CMK Life

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CMK Town Council Newsletter | Autumn 2023

International Festival hailed a success

This year's International Festival (IF) was a huge success, drawing in thousands of attendees across ten days in July. The arts festival, which runs every two years, saw CMK become the IF's beating heart as Campbell Park turned into Festival Central.

CMK's open spaces and venues were transformed by live music, theatre, comedy, cabaret, exhibitions, and events. Some residents were even greeted with flash mobs at their doorsteps! One of the main attractions was at The Point, as the spectacular Place des Anges (Place of Angels) saw circus performers and acrobats suspended in the sky.

Town Councillor Pete Lightfoot was among those who attended the festival: "There were hopes that this year's IF Festival would be the biggest and best yet, and the organisers certainly didn't disappoint. It was brilliant to see such a variety of exhibitions and events, and many of them were completely free. The Town Council is pleased to support community events like the International Festival and we hope to see it return in 2025."

Campbell Park...ing Problems

The Town Council has been working hard to tackle parking issues in Campbell Park, which can be especially problematic for residents during the event season. This summer saw the return of popular events including MKF Tribute Festival, the IF Festival and MK Pride, not to mention the smaller cultural and food festivals, resulting in thousands of visitors from across the city and beyond.

The Town Council expressed concerns regarding the often-random parking arrangements during these events, especially the smaller scale festivals, resulting in visitors parking in residential areas and has been working with The Parks Trust, who are responsible for event parking arrangements, to tackle this problem and mitigate the impact it has on residents living around the park. These efforts have seen the introduction of cones, purchased by the Parks Trust, and moveable signs, purchased by the Town Council, so the Parks Trust can block off prohibited areas.

Town Council Chair David Stabler said: "This summer's events have been a great success and a boost to local tourism, but we have always echoed residents' concerns about the sudden influx of cars to the area. I'm pleased that the cones and signs seem to be having a positive impact by encouraging visitors to use the city centre parking, and would welcome any feedback or suggestions on what else we can do to make the busy summer season better for our residents."

TOWN COUNCIL RESPONDING TO RESIDENTS' CONCERNS

Residents recently attended a Town Council meeting to raise several concerns about the area between North 9th and 10th Street, and we wanted to provide an update on what we've done in response. We were told about overgrown foliage in quadrant planters reducing visibility for drivers, and we're pleased to say this has now been trimmed. There was also a granite slab out of place, which has been returned to its rightful place.

The Town Council has also spoken to a shopkeeper in North 10th Street whose delivery vans were reportedly using disabled parking bays; the shopkeeper has promised that this will not happen again. Lastly, residents were frustrated with the scaffolding surrounding the apartment block as it was initially scheduled to be removed at the end of last year. Town Councillors were assured that this would be fully removed by the end of August, and this work is now complete and the gates to the play area have been returned. These may be only small issues, but they are important to our residents and we will help address your concerns wherever possible.

CMK apartment complex ranked best place to live in region

One of CMK's very own apartment complexes has been voted as one of the best places to live in the South East of England. The Almere, which is based along Avebury Boulevard, has scored top of the table on HomeViews - the equivalent of Tripadvisor for residential property.

The Almere is a premium build-to-rent development, consisting of nearly 300 apartment blocks across two towers. There's also a community space, areas to co-work, alongside lots of communal and event spaces too.

Residents of The Almere have been sharing their rave reviews, which helped them reach the top. Many have praised The Almere for its prime location, as it's less than ten minutes' walk to the train station, while others have hailed the "brilliant" facilities that cater for all occasions.

The Town Council worked with The Almere to deliver its ground-floor community space, aptly called the Gathering Place, which is full of public art. This space can be enjoyed by the wider community and is often home to small events and exhibitions.

Rare planning award for local business founder

An incredibly rare planning accolade, which has only been awarded a handful of times in its nearly hundred-year history, has been presented to a local business founder. David Lock runs an eponymous urban design and town planning business in North Thirteenth Street. In June, he received the prestigious Howard Medal during a parliamentary reception organised by the Town and Country Planning Association. MPs, planners and community members gathered to honour David's contribution to the promotion and public understanding of 'Garden City' principles – something which is seen across Milton Keynes. Garden Cities are planned urban areas made up of self-contained communities surrounded by greenbelts of undeveloped land, much like the housing estates and nature corridors of Milton Keynes' grid system.

David Lock's contribution is demonstrated in his extensive writing about the Garden City and new town movement, and he is passionate about the practical implementation of the vision in building new communities. He has had decades of experience in delivering this; he worked at the Milton Keynes Development Corporation when the city was just sketches on a page, and helped develop areas including Letchworth and Welwyn Garden Cities, Stevenage, Basildon and Peterborough. He was also part of the working group, comprising CMK Town Council, Milton Keynes City Council and the business community, that created the Alliance Plan for CMK, the country's first and only Business Neighbourhood Development Plan, which received nearly 90,000 votes at referendum and was made a statutory development plan.

Town Council Chair of Planning, Andrew Thomas, said: "The Howard Medal has been presented to just 11 people in the past ninety years. David Lock has made an immense contribution to our city and the country's planning system as a whole, so it's only fitting that he is the latest to receive the honour."

The Howard Medal is named after the inventor of the Garden City idea, Ebenezer Howard. Aside from receiving this award, David also has a Lifetime Achievement Award from MK Business and the University of Cranfield. He now works part-time as a planning consultant and is an active campaigner with charities in the planning world, often voicing concerns about the housing crisis and how planning can be a force for good.

Homelessness charity rebrands to UnityMK

The Winter Night Shelter, a homelessness charity based in the Old Bus Station, has announced it will be rebranding to UnityMK. The charity's initial mission was to provide safe and warm shelter for people during the coldest months of the year, but their role has since expanded and they are offering a plethora of vital services. Working with Milton Keynes City Council and other organisations, they are open all year-round providing welfare services such as mental health referrals and counselling, access to food, housing and benefit advice and support into safer accommodation.

"UnityMK reflects the work we do," explains Emma Johnson, the charity's general manager. "We bring people together and offer them hope for a brighter future. Our hope is that with our new name and new branding it will also encourage those that are struggling, but not homeless, to know they can seek help from us before it reaches crisis point."

UnityMK is located at Unity Park Station, formerly The Old Bus Station, and more information can be found at www.winternightsheltermk.com

An ever-changing skyline: part two

Those of you who read the article in our summer newsletter called 'an ever-changing skyline' will be aware of the Town Council's concerns over the number of high-rise buildings that are appearing throughout CMK. A lot has happened since then, including a planning application lodged to build a 33-storey apartment block, so we wanted to provide some updates.

While Milton Keynes City Council are the decision-makers, Town and Parish Councils also play a key role in the planning process. We often meet with developers to discuss and, hopefully, influence their plans at the very beginning. The Town Council takes this role very seriously, and several meetings have resulted in changes to schemes that are now moving forward. But unfortunately, not all talks have been positive, and, despite early engagement with developers, we are now seeing even more tall buildings proposed.

The Town Council welcomes interest and investment to CMK, but is concerned about the lack of social infrastructure to accommodate the surge of people anticipated to move to the area. Another concern lies around poor parking provision, which we believe will only get worse in the coming years. That's why the Town Council was pleased to learn that a planning application to build 279 high-rise flats by Campbell Wharf was recently refused, citing inadequate parking provision among the reasons for refusal. The Town Council had formally objected to the plans, also highlighting concerns about the lack of affordable housing and the development's impact on the area. Although the application has been refused, it may be subject to appeal or the developer may make changes before resubmitting. We hope that any future application will reflect the points made.

Concerns over more 'looming' tower blocks coming to CMK

This summer, two major planning applications have been submitted. The first is a 33-storey building on the site of the former Jaipur restaurant, consisting of over 300 build-to-rent flats which would be visible from across most of CMK. The second is seeking approval to start phase one of Campbell Park Northside, a significant housing development of around 1,500 properties on land opposite Campbell Park. This first phase consists of 450 flats across four tower blocks, ranging from 11 to 18 storeys, and a garage area for cars.

While we recognise that the developments are different, they each create the same challenges facing CMK and its residents such as parking provision and not providing the required amount of affordable housing. We have also highlighted that developments over eight storeys high must, under the CMK Alliance Plan, provide outstanding economic and social benefits to the city – but we believe that these developments do not.

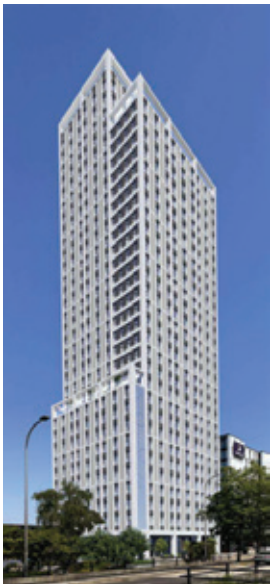
The Town Council has expressed its frustration that these tower blocks are cropping up without appearing to have proper planning and strategy to manage their locations or overall impact they have on infrastructure. Hundreds, if not thousands, of households are set to move into CMK over the next few years and we need the correct infrastructure to support this. CMK does not have a school or doctors' surgery within the parish, or the right amount of parking to suit the fast-growing city centre. The City Council is currently creating its new City Plan, and we hope that it will address these concerns and provide guidance on how tall CMK's buildings can be.

As a CMK resident, the Town Council encourages you to have your say on the plans mentioned above. You can comment by visiting https://publicaccess2.milton-keynes.gov.uk/online-applications/ and using these references:

Planning application 23/01634/FUL- Jaipur site

Planning application 23/01739/FUL- Campbell Park Northside

The Town Council will continue to respond to all applications highlighting its concerns on behalf of residents.



Right: *Proposed building visualisation on the site of the Jaipur.*

Connect with CMK Town Council

CMK Town Council is your local parish council, and we represent the interests of over 4,000 residents living in Campbell Park and Central Milton Keynes. Our work focuses on influencing Milton Keynes City Council to deliver better services and to make better decisions for our residents. We also partner with the City Council and other organisations to make life better for our community, and provide regular grants for local initiatives. For example, we recently funded the installation of defibrillators at Sports Central and the YMCA.

The Town Council wants to keep you up to date with our work, and we mainly do that through these quarterly newsletters. However, we know just how quickly things can change and how it's important we have a more direct communication link with you. That's why we're also turning to social media, to connect with residents in a more direct and engaging way. We will be posting across Facebook, X and Instagram, sharing everything from planning applications to upcoming events. It gives us the chance to share time-sensitive information and will make it easier for you to have your say on important things as they happen.

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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.

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