



**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 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.



**Tom Wootton**

***Town Deal Vice Chair of Board***

Tom Wootton is the Elected Mayor and leader of Bedford Borough Council. He is a Conservative and was elected Mayor in May 2023.

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.

Prior to his election as Mayor, he served on Bedford Borough Council as Councillor for the Wyboston ward.

Tom lives in Ravensden where he manages the family's farm, following a family farming tradition in Bedfordshire that stretches back hundreds of years.





**Richard Hill**

*Chief Executive, bpha*

Richard joined bpha as CEO in May 2023. His passion for housing has seen him hold leadership roles in the sector for nearly 20 years. He joined bpha from One Housing, where he had been CEO for over five years.

Prior to this, Richard was CEO at Spectrum Housing and has held senior leadership roles at the Homes and Communities Agency and the Housing Corporation. Richard is also the non-executive Chair of drugs and alcohol rehabilitation charity, Phoenix Futures.



**Hilary Chipping**

*Consultant*

Hilary was Chief Executive at the South East Midlands Local Enterprise Partnership (SEMLEP), which she helped to establish in 2011. She led on setting the strategic economic priorities for the South East Midlands area.

During her tenure, SEMLEP published the Local Industrial Strategy and Strategic Economic Plan for the area, Local Skills Report and Energy Strategy.



**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.



**Melanie Banks**

*Deputy Chief Executive Officer, Bedford Hospital*

Melanie is Director of Redevelopment and Strategic Planning, with overall responsibility for delivering a range of projects on both sites.



**Mark Fitzpatrick**

*Chair of Brickhill Parish Council*

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.



**Juliet Fern**

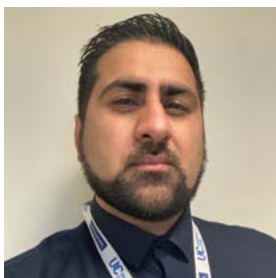
***Interim Executive Dean, Faculty of Education and Sport, University of Bedfordshire***

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.



**James Garlo**

***Partnership Manager, Bedfordshire DWP***

Responsible for stakeholder engagement, partnership and employment strategy at the Department for Work and Pensions (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.





**Patrick Harnan**

*Awaiting Bio*



**Elaine Midgley**

*Director, Bedford Creative Arts*

Elaine is Director of Bedford Creative Arts where she leads a team of staff, artists and freelancers that enable BCA to manage and deliver its diverse community-based programme of arts projects and activities. Elaine is an experienced arts manager with expertise in fundraising, event management, arts development, and theatre.

Prior to working at BCA she worked in youth & professional touring theatre, local authority arts development, and large-scale live event management including overseeing events such as the Cambridge visits of the Olympic Torch Relay and the Tour de France. She is Chair of the Bedford Cultural Partnership, a consortium of Bedford arts & cultural organisations.



**Tim Pain**

*CEO, 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.



**Laura Church**

*Chief Executive, Bedford Borough Council*

Laura Church, was appointed in October 2021. Laura is the Council's principal policy advisor to its directly elected Mayor and 46 councillors.

As the statutory Head of Paid Service, she is accountable for a budget of £370 million and the work of approximately 2,500 employees who deliver a wide range of services to the community.

She is 'on call', particularly to cover civil contingency and emergency management requirements. Laura is also the appointed Returning Officer for national and local elections for which she receives the appropriate fees.



**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 several 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.





## Yiannis Koursis OBE

### *Group Chief Executive Officer*

Yiannis has over 26 years of senior leadership experience both in the private sector and in Further Education colleges across the UK. Before entering the Further Education world, his early career was spent in managing Hotels for National and multinational companies. In 2005 he moved out of the profession to work in Further Education in a variety of roles before moving into Senior Leadership during his time in London.

He joined The Bedford College Group (TBCG) in November 2023. Before joining TBCG, Yiannis was CEO at Barnsley College. Under Yiannis' leadership, Barnsley College received an Outstanding rating from Ofsted and is a National Association of Colleges Beacon Award winner.

Yiannis is active in a range of networks, and strategic groups and has extensive non-executive experience both regionally and nationally. He is a Regional Councillor at the CBI, a Chartered Manager and a Fellow of the Chartered Institute of Management, a member of the Lifelong Learning Institute advisory group and a Fellow of the Royal Society of Arts. He also sits as a Board Member of the Bedford Town Deal Board, is a board member of the Associations of Colleges 2030 strategy board, and is a member of the British Computing Society Schools & Colleges Committee. Through partnership, he has experience in bringing people together and inspiring meaningful results for all stakeholders.

Yiannis was awarded an OBE in the Birthday's Honours in June 2022 for services to Further Education.

He is dedicated to supporting students and colleagues in realising their potential and committed to strengthening links which enable the achievement of inclusive growth in the community and across the region.





**Peter Wells**

*Chief Executive, Wells & Co*

Wells & Co are an independent, family-owned business based in the heart of Bedfordshire. Since 1876 they have been focused on two things: running great pubs and making great beer.

Customers can look to visit their new brewery and discover their estate of almost 200 pubs across England and France.



**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.





**Andrea Spice**

***Councillor / Portfolio Holder for Town Centre,  
Bedford Borough Council***

Andrea ran as the Conservative candidates for the new Ward of Wixams and Wilstead – she was successfully selected to represent the ward in the 2023 Borough elections.

Andrea's number one goal is to understand and improve the lives of, not only residents in her Ward, but all people across Bedford Borough.

By working with her fellow Councillors, the Mayor and Borough Officers, Andrea aims to improve Bedford Borough by building an attractive location for work, play, leisure and to raise a family for generations to come.

After successfully becoming a Borough Councillor during the 2023 elections, Andrea was selected as the Portfolio Holder for Town Centres and Planning.



**Mohammed Yasin MP**

***Member of Parliament***

Mohammed was elected as a councillor for Queens Park ward in Bedford Borough Council in 2006. Yasin was re-elected in 2009 and 2015.

Upon being elected to Parliament, he continued to serve as a Bedford Borough Councillor until the 2019 local elections where he stood down.

He was the Portfolio Holder on the Council for Adult Services.



**Phil Wayles**

*Technical Director, AECOM*

Phil has lived and worked in the Bedford area for over 30 years. During this time he has helped deliver some of the major infrastructure projects in the area, including A421 Bedford Southern Bypass and A421 Improvement to M1 J13.

He has also coached junior football teams for the past 15 years and is a governor of two local primary schools.

