

## **MK Futures 2050 Commission**

### **Terms of Reference**

#### **1. Commission Purpose**

The MK Futures 2050 Commission has been initiated by Milton Keynes Council to explore the emergence of Milton Keynes as a UK city and economy of increasing significance, and as it continues to grow as a place. It will reveal possibilities for the long-term, including how the city might choose to define itself.

The Commission will aim to deliver the following outcome by July 2016:

‘A view of potential longer term futures for Milton Keynes, noting the need to ensure flexibility for as yet unknown possibilities; making recommendations to the Council for their consideration in development of their medium and longer term policy framework.’

The Commission’s report will be used as the basis for Milton Keynes Council to seek the following outcomes through engagement with the Government and other relevant stakeholders to:

- re-establish MK as a project of national importance (as when the city was first designated in 1967);
- develop a framework and/or “deal” with government, business and other relevant stakeholders that will provide optimal arrangements to deliver the vision for the city’s future; and
- inform key strategies and policies, including the parallel programme of work on Plan:MK (the Council’s spatial plan).

#### **2. Commission Focus**

The Commission will consider a range of possible futures for Milton Keynes through to 2050, addressing three key questions in order to provide focus to its work:

1. What might be the role and significance of Milton Keynes as a place and economy in the region, the UK and more widely, including how it relates to other major places, cities and nearby large towns?
2. What might be the character of Milton Keynes as defined by its people, environment and culture?
3. What are the opportunities to pursue and challenges to address if we are to compete with other UK and international benchmark cities economically and in quality of life?

The Commission's process will recognise the unique character of Milton Keynes. It will ask both local people and existing and potential investors what they value about the city, as well as perceived unfavourable conditions. It will seek to challenge both positive and negative preconceptions about the city, whether held by internal or external stakeholders.

### **3. Overall role and process of the Commission**

The Commission is an advisory body that will make a report and recommendations for Milton Keynes Council to consider. The content of the final report to the Council is the decision of the Commission.

The Commission will make provision in its main meetings and through dedicated meetings to secure input from, and test its thinking and emergent recommendations with, the political leaders of Milton Keynes Council. There is a strong commitment to ensuring the Commission is transparent, and the evidence gathering process will be in public and made publicly available. In order to maintain the integrity of the process the deliberations will be a closed environment but a summary of these deliberations will be made publicly available. Dedicated arrangements will also be made to ensure that all elected members of Milton Keynes Council can feed into the process of the Commission.

Commission members will in the main be drawn from outside Milton Keynes but with strong associations to the region and city, in order to provide wider perspectives, knowledge and external challenge.

Local views, knowledge and experience will be engaged through the process of the Commission. It will take active steps to ensure the full range of MK residents and communities are able to engage, especially young people.

The Commission will also engage regional (including neighbouring councils), national and international stakeholders and seek insights from national and international benchmark cities.

The Commission's methodology will include:

- A sequence of formal meetings that will focus on specific topic areas and include input from topic specialists and those who may be requested to present evidence.
- Appointment of expert sub-committees and/or designation of individual lead Commissioners to gather and consider evidence on specific topic areas between the formal meetings.
- Open calls for evidence, comment and other contributions, including through social media.
- Workshop events, exhibitions and attendance at relevant local events.
- Assembly of a baseline evidence and information base.

- Modelling techniques to explore different potential future scenarios for the city.
- Assessment of opportunities, challenges and threats.

The Commission will have a series of formal meetings, and will be responsible for ensuring there is strong public engagement by organising specific events as part of a transparent process. Members of the public and other stakeholders will be invited to attend specific meetings. Provision will be made to engage the public and will explicitly work with elected members of Milton Keynes Council.

The Commission's report will summarise the main points of evidence produced and the key choices facing the city, with recommendations linked to the evidence and analysis. These recommendations will take account of potential future prospects for Milton Keynes, and are likely to include some where the Commission has a clear and preferred view and others where alternative courses of action are suggested for debate. It might also identify issues that require further development or thought.

#### **4. Role of Commissioners**

The Commission has considerable collective expertise but is not designed to be a representative body covering all the perspectives and possessing all the knowledge necessary to draw its conclusions. A core part of its role is to oversee a process that secures the necessary information, evidence and engagement, especially from local sources, to allow it to draw conclusions.

The Commissioners will be supported in their individual and collective roles by the Executive Team.

Commissioners are expected to:

- Retain an open mind about the Commission's outcomes during the process of gathering evidence.
- Act as a "critical friend" in reviewing evidence and contributions, seeking to tease out through questions and debate the most important points in answering the five key questions.
- Provide a range of perspectives and ensure opportunities for the contributions of others, ensuring active steps are taken to ensure the full range of MK residents, communities and Milton Keynes Council elected members can contribute, especially young people.
- Work as a team to produce and agree the Commission's recommendations.
- Attend meetings of the Commission – currently estimated at five full days and one half day. There is also the possibility of individual Commissioners leading specific pieces of work or engagement events outside the main meetings. Such additional commitments are not expected and would be by agreement only (reference attached timetable).

- Read documentation supplied by the Commission secretariat, notably any papers provided in advance of Commission meetings.
- Act as “lead” Commissioner on specific topics, by agreement.

## **5. Role of Milton Keynes Council Group Leaders**

The Leaders of the three political groups on Milton Keynes Council will attend the formal meetings of the Commission but are not full Commission members. Their attendance is to allow them to understand the emerging “story” of the Commission’s proceedings and provide input and comment as requested by the Chair at key points in the proceedings.

The Leaders will:

- Attend the three formal evidence gathering meetings of the Commission and any dedicated meetings that are established for the purpose of securing their input and sounding out findings and recommendations with them.
- Make contributions at formal meetings at appropriate points, as indicated by the Chair.
- Review and comment on draft documents produced by the Commission, as requested and provide advice on engaging with the wider body of elected members on Milton Keynes Council.

## **6. Expert Advisers**

Expert advisers will work with the Commission through two main routes:

- Working with the Executive Team to design the process and to develop evidence, data and analyses to inform the Commission’s deliberations.
- Attending individual meetings of the Commission where specific topic expertise is required.

The main expert advisers are:

- Foresight Future of Cities Team (Government Office for Science).
- Centre for Cities
- Future Cities Catapult

Specialist expertise will also be drawn from

- Open University (across various disciplines, in particular communications and community engagement)
- Cranfield University (across various disciplines)

## 7. Executive Team

The Executive Team will:

- Be led by the Council's Director of Strategy. It will provide project management, research and administrative support for the Commission and individual Commissioners.
- Include a dedicated project manager and a dedicated communications & engagement officer.
- Commission, organise and undertake, where appropriate, the gathering of evidence, attendance at meetings and any bespoke analyses required by the Commission.
- Capture the proceedings of Commission meetings and events and providing general secretariat services to the Commission and the Commissioners.
- Organise and deliver programmes of communications and public engagement activity, and act as a point of co-ordination with the Plan:MK process and engaging with the elected members of Milton Keynes Council.
- Work with the Chair and other designated contributors to draft the final report
- Manage the Commission's budget.

**END**