

THERE IS a rather insulting song sometimes sung on football terraces. It is sung by the opposition's supporters when a team is playing appallingly. It goes like this: "You're *#! and you know you are, you're *#! and you know you are"...

Milton Keynes Development Partnership, the wholly owned subsidiary of Milton Keynes Council, is the body charged with disposal and/or management of land sold by the Homes & Communities Agency to Milton Keynes Council for £32 million in January 2013. So far they have had few successes and been oft criticised for what they have done.

Conservative Cllr Andrew Geary was leader of the council when MKDP was formed. He told a newspaper in 2015: "We set up MKDP at arm's length from the council so it could manage the asset portfolio. It was designed to bring a revenue stream to the council budget. Thus far it has failed to deliver that."

And let's not forget that, as MKDP is wholly-owned by a council, it pays absolutely no tax on any profits so it has a unique advantage over other property owners and yet is still considered by many as an abject failure. Oh dear.

Now, after seven years of apparent lethargy at MKDP, the council has advertised the position of an independent chairperson for its subsidiary. An executive who will earn £30,000 a year for working just four

days a month. Nice work if you can get it, I'm sure you'll agree.

If this lucky new striker or midfielder, to continue my football analogy, was working full time they would be on £163,132 a year.

"Back of the net, son".

MKDP's other staff costs are not inconsiderable, either. In the year to March 31 2018, staff costs were £769,000. In the year to March 31 2019 they had gone up to £967,000 - an uplift of 25.7 per cent. I wonder how that was justified.

I will admit that their published profits went up in that year too but that was mostly due to revaluations on existing properties so it did not really take any property management geniuses

to achieve that, did it?

To be even fairer, however, it appears that MKDP has tried to get more monies rolling in recently. And yet even here, as previously outlined in these pages, their approach has been at best slapdash and at worst questionably competent.

One such is their planned 4.7 acres Caldecotte Site C Development Brief showing housing, offices and possibly a hotel just west of Brickhill Street V10. MKDP knows full well that it simply must use part of that site for a link to a new bridge over the railway line which will also take land from another site it owns, a planned industrial development at South Caldecotte subsuming just over 140 acres of farmland. Eventually it

seems inevitable that MKDP will be forced to acknowledge this and then, of course, the value of its land will suffer.

In the meantime, ever unresourceful, it has totally ignored the opportunity to rent out desperately needed car parking spaces in Caldecotte Site C to workers on the Red Bull site opposite, apparently preferring to let it just sit there earning nothing.

Let's hope that the new independent chairperson for MKDP, once appointed, will spend the majority of his or her four days a month kicking the comfortably padded backsides of the MKDP colleagues.

If any help is required, my number is above.

Cheerio.

Theo Chalmers



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New chair must rise to the task

Awards set to celebrate rising stars

THE BRIGHTEST young business stars in Milton Keynes and Northamptonshire will soon have the chance to shine at a glittering awards ceremony.

The Next Generation Business Awards will recognise inspiring young people whose achievements are making an impact in their chosen business field.

The awards are run by Next Generation Chamber, created by Milton Keynes Chamber of Commerce and its sister Chamber in Northamptonshire to help businesses to support and nurture staff who are dedicated to advancing their careers. Chamber chief executive Paul Griffiths said: "Everyone who attended last year's inaugural awards was blown away by the calibre of finalists. We hope this year's awards will shine a light on our next generation of business leaders."

The deadline for entries is April 3. The winners will be announced at an awards dinner in June.

To enter and for more information, visit www.nextgenerationchamber.co.uk

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