

Plans to spruce up CMK

Central Milton Keynes is one of the busiest parts of the city. The Town Council has been working alongside ward councillors, MyMK, CMK Green Gym and other community groups to keep the area looking tidy, however, this has not addressed the way the infrastructure has degraded in recent years. We have recently been in discussion with MK Council regarding this issue, and are pleased to say that additional resources have been allocated to the area to return it to the way it was.

This is not a short term project, but lots has already been done, and more improvements will be seen in the coming months. Faded benches, parapets and roadside railings are all being given attention. In 2014, many benches and bollards throughout the centre were painted in the colours of the Rugby World Cup (pinks and blues). MK Council is also now working to repaint all of these to the standard glossy black seen across all of CMK, and that is how the benches should remain.

Additionally, a tree survey has taken place in CMK, and recent results show that many trees are in poor condition due to damage caused by the original tree pits. Hundreds of trees have since been given a 'crown lift' and pruning for the first time in over a decade, giving them a better chance to thrive. This is a welcome temporary fix; there will eventually be new tree pits made to replace the unsuitable ones, and we will work with MK Council to ensure that this solution is delivered to preserve the long-term future of the trees in CMK.

In addition, work is ongoing to improve the look of boulevards and downpasses, which can prove difficult to maintain as it is fertile land for weeds and moss. MK Council's landscaping team has been clearing these areas by hand and it has made a great difference. We have also seen improvements to the setts on bridges (as seen in the photos below).

Town Council Chair, David Stabler, says: "This work forms part of a lengthy project to prioritise maintenance of the bustling city centre, and great work has been done already. The Town Council will be working with MK Council on how else to improve the area to ensure it remains an attractive place to live and work in the years to come."

Residents are invited to share their feedback on ways to spruce up CMK by emailing Paul Cranfield, CMK Town Council Clerk, at clerk@cmktowncouncil.gov.uk.

▼ Before cleaning



▼ After cleaning



MAKEOVER FOR MIDSUMMER PLACE

The atrium of Midsummer Place will soon be transformed from a cluttered and uninviting space to somewhere that is sleek and welcoming. The owners of the shopping centre have unveiled their makeover plans which include cosmetic changes to the existing food units, as well as four new food and beverage 'pods' to replace the existing kiosks housed within the space.



At the minute, people don't tend to use the atrium as a place to sit and relax - it is just used for walking to and from the shopping centres. However, it is hoped that the improvements will make the space somewhere that friends and family can gather. There will be improved seating including tables, chairs and benches, and the tree boxes will be moved to make the space look more inviting.

Going forward, we can also expect to see more events happening there. This could range from live music, dance, theatre and children's craft activities, to community arts. The Town Council looks forward to seeing the plans come to life when, subject to planning approval, work starts in the autumn to complete by Christmas.



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COULD YOUR ORGANISATION BENEFIT FROM A PARISH GRANT?

Each year, the Town Council provides parish grants to projects that benefit local residents - just like the YMCA's defibrillator. The grants can be used for various initiatives including supporting local events and groups, for landscaping and play areas, and improving community cohesion. If you know of a CMK-based voluntary initiative, why not take a look at the grants policy and application form online at www.cmktowncouncil.gov.uk. Please note that the grant pot is limited and not all applications will be granted.

PHONE MAST REJECTED

We are pleased that MK Council's planning officers have agreed with residents and the Town Council by denying permission for an 18-metre phone mast to be located close to residents and Campbell Park. The location, by Enmore Roundabout West, was viewed as being insensitive and would have dominated the character and amenity of the area and the adjacent listed park.

REDUCE THE RISK OF RATS

Work is currently underway to tackle the rat population around North Row. We hope that this work by MK Council will prove effective, but in the meantime there are steps you can take to reduce the risk of rats. We produced a handy guide on how to deal with rats a few years back, and it is included again with this newsletter.

You can also find a digital copy on our website.



Parish grant helps fund life-saving defibrillator

Last year, CMK Town Council provided the YMCA with £500 to go towards funding a life-saving defibrillator as part of the community grant scheme, and we are pleased that the device has now been installed.

Defibrillators are crucial in trying to save the life of somebody suffering a cardiac arrest. The defibrillator is located by the YMCA's reception on North Sixth Street, which is always open. It can be unlocked when provided with a code by a 999 call operator who will also give instructions on how to deliver life-saving shocks.

Town Councillor Mary Moore said: "The Town Council provides grants for lots of community initiatives each year, and I'm thrilled that we could help fund something as vital as a defibrillator for the YMCA. This will be a true asset to the community."

The YMCA has expressed its thanks to the Town Council for part-funding the device. Pennie Kennedy, Housing Manager at the YMCA, added: "With over 200 residents, 50 staff, visitors and customers at HomeGround, an on-site defibrillator could very well save a life. Our campus is staffed 24/7 making the defibrillator accessible to local residents also."



In addition, CMK Town Council has provided funding to install another defibrillator at Sports Central along Elder Gate. This grant also allows MK College, which runs Sports Central, to purchase 'bleed kits' in case of emergencies. We hope to provide an update on this in the next newsletter.

Crackdown on anti-social car cruisers

CMK residents will no doubt be aware of the regular car meets at The Quadrant car park along Elder Gate. These meet-ups attract car cruisers who often drive dangerously and anti-socially.

Work is ongoing to tackle anti-social behaviour at the meets; there is a Public Spaces Protection Order (PSPO) in place prohibiting this kind of behaviour, and a mobile CCTV camera can identify drivers who speed throughout CMK. Thames Valley Police also conduct regular patrols, and this approach appears to be

working. In just two months, two arrests were made, two vehicles were seized, nine people were informed of an intention to prosecute them for offences and 21 tickets were issued.

"Car cruise events are a real concern for the local community and often lead to a spike in anti-social behaviour," says Inspector Lee Brace from the Milton Keynes neighbourhood team, "Whilst not all those who attend these events are dangerous or anti-social drivers, these meets seem to attract this sort of behaviour."



The police force has also stressed the importance of cameras to catch offenders, with Inspector Bruce adding: "We cannot always respond to all incidents on the night so reviewing camera footage helps us to identify offences after the event and ensure that action is taken."

If you would like to report anti-social car cruising or dangerous driving then you can call TVP on 101 or visit their website. In an emergency, call 999.

Are the Police doing enough to combat car cruisers? Let us know your thoughts at clerk@cmktowncouncil.gov.uk

Could a shiny new hotel replace Cotswold Outdoor?

A planning application has been submitted for a large new contemporary hotel to be built in the place of Cotswold Outdoor along Elder Gate. The large outdoor recreation retailer will soon move out of the building, meaning the site and neighbouring car park will be available for redevelopment. A prospective developer has lodged a planning application with MK Council for an 187-bed, eight-storey hotel to be built over 82,000 square feet. They also want to introduce 68 parking spaces, 42 cycle spaces and create an inclusive public realm by way of a large garden complete with public art and seating.



According to the developer, the potential hotel’s design has been created with CMK’s architecture in mind to blend in with the surrounding area. Prior to the pandemic, the Town Council was asked for advice on how the scheme should progress and we suggested using simple brickwork to complement nearby CMK buildings such as Victoria House. The developer decided to proceed with a brickwork facade which we believe is the best approach, rather than the metal cladding initially suggested.

already seen in CMK, and I’m pleased that the developer has taken our suggestions on board.”

Councillor Andy Thomas, Chair of the Planning Committee, said: “Thousands of people drive past this site every day so it’s crucial that any future development reflects the cohesive design principles

The Town Council welcomes developments that enhance the character of CMK while bringing benefit to the community, and we will keep you updated as matters progress.

Town Council voices your concerns about wheelie bin switch

In September, CMK Town Council met with officers from MK Council for a walkabout in CMK to raise concerns about the upcoming switch from rubbish sacks to four wheeled bins. These plans will come into effect from Autumn 2023 and will be rolled out to all eligible households across the city (estimated to be nine in ten properties). Since the announcement of the switch, residents and the Town Council have questioned how it would work in CMK, especially as most people live in

townhouses or apartments that don’t have space for four large bins.

It seems that the rollout in CMK will work on a case-by-case basis, with some properties continuing with their current arrangements or even something bespoke. For example, office to residential conversions that use ‘eurobins’ could continue to use these and properties that have no easy storage or access (such as some on South Row) could keep using plastic sacks. If some

properties are eligible for wheeled bins, such as Avebury Boulevard, but have a front entrance facing the boulevard then it is hoped that screening could be introduced to hide the stored bins from passers-by.

Work is underway to identify what properties are unsuitable for the wheeled bins, and all CMK households will receive a letter next summer advising them of their waste collection option. If you are then unhappy with the option for your property

there will be regular discussions held once the scheme is in place, so residents will be able to raise concerns if bins are being left out or they are causing a nuisance, or if the solution proposed for the property is simply not workable.

The Town Council will keep you updated with information on the switch, but in the meantime, there are FAQs at www.milton-keynes.gov.uk/wheeled-bins.



Campbell Park events a 'huge success'



Campbell Park was the place to be this summer, with people travelling from across the city and beyond to enjoy festivals, concerts and other events. The Parks Trust and event organisers transformed the Grade II listed park and its amphitheatre into a large-scale concert venue complete with dozens of food vendors, bars and even a VIP area on platforms hidden among the trees.

There were events most weekends between July and September, with headliners including Rag n Bone Man, Paloma Faith, Craig David and STEPS. Larger day-long festivals drew crowds from across the country; thousands of people descended upon the park to watch reggae icons like Damian Marley and Shaggy at the Milton Keynes Reggae Festival, and there was a real buzz at Milton Keynes Pride. Local families also enjoyed MK Playday (pictured), a free event that

had activities and entertainment for children. The events have been hailed a huge success, especially as COVID-19 restrictions halted live performances for so long.

Throughout the summer, The Parks Trust engaged with residents living nearby in order to mitigate the events' impact. A spokesperson for The Parks Trust said: "The Parks Trust and third-party event organisers took great care to ensure that the needs of the park and our neighbours were given priority.

"We worked on ways to mitigate against potential issues like parking, noise, litter and how to protect the landscape. Any issues were responded to very quickly and, overall, we are really pleased with how the events have run to date. We are always open to feedback from local residents and can be reached at events@theparkstrust.com."

Extra pavilion parking gets the go-ahead

Plans to add more car parking spaces on the edge of Campbell Park have been approved by MK Council. In June, planning officers met to discuss The Parks Trust's proposals for 51 additional 'hard' parking spaces beside the pavilion.

The Town Council objected to these plans, with Councillor Andy Thomas (Chair of Planning) requesting they consider using 'grasscrete' for the spaces rather than unsightly golden gravel to protect the area's appearance. We also raised concerns about the need for additional parking in the first place, despite there being no additional development. However, the application has been approved as it stands, aside from the number of car parking spaces



being reduced from 51 to 44. The Town Council welcomes the reduction in car parking spaces, but still believes that 'hard' spaces could severely impact the beautiful landscape.

Another sculpture for Campbell Park

There are currently 11 public art pieces scattered across Campbell Park, and soon there will be 12. The Parks Trust are planning



to move Leda and the Swan from Willen Lake to the city centre park. This sculpture was gifted to the local charity in 1992 and we're pleased that it will soon be enjoyed by CMK's visitors and residents alike.

The Parks Trust have said that it will be installed in a 'suitable location' soon and we hope to share some photos of it in situ in the next newsletter!

www.cmktowncouncil.gov.uk



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