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Dec 2025, N° 129

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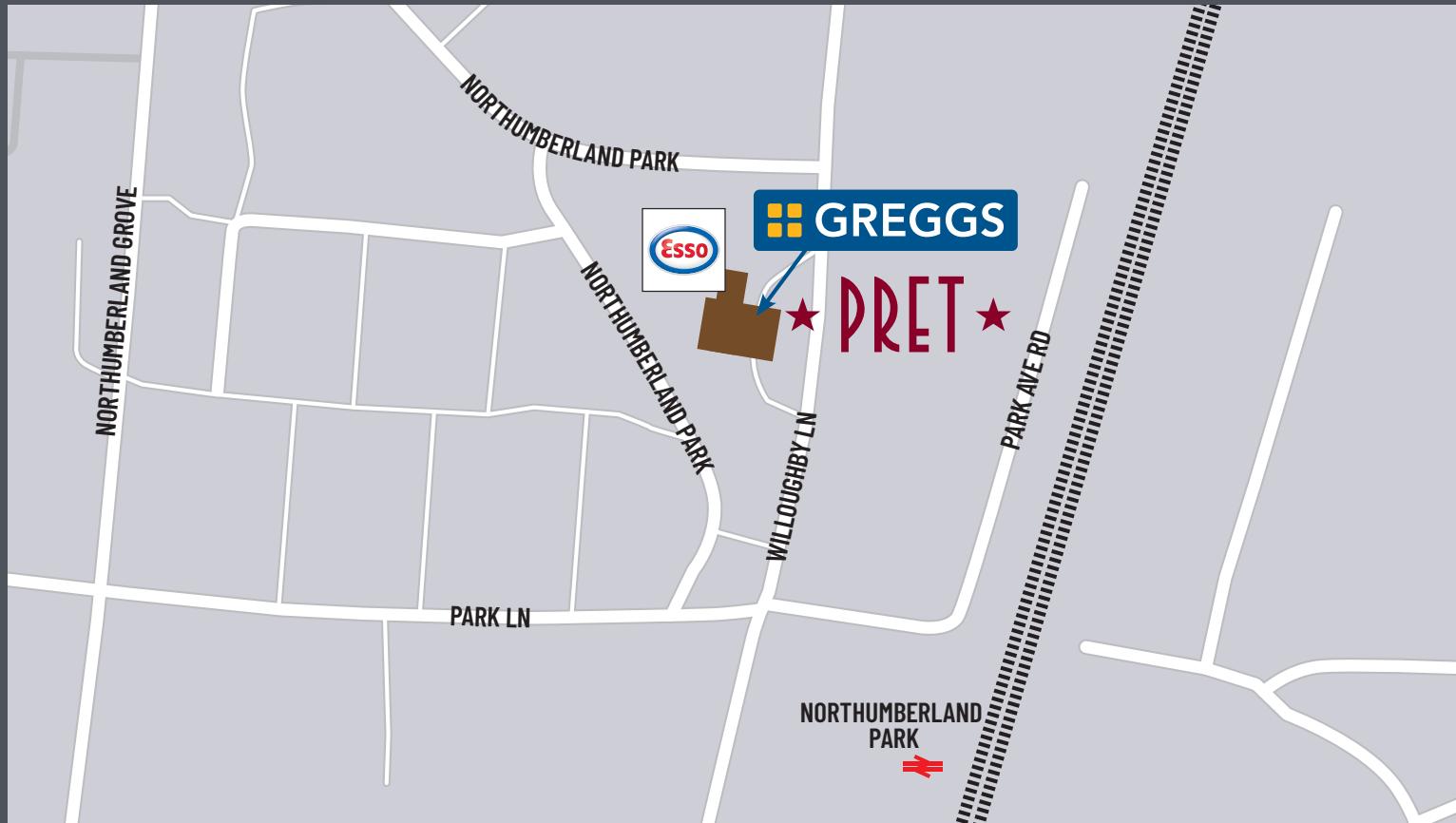
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An aerial view of Coppermill Treatment Centre in Walthamstow Credit Russss, CC BY-SA 4.0 via Wikimedia Commons



Alarm at state of 'crumbling' Thames Water site in Walthamstow

by Marco Marcelline

Concern is growing at the state of Thames Water's ageing Coppermills Water Treatment Works in Walthamstow, amid reports a "single fault" could cut off water supply for millions of Londoners.

The Walthamstow site is Thames

Water's main treatment works in London and provides water to approximately three million people.

Interruptions stemming from a failure at Coppermills could leave Londoners unable to use their showers, or flush their toilets.

In its business plan for 2025-2030, Thames Water states that

such an interruption could mean customers going without water for a "significant period of time".

Thames Water is understood to have first relayed concerns of the potential for "serious" risks to the water supply at Coppermills to watchdog Ofwat in 2019, when it presented an investment plan for improvements.

However, that £350million plan for works including algal pre-treatment and duplication of the high-lift pumping station, was slapped down.

In its refusal, Ofwat said Thames Water's supplied case for the works was "weak", stating there

Continued on Page-2

Waltham Forest 'consistently mishandled' housing repairs

Sebastian Mann,
Local Democracy Reporter

Poor handling of repairs was a "consistent theme" in complaints made by social tenants against Waltham Forest Council, the Housing Ombudsman says.

The ombudsman opened an investigation into Waltham Forest Council due to a high rate of maladministration and severe maladministration cases.

Severe maladministration – the highest tier of mistake – is defined by the ombudsman as a landlord failing to act or doing something they should not.

As a social landlord, the town hall is responsible for ensuring the structure of a council-owned property is kept in good condition. Complaints go through the authority first, and the ombudsman investigates those that have not been resolved.

In a recent report, the ombudsman said: "Poor handling of complaints and repairs, particularly leaks, damp and mould, were consistent themes in our casework.

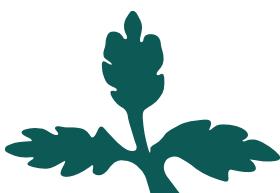
"In the [Waltham Forest] cases we reviewed, we saw insufficient compensation, delays in issuing complaints responses, and a dismissive tone in some letters.

"We also found delays in resolving repairs, particularly leaks. The [council] also showed difficulties in accessing its homes and incomplete or brief repair records."

The council has published a learning statement, in which it outlines its plans to enhance staff

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NEWS



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Editor
Marco Marcelline
Designer
Jonathan Duncan
Head of Advertising
Klaudia Kiss
Local Democracy
Reporter
Sebastian Mann
Contributors
Melissa Brown,
Angry Dan, Jake Green,
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David Floyd, Social Spider CIC,
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Contact
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Published on 28/11/25

Continued from Page-1

had been "poor risk analysis, inconsistent prioritisation, and an absence of evidence showing that Coppermills-related investments were optimal or urgent relative to other risks".

Ofwat also admonished Thames Water for wanting to wait until 2025-30 for works, describing the delay as "not appropriate" in the context of the potential water supply risks at Coppermills outlined by the company.

Instead of approving the investment plan, Ofwat granted a conditional £180m for Thames Water to immediately re-evaluate its Coppermill proposal and undertake a rigorous resilience assessment.

Ofwat eventually approved a £400m improvements package last year, with the money going towards replacing the pumping station, a new electricity substation, slow sand filter recirculation system, as well as fresh pipes, chambers and control structures both above and below ground.

But the work, which will begin in spring 2026 and finish in summer 2032, has raised alarm due to the view that works are happening too late.

In July, Sir Jon Cunliffe, a former deputy governor of the Bank of England, said in a speech announcing the findings of his independent review into the water



sector that the Walthamstow facility "is on its last legs", adding that the fact the site is only now being overhauled is indicative of "a patch and mend approach".

Speaking to the *Financial Times*, Cunliffe said when he visited Coppermills earlier this year, water was leaking into the engine hall that houses electrical pumps.

He said: "I'm not suggesting it will fail, but why is this [work] just starting now when I can see the water coming through the roof and they're telling me it's been like that for years?"

Areas of specific concern are the centre's 1960s high lift pumping station, failure of the slow sand filtration process, and drainage issues in the contact tank.

The *Echo* understands that there was a microbiological inci-

dent in March 2023 caused by untreated water entering the contact tank. The water contained cryptosporidium, a microscopic parasite that can cause a potentially dangerous illness called cryptosporidiosis. The parasite thrives in the intestines of infected humans and animals and is passed out in their faeces.

According to the UK Health Security Agency, cryptosporidiosis symptoms include severe watery diarrhoea, vomiting, stomach cramps, nausea, fever, and loss of appetite. It can last for around two weeks and anyone can catch it although it is particularly common in children between the ages of one and five.

In response to the contamination incident, the Drinking Water Inspectorate issued Coppermills with a notice enforcing it to continuously sample its water for cryptosporidium. The notice additionally mentions the centre must check for any "animal ingress" into any exposed open-air treatment stages, and carry out "appropriate analysis and disposal of any animal carcasses".

Thames Water said in a statement: "Thames Water has the oldest and most complex assets in the country and that is why we have embarked on the largest ever investment programme, delivering the biggest upgrade to our network in 150 years.

We have ambitious plans to deliver improvements over the next five years by investing more than £20bn to address asset health."

"Our £400m work for Coppermills is part of our planned investment to secure the ongoing resilience of our assets in light of London's growing population and climate change. Taken together, these investments will help secure an ongoing supply of safe, clean, wholesome drinking water to our customers."

Thames Water added that it took water quality "extremely seriously". "Since 2010 more than 99.95% of tests taken from customers' taps met the standard required by UK legislation.

"There have been no deficiencies in the treatment process at our water treatment works."

Ofwat was contacted for comment.

How water is treated at Coppermills

At Coppermills, the water undergoes two rounds of filtration: first, the rapid gravity filters remove substantial amounts of sediment.

Ozone gas is then introduced into the water in order to eradicate bacteria and oxidise pesticides.

The water then flows through slow sand filters, which have a biofilm layer that treats contaminants and removes finer sediments.

Finally, the water receives a dose of chlorine before being reintroduced into the system.

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INTERVIEW

The magic behind Soho Theatre's 'The Elmer Adventure'

This Christmas, Tall Stories' magical adaptation of the much-loved Elmer books by David McKee, will bring colour and cheer to the newly opened Soho Theatre Walthamstow, in a festive run of The Elmer Adventure for all the family from Saturday 20th December 2025 to Sunday 4th January 2026. We spoke with the show's artistic director Toby Mitchell.

What should we expect from this show?
Toby Mitchell: A whole lot of colour, warmth and laughter! We're weaving together three of David McKee's classics (*Elmer*, *Elmer and the Tune*, *Elmer and the Hippos*), so audiences will get a real sense of adventure and fun.

You'll step into a jungle campsite alongside our storytellers as they search for that patchwork elephant. There's playful puppetry, live music, funny moments, and even a few surprises for the audience. It's made for everyone – little ones, grown-ups, grandparents – because it's about friendship, uniqueness, and finding joy in being yourself.



The Elmer Adventure will grace Soho Theatre Walthamstow's stage from Saturday 20th December. Credits: Mark Senior

What's been the best part of putting this show together?

TM: Knowing how beloved Elmer the Patchwork Elephant is and bringing him

to life for audiences has been really exciting. Building the world of the show from scratch with lots of talented actors along the way as well as imagining how Elmer

might appear onstage with the help of our brilliant puppet designer, Yvonne Stone.

Why should families get tickets for it?
TM: It's a festive treat for all the family that's right on your doorstep! There's something lovely about heading to a local theatre together, especially during the holidays and getting that much needed time together creating happy memories whilst sparking imagination.

Tell us more about Tall Stories and previous shows they've put on!

TM: Tall Stories has been around since 1997, when Olivia Jacobs and I started the company with the idea of making playful, imaginative shows for families. Since then we've created a whole range of productions, from *The Gruffalo* to *Room on the Broom* and *The Smeds and The Smoos*, and we've been lucky enough to take them all over the world, from the West End and Broadway to the Sydney Opera House!

Tickets are available from £12 at sohotheatre.com

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NEWS

Credit Revel Puck Circus



Performers from The Revel Puck Circus, which is making its triumphant return to Walthamstow this festive season. With fun for all the family, visitors can catch the show in Walthamstow Town Square from Thursday 4th December until Sunday 4th January. Find out more: revelpuckcircus.com

Council could need bailout within 18 months, leader warns

Waltham Forest Council leader Grace Williams has said the town hall could be forced to request a bailout by the end of 2027 as reserves fell by £17m last year

by Sebastian Mann,
Local Democracy Reporter

The town hall may be forced to request exceptional financial support (EFS) from the government within the next 18 months, council leader Grace Williams has admitted.

Her warning comes after it was revealed the council entered the current financial year with £40million in reserves, £17m down from its position last April. It spent a total of £19.1m in those twelve months, while adding just £1.8m.

Central reserves act as a financial safety net for emergencies and unexpected costs. They are often used to plug budget gaps, such as those faced by Waltham Forest.

The council overspent by £24m

in 2024/25. The bulk of the overspend went on social care, which cost the council £15.1m more than it budgeted for.

The latest figures on the council's reserves show that £13m was spent on 'budget strategy,' bringing the total down from £25.6m to £12.5m – dropping by just over half.

Council leader Grace Williams told the Local Democracy Reporting Service (LDRS) that the financial situation was "unsustainable".

She said: "Our core spending power has decreased by over 10% since 2010/11, when adjusted for inflation.

"At the same time, the demand for the services we provide has spiralled. There has been an 80% increase in demand for temporary accommodation over the last two years alone, and we are

caring for more adults with social care needs than ever before."

The government's funding formula is based on data from 2010, which many councils say does not take into account 15 years of demographic changes. In many cases across London, this has led to insufficient funding for social care and children's services.

Harvering Council, in East London, has faced similar pressures on its housing and social care sectors. It entered the current financial year with a budget gap of £74m, which was only plugged by a £88m bailout it will spend the next two decades repaying.

Waltham Forest could end up taking similar measures by the end of 2027, Cllr Williams has warned.

She told the LDRS that top councillors "may need to consider asking for EFS from the

government within the next 18 months if the situation carries on like this."

She added: "The fact that a well-run council like Waltham Forest is even considering an extreme move like this shows how serious the problem facing the local government sector is. This is a direct result of 15 years of inadequate funding."

The Labour group leader says the authority is "working hard" to make the "best use of its limited resources" by reducing agency spend and reviewing the technology we use.

"We are approaching problems using innovation," she added. "For example, our housing sustainment team works to prevent private rental tenants being at risk of homelessness where they may need temporary accommodation."

Homeless to be moved out of borough 'more often'

by Sebastian Mann, Local Democracy Reporter

Waltham Forest Council will re-locate residents outside the borough "more often" as the cost of housing becomes "unsustainable".

Faced with a £23million overspend on temporary accommodation, the council will now focus on "good homes over location".

The new strategy was approved by top councillors at a cabinet meeting last month.

Council leader Grace Williams said the council had a "moral" responsibility to ensure vulnerable residents were being supported, and a "fiscal" responsibility to taxpayers.

"We need to be clear about what we can and cannot do," she said, adding that the council needs to ask how it can "meet our duties to those in housing need who can't afford to live in Waltham Forest".

In the report, green-lit by cabinet members, Joe Garrod, the council's strategic director of place, said officers would "prioritise high-quality temporary accommodation and settled homes, recognising that the rising demand means that we will need to look outside of Waltham Forest more often to find affordable homes for residents".

The strategy says that the growing waiting list for social housing in the borough means that "for most residents, moving into the private rented sector outside Waltham Forest is the most realistic route out of temporary accommodation".

Earlier this year, Cllr Williams told *MyLondon*: "We don't want to send families to the north-east [of England], but if the choice is between being able to settle someone into a home that they can afford or for them to live for months or years in hotels, what would residents think is reasonable what we do?"



Credit Pete F via Unsplash

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NEWS

Council 'bending the rules' in refusing by-election for councillor who missed meetings

Opposition parties have criticised the town hall for following an 'overly liberal' interpretation of the law to prevent a by-election after High Street ward councillor Tom Connor did not attend official meetings for six months

by Marco Marcelline

Waltham Forest Council has been accused by opposition parties of "bending the rules" in its refusal to disqualify a councillor who did not attend any official council meetings for six months.

High Street ward councillor Tom Connor, who sits as an independent, failed to attend council meetings for six months from 25th March.

According to Section 85 of the Local Government Act 1972, councillors are disqualified from holding office if they do not attend any formal council or committee meetings for six consecutive months.

On 25th October, Waltham Forest Tory group leader Emma Best wrote to the council's monitoring officer Mark Hynes stating that conditions for a by-election had been met.

However, in an email seen by the *Echo*, Hynes said Cllr Connor was allowed to keep his seat because he had attended "informal meetings" such as ward panel sessions and councillor surgeries in that six-month period.

Hynes said the council had been



Councillor Tom Connor missed official council meetings for six months
Credit: Waltham Forest Labour

following a "liberal" interpretation, rather than a strict one, of Section 85 since 2021. That year, the council had sought legal advice after an unnamed councillor had also missed six months of official council meetings, Hynes said.

Lawyers had recommended at the time that the council expand their interpretation of the law to include attendance at

meetings where a councillor has been invited in their official capacity as a member of the council, even if those meetings are not official full council or cabinet and committee sessions.

As the unnamed councillor in 2021 had attended such meetings, he was not disqualified from office, and a precedent was thus set for Cllr Connor to retain his seat, Hynes explained.

The *Echo* understands the Walthamstow councillor had attended four surgeries between 25th March and 25th October, in addition to two local ward police meetings.

Conservatives, the Green Party, and Liberal Democrats responded with dismay and anger at the council's refusal to disqualify Cllr Connor.

The Greens attacked the council's "sudden shift" from following a strict interpretation

of the law to a "very liberal" one, stating it raised "serious concerns".

A spokesperson said: "That approach breaks with standard democratic practice and undermines the clear intent of the law, which is to ensure that residents are never left without full representation.

"Waltham Forest residents deserve openness and consistency from their council – not one that bends the rules to suit political convenience."

The Conservative group leader, Cllr Best, said: "We do not understand the reluctance to carry out the necessary actions required of the council. The only people who seem to benefit from this decision are the Labour Party, who would likely lose the by-election in High Street ward.

"This is a matter of respecting both local democracy and the people of High Street ward. We hope that the council will finally do the right thing and call the by-election."

Cllr Connor declined to comment.

In January, he was suspended by the Waltham Forest Labour group for abstaining during a vote to cut council tax support for thousands of residents.

Cllr Connor, who sits on the housing scrutiny and licensing committee, was the only Labour member to abstain during the vote on 12th December 2024.

Explaining his vote, he told the *Echo*: "A decision that would increase the financial hardship of those residents already known to be in poverty is not something I could vote for."

Cllr Connor was elected to represent Hoe Street ward in 2018 before successfully standing for election in High Street in 2022.

A council spokesperson said: "Following advice from Queen's Counsel in 2021, Waltham Forest takes a wide approach to the interpretation of the Local Government Act 1972, Section 85, to give members every legitimate

opportunity to preserve their qualification as a councillor.

"Therefore, attendance by a councillor at ward panels, ward surgeries, and other meetings with officers would meet the legal test of a 'qualifying meeting' at which the councillor has presented as a representative of the council. This advice, which was first received in 2021, continues to be the approach of the council."



Waltham Forest Tory leader Emma Best slammed the council
Credit: London Assembly

Stella Creasy calls government's planned asylum overhaul 'performatively cruel'

by Marco Marcelline

Walthamstow MP Stella Creasy has slammed the Labour government's planned overhaul of the asylum system, calling the plans "performatively cruel and economically misjudged".

The Labour and Co-operative Party MP made the comments in an opinion piece for *The Guardian* on 17th November.

Creasy's criticism came in the wake of Home Secretary Shabana Mahmood's "Denmark-style" plans to end permanent status for refugees, meaning they would

need to reapply to remain in Britain every two-and-a-half years. If their home country is deemed safe, they could be deported.

Mahmood is also planning to extend from five years to 20 the amount of time refugees have to wait to apply for indefinite leave to remain, which can lead to British citizenship.

In response, Creasy wrote the plans would require "ICE-style raids" to remove people and their children from the country.

ICE (Immigration and Customs Enforcement) is a United States government agency that has come under fire from left-wing politicians, activists and human

Walthamstow MP Stella Creasy Credit: UK Parliament



rights groups for its family separations and deportations of undocumented migrants and detention of US citizens.

Referencing the previous Tory government's failed Rwanda plan, Creasy wrote: "The insanity of a 'deterrent' involving deporting four people to Rwanda at a price of £700million is now giving way to ministers breaking more than 70 years of convention to offer not sanctuary but suspicion.

"If and when we give someone sanctuary, the progressive response should be to make integration easier and a priority – not leave them open to exploitation through uncertainty."

NEWS

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NEWS

Preliminary 'station box' works for new Walthamstow Central entrance complete

The first works on the long-awaited new entrance hall were completed at the end of October



How the new station entrance is projected to look Credit TfL

by Marco Marcelline

The initial phase of works for the new entrance at Walthamstow Central was completed at the end of October, Waltham Forest Council has said.

The works include the construction of a portion of the "station box", which is an underground concrete box-like structure which the lower part of the station entrance will be encased in.

Effectively a slab of concrete,

this first portion of the station box is supported by a series of "temporary piles" that will act as plunge columns.

Council deputy leader and cabinet member for housing and regeneration Ahsan Khan told the *Echo*: "The initial phase of station works has been progressing well over the summer and autumn. Utility diversions, pilings, and surfacing works have been completed."

He added: "The council, TfL, and New River, who is the long leaseholder of 17&Central, are working collaboratively to

ensure the [redevelopment] programmes are aligned."

Transport for London (TfL) is said to currently be working on the business plan for the next phase of station box works, which the council says will be co-ordinated with "phase two of the wider regeneration plans" that include an extension of 17&Central shopping centre and a new town square.

The Walthamstow Central upgrade project has faced significant funding troubles since it was first announced as part of the redevelopment of The Mall.

In 2018, TfL said funding it had committed towards the new entrance was no longer available "due to budget constraints and other factors".

The council has estimated the full cost of constructing a new station entrance would come to £41.5m. For its part, the council has raised £5.3m towards the ticket hall and committed a further £3.9m "backstop" if alternative funding cannot be found.

Capital and Regional (C&R),

which won planning permission for the The Mall redevelopment before it was bought by Long Harbour in 2021, has put £1.5m towards the station entrance.

A planning condition attached to the redevelopment states that construction of the new entrance must begin before work on redeveloping the town square and adding new retail space to the shopping centre is completed.

A TfL spokesperson said: "We're continuing our work to secure funding from partners to enable the additional station entrance at Walthamstow Central station to be delivered.

"Work on the station box, which is the underground concrete box-like structure that houses the lower part of the station, needs to be followed by a further stage of works to complete the additional entrance.

"We have been working closely with both the developer, and [council] to enable these station improvements to be delivered alongside the wider development in the most efficient and cost-effective way."

A map showing the proposed shortcut (in red). Credit Greater London Authority



Blackhorse shortcut plan shelved

by Marco Marcelline

A pedestrian shortcut between new residential developments in Sutherland Road and Blackhorse Road Station has been shelved, the Greater London Authority (GLA) has said.

Mayor of London Sir Sadiq Khan approved a plan to explore the feasibility of the shortcut, which would have been built on GLA owned empty land between Blackhorse Lane and Sutherland Road, known as Blackhorse Yard, in March 2024.

The approval was part of a £150,000 fund for 'meanwhile' uses at Blackhorse Yard until its redevelopment into flats in late 2027.

Documents published in October on *London.gov* mention "the provision of a shortcut, potentially shortening journey times to Blackhorse Road tube station for Sutherland Road residents".

However, when asked what the status of the shortcut was by the *Echo*, the GLA stated the "presence of unsafe structures and ground conditions on some areas of the site" meant it has not been possible to deliver it.

The spokesperson added: "However, providing a connection between Blackhorse Lane and Sutherland Road will be a key priority of any future long-term redevelopment proposals for the site."

Currently, Sutherland Road residents have to use Sutherland Path to reach Blackhorse Road Station, a walk which can take up to twelve minutes.

The proposed shortcut would have run from Burnt Faith Brandy House, in 57 Sutherland Road, to Blackhorse Lane, near Hooker's Road.

A parcel of Blackhorse Yard has been used for a community sauna and garden, which opened to the public in September 2025 and will remain until the site is redeveloped into flats.



The proposed shortcut is visible in the bottom right of this sketch of Community Sauna Baths in Sutherland Road Credit Beep Studio Ltd

Council plans sweeping changes to Chingford Road

Waltham Forest Council is planning significant improvement works along Chingford Road, between Crooked Billet Roundabout and Forest Road.

The proposals include fully segregated, stepped cycle tracks on both sides of Chingford Road connecting Crooked Billet Roundabout to Farnan Avenue.

Also proposed are bus priority measures to enable buses, including Superloop services, "to run smoothly and reduce delays". These measures include removal of parking between number nine and 31 Chingford Road, including no loading restrictions on Monday



Visualisation of proposed improvements on Chingford Road near Knebworth Road Credit Waltham Forest Council

to Friday, from 7am to 7pm, on double yellow lines.

The council says these specific improvements will "make bus journeys faster and means buses won't get stuck behind vehicles loading and unloading at peak times".

All existing single yellow lines will be changed to double yellows along Chingford

Road from the Crooked Billet Roundabout to Farnan Avenue, and between nine and 31 Chingford Road.

Included in the plans are the upgrading of existing pedestrian crossings, as well as several new signalised crossings along the road.

The council is also proposing pocket parks and planting

to increase greening on the corner of Chingford Road and Farnan Avenue.

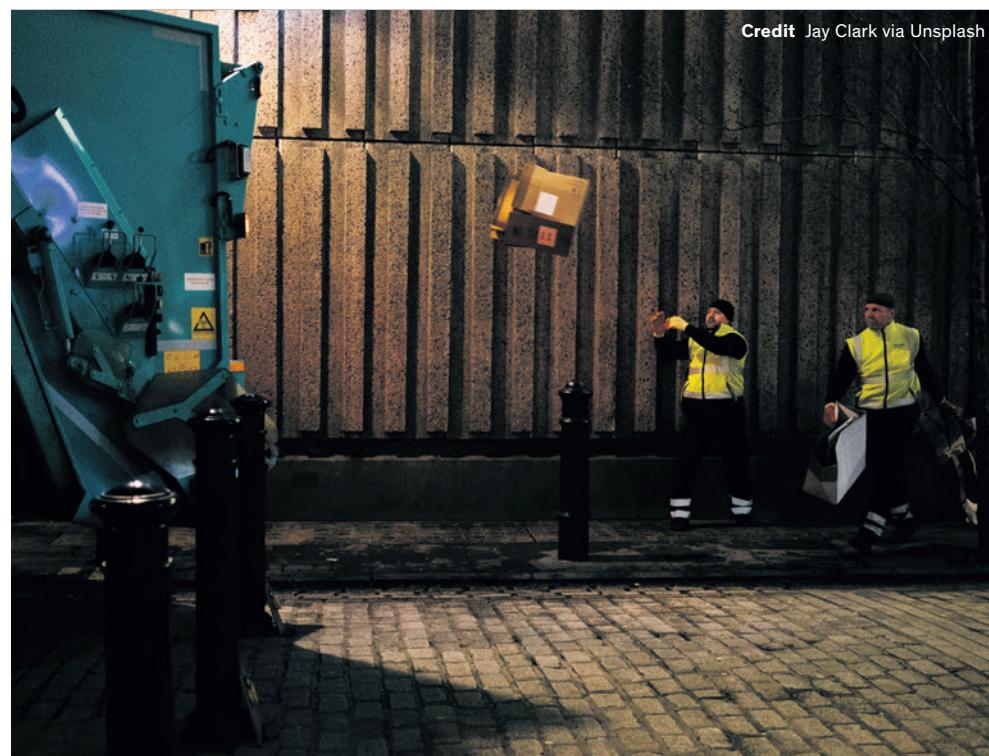
To make space for these proposals, there will be a net loss of 28 parking bays from Chingford Road.

Justifying the net loss, the council pointed to its parking stress surveys which indicate that the average utilisation of parking bays is "around 60%" along Chingford Road.

The council says it aims to write to residents to share the results from its consultation and next steps for the project in 2026.

For more information about these changes visit: talk.walthamforest.gov.uk/chingford-road-corridor

NEWS



Credit Jay Clark via Unsplash

Bin strikes set to hit the borough this month

Negotiations between outsourced contractor FCC Environment and trade union GMB have failed to resolve a pay dispute

by Sebastian Mann,
Local Democracy Reporter

Bin collectors across Waltham Forest will strike over what they claim is unsatisfactory pay.

Outsourced refuse workers in the borough have voted to take industrial action following months of dispute with their employer, FCC Environment.

The strikes have been looming since the summer, when members of the GMB union rejected a 2.8% pay offer. A follow-up offer of 3.2% was similarly rejected.

Dates are expected to be set for December, but none have been confirmed yet.

Of the union members who took part in the ballot, 97% voted in favour. Around a third of workers are with GMB, and turnout was 58%.

Mary Goodson, a GMB regional organiser, said: "This strike vote is the culmination of months of subpar pay offers. Our members have told FCC Environment that enough is enough."

"They want a proper pay uplift, which reflects their hard work and the high cost of living."

A spokesperson for FCC Environment said "our door remains open to talks" but the company would not "negotiate

through the media".

Clyde Loakes, deputy leader of Waltham Forest Council, said: "We are disappointed by the lack of a resolution to this long-running pay negotiation, despite changes made to the previous offer made by FCC. We urge both parties to continue with the dialogue that has seen improvements made to the offer so far."

"The council has not been involved in any of the pay discussions between FCC Environment and its staff, as that is not within our jurisdiction. But what we do want to see is both sides come to a swift resolution so that any back pay now building up can be included in pay packets in time for Christmas."

The town hall is responsible for waste management in the borough, but uses contracted workers to carry out collections. The striking workers are not employed by the council.

Throughout the negotiations, GMB has also raised concerns over "inadequate" staff facilities at the waste depot and "insufficient" water supplies for workers.

Union member Gary Bering said: "We are tired of FCC's poor pay and conditions."

"We do a vital job for the borough, come rain or shine. The least we deserve is a decent pay packet so we can pay our bills."

Leyton resident: 'Council fined me £300 for throwing book parcel in public bin'

by Marco Marcelline

A Leyton man has said Waltham Forest Council should focus on "actual flytippers" after he received a £300 fixed penalty fine for discarding a book parcel in a public bin.

Daniel Dixon says he was left "outraged" by the fine, which he was sent after council contractors leafed through a Vicarage Road bin after 10pm on Wednesday, 15th October.

He said the contractors, from environmental enforcement agency 3GS Group, put the ripped up A5 cardboard "back together" to read his address.

Footage shared with the *Echo* shows several contractors leafing through the bin, which was next to a large fly-tip including furniture and household waste. Daniel's friend, who shot the video, asks the workers if "digging through the rubbish was what you do now", and a firm "yes" is heard in response.

Daniel received a letter from 3GS Group on Thursday, 16th October informing him he had breached section 33 of the Environmental Protection Act 1990 for the "unauthorised deposit of controlled waste".

He told the *Echo*: "They asked me to respond with an explanation for why I

breached the law, and the reason is I had no idea that throwing away a book parcel in a public bin was a problem."

3GS Group were dissatisfied with his explanation and issued him with a fixed penalty notice on behalf of the council, stating he had failed to dispose of waste responsibly.

Daniel said: "To be told that I had to pay a £300 fine was outrageous. I am looking for an apology from the council and a refund, if I'm honest."

Councillor Clyde Loakes, deputy leader and cabinet member for climate and air quality, said: "Disposing of bags of household or commercial waste in a public litter bin intended for litter is considered fly-tipping."

"The evidence recovered in this case was part of a large fly-tip including furniture and household waste discarded in a wide area around a public litter bin, as can be seen in the video provided by the *Echo*.

"Enforcement officers and contractors routinely carry out evidence checks when investigating fly-tips at known hotspots and at times when offences are more likely to occur. Fly-tipping and misuse of public litter bins increases costs for all residents and undermines our efforts to maintain clean streets."

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NEWS

Parents of Alice Figueiredo call for sweeping NHS mental health reforms after trust sentencing

Alice's mother wants total ban on plastic bin-liners on all NHS mental health wards after trust fined £565k over death



Alice Figueiredo's family speaks outside the Old Bailey. L-R: Andrew Gordon (then boyfriend), Jane Figueiredo (mother), Max Figueiredo (stepfather), Eleanor Masters (sister) Credit: Sebastian Mann

by Sebastian Mann, Local Democracy Reporter

Warning: This article contains reference to suicide

The family of a young woman who took her own life during her stay on an NHS mental health ward say sweeping reforms are needed.

Alice Figueiredo was 22 years old when she died at the Hepworth ward in Goodmayes Hospital back in 2015.

She had used plastic bin-liners to self-harm on several occasions during her five month stay, including in her fatal attempt on 7th July.

Speaking outside the Old Bailey on Tuesday, 11th November, following a decade-long struggle for justice, her mother Jane Figueiredo called for a national ban on such items on all mental health wards in the UK.

She told reporters: "Very clearly, what has emerged from this, is that there should be a national ban on plastic bags and bin-liners in patient-accessible areas.

"There was no consistent rule [in Hepworth] and so, if we had one, we wouldn't

have any further pedantic and potentially lethal prevarication, such as happened at North East London NHS Foundation Trust during the five months, about whether infection control takes precedence over an immediate risk to life."

"Alice is certainly not the only patient who has lost her life due to a risk of this nature," she added.

NELFT was fined £565,000, to be paid alongside £200,000 in prosecution costs, after a jury found in June it did not do enough to prevent her death. It was cleared of the more serious charge of corporate manslaughter.

Benjamin Aninakwa, ward manager when Alice died, was handed a six-month prison sentence, suspended for twelve



Alice Figueiredo Photo provided by family

months. He was similarly acquitted of gross negligence manslaughter.

Though he was spared jail, he will need to complete 300 hours of unpaid work within the next year.

Jane stated that an action plan needs drafting to address general mental health ward patients with eating disorders, such as Alice, who were "being failed".

"They are not receiving the appropriate and essential treatment and support," she said. "This can be a great source of torment for patients, and we believe contributed to Alice's loss of life."

Jane continued that there also needed to be a reform of risk management and investigation systems across mental health wards, after Alice was able to attempt self-harm a total of 19 times.

During Alice's five-month stay on Hepworth, they were not "remotely fit-for-purpose," she said, and were "just not working on any level".

During the trial, which began in October, the court heard that incidents involving Alice and other patients were not consistently recorded using the NHS' internal systems.

Concerns raised by Alice's mother, about the repeated incidents, were said to go "ignored".

NELFT says it has made changes in the decade since Alice's death, while offering condolences to her family.

A spokesperson pointed to enhanced risk assessment and management procedures, which all inpatient staff have received "comprehensive" training in.

They added: "We have also prioritised a fundamental shift in ward culture, placing the person at the centre of our care delivery and working to build stronger partnerships between our clinical teams, patients and their families."

"Alice, your all-too-short life was dynamic, beautiful and unique," Jane closed by saying.

"You left an unforgettable impression on people's hearts wherever you went. For us you were, are and always will be precious, honoured and loved."

The Old Bailey trial was the first time an NHS trust had been charged in relation to a patient taking their own life, and only the second time a trust had faced corporate manslaughter charges.

Jurors deliberated for a total of 24 days, the joint-longest deliberation in UK legal history.

Anyone feeling emotionally distressed or suicidal can call Samaritans for help on 116 123 or email jo@samaritans.org



Former Goodmayes Hospital ward manager Benjamin Aninakwa Credit: Met Police

Duncan Bouette Credit: Met Police



Waltham Forest cop sacked after child abuse charges

An officer has been dismissed from the Metropolitan Police for sharing messages about sexually abusing children.

PC Duncan Bouette, attached to the north east command unit which covers both Waltham Forest and Newham, was charged last month with two counts under the Obscene Publications Act.

PC Bouette appeared at Westminster Magistrates' Court on Thursday, 9th October, where he pleaded guilty to both charges.

The court heard how PC Bouette sent a series of messages that related to the sexual abuse of children in November 2024. They also heard that he sent messages that related to extreme, violent sexual practices.

On Thursday, 6th November at the same court, Bouette was given an 18-month suspended prison sentence alongside 200 hours of community work. He was also handed a three-year criminal behaviour order with conditions prohibiting unsupervised contact with children and relating to the use of digital devices.

Superintendent Lynne Forster, who leads policing in north-east London, said: "PC Bouette's behaviour was completely unacceptable and specialist officers moved swiftly following information received."

"PC Bouette's guilty plea meant an accelerated misconduct hearing was organised and he was dismissed on Tuesday, 4th November. From his arrest to dismissal and sentencing has taken less than a month, showing our determination to tackle offending by our officers."

"PC Bouette will also be added to the barred list held by the College of Policing, meaning that he will not be allowed to serve as a police officer again".

LOCAL NOTICES

Published: 28th November 2025

LICENCES FOR SPECIAL TREATMENT PUBLIC NOTICE

NOTICE IS GIVEN THAT **Suzan Hussein** has applied to the London Borough of Waltham Forest for a Special Treatment Licence for: Tattoo Licence for the premises: **Starlac Atelier, 679-691 High Road Leyton, Studio 78 Mainyard Studios, London E10 6RA**

• Tattooing services

Anyone wishing to oppose the application must give notice in writing to the Licensing Officer, Licensing Services, Public Control Waltham Forest Town Hall, Fellowship Square, Forest Road, Walthamstow, London E17 4JF

WITHIN 28 DAYS OF PUBLICATION

specifying the grounds of opposition.

Persons objecting to the grant of a licence must be prepared to attend in person before a Committee of the Council.

LOST TITLE APPLICATION NO.: 2634716 OFFICE OF TITLES

NOTICE PURSUANT TO SECTION 82 OF THE REGISTRATION OF TITLES ACT (RTA)

WHEREAS the applicant(s) in the above stated application has/have declared that the following duplicate Certificate of Title has been lost, I HEREBY GIVE NOTICE that I intend to cancel the said Certificate of Title and issue a new one in duplicate fourteen days after the last publication of this advertisement.

Volume: 1329
Folio: 315
Place: Part of Drax Hall
Lot: 100
Parish: St. Ann, Jamaica

Registered proprietor(s):
Owen Gilward James and Tina Marita James

The following transactions lodged with this application will be registered pursuant to section 81 of the RTA:

- Application to Note Marriage 2634714
- Application to Note Death 2634715

L Dunbar, Deputy Registrar of Titles

LICENSING ACT 2003 Application for the Variation of a Premises Licence

Notice of application for the variation of a Premises Licence under section 34 of the Licensing Act 2003.

Notice is hereby given that **Mehmet Gul** has applied to the London Borough of Waltham Forest for the grant of a Premises Licence at **Orford Fish and Chips, 59 Orford Road, Walthamstow E17 9NJ**. The nature of the application is as follows:

• Sale of alcohol from 12.00–22.00 daily (off the premises including online sales)

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.

Representations must be received no later than: **24/12/2025**.

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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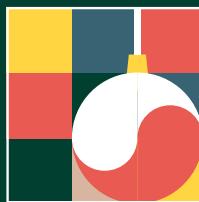
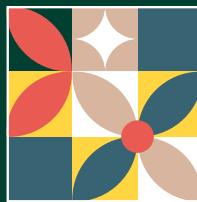
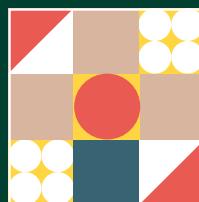
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Book your licence advert or notice with your local community newspaper!

Email for a quote to licences@socialspider.com or call
Klaudia Kiss 07732 000 430 or Mark Brown 07728 520 116

Next publication date: 29th December | Booking deadline: 22nd December



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ARTS & CULTURE



Walthamstow Trans Pride returns with biggest event yet

Walthamstow's second-ever Trans Pride was its biggest ever, with the sold-out event having a waiting list of "over 100 people", and its fundraising total being more than double last year's.

This autumn, Walthamstow Trades Hall hosted a packed line-up featuring the musician Tom Rasmussen, alongside a varied mix of drag and cabaret performers, DJs, and community stalls.

The event was held in support of The Outside Project, the UK's first LGBTQ+ shelter and community centre, which provides life-saving support for those facing homelessness, abuse, or unsafe living conditions.

The night raised thousands of pounds and was hailed by attendees as a "resounding

success", as the LGBTQ+ and wider Walthamstow community came together in solidarity to celebrate trans people.

Walthamstow Trans Pride said: "We are living through the most hostile climate for trans people in recent memory.

From attacks on our health-care to laws restricting our freedoms, we see the impact every day.

"Trans Pride Walthamstow is about taking space, loudly and unapologetically, but it's also about solidarity.



Our fight is bound up with the struggles of sex workers, migrants, people of colour, and all communities facing state violence. Pride means standing together."

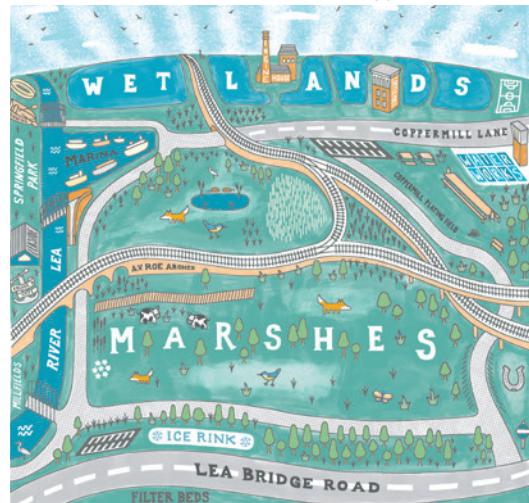
Actress and performer Mzz Kimberley said: "I'm thrilled to have shared the stage with my community at Walthamstow Pride 2025. In a time of rising hostility and division, it's more vital than ever to gather in joy, solidarity, and unapologetic celebration. Pride is not just a party, it's a political act of love.

"We must make the conscious decision to extend respect across every inch of our community, even to those we may not know personally. Our strength lies in our resilience. We have always found ways to create joy under pressure, to turn pain into power, and to stand proud in the face of adversity.



"As Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. once said, 'This speaks to the power of self-respect and standing in one's truth – a quiet but fierce pride in one's humanity. It's a reminder that dignity is not granted by others; it's claimed by us'. That truth echoes through our movement today."

Angry Dan's vibrant illustration of the Walthamstow Marshes and Wetlands Credit Angry Dan



Mapping the Marshes

Local artist Angry Dan writes about the inspiration behind his vibrant and colourful map of Walthamstow Marshes and Walthamstow Wetlands

What do you love the most about Walthamstow? The community? The market? The smug feeling when those 'best places to live in London' articles come out?

Regardless of what you decide, there's a good chance that our surrounding nature, namely the marshes, wetlands, and Epping Forest, will feature in your top three. For our household, the marshes have long been the go-to for a weekend stroll or the occasional mid-week stress-busting power walk.

When I arrived in Walthamstow in 2012, I soon discovered the marshes, where I reconnected with something I'd seldom felt since childhood – the peace and freedom of the countryside.

Walk down Coppermill Lane, past the waterworks, under the power lines and the low bridge, then turn left through the kissing gates, and you'll arrive at my favourite spot. Striding into the long grass, the treeline covers both the railway to your left and Tottenham to your right. If it wasn't for the tip of Canary Wharf in the distance, you could be anywhere in England.

What I hope to convey in my artwork is the idea of Walthamstow Marshes as a place that feels almost entirely separate from the urban development that surrounds it. The marshes is a place where nature has been allowed to remain, and where we arrive only as guests.

The illustration also contains seven of the more unique species that make our nature reserve such a special place. Water voles, grey herons, kingfishers, creeping marshwort, the Essex skipper butterfly, the peregrine falcon, and a hedgehog all feature as a reminder of our responsibility to London's diverse wildlife.

You'll be able to secure a map from Dan at his pay-what-you-like exhibition at 1B Window Gallery in Coppermill Lane from 1st–7th December. If you can't make the show, you can order one at: angrydan.com

CHRISTMAS LISTINGS

MARKET

Christmas Makers Market

Wednesday 3rd December, 6–9pm
Blackhorse Workshop, 1–2
Sutherland Road Path E17 6BX

Blackhorse Workshop is a makerspace that offers courses for woodworking, blacksmithing and more. This December we're opening the workshops for an evening of festive fun with our local maker. A free event with music from Turncoat Billy, it's a chance to pick up some beautiful hand crafted Christmas gifts from our makers. The perfect place for bespoke presents made from wood, metal, forged paints and more!

Free

Visit blackhorseworkshop.co.uk

GIG

Grapes of Wrath

Friday 5th December, 7pm
Walthamstow Trades Hall, 61–63
Tower Hamlets Road E17 4RQ

Grapes of Wrath presents the best hand-picked punk acts from all over the UK, and this month we have: Ritual Error (noisy punk from London), Value Of Nothing (radge post hardcore from Leicester) and Louse (London d-beat/crust/hardcore).

Tickets from £10 (16+)

Visit wegottickets.com/f/14468

WRESTLING

Eve Wrestling: Let's Slam Santa

Friday 5th December, 8–11pm
Big Penny Social, 1 Priestley
Way E17 6AL

Join us for the beautiful chaos that is EVE; a punk-rock, women's wrestling and cabaret night out in London! Don't just take our word for it – check out what others had to say: "I had one of the funniest, most uplifting nights ever at EVE!" – Kathy Burke, actor and comedian. "I brought my sisters and a few friends and we had such an amazing time. –Kate Nash, musician.

Tickets (£25) available here:

Visit bigpennysocial.co.uk/whats-on

BEER MILE

Blackhorse Beer Mile

Christmas Party

Sat, 6th December, 12pm–1am
At participating breweries across the Blackhorse Beer Mile in Walthamstow

We're throwing the ultimate Christmas party with our friends and neighbours across the Blackhorse Beer Mile. Get into the festive spirit with us with the Big Penny Social Christmas tree market and lots of free live entertainment including nine-piece band Brass Funkeys, and DJs keeping the party going until 1am.

Free entry

MARKET

Go East Vintage Flea Market

Sun, 7th December, 11am–5pm
Walthamstow Trades Hall, 61–63
Tower Hamlets Road E17 4RQ

Discover the Go East Vintage Flea Market at Walthamstow Trades Hall for a shopping experience with unique vintage finds and handmade goods. Join us for a day filled with unique finds and festive cheer. Explore a variety of vintage treasures, handmade crafts, and delicious treats from local sellers. Don't miss out on this opportunity to discover one-of-a-kind gifts for your loved ones!

Tickets (from £1.79) available

via Eventbrite. Search 'Go East Vintage Flea Market'

COMEDY

Laff-Uccino with Nish Kumar

Thursday 11th December, 7pm
Soho Theatre Walthamstow, 186 Hoe Street E17 4QH

The line-up includes talented and hilarious comedians from refugee and migrant backgrounds performing for their very first, second or third gig, refugees from our latest stand-up workshop participants, and some old horses of the stage, including Ed Night, Sam Williams on MC, and special headliner Nish Kumar.

Tickets £16

Visit sohotoatre.com/events

PANTOMIME

The Christmas Carols

Running from Wednesday 3rd to Tuesday 23rd December
Ye Olde Rose and Crown Theatre Pub, 53 Hoe Street E17 4SA

The gang is back with Walthamstow's sell out professional panto that comes to town every year. This year they are giving us a new panto inspired take on 'A Christmas Carol'. You all loved the panto version of The Nativity last year and this year is going to be even more glorious.

Visit yeolderoseandcrowntheatrepub.co.uk/whats-on

For big group bookings email theatre@yeolderoseandcrowntheatrepub.co.uk

CAROLS

Christmas Carols

Wednesday, 17th December, 6pm
Gaughs Group Stadium, Brisbane Road E10 5NF

Join us for a festive evening of singing Christmas carols together at Leyton Orient FC. Expect a special panel featuring Leyton Orient footballers of faith, a chance to sing along to your favourite Christmas carols, and a gospel message and powerful personal testimonies. Hot and soft drinks will be available to purchase. Light snacks provided.

Free entry

SANTA'S GROTTO

Love North Chingford Christmas Market

Sat, 20th December, 11am–5pm
North Chingford Assembly Hall, The Green, Station Road E4 7EN

North Chingford Assembly Hall will be transformed into a festive wonderland for the Love Chingford Christmas Market. From 11am to 5pm, join us for a magical day filled with shopping, entertainment, and family fun right in the heart of Chingford. The market will feature a wide variety of local traders offering unique gifts, handmade crafts, and festive treats. There will also be delicious food and drink to enjoy, along with live performances and community entertainment to get everyone in the Christmas spirit.

Market is free but Santa's Grotto is £10
Visit tickettailor.com/events/lovechingford/1849522

We can include low-cost community events taking place in Waltham Forest. For next month's listings, email the details of your event to wfecho@socialspider.com by Friday 12th December

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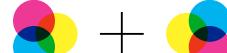
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PHOTOGRAPHY



Golden Racquets

Every Wednesday morning a group of older people meet in Leytonstone. The Golden Racquets is no ordinary badminton club.

These 50-to-90 year-olds are here to walk, run and smash their way to a win, all the while forging friendships and building a community in the east end of London.

I first met some of the Golden Racquets at The Pastures Sports Centre after hearing about a very active and talented group of senior players.

Once I saw how they were being so active and competitive I was inspired to share their story. In contrast to preconceptions of old age and my own experience with family members of similar ages I was impressed

by their physicality and camaraderie.

The club made me feel very welcome and they were happy to share their stories. The film is just a snippet of the club and its wonderful community, to understand it completely you would have to join them on a Wednesday – *Jake Green*

Inclusive and friendly, Golden Racquets welcomes everyone, whatever their skill level, whatever their needs. If you wish to join please contact Anne at Pastures@walthamforest.gov.uk

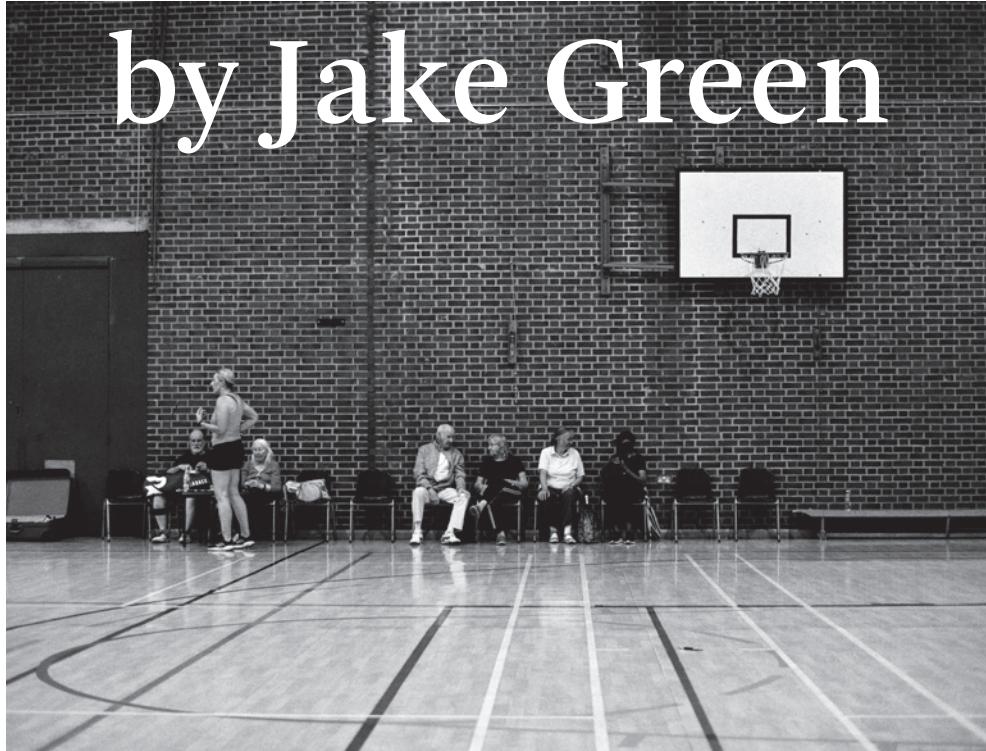
You can watch a short film about the Golden Racquets by Jake Green using the QR code:



We want your photos! To feature in our January issue please send in your images to wfecho@socialspider.com by Monday 8th December



by Jake Green



FEATURES

Clipped wings

When Walthamstow single mother Mellissa Brown found herself homeless, she says housing officers treated her as a problem rather than as a whole person with complex needs. Now, working for the homeless charity Forest Churches Emergency Night Shelter, Mellissa is able to provide others the help she was denied. This is her story.

I was kicked out of my family home, along with my four-year-old daughter, by her dad, my then-partner of ten years, when he decided to end our relationship, leaving me homeless with my daughter.

I was already in a bad place, experiencing severe levels of anxiety and depression, but this crushed me. In all of this I had to make a quick decision to stay with a friend who lived close to my ex-partner, so my daughter still had access to both him and her nursery.

At the time I was receiving therapy, and they referred me to the housing hub in Islington.

I was unfortunately only seen as my

housing situation and not as a whole person. I was a single mother, with severe mental health issues and I was so much more than the information on my housing application.

In a meeting with my early-help worker, my daughter's nursery manager and her dad, I was told abruptly that I wasn't eligible for social housing as I had potentially made myself homeless by leaving. I was then asked if my daughter and I could move back in with her dad.

I was in a deep dark hole, asked to return to an unwanted place, and I was hurt and angry when my ex-partner said no.

I was really livid at this time, as no one took the time to see me as who I was.

Living with my friend wasn't working out and I made the decision to move back home with my parents in Walthamstow. My new early-help worker told me that I had to be in the borough for three years at that time to get social housing.

My housing officer for Waltham Forest Council never heard my challenges or the concerns I emailed them, as the room I shared with my daughter was too small and had damp problems, and the family dynamics at that time were very challenging.

I was dismissed, as they saw me as living



with family. Again, I had no voice to fight my corner, no voice to air my concerns, so I reverted into myself.

Throughout the process of seeking help – from housing officers, early-help workers and local authorities – I was often treated as just a housing case, not as a mother, or a woman navigating trauma and mental health challenges. My voice felt silenced. I felt invisible in the very systems meant to help.

As time passed, I worked hard on myself to get better and feel stronger mentally and physically. And in March 2024, I started working at FCENS, the Forest Churches Emergency Night Shelter – a place where people are seen and heard.

Through this, I help give a voice to those

who walk through our doors. I run meditation sessions and organise monthly social events which help guests connect and feel human again.

Here at FCENS, we're not just offering shelter – we're restoring dignity, building trust, and walking alongside people on their journey.

If I had had the same support we offer, I know I would be living in my own accommodation by now, and I would have received support for my mental health a lot sooner.

FCENS is recruiting for a part-time peer coach with lived experience of homelessness, to work alongside the casework support team in Walthamstow. The deadline for applications is Friday 12th December. For job details and an application form visit: forestnightshter.org.uk/peer-coach



A snug place

The Snug, which supports adults with severe mental health conditions, could face closure, writes volunteer Ollie Welch

CREST's award-winning mental health pilot project The Snug is a grassroots community service that reaches adults at risk of social isolation, offering comprehensive

mental health support in a non-clinical, non-judgmental setting, delivered through a range of stimulating peer-to-peer activities.

This includes adults living independently with physical and mental health condi-

tions, older adults including those with early-stage dementia, and anyone whose circumstances make them vulnerable to social isolation.

CREST's mission for The Snug is to reduce reliance on statutory services, and facilitate smoother and more effective transitions to and from clinical treatment.

The Snug has been a resounding success and, in 2024, CREST received the largest single investment in the history of the charity from the National Lottery Community Fund.

This five-year, £750,000 grant is allowing us to expand the model and ethos of The Snug to establish similar services aimed at older adults with early stage dementia in Chingford and Leytonstone.

Paul*, 54, first wandered into The Snug around two years ago, curious about what we did. When I explained that we were a newly opened community space supporting people with mental health challenges, he opened up about his own history.

He told me he had spent time in prison following a severe mental health crisis that resulted in an incident involving a knife. Although he had been out of prison for several years, he had received no help navigating essential tasks such as managing his utility bills or applying for council tax support. As a result, he had accumulated significant debts that eventually went to court, and bailiffs had begun turning up

at his door.

Over time, we worked closely with him, his borough link workers, and his community mental health team key worker. Together, we helped him secure the correct council tax benefits and begin a manageable standing order to repay his utility debts. He is now in a far more stable and sustainable position, both financially and emotionally.

As it stands, funding for The Snug runs out at the end of 2025. While our lottery grant is allowing CREST to expand its services across the borough, the restricted nature of this money means it cannot be diverted to sustain an already existing service.

To ensure we can keep helping people like Paul, CREST must raise at least £60,000 to guarantee another year of operation. We are in the process of applying for new revenue streams from a number of possible sources and are hopeful of success – but without any guarantees at this juncture.

We are determined not to lose this award-winning service in Walthamstow as we stand on the brink of extending the successful model into new communities.

*Name changed to protect anonymity

You can help support CREST and their services by donating to their JustGiving page: [justgiving.com/page/the-snug-1721744035557](https://www.justgiving.com/page/the-snug-1721744035557)

You can also volunteer for CREST here: crestwf.org.uk/volunteer

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