

# 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 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** **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 has 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.

**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.

**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**

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.

**Elaine Midgley**

Director

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**

Tim Pain FRICS: 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.



**Pat Jones**

Bedford College

Pat joined as Executive Director of Finance in 2013 having worked in a range of public sector organisations. She is accountable to the Corporation Board for the Group's Estate and has responsibility for maintaining the Group's outstanding financial health grade. Pat's specialisms include Leadership and Management, Identification and Application of Funding Streams as well as leading the Group in new ventures and developments.

**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.



**Peter Wells**

Chief Executive, Wells & Co.

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

Customers can look to visit their new brewery, 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**

Mohammed was elected as a councillor for Queen's 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 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.

