

**A EUROPEAN/INTERNATIONAL POLICY AND STRATEGY
FOR MILTON KEYNES COUNCIL**

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Introduction

One of the **distinguishing features of Milton Keynes** is the extent of its international links. Many international businesses have been attracted to the borough as it has developed. Partly as a result of that there is a diverse population with many international links. For example one in 13 of the population were born outside of the United Kingdom. There is a broad ethnic mix in the population. Most schools and many youth groups have international interests. There are many other cultural, educational and social links with other countries.

The **Council's corporate aims** are to:

- work in partnership for the benefit of everyone in Milton Keynes
- to be an open, accessible and consultative organisation
- to tackle disadvantage and promote equality
- to promote a healthy and sustainable environment
- to develop excellence, efficiency and effectiveness across all services

Given the international links within the borough, the Council is committed to making the most of these to help it deliver its services more effectively. Our policy therefore arises from our commitment to the community and the context within which it is set.

We believe our services can be enhanced by ensuring there is some coherence to our European and international contacts and activities and the strategy is an attempt to develop this coherence from existing diversity:

Milton Keynes Council's policy towards its European and international activity is to enhance the Council's effectiveness by working in partnership to increase:

- **funding and economic well-being,**
- **the flow of information and understanding, and**
- **mutually beneficial influences**

through European and international activity.

To deliver this policy a three year strategy is outlined that identifies aims, objectives and methods of working. It is based on the local, national and international context of the area and on the services that the Council delivers or can influence. It has been developed in partnership with the community .

We welcome comments on the policy, the strategy and on any omissions. If you have any comments, please contact Deborah Cooper, Economy and Learning Manager, Saxon Court, 501 Avebury Blvd, Milton Keynes MK9 3HJ Tel: 01908-253306, Email address: Deborah.Cooper@milton-keynes.gov.uk.

The local, national and international context for the strategy

The local context for the strategy

Although this is the first time that Milton Keynes Council has had a strategy that covers all of its services as a unitary authority, it builds on the European Strategy inherited from the Borough Council.

Milton Keynes Council has been a unitary authority since April 1997 and provides a wide range of services. The Council also has an influence on many other services through its partnership activities. International work either already influences them in a range of ways or could do so in the future. To try and develop a structure for this diverse range of activity we have divided the Council's activity and the existing international links into five areas. Below are those areas of activity and some examples of existing links and the Council services they link to. Until now there has not been a single strategy to develop any coherence between this very diverse range of activities.

Examples of existing international activity with MK Council

Nature of activity and link to Council policy <i>(Council policy extract in italics)</i>	Which Council service or partnership activity	Example of current international activity
Educational/cultural i.e. to further the understanding of people in one area about the people in another area <i>'to enhance the Council's effectiveness by working in partnership to increase...</i> • <i>the flow of information and understanding'</i>	Education and Early Years	Ousedale School has a long-standing exchange programme with a school in India. Many schools have language links with European schools.
	Youth Service	There have been links and visits to many countries including USA and St Vincent
	Arts and Museums	The Service has provided support for many international performances and artist exchange programmes, including...
Economic/financial i.e. so that groups in one area can benefit from links and funding that will enhance the economic viability of another area	Economic Development	The Competitive Bidding Unit provides advice to Council services and to community partners about funding available from the European Community to develop services

<p><i>'to enhance the Council's effectiveness by working in partnership to increase</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>• funding and economic well-being'</i> 	Economic Development	The Competitive Bidding Unit helps to develop links with towns and regions in other countries that will enable the Council and partners to bid for European funding where an international partner is necessary.
	Economic Development	The Council works in partnership with Invest in Milton Keynes (IMK). IMK develops links with companies from other countries to encourage inward investment.
	Tourism Development	Variety of activities to support international visitors to come to Milton Keynes.
<p>Social development /recreational i.e. so that people in one area can work in partnership to develop social links with another area</p> <p><i>'to enhance the Council's effectiveness by working in partnership to increase...</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>• the flow of information and understanding'</i> 	Milton Keynes Council Sports and Social Club	The club has continued the long established link with Bernkastel-Wittlich
	Wavendon and Sherington Parish Councils	These two villages have formal twinning agreements with villages in France.
	Sports Development	Supports international sporting events in MK
<p>Governance/ management i.e. so that groups can learn from patterns of governance and management in one country that will help the other to be more effective</p>	Milton Keynes Council	During the visit from members and officers from Almere, Netherlands, a seminar was held to discuss different patterns of local authority governance.
<p><i>'to enhance the Council's effectiveness by working in partnership to increase...</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>• mutually beneficial influences'</i> 	Environment Directorate	European funding is enabling a link between new towns in Europe to discuss planning. (Interreg IIC)
<p>Ethical/Spiritual i.e. so that people in one area can share views about ethical issues with people in another area</p>	Milton Keynes International Partnership Association (MKIPA)	MKIPA have acted as a forum for groups interested in international links to promote a better understanding of international issues in Milton Keynes with Council support for several years.

<i>'to enhance the Council's effectiveness by working in partnership to increase... mutually beneficial influences'</i>	Environment Directorate Purchasing Dept.	The Environmental Purchasing Policy is informed by Agenda 21 and includes reference to international issues - e.g. in relation to fairly traded catering supplies.
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National and international influences and their impact on the work of the Council

There are a range of influences that make it important for the Council to develop a strategic approach to international activity. These are listed below.

Influences that impact on the Council

	Influence	Impact on MK
Economic/ financial	There are increasingly global markets for exports	MK has many companies operating in international markets and so the Council needs to understand how global markets impact on existing companies and the potential for new investors in MK
	There is continued economic volatility in some parts of the world	As above
	International tourism, social and business related, are important economic activities for all communities	In Milton Keynes many visitors are from the business community or visiting friends and relatives. This could be further developed because of the area's good national road and rail links.
Educational/ cultural	Increasingly governments are comparing educational standards across countries to establish successful education systems	MK has many organisations moving in to the area who will also be interested in the comparative success of the educational attainments of the people of MK
	The growing ease of international communications means that educators and other professionals can compare systems in countries and develop good practice	MK already has some links across the world
	Links between learners in different countries through exchange visits and written links form an important part of learning opportunities	MK schools and youth groups have extensive links, some directly linked to the national curriculum and others to a broader social curriculum

	European funding forms an important part of the income that supports developments across the community	The Council has officers to support income generation from Europe and this may have further potential as links in Europe and beyond are extended
	The enlargement of Europe and changes to Structural Funds will affect all members of the European Community	MK Council will need to watch the changes and be prepared for them
	The introduction of the Euro will affect all countries in Europe	The Council and its businesses will have to be ready for changes
Social development/recreational	There has, since the Second World War, been a strong emphasis in Europe towards formal and informal twinning as a social activity to develop better connections between countries	Sherington and Wavendon have twinning arrangements. There is a long-standing link with Bernkastel-Wittlich in Germany.
	There is a renewed interest in twinning or other links to develop the notion of European citizenship	This has been developed through education and youth activity more than as a social activity in MK
	Developing social links between communities has been used in other areas as an important part of community development, e.g. between groups from ethnic minorities and communities in a mother country	This could have value in MK
Governance/Management	Local and national governments are showing an increased interest in sharing information about systems both as 'north-south' and 'east-west' links.	There could be interesting links for MK , but none have been promoted by the Council to date
	There is Government funding for support for Eastern European countries wishing to join the European Community to develop local government structures	There could be interesting links for MK , but none have been promoted by the Council to date, though individual members have made visits

Ethical/spiritual	Churches and other community groups show an interest in ensuring there are links with other countries that help people in this country to develop an understanding of the broad ethical issues of connections between countries	Several churches and groups in MK are active in this area
	The activities of Councils have an impact across the world as Agenda 21 has	Milton Keynes has committed itself to sustainable policies and these affect all

	outlined	aspects of its work.
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Strategic aims and objectives

Milton Keynes Council's policy is to enhance the Council's effectiveness by working in partnership to increase

- funding and economic well-being,
- the flow of information and understanding, and
- mutually beneficial influences

through European and international activity.

The strategic aims echo the Council's policy. They are:

- 1. To support activities that will enhance the funding available to Milton Keynes and the economic well-being of the area**
- 2. To support activities that will develop the flow of information and understanding among the people of the borough**
- 3. To support activities that will ensure mutually beneficial influences between Milton Keynes and other areas**
- 4. To work in partnership and to encourage partnership between others.**

In the list below, continuing or existing strategies are indicated by C in the final column and developments are indicated by D.

	Objective/action	Council Service	C/D
1. To support activities that will enhance the funding available to Milton Keynes and the economic well-being of the area			
1.1	Provide advice to Council services partners about funding available from the European Union that will enhance the services offered in line with strategic plans	Economic Development	C
1.2	Provide advice to community partners about European funding that will enhance services offered	Economic Development	C
1.3	Develop contacts with towns and organisations in Europe and beyond to enable funding bids to be made	Economic Development	C
1.4	Support Invest in Milton Keynes (IMK) and other community partners in making links with businesses abroad who wish to invest in Milton Keynes	Economic Development	C
1.5	Develop links through partnerships in Milton Keynes with communities in Europe and beyond to enhance markets for Milton Keynes exports.	Economic Development	D

1.6	Ensure the Council has a co-ordinated approach to the introduction of the Euro	Treasurer	D
1.7	Investigate ways in which international contacts can enhance the visits to Milton Keynes by those from other countries.	Tourism Development	C
2. To support activities that will develop the flow of information and understanding among the people of the borough			
2.1	Support and monitor links between MK Schools and communities abroad	Education and Early Years	C
2.2	Support and monitor links between the Youth Service and communities abroad	Youth Service	C
2.3	Support and develop international cultural exchange	Arts and Museums	C
2.4	Support activities that enhance the understanding of the EC by people in MK specially the local economy	All - especially Economy & Learning	C
2.5	Support communities who are or wish to develop international links for social reasons	Community Development	D
3. To support activities that will ensure mutually beneficial influences between Milton Keynes and other areas			
3.1	Support projects that enable exchanges of information between Milton Keynes Council and/or community partners and equivalent bodies in other countries to influence activity in MK.	All - but funding co-ordinated by Ec. Dev.	C
3.2	Develop opportunities to share knowledge MK has with other countries including Eastern Europe	All - but co-ordinated by Economy & LLL	D
3.3	Implement the Council's Environmental Strategy (including the Environmental Partnership Policy), and others in line with Agenda 21 commitments.	Environment	C
4. To work in partnership and to encourage partnership between others to develop and monitor coherent activity			
4.1	Co-ordinate an internal officer group to share information about European/International issues	Economic Development	D

4.2	Work in partnership with MKIPA and others to establish an MK-wide approach to contacts with Europe and other countries.	Economy & LLL	C
4.3	Monitor and report on this strategy and other developments	Economy & LLL	D
4.4	Develop criteria for the Council's links with other communities/countries, based on this policy and strategy	Economy & LLL	D

Quality Assurance and Monitoring

This strategy will be monitored by the European/International Sub-Committee of the Economy and Lifelong Learning Committee. An annual report will be produced documenting progress in the implementation of the Strategy.