

MK 2050 Futures

Inception Meeting, 16th October 2015

1. Present:

Commissioners:

Sir Peter Gregson (Chair), Andrew Carter, Oliver Dean, Andrea Edmonds, Eleri Jones, Chris Murray, Lee Shostak, Judith Sykes, Pete Winkelman

Milton Keynes Councillors in attendance:

Pete Marland, Edith Bald, Douglas McCall

Executive Team

Geoff Snelson, Sarah Gonsalves, Anna Rose, Liz Varga, Chris Leaman

Foresight Future of Cities Team

Sir Alan Wilson, Ine Steenmans, Nick Francis

2. Introductions and Welcome

At the outset of the meeting Sir Peter Gregson, the Commission Chair, invited the Commissioners to introduce themselves and explain their particular areas of interest and expertise, including initial perspectives about Milton Keynes and thoughts on the work of the Commission.

The three political group leaders from Milton Keynes Council introduced themselves. It was noted that they would participate in the Commission's discussions at the discretion of the Chair but are not Commissioners and would not attend the meetings at which the final report and recommendations will be drafted.

The role of the Executive and Foresight Teams was explained. The Foresight Team is a national team based in the Government Office for Science and is working with towns and cities across the UK on futures projects. Their particular role is to help design the Commission's methodology and facilitate elements of the Commission's process.

3. Milton Keynes over the last 50 years

As a curtain raiser for the Commission's work on the future of Milton Keynes, Lee Shostak provided a personal reflection on the development of the city, drawing on his experience as a member of the MK Development Corporation and his recent study visits. His general view was that Milton Keynes is doing very well but could do better and must consider what it needs to do to become a great city.

Following Lee's presentation, the Commissioners took the opportunity to ask questions and offer their own views on some of the questions raised by Lee.

4. Commission overview

Geoff Snelson, the lead for the Executive Team, provided a brief overview of the Commission's work programme, including an emergent research programme that will include desk-based research, commissioned presentations and round table/workshop discussions with experts and local stakeholders, as well as gathered views from public engagement. The research topics will be defined on a rolling basis as the Commissioners do their work.

5. Scenarios workshop

The Foresight Team facilitated a brief workshop to introduce the Commission to futures thinking and to begin defining the issues that will provide the focus for its work programme. The three hypothetical scenarios had been defined for MK in 2050:

Scenario 1:

- Since 2015 growth nationally has continued to focus on London and its surrounding areas
- MK population has grown by 150,000 (60% increase)
- In 2018 Milton Keynes adopted a plan intensifying the urban core

Scenario 2:

- Since 2015 growth favoured large cities like Manchester and Birmingham who were handed many powers throughout an era of devolution
- MK population has grown by 75,000 (35% increase)
- In 2018 Milton Keynes adopted a plan developing the city fringes

Scenario 3:

- Since 2015 population growth focused within historically smaller cities such as Milton Keynes and York
- MK population has grown by 250,000 (100% increase)
- In 2018 Milton Keynes adopted a satellite development plan

Those working on each scenario were asked to write a postcard from 2050 back to the present, addressing such questions as:

- MK's role within the national system of cities and its relationship with surrounding cities are now characterised by...?
- The highest growth sector is?
- Employers see MK's strength arising from...?
- How are people moving around MK?
- People think that life in MK is...?
- People wish the following were different about MK
- If I had been responsible for MK's future in 2016 I wish I had known that.....

The meeting split into three groups to work on the scenarios and at the end all came back together to share and discuss their conclusions.

Sir Alan Wilson provided an overview and some observations, drawing on his wide experience of futures work.

6. Next steps

Geoff Snelson described the emergent work programme.

The next meeting of the Commission will be an all-day meeting on 2nd November.

Two pieces of research are being commissioned for that meeting and will form the basis for workshop discussions:

- *What makes a great city?* Arup have been commissioned to undertake this drawing on their consultancy experience of cities worldwide.
- *Benchmarking the MK economy.* Centre for Cities will review existing data about the MK economy and its wider context and consider strengths, challenges and opportunities.

A public and stakeholder engagement programme is being devised around the key emergent questions. A research proposal will be circulated for Commissioners to consider in the interim.