

CMK Life

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CMK Town Council Newsletter | Winter 2023/24

Unity Place officially opens in CMK



The newest addition to CMK's business district, Unity Place, has officially opened its doors. Aside from being Santander's main offices and the city's bank branch, the building also offers retail, dining and event spaces for everyone to use.

The ground floor is open to the public, and is home to the Urban Food Market. The food market is a mix of local and original street food vendors, and proves popular with city centre workers. Also on the ground floor is Santander's Work Cafe, a free co-working space coupled with private meeting rooms that anybody can use during

the week. Next to it is Change Please Coffee, a social enterprise where all profits go towards helping those who experience homelessness back into employment. Upstairs, on the seventh floor, is Unity Sky Lounge - a sky bar that is open for drinks and food from Tuesday to Friday evenings.

In 2024, there will be further additions to Unity Place including Punjabi and South Indian restaurant Dipna Anand Kitchen and Bar, a bakery, and an on-site microbrewery



that turns any leftover bread into beer. The innovation continues with The Corner Store, where you can buy groceries and essentials using 'frictionless shopping'. Essentially, this new shopping experience uses cameras and AI technology to track what items you add to your basket and bills them to your account when you leave the shop - all without need for queues or a checkout. This shop will be open from 8am to 10pm Monday to Saturday, and from 9am to 3pm on Sundays making it convenient for top ups of the essentials.

We are also looking forward to the Community Hall opening, which is a free-to-book space for local charities and

community groups. It has its own external entrance and exit, toilets and kitchenette, meaning it will be a great space for organisations in CMK to use.

Unity Place itself complements the city's sustainability aims, as the

building boasts eco-friendly technologies ranging from rainwater flushed toilets to hundreds of solar panels powering the building. Although in its infancy, Unity Place has quickly become popular with CMK residents and we anticipate that this will only continue into 2024.

CMK residents benefit from FREE money-saving advice sessions

The cost-of-living crisis continues to impact people living in CMK, whether it be skyrocketing bills or expensive food shops. That is why last year, the Town Council announced it would be funding an initiative where CMK residents can access free face-to-face sessions with Citizens Advice MK caseworkers.

Since launching in June, dozens of local residents have benefited from the fortnightly sessions held at The Skills Centre in the centre.mk. Citizens Advice MK has advised on hundreds of issues ranging from accessing benefits and universal credit, help with housing and homelessness, tackling debt, and rights at work.

Following the sessions, over £93,000 has been claimed in successful benefit awards, £11,000 of personal debt has been managed and written off, and advisors have applied for many

charitable or hardship grants for residents. Fuel vouchers have also been distributed to those who cannot afford to top up their prepayment meter.

Town Council Chair, David Stabler, said: "With so many different grants and benefits out there, it can be hard to know what support you could be entitled to. These Town Council-funded advice sessions have helped so many people access vital support already, and we look forward to continuing the work into 2024."

The free service is for CMK residents only. You can book an appointment by visiting miltonkeynescab.org.uk/milton-keynes-parish-council



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Changes to Campbell Wharf proposals

There have been some changes to development plans at Campbell Wharf. Developers Crest Nicholson hoped to build nearly 300 high-rise flats on the northside of Campbell Wharf, but the Town Council objected to the plans citing its unsuitability and not having sufficient parking or affordable housing provision. This scheme was refused by the City Council, and Crest Nicholson has now reverted to its original scheme to build 34 mews and townhouses along the canal instead. Residents living in the south side of Campbell Wharf had raised concerns that the high-rise apartments would have a negative impact on the look of the area.

MK Can

In October the Town Council took part in MK Can, a world record attempt for the longest line of food cans. We joined hundreds of businesses, church and faith groups, schools and community members and created a 10km line throughout Campbell Park. We're thrilled that Milton Keynes absolutely smashed the world record by collecting 102,447 cans! This will provide more than half of the canned food that MK Food Bank needs for an entire year, so the charity can continue to help thousands of families this winter.



The New City Plan

Milton Keynes City Council has started work on its New City Plan, an important planning document that will help shape the city's long term vision called the 'Strategy for 2050'. The local plan will aim to set out the framework for future development, and will look ahead at key issues such as housing, infrastructure, climate change and how neighbourhoods could be improved for future generations.

The work will replace the previous Plan:MK. Whilst the direction of travel of the Plan as it relates to CMK will not be known for some time, a whole section will focus on CMK and its role within MK going forward. Whether the recommendations are felt to be a positive move or not, we will have to wait and see.



Town Council Chair of Planning, Andrew Thomas, said: "The Town Council welcomes the news that CMK will be a key feature of the New City Plan. However, until the detail is available for consideration, the impact of the Plan on issues such as high-rise buildings in CMK will remain of concern. We recently met with City Council planning officers to discuss the issues facing CMK, and this work will continue while the New City Plan is developed."

There is currently an informal consultation phase of the New City Plan, asking people what they like and dislike about living in their neighbourhood. This could be anything from access to local facilities, how easy it is to take children to school, and what things you would like improved. You can have your say on the New City Plan by visiting: <https://mknewcityplan.commonplace.is/>

Once the New City Plan is adopted, revisions to CMK Alliance Plan (a document produced by the Town Council and partners) will be required to bring it into line with the New City Plan and national planning policy which is current at that time.

We will keep you updated on this as things develop.

Sustainability and safety among priorities for MyMiltonKeynes' new CEO

MyMiltonKeynes, the non-profit organisation which runs the CMK Business Improvement District (BID), has appointed a new Chief Executive. Jill Farnsworth joins MyMiltonKeynes BID having worked at Watford BID since 2014, and is passionate about the value that BIDs bring to areas.

BIDs are funded by businesses within the area and provide additional or improved services identified by the businesses that they represent. This could include boosting tourism, improving safety, or making the area more attractive to ultimately increase visitor numbers.

MyMiltonKeynes has recently fronted local projects including the Christmas lights and switch-on events, improved landscaping of pathways, and launched crime and safety initiatives. This is expected to all continue under Jill Farnsworth, with some new priorities on the agenda. "We are all about promoting the area and celebrating the great things Milton Keynes City Centre has to offer," Jill explains,

"I want people to be impressed by what a great place it is, so we will be ramping up our marketing activities including a new website that will become the go-to place for everything going on and also launch a city centre-wide gift card."

She adds: "We're also looking at doing more events and will continue working with partners, including the police and the local councils, on projects that keep the place looking great and feeling safe. For us as an organisation, I'm keen to get a net zero strategy in place and start taking the steps we can to reduce our carbon emissions."

We look forward to seeing what MyMiltonKeynes does this year. You can find out more about the BID here:

www.mymiltonkeynes.co.uk

Town Council's success as 'reckless' high-rise schemes refused and withdrawn

If you regularly read the newsletter, you will be aware of the Town Council's concerns with the number of high-rise buildings proposed for CMK. Town Councillors recognise the importance of CMK's growth but believe this can be achieved without resorting to very high-rise buildings that go against the established character of CMK.

Several high-rise schemes were put forward to Milton Keynes City Council recently, and the Town Council objected as the proposed developments did not have sufficient affordable housing or parking provision. The Town Council also highlighted the CMK Alliance Plan, which requires any building in excess of eight storeys high to provide outstanding social and economic benefits to Milton Keynes.

We're pleased that some of our recent objections have resulted in positive outcomes.

Developers behind Campbell Park Northside withdrew their planning application seeking to build hundreds of flats on land opposite the canal. Separately, developers had lodged a planning application to build a 33-storey tower in replacement of the old Jaipur restaurant, consisting of 300 flats and some commercial units. This scheme was refused by the City Council in December, citing many issues we raised in our objection.



Plans for this development have been withdrawn.

Town Councillors also attended a City Council Planning Committee to speak against plans to build a 20-storey apartment block at Bank House and were pleasantly surprised when the Committee voted unanimously against the application - despite a recommendation for approval from planning officers. While this is good news, the developers can appeal against the decision or make changes to the plans and resubmit their application.

Town Council Chair of Planning, Andrew Thomas, said: "We are really pleased that our arguments, made on behalf of you, our residents, are being listened to. We will continue to object to reckless developments that fail to respect planning policy, particularly where they will have a significantly negative impact on CMK, its residents and visitors."



Could it be time to say goodbye to The Point?

After a decade of uncertainty surrounding the future of The Point, it seems the iconic CMK landmark could soon be demolished. Developers have submitted a planning application to Milton Keynes City Council, seeking to bulldoze the building and replace it with a large and dense apartment

complex. The controversial plans are to build nearly 500 rental flats across four blocks, with the tallest reaching up to 21 storeys high and the development spanning from the site of The Point down to the Avebury Boulevard car park. There are also mentions of leisure and retail units within the development, including a cinema, bar, outdoor sports area and landscaped public space.

The Town Council has objected to the proposal as we believe it is unsuitable for the city centre site. We have also raised concerns around its bulky appearance, lack of affordable housing and its impact on the Grade II listed Shopping Building.

By the time you receive this newsletter, the planning application may have already been determined by the City Council's Planning Committee but if you would like to look at its current status please visit publicaccess2.milton-keynes.gov.uk/online-applications/, and type in reference '23/02265/FUL'. We will provide any updates in future newsletters.

Congratulations Team Electra!

Electra, the all-electric community boat based at Campbell Wharf, won Silver in the New Tourism Business category at the Beautiful South Tourism Awards. Electra is run by hardworking volunteers and the award is very well deserved. The team is now taking a break for the winter season, and will be back in April. Cream tea, coffee and cake, and fish and chips will all be back on the menu when Electra sets sail in the spring. You can keep up to date with Electra by visiting www.bmkwaterway.org/electra



Have your say on what we do

The Town Council is committed to working with CMK residents to improve quality of life in the area. As we are heading towards May's election, where the composition of the Town Council may change, we want to hear about your thoughts and experiences of living in CMK to help shape what we do in the next four year term.



Every few years, we send out Residents' Questionnaires to find out the views and priorities of people living here. The last survey was conducted in 2019 and there has since been a large amount of growth, so we are re-doing the survey this year. Hard copies of the Residents' Questionnaire have been sent to all households in CMK, and we would like to say 'thank you' to those who have already responded. If you are yet to complete the survey, you have until

23rd February 2024 to do so. For ease you may like to complete this online by scanning the QR code (left).



Town Council Chair, David Stabler, said: "This survey will help the Town Council understand your thoughts and experiences of living in CMK, and what you would like to see improved. Your contribution will ensure we can work towards the needs of our residents over the next few

years, and we encourage everybody to have their say."

Thank you, and we will share the results later on this year.

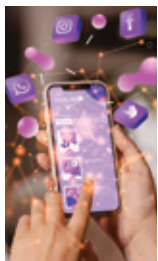
CMK Town Councillors set to be up for election in May



In May 2024, all of CMK's Town Councillors will be up for election having completed their four year term. This will also provide an opportunity for any residents wanting to join the Town Council and make a difference to their community by standing for election. Being a Town Councillor is a voluntary role, but you ultimately become the voice of your neighbourhood and can make a real positive impact.

Nominations for Town Councillors have to be lodged with Milton Keynes City Council between 18th March and 2nd April for elections on 1st May, so it is worth getting in touch soon if you would like to know more about becoming a Town Councillor. You can email Town Council Clerk, Paul Cranfield, for an informal discussion: clerk@cmktowncouncil.gov.uk

Have you registered to vote? Register on www.gov.uk to have your say in May's elections.



Keep up to date with our work and the latest goings on by following CMK Town Council on social media

We post about everything CMK, ranging from planning applications to upcoming events. It allows us to share time-sensitive information and makes it easier for you to have your say on important things as they happen.



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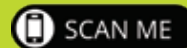
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Scan here to visit CMK Town Council's website, where you can find out more information on who we are and what we do. You can also download the application form for our 2023-2024 small community grants scheme.



www.cmktowncouncil.gov.uk



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