

Milton Keynes Community Interim Ambition Statement for university level education in Milton Keynes

Preamble

In 2009 Milton Keynes Higher Education Board adopted **2020 Vision – towards a University of Milton Keynes** as a statement of vision, values, strategic aims and high level milestones on behalf of the community. It was prepared following consultation with a wide range of community interests. The first stage of this strategy has been successfully driven by Milton Keynes College through University Centre Milton Keynes in partnership with University of Bedfordshire as lead HEI and a number of other local universities. Much has been achieved through this initiative and following a process of review undertaken with the University and the College, the Board has now refreshed this vision to reflect the rapidly changing funding landscape for higher education in England. The outcome is as set out in this **Interim Ambition Statement**. It is intended that **2020 Vision – towards a University of Milton Keynes** will be more substantially reviewed and revised over the next 12 months led by the proposed Milton Keynes University Trust in cooperation with the key local providers of university level education.

Context

Milton Keynes is already a city of over 245,000 people and is set to grow to 300,000 over the next 15 to 20 years. It does not have a local university. **The urgent establishment of a significant university presence is given high priority in the city's key economic development policies and plans** (see Annex Ai).

The Vision

Our vision is that quality locally provided university level education will be at the heart of the economic development, future growth, prosperity, culture, equality, and social cohesion of the Milton Keynes community and the South East Midlands Local Enterprise Partnership (SEMLEP) area.

Those living in Milton Keynes and its wider region should be stimulated to study at university level to both increase and widen participation, and to have access to a quality offer locally if that is their preference. Those studying in Milton Keynes should be supported in securing attractive careers in Milton Keynes as part of its knowledge based economy and encouraged to live in and to contribute to the future of Milton Keynes. Provision should be distinctive, innovative in design, flexible in delivery and relevant to the needs of the student and the community.

Businesses should be confident in investing in Milton Keynes, secure in the knowledge that there will be a local pool of talented, skilled graduates and that they will have ready access to high quality R&D expertise.

(Source 2020 Vision with minor editing)

University of Milton Keynes

The establishment of a University of Milton Keynes capable of embodying the vision, values and strategic aims outlined here is the explicit goal of the Milton Keynes community.

A University, attracting aspirational and talented students from the locality as well as from the rest of the country and overseas, will ensure that in terms of knowledge, skills and research Milton Keynes becomes one of the nation's leading cities, driving innovation, managed environmental change, and community coherence and well-being.

The city's approach is both ambitious and pragmatic. It will work incrementally with university and further education partners, the private sector and other public funding bodies to build on the experience of the past and to create the medium and long term critical mass needed to realise our vision and achieve lasting viability and sustainability.

(Source. 2020 Vision but reference to New University Challenge initiative paragraph deleted)

Core values

University level education provision core values will be based on the following cornerstones:

- quality and integrity in all that we do
- *aspiration to excellence in teaching, scholarship and research*
- inclusiveness
- the centrality of the student in determining the shape and content of the teaching provision
- *commitment to a transformational student experience*
- distinctive innovation – pedagogical, cultural, scientific and technological
- high level business/employer engagement
- environmental sustainability
- creative civic partnerships

(Source. 2020 Vision with two additions as in italics)

Milton Keynes aspires for its local university graduates and students to demonstrate more general characteristics as set out in the statement **“What kind of graduates”** (see Annex). It has also set out a statement to guide providers **“What kind of university level education providers?”** (see Annex Ai).

Teaching provision

Milton Keynes aspires to teaching provision which will be responsive to the Council's Economic Development Strategy, to business needs and to student demand – local, national and international. Ultimately a broad based provision covering all such provision is the aspiration. Priorities will be established on an on going basis as a follow up to the adoption of this Interim Ambition Statement as part of the process of review and revision of 2020 Vision.

Provision should be available at Foundation Degree, Honours Degree, and Masters and Doctorate levels, with professional recognition, where relevant, targeted to meet the needs of school/college leavers, adults and business/employer professional development.

High academic standards and quality will drive the provision and its delivery to the student. The explicit ambition is that the provision will be recognised to be sector-leading in terms of the quality of its pedagogy and innovative in its delivery.

(Source. 2020 Vision summarised and partly amended)

Research and knowledge exchange

The knowledge economy is crucial to the future of Milton Keynes and already employs some 40% of its working population. In this regard the city already benefits from the presence of the world leading distance learning Open University and nearby specialist Cranfield University each with research expertise. **The ambition is for a local university presence with an internationally recognised research capacity in niche areas that will act as a key partner in: local initiatives such as Milton Keynes Gateway and the Innovation Centre (which seek to promote skills, enterprise and innovation); civic initiatives covering such matters as Low Carbon, Smart Cities and Tele-health; regional initiatives through SEMLEP; and wider national and international initiatives relevant to the needs of Milton Keynes.**

(New but drawing on a number of existing policy documents)

Scale

The long term ambition is for the scale of university level education in Milton Keynes to be about 10,000 students. The basis for this long term ambition is that the city would then no longer be a net exporter of higher education students (about 10,000 students domiciled in Milton Keynes study at HE level somewhere in the UK at present). Ultimately it should aim to match that of other like-sized centres of population but that is looking very far ahead. For example, Leicester a city with a population of about 307,000 supports two universities each with more than 20,000 students, and a further education college with about 700 HE students. Having regard to likely national trends in the sector, the challenging financial context, and the continuing strict government student number controls for English and EU students, it is an optimistic planning assumption that Milton Keynes should have reached the milestone of 5000 HE level students studying locally (headcount) by about 2025 (excluding students resident in Milton Keynes of the national and international Open University).

(New in this form)

Estate and Facilities

The University of Milton Keynes will have a strong, inspirational, centrally-located physical presence in the city complemented by local facilities and distributed delivery to students and businesses wherever they are located using the power of modern communication and learning technologies and partnership working under the *Cloud University* model pioneered by UCMK. Taken together, the physical and distributed facilities for the delivery of higher education in Milton Keynes can be characterised as a rich learning or knowledge “habitat”. The central physical presence will act as an intellectual focus and catalyst for innovation and ideas. It will be an exemplar of environmental sustainability. It will contribute to the civic centre vision of the city and be accessible to students by maximising public transport opportunities. The Cloud University model will ensure that higher education is delivered to the students accessibly and effectively wherever they are located. It will be a practical demonstration of the University’s commitment to innovation and partnership. The estates provision will be driven by the needs of teaching and research.

(Source. MKHEB June 2011)

Milton Keynes Council Local Investment Plan is setting out the priorities for investment in infrastructure arising from planning gain and other sources to support the long term growth of the city. Higher education figures strongly in this draft Plan as it does in the earlier Milton Keynes Partnership Investment Plan 2009-2011 which it will subsume. The preamble to the draft Milton Keynes Local Investment Plan submitted on behalf of MKHEB in January 2012 reads as follows. "This Delivery Plan aims to set out a realistic but ambitious framework in which the city might develop its higher education (HE) aspirations and achieve concomitant economic benefit. The plan assumes the imperative of establishing the University College as a key developmental step and the necessity of working in close partnership with one or more universities to achieve this goal. The Knowledge Gateway concept informs the plan because of its potential to secure substantial enterprise integration, with associated economic benefits, and to optimise corporate subsidy for the development of university facilities. The plan anticipates the pivotal role of focused R&D and knowledge exchange facilities for the city, and specifically addresses the development of the Smart Cities Institute and the creation of a research facility in tele-health. While the plan, at its most ambitious, allows for some new build facilities, it does not preclude the refurbishment of existing real estate if this is demonstrated to be the most effective option. The plan incorporates an exploratory phase in which the Knowledge Gateway concept and the governance models for the University College partnerships are tested. "

(Source. MKHEB February 2012)

There are opportunities for investment in higher education infrastructure to be directly aligned with associated research and knowledge transfer activity (see above) as well as with cultural, leisure and business initiatives. It is essential these should be kept under active review by the Council and the providers of higher education. The Council's Core Strategy for the spatial development of Milton Keynes includes many potential opportunities for such synergy to be exploited and includes the willingness of the Council to modify existing planning guidance within Central Milton Keynes to assist the expansion of university activity.

Delivering the University Vision for Milton Keynes: the next phase

Milton Keynes Council, Milton Keynes Higher Education Board and Milton Keynes College have welcomed and actively supported the propositions from the University of Bedfordshire to establish University College Milton Keynes as a wholly owned subsidiary starting in September 2012 in the knowledge that Milton Keynes College (in collaboration with its HEI and professional awarding body partners) will continue to offer "HE in FE" provision. Milton Keynes will thus have the benefit of two providers of university level education in Milton Keynes with each contributing its own distinctive and complementary provision. **Collaboration between the University of Bedfordshire, an acknowledged leader in respect of student access, teaching and graduate employability, and Milton Keynes College with its commitment to access, high student satisfaction and successful record in delivering vocational higher education in collaboration with the Milton Keynes community offers a distinctive and innovative model which will capitalise on the strengths of each party**

University College Milton Keynes will lead on the development of a teaching and research university presence in Milton Keynes including a new flagship Faculty of Engineering and Technology. In parallel, Milton Keynes College will lead on the development of the "higher education in further education" ("HE in FE") model concentrating on higher level apprenticeships and selective vocational progression pathways building on the successful experience of University Centre Milton Keynes in order to widen access to higher education and to contribute to local higher skills needs. **University College Milton Keynes and Milton Keynes College have each developed their own Ambition Statements including key milestones which set out how they will help Milton Keynes achieve its vision and ambitions.**

(Source new in this form but draws on existing exchanges of letters)

June 2012