

CMK Life

www.cmktowncouncil.gov.uk

CMK Town Council Newsletter | Spring 2024

New art trail encourages you to Look Again

A new arts project is being trialled in CMK which celebrates our modern heritage and unique cityscape.

Look Again, commissioned by Milton Keynes City Council, will be an architecture, design and art trail throughout the city centre. There are plans to replace old mapping signs, dotted across key points in CMK, with heritage information and QR codes that direct people to a new and interactive heritage trail website. The signs will showcase our public art, green spaces and architectural heritage. They will also provide archived content from our internationally-significant collections on the building of Milton Keynes as a new town.

The architects behind the project, Flow, say that the trail will bring hidden stories to life. A spokesperson for Flow explains: "Look Again

replaces an existing heritage trail with a fresh, exciting and sideways look at Milton Keynes' often misunderstood urban landscape to revel in the utopian ideals which built the UK's youngest city and encourage people to see it as a playground for modernist ideals around civic participation, quality design, and public art in creating identity."

Look Again is planned to have a pilot phase, which started in late April and will run to mid-June, which will be a test route running from Fred Roche Gardens along Silbury Boulevard to Lloyds Court. There will be a trial mapping information board, showcasing 24 pieces of local artwork and encouraging people to scan a QR code to find out more.

Depending on the pilot's success, Look Again could be rolled out further across the city.



SAIL INTO SPRING ABOARD ELECTRA

Residents living in Central Milton Keynes can secure discounted tickets aboard Electra, the electric community boat based at Campbell Wharf.

Electra provides public cruises, private charters, and seasonal events for people wishing to cruise along the scenic Grand Union Canal. Discounted sailings are available for people with an MK9 postcode - you just have to enter the code 'MK9202410' when booking online.

You can book your trip aboard Electra, and see the full cruise schedule, by visiting www.bmkwaterway.org.



Keeping CMK Tidy!

MyMiltonKeynes and the Town Council joined forces for a community litter pick in March. The 16-strong team spent hours clearing rubbish from some of the busiest stretches of CMK, and collected 35 bags in total! More litter picks will be happening throughout the spring and summer, and we'd love for you to join us. Contact us using the details on the back page to find out more.



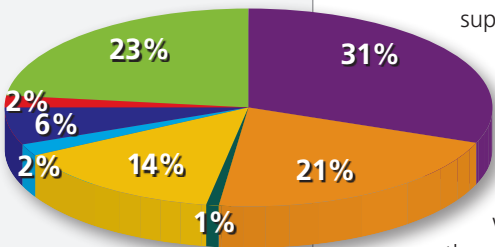


CMK Town Council saving you money

Every household in CMK will be paying less for their parish precept tax this year. The Town Council has reduced parish precept tax from nearly £78 for the average Band D household, to just £55. This is because hundreds of new properties are being built in CMK, and more people are paying for our services, so we can reduce our charges accordingly. We are pleased to report that, once again, our parish precept tax remains amongst the lowest of the larger parishes in Milton Keynes. Town Council Chair, David Stabler, said: "This is good news for residents and means that we will be able to continue to work on your behalf, developing new projects, while cutting parish precept tax by 29.5%."

How we spend your parish tax

This chart shows how your parish precept taxes were spent in 2023/24. Your volunteer councillors will continue to strive to deliver value for money while seeking to improve CMK for residents and visitors alike.



- Statutory Costs
- General Admin
- Councillor's Expenses
- Communications
- Planning Responses
- Community Support
- Consultations
- Partner Organisations

Funding boost for CMK homelessness charity



CMK-based homelessness charity UnityMK has received a £500 grant from the Town Council. This funding, awarded through the community grants scheme, will help UnityMK improve and upgrade the storage provision used by their guests.

UnityMK is seeing an increased demand on their services, with around eight new people finding themselves homeless and needing help every week. The charity provides wide-ranging support for those who need it, spanning from practical help with food and laundry to qualified welfare advice about housing and employment options. They also provide a safe and warm space - which is crucial for those who may find themselves without a roof over their head. It's also important for these individuals to have a secure space where they can store their possessions.

Emma Johnson, General Manager at UnityMK, said: "One of the biggest challenges a person who is newly homeless can face is the heartbreaking decision to leave their possessions behind. Although we cannot yet provide a large amount of storage, we can provide lockers to ensure that a person's valuables and meaningful

keepsakes are stored safely for them until they can move onto a more permanent home.

She added: "Unfortunately, instances of people who are rough sleeping being attacked and the few possessions they are carrying being stolen is also all too common, so providing safe storage for them makes a world of difference. Thank you to the Town Council for helping us to make a difference for people who, in most cases, are facing the worst times in their lives."

Could your group benefit from a grant?

Each year, the Town Council provides parish grants to projects that benefit local residents - just like upgrading UnityMK's storage. The grants can be used for various initiatives including supporting local events and groups, towards 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.

High-rise plans for old theatre car park?

Plans to build apartment blocks on the site of the former theatre car park, with one block reaching up to 25-storeys high, have been submitted to Milton Keynes City Council.

A developer has outlined its ambition to demolish the empty and unloved car park just off Marlborough Gate and build three build-to-rent residential blocks in its place - standing at 25-storeys, 18-storeys and 16-storeys high. The smallest block would join the two taller blocks together, as shown in the sketch below. These buildings would house nearly 300 apartments, providing leisure space on the first floor and supporting infrastructure.

The Town Council has been engaging with the developer during production of the scheme, and their communication with us and the public has been exceptional. Several changes have been made to the proposal following this consultation, including adding colonnades and creating a more streamlined approach to the outside of the buildings.

However, the Town Council has objected to the scheme as several concerns remain, including a lack of affordable housing, minimal car parking provision and outdoor amenity space, and little social and economic benefit. The planning application also fails to mention any section 106 developer contributions, which developers pay to the City Council to minimise the impact on the community. This pot of money would fund beneficial community and social infrastructure, such as play parks, which we believe is vital considering the potential for thousands of new tenants moving into the area.

Town Council Chair of Planning, Andrew Thomas, said: "Whilst the developers have made the best of what is a challenging site, the lack of car parking and affordable housing allowance means



that the Town Council is simply unable to support the proposals as they stand."

You can find out more about the proposals and have your say if the application hasn't yet been determined by visiting publicaccess2.milton-keynes.gov.uk/online-applications and using the reference '24/00036/FUL'.



Developer appeals against refusal of 20-storey apartment block

A developer has submitted an appeal to the City Council, after its proposals to build a 20-storey apartment block were refused by the City Council's Planning Committee. The plans outlined their ambition to demolish Bank House, an office block close to the old Santander offices and Bouverie Square, and build up to 355 apartments and ground floor commercial space in its place.

The scheme didn't comply with local planning guidance as the developer wanted to build a residential scheme in the central business district. There was also a low level of affordable housing, no evidence of social or economic benefits, and little parking provision - a problem that is becoming increasingly common with high-rise schemes that are being brought forward.

The Town Council's Chair of Planning, Andrew Thomas, spoke against the scheme at the Planning Committee meeting and it was refused after due consideration. The applicant has now appealed the decision, which means a government inspector will review it and we expect to provide an update on the appeal in the Summer newsletter.



Residents' Survey

Thank you to everybody who took part in the Town Council's recent Residents' Survey. We asked you about your thoughts and experiences of living in CMK, and what you would like to see improved. Hundreds of people responded to our questionnaire, and these responses will help shape what the Town Council does in its next four-year term. Your feedback has been incredibly insightful, and we look forward to sharing our findings with you soon.

Spotlight on Campbell Park

The Parks Trust, a local charity that manages over 6,000 acres of green space across the city, has been busy preparing Campbell Park for the upcoming summer season. The charity's landscaping team and contractors have been looking after the park's array of trees and flora.

They've also installed some new table tennis tables, and are looking forward to events ranging from cricket matches to community festivals. This summer, The Parks Trust will be keeping a watchful eye on litter in the park too. Their in-house team will be working to keep the park clean and tidy, and we spoke to Luke Nixon (Assistant Ops Manager at The Parks Trust about this. He says that litter in the parks has reduced since they banned barbecues, and their in-house cleansing team means they can swiftly respond to any problems. He said: "The more that people take their litter home with them, the more we can invest in the park."

CMK residents entitled to free money-saving advice sessions

The Town Council will continue to fund free face-to-face advice sessions for local residents, following a successful trial with Citizens Advice MK last year. These fortnightly sessions are for CMK residents to speak to Citizens Advice caseworkers, and have helped with hundreds of issues so far ranging from accessing benefits and universal credit, help with housing and homelessness, tackling debt, and rights at work.

This initiative has resulted in nearly £100,000 being claimed in successful benefit awards, tens of thousands of pounds of personal debt being managed and written off, and advisors have applied for many charitable or hardship grants for residents. They've also distributed fuel vouchers for people who struggle to top up their prepayment metre.

The Town Council will be extending funding for these invaluable sessions, held fortnightly at the Skills Centre in the centre:mk, as the cost-of-living crisis continues to run deep.

Town Council Chair, David Stabler, said:

"These advice sessions have had such a positive impact on local residents, and we're pleased to secure them for another year. There are lots of grants and benefits out there, and it can be difficult to know what support you could be entitled to. We encourage people to book an appointment and make use of the service wherever you can."

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





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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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CMK LIFE is published by CMK Town Council (CMKTC), which is the parish council elected by residents living in the City Centre and Campbell Park. CMKTC is independent of MK City Council and is not affiliated with any political party. Any opinions expressed in this publication do not necessarily reflect the views of CMKTC. Contact us on 01908 766176. As councillors are subject to re-election on 7 May, the details of those representing the parish may vary after that date.