

Bedford Town Deal Board members and biographies

Samantha Laycock - Town Deal Chair of Board



Born and bred in Bedford, Samantha's career began in retail holding various positions as a Store Manager over ten years. In June 2007, Samantha joined the management team at the Harpur Centre in Bedford which consists of 35 retail outlets and after graduating in 2010, Samantha became the Centre Manager and also held the voluntary position of Director on the BID until she became Chair in 2016 to present day.

She is a member of the British Council of Shopping Centres (Revo) and holds various industry qualifications including IOSH, First Aid and the Diploma of Shopping Centre Management. Samantha was then voted Chair of the Town Board Deal due to her passion, experience and excellent stakeholder relationships within the town.

Dave Hodgson - Vice Chair of Board



Dave Hodgson MBE is the Elected Mayor and leader of Bedford Borough Council. He is a Liberal Democrat, and was first elected Mayor in October 2009 and re-elected in May 2019, 2015 and 2011.

As Mayor, he represents Bedford Borough on a local, regional and national basis, appoints Councillors to his Executive, and is responsible for the majority of Council services while specifically holding the portfolio for economic development amongst others. Dave has made the economic growth of the Bedford borough one of his key targets and priorities since being elected.

[Kevin Bolt MCIM – CEO, bpha](#)



Kevin has been CEO of bpha, Bedford's principal housing association with more than 10,000 homes in the area, since May 2014. He came into housing via a career in consumer goods and change management Consultancy. He has a depth and breadth of commercial experience gained working at Board level in the private and public sectors. His first experience of the Housing Sector came in 2012 when he undertook a consultancy project with bpha and he has been a passionate advocate for the volume and quality of affordable housing in Bedford ever since.

[Hilary Chipping - CEO, South East Midlands Local Enterprise Partnership \(SEMLEP\)](#)



Hilary is Chief Executive at the South East Midlands Local Enterprise Partnership (SEMLEP), which she helped to establish in 2011. She leads on setting the strategic economic priorities for the South East Midlands area, including overseeing a £265m programme of capital investment through the Local Growth Fund. During her tenure, SEMLEP has published the Local Industrial Strategy and Strategic Economic Plan for the area, Skills Plan and Energy Strategy. Hilary works closely with central Government, local authority, regional and private sector partners and the national network of Local Enterprise Partnerships to enable the delivery of infrastructure to unlock economic and housing growth, develop skills and create good quality places.

From 2008 to 2011, Hilary was Director of the Milton Keynes South Midlands Growth Area (the largest growth area in the UK).

As Director of Network Strategy at the Highways Agency from 2001 to 2007 she developed the investment strategy for the motorway and trunk road network.

Hilary graduated from the University of Manchester with an MA in economics and joined the Department of the Environment as an economist working initially on housing and then, from 1984, local government finance.

[Andrew Clarke - Head of Commercial Agency, Kirkby & Diamond Bedford](#)



Andrew has worked for over 31 years as a commercial property agent in Bedford and has headed the Bedford office of Kirkby Diamond Chartered Surveyors since 2012. Over the years he has been a multiple winner of the Estates Gazette Most Active Dealmaker for Bedfordshire and has an in depth historical knowledge of the town's commercial property sector.

[Juliet Fern - Interim Executive Dean, Faculty of Education and Sport, University of Bedfordshire](#)



Juliet Fern became the Interim Executive Dean for the Faculty of Education & Sport in September 2019. Prior to that she was Associate Dean and Head of Teacher Education in the Faculty, and is the Provider's Representative for Initial Teacher Education (ITE).

Juliet started her teaching career in Further Education, and worked at Bedford College for ten years. Whilst working in Further Education she was an Advanced Practitioner, and developed and managed a cross-college mentor programme, supporting early career teachers.

Juliet has over 25 years' experience of working within education. She started as a teacher and course co-ordinator of both undergraduate and postgraduate programmes and has been a manager of a range of education departments, leading large academic teams for over 10 years.

Juliet is the University representative on the MillionPlus Deans of Education Network. She is also Chair of Members of a Multi-Academy Trust (MAT) in Luton. She is committed to the training and development of teachers in all phases of education and in developing and enhancing partnerships.

Tim Figg



Timothy Figg is a member of the management team at Aircraft Research Association Ltd (ARA) responsible for business development. ARA is one of Bedford town centre's largest employers with 150 highly qualified staff. Located in Manton Lane, ARA is a leading independent specialist in aerodynamic research.

Tim has lived in Bedford all his life attending Bedford Modern School and has over 40 years business experience primarily in international aerospace.

Cllr Mark Fitzpatrick



Councillor Mark Fitzpatrick is Chair of Brickhill Parish Council. He has served as a parish councillor since the parish council was created in 2004. He was a Borough Councillor for eight years and a Governor of several local schools for over 20 years. Mark is a Trustee of Brickhill Community Association.

He is a Senior Project Manager for Network Rail, but is a member of the board due to his Brickhill Parish Council role.

[James Garlo](#)



James Garlo is responsible for stakeholder engagement, partnership and employment strategy for DWP across Bedfordshire.

James works closely with key partners across the county to ensure DWP's local employment and skills activity align with national Government priorities, Local Authority, LEP and stakeholder Visions, employer/sector needs and Borough-wide investment, skills and regeneration plans.

[Richard Last](#)



Richard is a partner at Brown & Lee Chartered Surveyors and for 25 years has dealt with new developments in the area and companies moving into Bedford. This background gives Richard a unique insight into what issues hold back the town and what improvements can help make things work.

[Charles Little - Director, Keen Shay Keens Chartered Accountants & Business Advisors](#)



I launched the Bedford KSK office in September 1977 and am now on my 5th and best senior management team where the average age is 36. I strongly believe in giving young people a real opportunity in business as, with the right guidance, they will be the business leaders of the future.

I live in and am “immersed” in Bedford. I love the place and all it has to offer. On the business front we are fortunate to have so many top business people willing to give some of their time to help and play a part in the town’s development.

[Tim Pain FRICS - CEO of Verve Developments Ltd](#)



Tim Pain FRICS is CEO of Verve Developments Ltd, a company engaged in property investment and regeneration and the owner of Bedford Heights.

[Elaine Midgley – Director of Bedford Creative Arts](#)



Elaine Midgley is Director of Bedford Creative Arts (BCA) and Chair of the Bedford Cultural Partnership. BCA is an Arts Council funded organisation working in socially engaged artistic practice, commissioning art projects with communities and schools.

[Philip Simpkins - Chief Executive, Bedford Borough Council](#)



I have worked continuously in local government for 43 years working in finance until being appointed Chief Executive in 2009. The last 30 years have been at Bedford Borough Council as both a district council (until 31 March 2009) and then as a unitary authority.

My experience is supported by my academic achievements whereby through examination I am a fully qualified member of the Institute of Revenues, Rating and Valuation (IRRV) and the Chartered Institute of Public Finance & Accountancy (CIPFA). In addition, I gained an MBA at the same time as supporting the Council's transformation from a district to a unitary authority.

I chair the SEMLEP Chief Executive group as well as the SEMLEP Local Fund Task Group. I have also led LGA peer reviews.

Ian Pryce CBE – Principal and Chief Executive, Bedford College



Ian Pryce has been Principal and Chief Executive of Bedford College since 1998, having joined the College in 1996 as Finance Director. He was previously a regional Finance Director at the Further Education Funding Council and has also worked as a Director or Senior Manager in retail, electricity generation and local government in Liverpool, Derbyshire, Nottingham and Northamptonshire. He is a fellow of the accountancy body CIPFA and a Syndic of the University of Cambridge. He was one of the founder members of the 157 Group, founding Chair of the Bedford Free School and was awarded a CBE in the 2011 Queen's Birthday Honours. In August 2017 the College merged with Tresham College to form The Bedford College Group.

Justin Richardson - CEO, Bedfordshire Chamber of Commerce



Justin was appointed Chief Executive at Bedfordshire Chamber of Commerce in April 2018 to spearhead an exciting period of investment and transformation at the Chamber. Having previously worked as Head of Finance & Strategic Partnerships, Justin has led on a number of local business support programmes and can draw on an extensive network to bring an insight into the current local business and economic landscape. Justin is passionate about fostering a collaborative business network and providing a platform for local businesses to connect and build meaningful long-term relationships. His remit, and that of the Chamber, is to provide a voice for business and become an enabler for local companies to grow and succeed.

Paul Wells

[Biography to follow](#)

[David Steadman - Chief Executive, The Harpur Trust](#)



With a background in the technology industry and two decades of experience in a range of charities, David Steadman joined the Harpur Trust in 2019. He now leads the £50m charity which is focused on education and supporting the community in Bedford. David is passionate about education and co-founded a successful Free School based in Barnet.

[Cllr Henry Vann](#)



Councillor Henry Vann is the Portfolio Holder for Town Centres and Planning on Bedford Borough Council, a position he has held since its creation in May 2019. He was previously Portfolio Holder for Education for six years, overseeing successful changes in school structures and replacing almost every temporary classroom in Bedford Borough with permanent classrooms. He has been a Councillor for De Parys Ward since 2011 and worked in the public affairs, creative industries and education sectors for ten years in London, now teaching in central Bedford.

[Mohammed Yasin – MP Bedford](#)



Mohammad Yasin was elected Member of Parliament for Bedford and Kempston in 2017 and retained his seat in the 2019 election. He sits on the Housing, Communities and Local Government Committee.

Yasin moved to Bedford at the age of 21 from Mirpur, Pakistan, and joined the Labour Party following involvement with trade unions in his early career, before becoming a taxi-driver. In 2006, he was elected as a councillor for Queen's Park ward in Bedford Borough Council and was re-elected in 2009, 2011 and 2015. He was Portfolio Holder on the council for Adult Services and held the roles of Deputy Speaker and Speaker of the Council.

Yasin is a proud resident of Bedford, committed to representing his constituents in Westminster to increase the resilience and progress of the towns of Bedford and Kempston. In 2019, he pledged to bring mental health beds back to Bedford Hospital, increase police funding and protect local services. In Westminster, Yasin pushes for economically sound and just policies to bring about a fairer society and is committed to combatting climate change through low emissions, sustainable energy and a green Covid-19 recovery.

Phil Wayles - Technical Director at AECOM



I have lived and worked in the Bedford area for over 30 years. During this time I have helped deliver some of the major infrastructure projects in the area, including A421 Bedford Southern Bypass and A421 Improvement to M1 J13. I've coached junior football teams for the past 15 years and I'm a governor of two local primary schools.