppy Hollman, formerly head of touring exhibitions at the V&A.

Cllr Brian White joins Deputy Mayor Cllr Derek Eastman and Paul Collins, chair of trustees of the Cowper & Newton Museum in Olney, on the board.

Mr Hawking said: "Reinvigorating the board could not have come at a better time."

His predecessor John Hilton has become president of the company. His former deputy, Neil Loudon, is now vice-president.

Bidwells Holly Dawson *right* is among 20 promotions announced by the commercial property consultancy, becoming divisional partner at the Milton Keynes office's business space agency team.

Kirkby Diamond Senior management surveyor Geraldine Collar has joined the property consultancy from Milton Keynes Council.

Managed 24/7 The IT and telecommunications managed services provider has promoted Mark Boyer *pictured* to technical director. He joined as technical services manager in August.

PwC Ruby Parmar is the new office senior partner at PwC in Milton Keynes and the South Midlands. She succeeds Mike Robinson, who has been office senior partner for five years. Ruby *below* heads the firm's regional private business and private client practice and will lead a team of 120 staff in Central Milton Keynes.

She is spearheading PwC's support for a new Cluster Report, led by Silverstone Park asset manager and developer MEPC, into the concentration of high-performance technology and motor-sport businesses at Silverstone motor racing circuit. Ruby said: "It is an economic geography of great significance to the future of the UK economy."



Theo Chalmers

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Demolition is no answer to housing crisis

READERS may recall that in May last year I wrote about Milton Keynes Council's plans to demolish and redevelop many of our older estates, including Netherfield, Coffee Hall, Tinkers Bridge, North Bradville, Fullers Slade, The Lakes Estate and Beanhill. This was to cost in excess of £600 million and I discovered that the cost was to be funded by £70-£75 million from 'rent money' - the Housing Revenue Account for RegenerationMK. The balance would be from a private developer partner (at that time not appointed). It has been now; it is Mears Group plc.

So where is the additional £525-£530million coming from? It seemed clear; the only way to find that money was to build on every inch of our once generously proportioned estates.

The council has now admitted that any new homes built will be considerably smaller than current homes and that densities will rise from 20 homes per hectare to 35. Residents will be moved out, possibly into temporary or emergency accommodation and then moved back to newer homes months later having suffered inconvenience, educational disruption, transport problems and work issues.

But apparently there is no guarantee of that or of anything at all for that matter. After all, we are talking about active local communities here. And

who cares about them?

It seems obvious that in the event the owners do not agree to a forced, fixed-price, no-haggle, only-one-bidder sale of their home, it eventually will be purchased under a Compulsory Purchase Order. Until then, owners risk years of 'blight', unable to sell or move on with their lives, while this process slowly devours them.

There is another important point and that is to do with Parker Morris room standards. These 1961 minimum-room-size standards became mandatory for all housing built in new towns in 1967, were extended to all council housing in 1969 and were used on many of our older estates. The standards were effectively ended by the Local Government, Planning and Land Act 1980, as concerns grew over the cost of housing and public spending.

While some houses on these older estates are showing signs of age, the generosity of their living spaces and abundant storage puts a vast majority of the new homes to shame. Can these homes not be renovated rather than demolished? Many residents think so, some have done the job themselves and appear very happy in their well-proportioned homes.

Surely if the council really cared about local people and not its bottom line, it would reinstate Parker Morris room standards as a bare minimum instead of allowing new dwellings that are potentially 'future slums': Monkston Park, Broughton Gate, Broughton, Oakgrove, Grange Farm for example. I call these 'Insult Developments', where the planners and builders conspire to build homes that "are good enough for the likes of *them*". Where refuse trucks

cannot access the narrow, traffic-choked street, so vans collect sacks and discharge them into the garbage truck parked outside.

The council wishes to fund massive infilling of green spaces in our central estates by demolishing all the older housing stock, building lots of tiny new homes, bulldozing trees and building on every sward of grass. Thousands of residents will be seriously discommoded in the process and if they are lucky enough to get a new home near where they once lived, it will be tiny, densely packed and enjoy no empty green spaces.

But worry not. According to one recent report, the council's head of regeneration Kathryn Eames has confirmed they are not doing it for the money, to hit housing targets nor to turn Milton Keynes into Basingstoke, Crawley or Stevenage. Oh no. "We're doing it because people live 11 years less than those in neighbouring estates and something needs to be done".

So these people's lowered life expectancy is nothing to do with higher levels of poverty, social inequality, unemployment or living on questionably nutritious food bank handouts but because they are living in generously proportioned yet run-down housing, much of it actually council-owned?

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