



Your independent community newspaper

# WALTHAM FOREST ECHO

Free  
Jan 2024, N° 106

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Hula hoops, bendy spines, and human-sized balloons featured at the Revel Puck Circus in Walthamstow last month. Read our review on pg. 12 Credit Penny Dampier

# Leyton Station upgrade to go ahead as funding secured

by Marco Marcelline

Work on making Leyton Station step-free will begin in the summer after the government confirmed Levelling Up funding worth £13.7million.

The funding comes as part of a total Levelling Up Fund package of £43.1m that is split between

Leyton and Colindale Station in the borough of Barnet.

According to a Transport for London (TfL) spokesperson, the £13.7m for Leyton Station will arrive once detailed design work is completed in early 2024. The spokesperson added that the station will continue to stay open throughout the construction period and that the new facilities

will open in 2026.

The Central Line station will get a new ticket hall built adjacent to the current one, two new staircases, and two lifts which will make it fully accessible. The construction contract is "expected" to be awarded this summer, TfL said.

Waltham Forest Council is providing an additional £9m

towards the construction efforts.

Council deputy leader Clyde Loakes said: "In partnership with TfL, the redevelopment of Leyton Underground Station will improve and future-proof this station as a critical gateway to Leyton. Many of us have been campaigning, alongside local residents, for this important upgrade that

includes much-needed step-free access for many years. With this investment Leyton Underground Station will become the much-needed sustainable, safe and accessible public transport hub that we need in Leyton.

"This confirmation of Levelling Up support – combined

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# NEWS

## Protesters show solidarity with Walthamstow activist facing court battle

### Trudi Warner is awaiting a contempt of court trial for holding up a sign defending jury rights

by Marco Marcelline

A protest outside Snaresbrook Crown Court took place last month in solidarity with Walthamstow activist Trudi Warner and others who are facing contempt of court charges for holding signs advocating for jury independence.

According to organisers Defend Our Juries, around 15 people demonstrated outside the court on Monday 4th December. All held signs that professed the rights of jurors to acquit defendants based on their conscience, irrespective of the directions of the judge. The action was repeated at 49 other crown courts across England on the same day.

Trudi, a 68-year-old retired social worker, could face two up to two years in prison or a fine for holding up a sign outside a climate trial earlier this year that



Protesters sat outside Snaresbrook Crown Court Credit Jo Syz

stated: "Jurors: you have an absolute right to acquit a defendant according to your conscience."

Trudi had held the sign up as jurors arrived at a trial of Insulate Britain activists at Inner London Crown Court on 27th March. She had also challenged judge-imposed restrictions on the defendants that prevented them from mentioning climate change or property

insulation in their defence.

In October, the Attorney General confirmed that Trudi would face prosecution.

Jakob Kiessling, a spokesman for Defend our Juries, told the *Echo* that protesters at 50 crown courts across the country protesters stood in "solidarity" with Trudi and others who are facing prosecution. He said that

the protest was about "protecting the foundational right of juries" to acquit, which was established in 1670 after a judge imprisoned a jury for reaching a verdict he refused to accept.

Concern for the rights of jurors stem from a government appeal against the acquittal of four Black Lives Matter activists who toppled the statue of slave-owner Edward Colston in 2020. In its 2022 decision, the Court of Appeal did not reverse the acquittal but ruled that protesters accused of "significant" criminal damage cannot rely on human rights protections when on trial.

Courts have subsequently rolled out bans on defendants explaining why they did what they did in the court, which has been seen as an infringement on the right of jurors to acquit based on their conscience.

Jakob told the *Echo* that "no date" had yet been set for Trudi's trial.

## Local woman loses Met Police court challenge

### Kristina O'Connor argued that the Met had insufficiently dealt with an officer who sexually harassed her

by Marco Marcelline

A Walthamstow woman has failed in her bid to challenge the Metropolitan Police's handling of her complaint about the conduct of a former top cop who sexually harassed her.

In a November ruling, the High Court dismissed Kristina O'Connor's claim that the Met Police's investigation into her complaints was insufficient.

The case stems from 2011, when Kristina reported an assault by a group of young men at Kentish Town Police Station.

James Mason, then a detective sergeant, made sexually inappropriate advances to Kristina both in person and over email and suggested that rejecting him would be "frowned upon".

In October 2020, Kristina made a formal complaint to the Met Police about Mason's conduct and in 2021, a police misconduct panel

found him guilty of eight breaches of behavioural standards, amounting to gross misconduct. Mason received a written warning, but was allowed to remain in post and keep his rank as detective chief inspector. He resigned in October 2022.

Kristina issued her claim against the Met Police's handling of her complaint in January 2022, and the judicial review was heard over two days at the High Court in May 2023. Kristina had argued that the investigation into Mason's conduct was unlawful as it, among other alleged failings, did not unearth evidence showing he had behaved in a predatory manner. She also challenged the decision not to dismiss Mason.

In his decision, Justice Swift dismissed the application for judicial review. He found the steps taken in the investigation were reasonable and appropriate, and additionally ruled it did not matter whether it could have been conducted differently.



Kristina O'Connor Credit Hodge Jones & Allen

Justice Swift also concluded that a misconduct panel has discretion to impose a penalty as they see fit, providing the reasons set out are sufficient to support their decision.

Responding to the outcome, Kristina said: "This has been a frustrating process and it is not

the outcome I was hoping for but I want to keep fighting for justice for women. I am so grateful for the continued support of Nancy Collins, Caoilfhionn Gallagher KC and Fiona Murphy KC."

Kristina said she will seek permission to appeal the judgement.



FELLOWSHIP IS LIFE

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## NEWS

# Worker killed by Leytonstone roof collapse named

*Originally from India, Ekarmanjeet Singh, 25, had ambitions to start his own construction company*

by Marco Marcelline



Ekarmanjeet Singh Photo provided by family

A construction worker who was killed by a roof collapse in Leytonstone has been named.

Ekarmanjeet Singh, from the city of Gurdaspur in the Punjab, India, was working as a roofer on a house renovation in Pevensey Road, Leytonstone when he died. He was 25-years-old.

He was found trapped under rubble by firefighters attending the end-of-terrace house shortly after 5pm on 12th December. He was pulled out and received emergency treatment from firefighters but was pronounced dead at the scene.

The incident also left a second man in hospital with minor injuries.

Speaking to the *Echo*, Ekarmanjeet's family described him as a "very honest, very humble and fun-loving person" who "loved children and animals and always made others happy".

A "true gem of the family", Ekarmanjeet was the youngest of three siblings. He is survived by his mother, father, older brother, sister and grandmother. His brother-in-law Sushant Attri said: "He was a good human being. He would never fight with anyone. He never mistreated anyone and he always paid respect to everyone he worked with. It is the biggest loss of our family."

Ekarmanjeet moved to the UK on 15th September 2020 and was living in Hayes, West London. He had been working as a roofer since his arrival and had ambitions to start his own construction company.

Ekarmanjeet's family said he had been working on a contract job for SRA & Padda Roofing Ltd. No-one from the construction company had personally contacted the family since his death, the man's brother-in-law said.

The roofing company has not responded to a request for comment.

Next-door neighbour Seveka Rendall was at home when the incident happened. "I heard a huge collapsing sound and I ran to my daughter who said there's smoke pouring out of all the windows. We heard a lot of screaming. When we got in the door [of the collapsed house] we saw about five young guys in there."

Seveka, a nurse who has lived on Pevensey Road since 1985, said she saw Ekarmanjeet's head trapped under the rubble when she went inside the building. He was still alive, she said.

The landlord of the collapsed property arrived at the property following the incident, but he did not stay for long and "was trying to run away" when she approached him. The next day he told her son that the roof collapse was "not [his] fault" but the fault of "the builders".



The roof of the house collapsed during renovation works

On 21st December Waltham Forest Trades Council (WFTC) held a vigil for Ekarmanjeet on Pevensey Road.

Kevin Parslow, secretary of WFTC, said: "Sadly the tragedy of someone being killed at work returns to Waltham Forest. The victim's death comes just after our health and safety police, the Health and Safety Executive (HSE), reported a massive rise in construction worker deaths up to 45 in 2022/23 from 29 in 2021/22."

"Our thoughts are with the family and friends of the deceased. No-one should go to work and never return and no family should ever have to experience this."

A HSE notice directing people to leave the property undisturbed has been plastered on the front door of the Pevensey Road house. The owner and landlord of the property is listed on the notice as residing in Plaistow, Newham.

HSE, which is tasked with investigating workplace accidents, confirmed that it is investigating the circumstances of Ekarmanjeet's death with the police.

His body is currently being held at Walthamstow Mortuary. An inquest into his death is to be opened by the Walthamstow Coroner Court at a later date.

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with development contributions from local housing growth, secured by the council – will also help unlock significant further investment in much needed new affordable homes, workspaces and community infrastructure."

The news comes amid wider development plans for thousands of new homes in the area around Leyton Station. The first phase of Taylor Wimpey's under-construction 750-home Coronation Square scheme is due for completion later this year.



An illustration of what the new ticket hall is set to look like Credit TfL

# NEWS

Luz Turner (left) and Ayse Hussein (right) hold a photo of Ailish Walsh at the vigil



## Vigil held for woman murdered by boyfriend

by Marco Marcelline

**A** vigil was held at St James Street last month for a pregnant mother-of-four who was murdered by her boyfriend.

Around 50 people turned up to the vigil on 15th December to mark a year since the passing of Ailish Walsh, who had spent some of her childhood in Waltham Forest before moving back to her country of birth, Ireland. She briefly returned to live in the borough in 2021.

Ailish was stabbed with a pair of scissors more than 40 times at her flat in Rectory Road, Hackney, on 15th December 2022. She was 28-years-old.

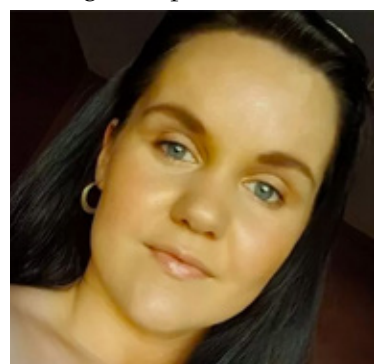
Her boyfriend Liam Taylor, 37, of Hornsey, was jailed for life in August after pleading guilty to what judge Nigel Lickley KC called a “ferocious, brutal, sadistic and savage” attack. He will spend a minimum of 27 years behind bars.

Friend and vigil organiser Sabrina Shelley told the *Echo* that Ailish had been a “rock”. Through tears, she said: “She

was a good friend, she became a rock to me. She took my son on days out and was full of love. There isn’t anyone who had a bad thing to say about her. She was an outstanding woman.”

The vigil took place at CRATE St James Street. Attendees decorated a Christmas tree with purple ribbons, baubles and feathers to raise awareness and honour those who have been killed due to domestic violence. Purple ribbons are used to mark violence against women.

In an emotional speech Sabrina thanked guests for attending and said: “Today’s been truly special and I can’t thank you enough for making it so special.”



Ailish Walsh was killed by her partner in 2022. Photo provided by family

The vigil included a raffle featuring prizes donated by local shopkeepers from businesses including JK Beauty, DejaVu, St James’s Kitchen, Scarred for Life, Walthamstow Trades Hall, and Savers. The prizes included food hampers, free tattoos, and a Trades Hall membership.

Ayse Hussein, a friend of Sabrina and a domestic violence campaigner, said she was especially moved to attend because she had lost her cousin to a brutal domestic murder in Canning Town, Newham in 2019. During the vigil, Ayse and Luz Turner, a police officer who works with victims of domestic violence, paid their respects to Ailish by holding up a purple bauble and a photo of her.

A table with a book of condolences, a small Christmas tree, and photographs of Ailish and Sabrina, also featured an ultrasound picture of Ailish’s unborn daughter.

Sabrina and friends raised £600 from fundraising efforts which will go towards charities helping women with experience of domestic abuse.

## Home furnishing scheme for domestic abuse survivors launches

### Three households living in the borough will have their homes decorated with high-end furniture

**A** new partnership between housing association Peabody, the council, and charity Furnishing Futures, will see the organisations working in partnership to create professionally designed, fully furnished homes for domestic abuse survivors.

The scheme, Peabody says, will provide safe, affordable, and ready-furnished homes for survivors to move into and rebuild their lives.

In the pilot, Peabody will offer homes to three households who have fled domestic abuse and applied for Waltham Forest social housing after living in refuge accommodation.

Peabody will paint and provide flooring for the homes while Furnishing Futures will work with the residents to design and furnish their new home with white goods, furniture, and soft furnishings.

To date, Furnishing Futures has helped 88 women and children across the capital get back on their feet and supported a further 43 women and children through their work in furnishing and redecorating women’s refuges.

Emily Wheeler, founder and CEO of Furnishing Futures, said: “When women escape domestic abuse, they often leave all their belongings behind, without access to finances.

“Starting again in an empty flat without flooring, white goods or

furniture can feel impossible. In many cases, children sleep on floors and there’s no oven for a home-cooked meal or washing machine to keep clothes clean.

“Creating a beautiful, well-designed home that’s equipped with everything a woman needs saves lives. Survivors can recover from a place of safety, without the need to return to an unsafe place due to lack of resources. It also reduces financial hardship, in-turn raising self-esteem and improving wellbeing.

“We’re delighted that Peabody recognises the life changing impact of our work in creating healing homes for women. We hope our partnership continues so that this support becomes the benchmark for survivors’ housing.”

Cllr Ahsan Khan, the council’s housing lead said: “It must be incredibly difficult and overwhelming for survivors to leave a controlling, hostile and intimidating environment. Survivors that access refuge services often must move long distances for safety, and finding move-on accommodation subsequently can be disruptive to survivors’ lives and healing; this pilot is a great opportunity to keep survivors close to their new and existing support networks.”

Further information can be found on Furnishing Future’s website: [furnishingfutures.org](http://furnishingfutures.org)



A living room that was refurbished as part of the scheme. Credit: Peabody/Furnishing Futures

## HOUSING

# Residents move into Walthamstow high-rise after four-year build

Though the 17-storey Juniper House building has started filling up after construction finished in August, a quarter of its private sale flats remain unsold

by Marco Marcelline

A brand new residential tower block opposite Walthamstow Central Station has opened to residents.

Called Juniper House, the building was constructed by The Hill Group on behalf of Waltham Forest Council, and it comprises 91 homes, 50% of which the council says are affordable.

Plans to build the 17-storey, 91-flat building were agreed in June 2019, and construction began later that year with an expected finish in 2021. Hill Group did not finish construction works until August last year, however, amid negotiations with the council over an increase in costs that, according to an official report, risked turning into a legal battle.

Earlier this year, the council report laid bare the financial troubles afflicting the project. After it became £4million more expensive than the £37.7m budget agreed four years

previously, the council revised prior expectations of a £2.6m profit down to a £562,000 loss.

According to the report, nearly half of the increase in costs was down to Hill Partnerships requesting an additional £1.8m from Waltham Forest because of “Covid-19” and “significant cost inflation to both materials and labour” caused by “global and national market conditions”.

The building had previously been vacant council offices. It’s the third residential building by the Waltham Forest Capital Delivery team to be completed this year and it includes 23 flats for social rent, and 18 for shared ownership.

At the time of going to press, 15 of the total 50 private buy flats were marked as still available on the development’s official website, while a further nine are marked as reserved. The cheapest flat, a one-bedroom, is on sale for £390,000 (the average price for a flat in outer London was £347,500 in March 2023), while the most expensive, a two-bed, is

on offer for £590,000.

As well as new homes, the development includes two floors that will be dedicated to part of the new University of Portsmouth campus.

The university campus, the borough’s first, will initially occupy two floors in Juniper House. The first undergraduate students will start in September, while postgraduate students will begin their studies in February. The university campus’ main building will be in the as yet uncompleted Central House in Hoe Street.

Juniper House also contains a 53-place pre-school nursery with its own play area, while the council has boasted about the building’s “low-carbon” heating that is provided by communal air source heat pumps and solar panels.

This was a feature praised by a newly-moved resident who spoke to the *Echo* on the condition of anonymity. She estimated that around 59 or so people had moved into Block A by the middle of December. Block A is split between private and shared ownership flats, while Block B and C are reserved for social rent. The resident praised the views from the property but said bins were only being collected once a fortnight, and management was “slow to respond” to complaints and queries.

The council’s housing lead Ahsan Khan said: “The completion of Juniper House is a monumental achievement when interest rates are continuing to rise in the housebuilding sector. We are doing our part to tackle the housing crisis by building the right homes in the right places to help local people get on the property ladder and live close to their friends, family, and support networks.”

In a press release, the council said that further works to on-site commercial spaces will continue this year, with their opening scheduled for “late 2024”.

An illustration of what the approved development will look like Credit NEAT Developments



## Blackhorse Lane skyscrapers get council go ahead

Construction on the Uplands Business Park development may begin in the summer

by Marco Marcelline

Waltham Forest Council has green-lit plans to turn a Walthamstow trading estate into a sprawling mixed-use development featuring a set of 38-storey towers.

The development is backed by the world’s largest asset manager, BlackRock, and Neat Developments.

Outline planning permission was granted at a council meeting on 5th December for five residential towers reaching 30 to 38 storeys as part of the development’s second phase.

The development will also include three towers at 18 storeys as well as six smaller towers of up to eleven storeys.

To make way for the project, the site’s 35 low-rise industrial units will be demolished except Uplands House, an office building previously used as a college.

The council has touted that it will bring 1,800 new “high-quality” homes as well as more than 1,000 jobs to the area. In addition to a boost in the borough’s residential capacity, there will be industrial floor space of 29,000 square metres.

The plans additionally include increases in biodiversity and openly

accessible green spaces such as a new wetlands park to link in with the wider green area network.

The council says that essential infrastructure will support new and existing communities such as new educational facilities, health services, walking and cycling improvements to roads, and funding to local community hubs.

There has been notable push-back to the plans, however. In October a local historic society slammed the development, calling it “appalling” as well as describing the proposed designs as “completely out of character” with the surrounding area.

In its formal objections to the development, Waltham Forest Civic Society added that it would make the Lea Valley look like “New York’s Central Park”.

Ahsan Khan, the council’s housing lead, said: “We are pleased that the plans to transform Blackhorse Lane with Uplands Business Park have been agreed and the real work can begin. This is going to be a huge bonus for residents once complete, creating thousands of new homes and jobs with more improvements to the surrounding environment.”

A wide drone shot of the Juniper House development in Walthamstow town centre Credit Waltham Forest Council



## NEWS



Vestry House Museum  
Credit Vestry House Museum

## Vestry House Museum set to reopen in 'early 2026'

*The Walthamstow Village museum will undergo a £4.5m redevelopment with works starting this year*

by Marco Marcelline

An "early 2026" reopening date has been set for Vestry House Museum as it prepares for a £4.5million revitalisation project.

The museum shut its doors to the public on 23rd December ahead of the works which will begin early this year. Its garden is staying open to visitors until 18th February.

Waltham Forest Council has appointed architecture firm Studio Weave, which redesigned Lea Bridge Library, to lead the project.

The revitalisation is set to include improved disability and general access, new creative workspaces and a café.

The project comes as a key part of the council's Levelling Up Fund programme.

The council has committed £4.5m to the redevelopment after receiving a total of £17m from the government's Levelling Up Fund. The money was granted to the council to boost Walthamstow's "cultural offer".

In a 2022 engagement document, the council wrote that the "reimagining" of Vestry House would contribute to the creation of its "15-minute cultural neighbourhood" for Walthamstow, alongside the restoration of other council-owned buildings like Chestnuts House

and Hatherley Mews.

Another planned "cultural offer", Soho Theatre, has been hit by construction delays with its opening pushed back to 2025 from February 2024.

Vestry House currently receives around 22,000 visitors a year, compared to over 100,000 yearly visitors at William Morris Gallery which was revamped in 2012. The council is planning to increase visitor numbers to 60,000 and diversify the visitor demographics by inviting school visits and hosting 150 free events.

The 18th Century Grade 2 listed building was constructed in 1730 to house the parish workhouse and was later used as a police station, an armoury, a builders' merchants and a private home before opening to the public in 1931 as a local history museum.

It is home to the borough's archives and local studies library which contains 18th and 19th Century documents on the men, women, and children who worked there.

The museum has a collection of more than 100,000 historical objects and themed displays that tell the story of the borough. Its collection includes the famous Bremer car, a Victorian parlour, toys, a photo archive and its volunteer-run garden.

Archives from the reading room will be moved to Waltham-

stow Central Library during the renovations, though it is not clear if they will be re-housed in Vestry House when the works are complete. The archive reading room had once been the women's ward of the workhouse.

The council's cabinet member for culture Ros Doré said: "We are thrilled to be working with Studio Weave on the revitalisation of Vestry House Museum. Their work on Lea Bridge Library shows they have the sensitivity and expertise to work with us to bring new life to this important historic asset, making it more accessible, inclusive and exciting for all the borough's residents to enjoy."

Meanwhile, local residents and historical preservation societies have called on the Bremer car to continue to be housed in Waltham Forest while Vestry House is redeveloped.

Chair of the Lea Valley Heritage Alliance, Linsey Collier, said the car could go to Walthamstow Pumphouse Museum or the town hall during the redevelopment period instead of the National Motor Museum in Hampshire, its currently planned destination.

The car was given to the residents of Walthamstow by engineer Fredrick Bremer and was the first British four-wheeled internal combustion engine car which was built at his works in Walthamstow in 1894.

## Council takes over CRATE St James Street site after owner steps back

by Marco Marcelline

Waltham Forest Council has announced it will own and manage CRATE St James Street in a move that secures its future until "at least" January 2026.

The move follows many weeks of negotiations between the council and CRATE St James Street co-founder John Walker. The council's ownership will become effective on 1st January.

In a statement, Ahsan Khan, cabinet member for housing and regeneration, said the council sought ownership when the "current management announced they were stepping back" from the site.

CRATE St James was opened in 2019 with the understanding that it would be a non-permanent space. It occupies council-owned land that had previously been a car park blighted by anti-social behaviour.

In October, amid negotiations between the council and CRATE ownership on extending the lease, unconfirmed rumours swirled on social media that the site was set for demolition. An online petition against the "slated demolition" attracted over 1,400 signatories.

In an email seen by the *Echo* announcing the move, council officer Aydin Sipalogu wrote to business owners at the site: "From January 1, 2024, Waltham Forest Council will be taking over the ownership and management of the site and I'm happy to confirm the scheme's future is guaranteed until at least January 2026."

Aydin added that there would "be

no obvious changes in the day-to-day running of CRATE St James Street."

Mike Gerber, co-founder of Vinyl Vanguard, a record shop located on the CRATE St James Street site told the *Echo* that the news had "lifted the uncertainty about the place" that had been hanging over it for many weeks.

The record shop moved into CRATE in its early days in October 2019. While noting that "it'd be nice to be in a bigger shop", he found CRATE rates to be "affordable". He said that he hoped that, as owners, the council will put on "more music gigs, and more comedy events" as the site has a "hell of a lot of potential".

In a statement shared via the council, CRATE St James co-founder John Walker said: "We set out in 2019 with a five-year plan to showcase local business, support diverse entrepreneurs and help Waltham Forest Council with its business support, community engagement and regeneration objectives."

"Together we have come a very long way in meeting these goals. The coming years though require a different approach to better leverage what we have built together and the council's improving capacity."

"I am delighted to see the CRATE St James Street scheme transfer to an ownership best placed to shape a new chapter."

"The change of control also enables me and fellow directors to focus on new challenges, particularly helping the social enterprise sector scale its impact."

CRATE did not respond when contacted for comment.



CRATE opened its St James Street site in 2019

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NEWS

# John Cryer calls for Gaza ceasefire

In an email to constituents, the Leyton and Wanstead MP said it was “difficult to see what the continued military offensive in southern Gaza is achieving”

by Marco Marcelline



John Cryer MP  
Credit UK Parliament

Leyton and Wanstead MP John Cryer has called for an Israel-Hamas ceasefire, a shift from his previous position of backing humanitarian pauses.

In an email sent to constituents on 11th December, Cryer cited the UN Security Council’s “[failure] to agree a resolution on Gaza” as one of “among other things” that have “changed the situation in the Middle East”.

Cryer added: “It is difficult to see what

the continued military offensive in southern Gaza is achieving.”

He continued: “I have received thousands of emails about Gaza and Israel since October 7th, covering every shade of opinion. In response to those emails, I have always sought to give my honest view of the situation and the above is the same. I will also seek to argue the above in the coming weeks.”

Cryer did not respond to a request for comment. Earlier, in response to a protest outside his office on 9th November by activists pressing him to back a ceasefire, he told the *Echo* that the “best chance to save people is to secure cessations in hostilities, to get aid through via a pause”.

A ceasefire brokered by Qatar between Hamas and Israel went into effect on 24th November and lasted until 30th November when both parties accused each other of wrecking the truce agreement.

The Gaza health ministry has said over 21,300 Palestinians have died in Gaza since October 7th, with the majority being women and children. 1.3 million Gazans are reportedly in overcrowded



A protest outside John Cryer's office on 9th November

UN-run refugee shelters with limited access to food and water.

Constituent and Palestine activist Hil Aked welcomed Cryer’s move, describing it as a “victory for grassroots people power” that showed how “we have power as local constituents”.

They added: “It’s better late than never that John Cryer has come round and we hope he will now push hard to end the slaughter in Gaza. We believe that Palestine will be free.”

Hil added that they “hope” other Labour figures like Tottenham MP and Shadow Foreign Secretary David Lammy will also back an immediate ceasefire.

Irfan Akhtar of Waltham Forest Council of Mosques (WFCOM) said: “We’re glad and welcome the change of position. People [in Gaza] are dying not daily but through the minute. We will continue putting pressure on a local level.”

Irfan added that a ceasefire was a “welcome” first step to addressing the conflict: “We want our politicians to call for the end of the Israeli occupation. There’s no peace, there’s no justice in an apartheid that needs to be dismantled.”

Cryer’s Labour colleague, Walthamstow MP Stella Creasy backed an SNP-led Westminster motion calling for a ceasefire on 15th November, while Chingford MP Sir Iain Duncan Smith, a Conservative, voted against. Cryer had abstained along with the majority of Labour MPs.

That vote to abstain prompted a protest outside his office in Leytonstone on 23rd November. Organisers said over 100 attended.

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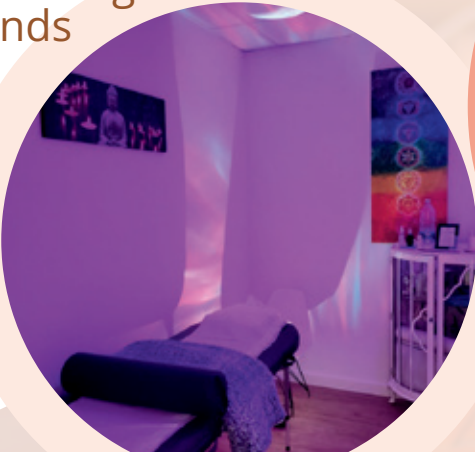
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## NEWS

# Walthamstow Village church hit by back-to-back burglaries

*St Mary's appealed for donations after it was robbed on twice in one weekend*



St Mary's Church Credit Tim Crocker

by Marco Marcelline

St Mary's Church in Walthamstow Village has estimated that "at least" £2,500 of damage was done to the building following two break-ins over the last weekend in November.

According to a spokesperson for St Mary's, the robbers set off with "very little", though they made a "considerable amount of damage" to the building during the break-ins on Saturday 25th and Sunday

26th November.

Two doors in the church and a stained glass window were "seriously damaged". The doors have been made "more secure" since the robbery, though the windows need to be replaced.

The spokesperson added that the church is entering the new year running a significant loss, as its operating costs are "well in excess" of £250,000 per year which is the amount needed to staff, heat, maintain and run the church building.

The majority of the church's income comes from donations. While the church "expects" to use insurance to cover repair costs from the break-in, it is inviting visitors, supporters, and local residents to send a private donation to help them with their looming budget deficit.

Reverend Vanessa Conant, rector of St Mary's Walthamstow and the Parish of Walthamstow, said that alongside the break-ins, the church has been grappling with various antisocial behaviour on the church grounds such as "an increase" in drug dealing and drug taking and a rise in people who are experiencing mental health crises without support.

Rev Conant said: "These recent burglaries, as well as some of the other antisocial behaviour we have encountered, are a reminder of the desperate situations that many in our community find themselves in, whether that be because of poverty, fear, substance abuse, poor mental health or some combination of all of these."

Rev Conant explained that the

antisocial incidents have meant that St Mary's has had to "carefully balance [its] commitment to welcoming all alongside [its] responsibility to keep others safe". She added: "All people are welcome at St Mary's, but not all behaviours are welcome."

The church underwent a twelve-month regeneration project through 2022, and was re-opened in December last year. Prior to the church's re-opening it was not open most days, but it now welcomes visitors throughout the entire week. The church building also houses the independent Froth & Rind cafe and an exhibition space with a permanent history display about St Mary's.

St Mary's began its regeneration project after an architect's report in 2015 indicated the church had to make urgent repairs to its building. The report prompted the church to look at how it could better serve the community around it. Earlier this year, the church's £3.4million revamp was recognised and nominated for a prestigious New London Architecture Award.



## Walthamstow to Finchley 'Superloop' bus route launches

A brand new Transport for London (TfL) 'Superloop' bus route connecting Walthamstow with Finchley launched on 9th December.

The SL1 bus launch comes after the SL10 route between Harrow and North Finchley went into operation on 25th November. The Superloop, which is a ring of express bus routes connecting outer London boroughs, was first announced in May.

The SL1 route runs alongside part of the existing route 221 between North Finchley and New Southgate and part of route 34 between Arnos Grove and Walthamstow. It includes stops at Crooked Billet, Walthamstow Bell Corner and Walthamstow Market, as well as Walthamstow Central which serves as the route's terminus.

The SL1 also stops in Chingford, following "positive feedback" TfL received in its consultation round for the service, and stops at travel connections like New Southgate, Arnos Grove and Silver Street stations.

At Walthamstow Central, the SL1 will connect with future route SL2, which will take riders to the Royal Docks and include stops in Gants Hill, Ilford, Barking and Gallions Reach.

The full loop of the Superloop will be complete by this spring, as the SL2, SL3 and SL5 enter service.

The express bus runs every twelve minutes Monday to Saturday and every 15 minutes on evenings and Sundays. This service, combined with bus route 34, will mean customers can expect a bus every five to six minutes during Monday to Saturday, up from every eight minutes previously.

## Leyton 'warm hub' opens doors for winter

The Seddon Centre is open every Wednesday afternoon. It aims to support local people battling rising living costs and social isolation

A 'warm hub' has opened its doors in Leyton to help those struggling to heat their homes this winter.

Housing association and social landlord London & Quadrant (L&Q) ran its free warm hub at the Seddon Centre in Leyton last winter, and is open again every Wednesday from 12-4pm.

L&Q describe the hub as a "warm, friendly space for people to come and get a hot drink, make friends, play games and engage with staff who can offer free employment and financial advice".

Last winter, three of the social landlord's flagship community centres hosted warm hubs. According to L&Q, 144 residents visited in total, with attendance



The Seddon Centre Credit L&Q

going up each month it was open.

Matt Corbett, director of L&Q Foundation said: "The cost of living remains a real challenge for

low-income households. We surveyed our residents last year and found that 60% expected they would have to choose between

heating and eating over the winter. This was before the higher costs for heating homes took hold – with Ofgem announcing that energy prices will rise again in January.

"In times of economic hardship, our duty to help those that are less well-off is more important than ever. That's why we're re-opening our hubs this year, offering local people a warm meeting place and home away from home."

Last winter, Waltham Forest Council used 44 buildings and community venues across the borough to offer residents support and advice. The venues used were either community living rooms, community kitchens, or libraries.

The Seddon Centre is at 33 Clydes Place, E10 5AS.

## CRIME

A police cordon on Cheney Row Park last year  
Credit Penny Dampier



## Man who fled to Caribbean found guilty of party murder

### Chase Griffith murdered Sam Brown at Cheney Row Park in July 2022

by Marco Marcelline

A man who fled to the Caribbean in a bid to evade police has been found guilty of the murder of 28-year-old Sam Brown in Walthamstow.

Chase Griffith, 22, of Ashfield Parade in Southgate, shot and killed Sam at a party in Cheney Row Park in Higham Hill on 24th July 2022.

Griffith fled to Saint Lucia following the murder and was extradited back to the UK in December 2022.

Detective Chief Inspector Kelly Allen, who led the investigation, said: "This conviction brings an end to a long and painstaking investigation by officers from the Met assisted by colleagues at the National Crime Agency. I am very grateful for their assistance with the extradition of Griffith."

"Sam Brown was gunned down in the street by Chase Griffith in an act of perceived revenge following a stabbing that had taken place earlier that night. Griffith then fled the country to Saint

Lucia, while Sam's family grieved his brutal murder.

"Thanks to diligent detective work, using CCTV and other forensic evidence, a watertight case was built against Griffith allowing his arrest and extradition back to the UK to face justice. Sam's family are very much in my thoughts today. I once again wish to express my deepest sympathy to them."

In a statement provided by the Met, Sam's family said: "We will never have any closure to what actually happened to our son that night. We all have to move on with our lives as we know that's what Sam would want us to do. He will always be our angel and never forgotten."

The court heard how Griffith and Sam attended a party where around 150 people were present in Cheney Row Park, Walthamstow on 23rd July last year.

In the early hours of the following morning (24th July) a man at the party was taken to hospital with a stab wound. In the aftermath of the stabbing, Griffith produced a firearm and, believing Sam was in some way responsible, shot him in the street.

According to police, Sam staggered into his car and managed to drive a short distance before falling unconscious. He later succumbed to his injuries in hospital.

Following the shooting, Griffith fled the scene and travelled to the Southgate area. After arriving home, the court heard how he attempted to cover his tracks by

disposing of a distinctive tracksuit he was wearing.

Three days later Chase boarded a flight to Saint Lucia in the Caribbean from Gatwick Airport, and in a further attempt to confuse police, he had cut his hair.

He remained in Saint Lucia until his extradition to Gatwick Airport on 8th December.

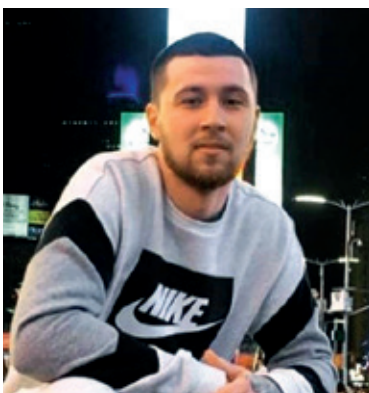
Detective Chief Inspector Allen added: "This was a challenging investigation. Although numerous people were at this gathering and many witnessed Griffith shooting Sam, people were reluctant to come forward and speak to police."

"However, through forensic CCTV analysis and meticulous investigative work using mobile phone data, we were able to conclusively prove Griffith was the person responsible for this murder. I am pleased that the hard work of the investigating team has paid off and a dangerous individual has been held to account for this callous murder."

Griffith will be sentenced at the Old Bailey on 12th January.



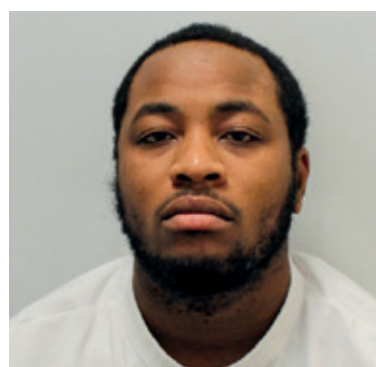
Chase Griffith Credit Met Police



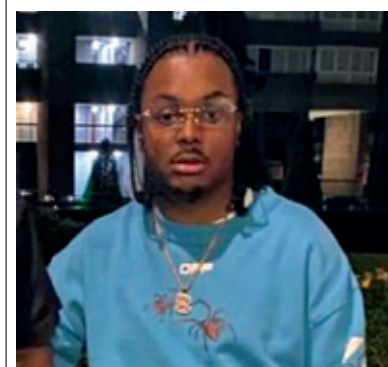
Sam Brown was murdered at a party, Credit Met Police

## Leyton killer among four convicted of Walthamstow murder

*Kammar Henry-Richards was one of four who killed Kacey Boothe as he was leaving a child's birthday party in Forest Rise last August*



Kammar Henry Richards was convicted of murder in December Credit Met Police



Kacey Boothe was shot as he was leaving a child's birthday party Credit Met Police

Four men have been convicted of murdering Kacey Boothe in Walthamstow last summer.

The 25-year-old from Stratford was shot in Forest Rise at around 9.30pm on 13th August 2022, and later died in hospital.

Following a ten-week trial at the Old Bailey Kammar Henry-Richards, from Leyton, was found guilty of murder alongside Ka'mani Brightly-Donaldson, Joao Pateco-te and Jeffrey Gyimah.

The four were also convicted of conspiracy to murder another man and conspiracy to possess a firearm with intent to endanger life.

Kacey was shot as he left a children's birthday party at Peterhouse Community Centre. Police said the murder took place "against a background of violent incidents" between two gangs of which the defendants and Kacey were associated with.

Detective Chief Inspector Larry

"I am pleased to see these men held responsible for their actions and hope this serves as a warning to other people who involve themselves in gang related violence, that we will take robust action."

"Ultimately, a family have lost their loved one and for this my thoughts remain with Kacey's family and friends at this time. I hope today's verdict will help them to move forward."

A fifth man, Roody Thomas, previously pleaded guilty to possession of a firearm.

All five will be sentenced at the Old Bailey at a later date to be confirmed in January, police said.

## Police appeal for witnesses after Leyton Station 'arson attack'

Police are still appealing for witnesses to a suspected arson attack on a Central Line train at Leyton Station on 2nd December.

In a video of the incident posted on Twitter/X by London & UK Street News, smoke can be seen billowing out of an empty tube carriage. A small blaze is seen at the far-end of the carriage while people watch on the platform.

According to the British Transport Police (BTP), who are investigating the blaze, the affected tube pulled into Leyton Station at around 10.13pm.

In a statement to the *Echo*, the BTP said that officers were called just before 11.50pm to a report of a bag that had "melted into the floor of the train". It is unclear whether the train carriage was already ablaze before the train pulled into Leyton Station.

No arrests have yet been made.

ARTS & CULTURE

From aerial hoops to human-sized balloons, the circus acts kept the audience on their toes **Credit** Michael Lynch

An absolute ruckus!



Selin Azimkar reviews Revel Puck Circus’ festive show at Fellowship Square, finding it to be a celebration of joy and community

In the heart of Walthamstow, a progressive circus takes centre stage, captivating audiences with a fresh approach to the longstanding art form. Meet the Revel Puck Circus, a talented and innovative troupe that emerged in 2018, determined to redefine the public perception of circuses. The circus show has been entertaining Waltham Forest residents since its debut in Leyton Jubilee Park in 2021, and last month they took their big top tent to the town hall for a festive residency called *The Ruckus*,

which absolutely lived up to its name. In Shakespeare’s *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, Oberon, the king of fairies, instructs Puck, a powerful, mischievous, and humorous fairy, to use the juice of a magical flower to ensure that characters fall in love with the next person they see. It is no secret that Puck the fairy and the Revel Puck Circus both use the power of whimsical and fantasy-infused magic. The Revel Puck Circus performers create a spell-binding show that leaves their audience

enchanted and captivated in their fascinating realm of entertainment. Drawing a parallel to the magical flower that Puck uses in Shakespeare’s play, the Revel Puck Circus harnesses a similar enchantment. Instead of a mystical potion, the magic there lies in the circus performers’ artistry, skill, and sheer brilliance. As Puck’s love potion causes characters to love the first person they see, the circus’s enchanting acts and dazzling displays have a comparable effect on their audience. The

Revel Puck Circus audience is drawn into a world of wonder and whimsy, where every performance exhibits pure magic. Just like Puck’s antics led to humorous and unpredictable performances, *The Ruckus* encourages the audience’s laughter with random and comedic performances. This fun comedy on stage fosters a connection and love for the performances and characters in the show. An embodiment of the spirit Shakespeare’s Puck brought to life centuries ago, the show dazzles as each performer’s talents, skills, and friendly stage presence create an enchanting performance. No laws of artistic tradition are set in stone; not even the rule of gravity. Performers dance in the air, quite literally, raising the stakes of wonder and entertainment for their audiences. Under the big top, the circus’s talented performers shock audiences with hair-hanging acrobats, human-sized balloons, dancing gymnastics and much more. Daisy Minto, Revel Puck Circus’ marketing manager, delved into the circus’s artistic mission, creative process, and commitment to community engagement. With the team’s fresh approach to circus artistry, Daisy explained: “We strive to educate our audiences on modern circuses and what we are. We want people to feel confident and trust in what we do.” Daisy explained that “challenges lead to positive outcomes” in the team’s artistic vision and performances. Their ever-evolving performances will always embrace these challenges. Each show will be “a performance you can’t believe until you see it. Every five minutes, there’s truly something you haven’t seen before. All the artists have a very specific relationship to their disciplines. They are always inventing and coming up with new ways to perform”. Moving forwards, Revel Puck strives to gain a permanent location for their tent and are encouraging the public to speak to the council to encourage space for the formation of Revel Puck Circus’s permanent home.

**Check what Revel Puck Circus are up to next by signing up to their newsletter on their website:** [revelpuckcircus.com](http://revelpuckcircus.com)



Credit Michael Lynch



Credit Michael Lynch

## ENVIRONMENT

## Nature notes

Kelly Bewers takes a winter walk among the ancient oaks and inquisitive squirrels at Hollow Pond, Leytonstone



A wintry Hollow Pond

Epping Forest is a protected strip of ancient woodland that stretches like a curled finger across 5,900 acres from Epping all the way down to the heart of East London.

And it is here, nestled between Whipps Cross Road and Hollybush Hill in Leytonstone, that we find Hollow Pond, one of my favourite local green spaces.

Like the colourful history of Epping Forest, also known as the 'People's Forest' for the successful protest movement in the late 19th Century that resisted enclosure by the Crown and ensured the forest remained accessible as common land for all, Hollow Pond has its own curious social history.

In the late 1800s gravel was extracted from the land to support road building in the area. This ceased in 1878 but left a series of water-filled pits on marshy land. In 1905 a group of unemployed labourers were engaged by the council to expand the lake, creating the pools and islands we enjoy today.

To the north of the site, one of these ponds became a popular public bathing pool, fed by natural springs. It was beset by silt build up, so in 1923 the local authority invested £7,000 to develop it into a lido; the largest in Britain at the time. Much loved by the local community it

was sadly closed in 1983 due to ongoing hygiene problems.

In the winter months our local green spaces might feel bare and uninviting. The short days and harsh weather can impact our mood and sense of wellbeing. But look a little closer and nature still has plenty of delights to offer and a stroll around Hollow Pond can be restorative.

Hundreds of oak trees gather around the banks of the pond like still and silent sentinels. Without leaves you can appreciate the incredible tree architecture, the lacing of branches, the unusual bend of a trunk, the lofty height of reaching limbs, the texture of the bark.

I'm always amazed at how the oaks on the eastern side of the pond seem to grow in gravity-defying directions, creating incredible shapes and shadows. As you wander among the trees, perhaps stretch out your own limbs and reach up to the sky. Unfold from the winter curling in and remember that you are a body too!

A January walk here will undoubtedly involve mud. The paths and puddles are definitely not to be trodden in your favourite shoes. Noticing the soil during winter is another way to bring awareness to the seasonal cycles. Although the landscape during winter might seem colourless and sparse, the magic is all happening

underground.

Deep beneath the brown clay and soggy earth, seeds of bluebells, daffodils and spring's wildflowers are being enriched. The debris from autumn's fallen leaves are nourishing new growth.

Not everything is hibernating at Hollow Pond. Despite the cold and frost, squirrels always abound. Scurrying from tree to tree, making brave leaps among the branches and pausing to stare curiously as you walk beneath them. Stay awhile to watch as they explore, gathering in nuts and acorns. Look closely at the forest floor and see what you can see; a feather, a stone, a mushroom or a sprig of holly.

Finally, look out across the water and you'll see mallard ducks, Canada geese and great white swans floating gracefully. You might even see the heron. I find him most often on the north-eastern edge, tucked into the marshy shallows, still as a statue, waiting to dart his sharp beak into the water for a silty breakfast.

Ours is the only London borough with 'forest' in its name, so let's celebrate Waltham Forest's wild places this winter and maybe we'll even learn something about ourselves from the wisdom and magic they reveal.

*Hollow Pond is a 20-minute walk from Leytonstone Station.*

## Parents criticise MP's climate votes



Families gathered at Higham Park to protest the Chingford MP's climate record  
Credit Joanne Warren Moore

A group of Highams Park parents have taken Chingford MP Iain Duncan Smith to task on his environmental voting record.

At a small protest on 25th November, the parents highlighted the MP's climate record, such as voting to dump sewage in rivers, lakes and seas and his support for new UK oil and gas exploration.

Local constituent and mum of one, Jessica Bridges, said she was "really disappointed" to learn about the Chingford and Woodford Green MP's voting history on climate issues.

She said: "He's consistently used his voting power in parliament to block progress on issues like fracking bans, and he voted against stopping water companies dumping sewage in rivers and lakes. Like many people who live on the fringes of Epping Forest I care about our environment and I find it concerning that he doesn't appear to."

According to the website TheyWorkForYou, which collects and aggregates the parliamentary voting records of MPs, Iain Duncan Smith has "generally voted against measures to prevent climate change".

Iain Duncan Smith's office did not respond to a request for comment.

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### LICENSING ACT 2003 Application for the Variation of a Premises Licence

Notice is hereby given that **Halil Yasar** has applied to the London Borough of Waltham Forest for the grant of a Premises Licence at **Buy And Save 251/255 High Street, Walthamstow E17 7BH**. The nature of the application is as follows:

- The variation of the premises plans to add the **Unit No 251 to existing premises licence no: f01517253-/1**

The Licensing register listing full details of the application is kept by the Licensing Service, Waltham Forest Town Hall, Fellowship Square, Forest Road, London E17 4JF. The application may be viewed Monday to Friday between the hours of 9am-5pm (except Bank Holidays).

Any person wishing to make a representation in respect of the above activities may do so in writing to the Licensing Service, Waltham Forest Town Hall, Fellowship Square, Forest Road, London E17 4JF or via email: [Licensing@walthamforest.gov.uk](mailto:Licensing@walthamforest.gov.uk)

Representations must be received no later than **25/01/2024**.

It is an offence to knowingly or recklessly make a false statement in connection with this application. A person is liable to an unlimited fine on conviction should such a false statement be made.

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### LICENSING ACT 2003 Notice Of Application For A Premises Licence

Notice is given that **JPHA LTD** has applied to London Borough of Waltham Forest Licensing Authority for a Premises Licence under the Licensing Act 2003.

- **Premises:** Unit T2, Leyton Industrial Village, Argall Ave, London E10 7QP
- **The licensable activities and timings are:** Sale of alcohol (off the premises), Monday-Sunday, 00:00am-23:59pm

The Licensing register listing full details of the application is kept by the Licensing Section, Town Hall, Fellowship Square, Forest Road, Walthamstow, London E17 4JF. The application may be viewed Monday to Friday between the hours of 9am - 5pm (except Bank Holidays).

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Representations must be received no later than **18th January 2024**.

It is an offence to knowingly or recklessly make a false statement in connection with this application. A person is liable to an unlimited fine on conviction should such a false statement be made.

# AROUND THE BOROUGH

## LEYTONSTONE

### Hundreds turn out to mark Leytonstone Menorah lighting



Mayor Roy Berg (right) at the Leytonstone menorah lighting on Sunday 10th December  
Credit Ruth Schryber

Over 250 people from the local community attended the fifth annual menorah lighting outside Leytonstone Station on Sunday 10th December.

The guests enjoyed traditional doughnuts, latkes and steaming hot chocolate, as well as live music.

Entertainment came in the shape of local band Stew Curtis' Klezmer Without Borders, with virtuoso jazz reedsman Stew Curtis on sax, Mark Adelman on keyboards, Rob Rickenberg on bass and Guy Dewar on drums. Guests were also treated to a

fast-paced martial arts inspired LED light show from Manic of Infinity Circus.

The shamash was lit by mayor of Waltham Forest Roy Berg and the blessings for Fourth Night of Chanukah were sung by Chazzan Menorah Scharf. Following this, the crowd joined in for *Mo'az Tzur*, a prelude to further spirited singing well into the evening including Jewish anthems such as *Am Yisroel Chai* and a rendition of *Acheynu* sung by Turan Webb and Fyvish Honig.

Leytonstone and Wanstead Synagogue's Rabbi Yitzchok Austin addressed the crowd of local Shul members, visitors, friends and local dignitaries, including councillors and Waltham Forest Council representatives such as leader Grace Williams, and London Assembly member Sem Moema.

## WHIPPS CROSS

### Hospital cleaners, caterers, and laundry staff go on Christmas strike

Caterers, porters, cleaners, and laundry workers at Whipps Cross went on strike over the Christmas period.

The strike is a ramping up of Unite's ongoing dispute with Barts Health NHS Trust over "unsafe" staffing levels and inadequate pay. Barts Health manages Whipps Cross Hospital along with six other London hospitals.

Synergy staff took strike action between 18th – 26th December, while NHS facilities staff walked out between 18th – 22nd December and on Christmas Day and Boxing Day.

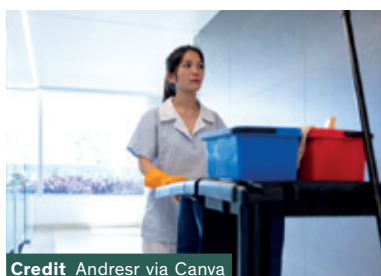
Synergy is an outsourced company providing linen and laundry services to the NHS. In autumn, Synergy staff at Barts joined doctors and consultants on strike.

Additional staff from the East and South East London pathology partnership, who work in

haematology, biochemistry, and blood transfusion laboratories at Whipps Cross, also joined the dispute. Unite says their action comes "due to anger over an imposed restructure that [staff] believe will put patient safety at risk".

In October, it was revealed that Barts Health will join with Barking, Havering and Redbridge University Hospitals Trust (BHRUT) to become "one group" called Barts NHS Group. The trusts are set to merge into one executive board by April 2025.

Over 1,000 workers at the trust



Credit Andresr via Canva

are in dispute over pay, safe staffing levels, bank rates and lump-sum payments. Unite says that workers are experiencing staff shortages which threaten patient safety and the welfare of staff.

The strikes caused significant disruption to catering, portering, cleaning and facilities maintenance over the festive period.

Unite general secretary Sharon Graham said: "Barts could easily end this dispute but it is refusing to agree to Unite's reasonable demands. Our NHS members are fighting for fair pay and to put an end to dangerously low levels of staffing.

"It is an outrage that our members at Barts, who are some of the lowest paid staff in the NHS and who are struggling during this cost of living crisis, have been denied the lump-sum payment they are entitled to."

## WALTHAMSTOW

### Woman dies after being struck by bus at Walthamstow Bus Station

A woman in her 70s died after being hit by a route 212 bus at Walthamstow Bus Station on 15th December.

The bus station was closed overnight while an investigation was carried out. It reopened just before 6.25am the next morning, Waltham Forest Council said.

The name and identity of the woman, who was pronounced dead at the scene, has not yet been revealed by police.

According to a Transport for London (TfL) spokesperson, the operator of the bus involved in the crash was Go Ahead London. The police are leading an investigation with the support of TfL, the spokesperson confirmed.

When asked if a bus driver had resigned or been suspended, TfL refused to comment citing "ongoing" investigations.

In a statement, TfL said: "We are extremely saddened that a woman has tragically

died after a collision with a bus and our thoughts are with their family and friends. We are working urgently with the operator, Go-Ahead London, and the police to investigate what happened. We are thinking of everyone affected by this incident and will support everyone however we can."

The Metropolitan Police said it was called at around 5.15pm on 15th December "to a collision between a bus and a pedestrian at Walthamstow Bus Station".

Responding to the fatality, Walthamstow MP Stella Creasy tweeted that she was "devastated by the incident at Walthamstow bus station – thoughts very much with the friends and family".

There has been no reported arrest and witnesses who are yet to speak to police are asked to call 101 quoting reference number 5575/15dec.

## LEYTON

### Refugee welcome hub opens at Lea Bridge Library

The council opened a welcome hub for refugees at Lea Bridge Library last month, after successfully applying for Waltham Forest to become a sanctuary borough.

The new hub, which opened on 14th December, aims to provide support across a range of areas to residents from refugee and migrant backgrounds, including people seeking asylum.

Council leader Grace Williams said: "I'm proud that we have been recognised as an official 'Borough of Sanctuary'. Waltham Forest has gained so much from people who have come here from around the world and enriched our community."

Over the last few years, the



Council leader Grace Williams (centre) with community volunteers Mo (left) and Talal (right) at the opening on 14th December Credit Waltham Forest Council

borough has welcomed refugees from Ukraine, Afghanistan and Syria who all arrived as part of the government's dedicated resettlement schemes. More than 400 people seeking asylum, including children, have been placed in two contingency hotels in the borough by the Home Office.

## SPORT



# Meet Stow FC's star pitch side interviewer

David O'Driscoll speaks to JJ Sadowski, the man behind the football club's YouTube channel Stow TV

It's not often that football columns turn their focus away from the players, but I couldn't miss the chance to speak to the main man behind Stow TV.

JJ Sadowski has been conducting interviews with players, managers, and representatives of the club post-match for some years now. JJ, who has gained plaudits for his very natural and informal interviewing style, tells me there's also much more to what he does to keep the Stow FC show on the road.

"I started supporting them ten years ago when they were called Waltham Forest. I come down to hang out with my mate Andrzej Perkins." Perkins is Stow FC's communications manager and since then has enlisted JJ in multiple roles over the years.

He explains: "I'm involved in pretty much everything. From around midday on match day, I'm at Wadham Lodge sorting out the changing rooms, checking on the pitch, trying to get everything as ready as possible." JJ is also involved post-match, entertaining the opposing team's officials and sorting out refreshments.

In a previous life JJ was a Leyton Orient fan but nowadays he's 100% behind Walthamstow FC. A reason why he took to Stow was because of how seriously they take their community responsibilities, he says.

JJ employed his informal interviewing style after noticing that a colleague's formal approach did not prompt much of a response from players. "These guys have interesting stories; you just need to find a

way to get to them. I felt that [happened] once [I] started talking to the players [normally]. Since then, I've sort of developed my style."

JJ's Stow FC highlight so far was the "magical" day when the club won the Essex Senior League in 2022 in front of a bumper crowd at Wadham Lodge. Despite a currently tricky period, he feels the team could still be successful this year and "hopefully" reach the play offs.

Through talking to him I came to realise the extraordinary number of other roles he plays at Walthamstow. His work can often go unnoticed and unappreciated, yet he is vital to maintaining a non-league community club with a small budget.

You can watch JJ's pitch side interviews on Walthamstow FC's YouTube channel: [youtube.com/walthamstowfc](https://youtube.com/walthamstowfc)

## LETTERS

# Crematorium objection

Dear WFE

I SHARE ALL OBJECTIONS TO the current proposal by the council to disrespectfully build a new crematorium in Chingford Mount Cemetery.

Any imposition of a crematorium would impede the existing public rights of way and would lead to increased motor vehicle pollution from high volumes of daily traffic congestion.

To create a crematorium in Chingford Mount Cemetery would be disrespectful to the dead and distressing to the living as well as thousands of bereaved families. It would also impede

upon access to the Royal British Legion and Commonwealth World War One/Two graves. Access to processional ceremonial events, acts of remembrance at the consecrated war monument and garden of remembrance would also be affected.

I ask that the council looks again to find a practical solution if it appears a new crematorium is in fact required. It can be possible to use a less congested traffic zone like Sewardstone Road where there is already a simultaneous planning consent and safest planning option available.

Patrick Smith  
Chingford

# Cut the NHS some slack

Dear WFE

I MEET LOTS OF LOCAL people in the course of various voluntary tasks. It's sometimes difficult to avoid hearing worries and grumbles about GP services being bad. But we don't seem to devote the same energy to celebrating them when they're good?

A couple of weeks ago I went along to my practice to ask for a face-to-face appointment. I was braced for third degree triage, a steer towards doing it by phone, and, if lucky, a slot in two weeks.

What did I get? An appointment in less than 48 hours. Once there I was seen bang on time.

I was carefully listened to (for more than ten minutes!) and I got a referral for a couple of procedures 'to be on the safe side'. That very afternoon I got phone calls from the two different institutions involved to arrange appointments before Christmas.

And no, I am not at death's door; I'd just amassed a list of a few health queries and concerns. We all know GPs are having a tough time but they are trying very hard to get things right for us. I'm sure it helps a lot if we can be cheerful, polite and focused when going.

Jane Harrington  
Walthamstow

Email your letters to [wfecho@socialspider.com](mailto:wfecho@socialspider.com) by Monday 15th January

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