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# WALTHAM FOREST ECHO

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Bus drivers on the picket line in January Credit Unite



Lea Interchange Bus Company's depot in Leyton



# Bus drivers strike over management 'bullying' at Leyton depot

by Marco Marcelline

Bus drivers at a Leyton depot are set to strike again over four days in February, amid an unresolved dispute with their management.

Unite union members at Lea Interchange Bus Garage, which is part of Stagecoach, are set to

strike on 6th, 7th, 20th and 21st February.

They previously went on strike for two days in January and in December.

The action comes as Unite union members at Lea Interchange Bus Company, run by Stagecoach, accuse their management of "bullying" and

"union victimisation", claiming they have been subjected to aggressive behaviour since a change in management nine months ago.

In a statement confirming action, Unite alleges that one of its reps was suspended, later dismissed and then reinstated, while another was suspended on

"trumped-up charges".

The union believes these reps are being targeted for participating in trade union activities, in a violation of employment law.

A Unite member at Lea Interchange, who did not want to be named, said that the "union victimisation" began in April 2025, when members began to

organise and take up issues that were affecting members.

He said: "We were in the process of recruiting and carrying out consultative ballots on a number of workplace issues, and that was when the victimisation started. Union representatives

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## NEWS



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The Edmonton Incinerator

## Ageing incinerator to stay in use 'beyond original lifespan'

by Sebastian Mann, Local Democracy Reporter

**A**n outdated incinerator providing power to North London will stay in use well beyond its lifespan, as progress slows on its replacement.

The facility will now remain operational "up to and beyond 2030" according to North London Waste Authority (NLWA), which runs Edmonton Eco Park where the incinerator is based.

However, this is "significantly past design life" for its mechanical, electrical and civil infrastructure, according to a report published in December 2025.

The NLWA is controlled by

councillors from Barnet, Camden, Enfield, Hackney, Haringey, Islington and Waltham Forest, and is responsible for disposing waste from the seven boroughs.

A replacement energy facility was initially slated to begin operation in 2027, and while construction is ongoing, no clear timeline has been established by the authority.

In August, the project's overseers said it was being hindered by local and international challenges. They pointed to Brexit, the war in Ukraine, and high interest rates impacting the cost of raw construction materials.

Councillor Clyde Loakes, chair of the NLWA and deputy leader

of Waltham Forest Council, said that month that work "had not stopped" despite rumours and "construction progress continues to be made, with over 200 workers on site".

The total budget for NLWA's ongoing North London Heat and Power Project – which includes the incinerator as well as new recycling facilities at Edmonton Eco Park – has climbed from £1.2billion to £1.5bn.

A total of £66.5million has now been allocated to the project from the Heat Networks Investment Project, a government-funded scheme aimed at increasing the number of district heat networks in England and Wales.

## Power Networks complete £18m cable upgrade

**U**K Power Networks has finished installing 22km of cable and ducting in Walthamstow and Hackney, in a move the company says will benefit over 30,000 residents across both areas.

The £18million project, which began in July 2017, required the installation of cable and ducting, across four new circuits, and the final circuit was ener-

gised last month.

UK Power Networks says the new infrastructure will benefit more than 30,000 homes in Hackney and Walthamstow, "paving the way for electric vehicles, heat pumps, and a greener future".

Errol Lord, project manager at UK Power Networks said: "This initiative represents a significant investment in [Walthamstow's]

energy infrastructure and underscores our unwavering commitment to the local community.

"The project was meticulously designed not only to enhance network resilience but also to meet the burgeoning demands of both residents and businesses in the area. The upgraded infrastructure will provide more reliable and sustainable energy to homes, schools, and local services."

## Council to hike rent for tenants by almost 5%

by Sebastian Mann, Local Democracy Reporter

**W**altham Forest Council will hike rent for its tenants by almost 5%, raising its annual income by £3million.

Residents living in council-owned homes will pay 4.8% more from 8th April, according to a report published in January.

That will mean an average rent increase of £6.41, from £130.73 to £137.14 per week.

Councillor Ahsan Khan, deputy leader and cabinet member for housing and regeneration, said: "Rent and service charges are vital to ensure that the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) is well funded.

"This money is used to manage and maintain our council housing stock and ensure tenants are living in safe and secure homes. We have a legal duty to ensure rent and service charges are set at levels that ensure the long-term viability of our housing service."

The HRA is a ring-fenced fund used to look after the homes the council owns.

He added that rents are set in accordance with the Regulator for Social Housing's published guidance and at a level "similar to most other comparable housing providers".

*"The average council tenant will see their rent rise by £6.41 per week"*

The council's total housing revenue will rise from £83.3m to £86.9m next year. It will cost the council £33.4m to run the housing service, bringing its total income down to £53.5m.

With similar hikes forecast for the next decade, Waltham Forest will be bringing in just shy of £113m by 2036. Net costs projected at £49.3m, however, means this will be closer to £63.7m in actuality.

Hiking temporary accommodation rent will help "reduce financial pressure on the council, as a proportion of housing benefit spend for temporary accommodation properties is recoverable from central government," Cllr Khan continued.

Households on low incomes continue to have their rents paid through housing benefit, he added.

## NEWS

# Nicolas Cage war film stopped from filming at town hall over Nazi flag concerns

*Fortitude was blocked from filming after producers ‘abruptly’ asked to move the shoot from October to 15th September, leaving the council unable to consult with local residents about Nazi flags*

The film was eventually shot at the Royal Naval College in Greenwich instead Credit Dmitry Tonkonog via Wikimedia Commons



by Sebastian Mann, Local Democracy Reporter

Plans to film a Nicolas Cage war film at Waltham Forest Town Hall fell through over fears about Nazi iconography.

The shoot for the upcoming movie *Fortitude* would have involved draping the building in flags bearing the swastika.

The film tells the story of 1944 Operation Fortitude undertaken by the Allied Forces to mislead Nazi Germany about the nature and timings of D-Day, the storming of Normandy.

Waltham Forest Council agreed to the project under the provisos the production team – Operation Fortitude Ltd – would consult with nearby residents and ensure “Nazi-era flags and symbols were not publicly visible”.

As reported in *London Centric*, when the production was “abruptly” brought forward from October 2025 to 15th September, the council felt there had not been enough time to discuss the situation with locals.

A spokesperson for the council said: “We were very disappointed when the shoot was abruptly brought forward from October to 15th September, preventing the level of consultation previously discussed, and that letters had been sent to the community by the location team stating explicitly that Nazi symbols would be highly visible during the shoot.

“Because of these significant changes that did not honour our agreed conditions, and given the high level of sensitivity to far-right iconography, we felt we had no other choice than to refuse permission.”

“The council has a longstanding and positive relationship with the film and television industries,” the spokesperson added.

“We have been immensely proud to have hosted several high-profile shoots over the years. We will do all we can to contribute to the enormous success of the capital as a sought-after location for filming and production.”

In August – when the production company first approached

the council – a nationwide campaign to hang the Union and St George flags in public places was launched.

Though supporters of Raise the Colours say it represents national pride, critics have raised concerns about potential links to far-right causes.

No filming permit was ever granted, and the council did not collect any fee for the proposed filming and no compensation

was offered to or requested by the filmmakers.

The decision to cancel the shoot was made without the input of the Department of Culture.

In the end, production went ahead at Greenwich’s Old Royal Naval College, which has been used by blockbuster films including *Jurassic World* and *Napoleon*.

The town hall and Fellowship Square have also been used in several high-profile shoots in recent years, including the production of the Emmy-winning Apple drama *Slow Horses*.

Elsewhere in the borough, Asda and Argos shot their 2025 Christmas adverts in Walthamstow Village, while in January pop singer Raye shut a local street down to shoot a new music video.

According to the council’s film booking office, a full day’s shoot with a crew of more than 50 people can cost over £22,000, while it would cost a team of five £2,045 for the same time.

Producers for *Fortitude* did not respond to a request for comment.

*Additional reporting by Marco Marcelline*



The actor Nicolas Cage in 2011 Credit G155, CC BY-SA 2.0 via Wikimedia Commons

Soho Theatre Walthamstow has been a boost to the local area’s night-time economy Credit David Levene



## Council sets sights on boosting night-time economy

by Marco Marcelline

Waltham Forest Council has approved a new strategy aimed at boosting the borough’s night-time economy.

The ‘Evening and Night-time Economy Framework’ sets out how the borough intends to support, manage and grow activity between 6pm and 6am across all wards.

Rather than focusing narrowly on pubs and clubs, the council defines the night-time economy as encompassing everything from eating out and shopping to sport, culture, learning, creativity, travel and night-time work.

The aim, according to the council, is to make town centres “safer, more welcoming and more economically resilient after dark”.

The strategy identifies a number of locations where evening and night-time activity will be prioritised, including Walthamstow, Blackhorse Lane, Leyton, Leytonstone, Lea Bridge, Highams Park and North Chingford.

These areas are described as places with existing evening activity or clear potential for growth, where “coordinated action” could improve safety, footfall and local business performance.

The framework priorities include promoting and increasing evening activity, including cultural programming and “better use of council-owned and private commercial spaces”.

There is also a focus on creating pathways into night-time jobs and supporting people who work evenings and nights, in addition to helping operators diversify their offer and better navigate licensing processes.

The council argues that busier, well-programmed town centres create “natural surveillance”, making streets safer while supporting local businesses.

The strategy reportedly does not require additional council funding. Instead, it aims to better coordinate existing teams and programmes, attract external funding and private investment, and increase commercial income and business rates over time

## NEWS

A red squirrel says hello to the camera in a wet and wintry Epping Forest last month Credit Jaz Deans



The seized e-bikes and mopeds Credit Waltham Forest Council

## Council seizes 21 illegal e-bikes and mopeds in parking crackdown

by Sebastian Mann,  
Local Democracy Reporter

**M**ore than 20 vehicles were seized in Walthamstow as part of a crackdown on illegal street bikes.

13 e-bikes and eight mopeds were removed from the town centre by a team made up of Waltham Forest Council and the Metropolitan Police.

A total of 17 penalty charge notices (PCNs) were handed out and 19 traffic offence reports were written up across the weekend of Saturday, 17th January.

The council said the action was a response to “long-standing local concerns” around vehicle-related anti-social behaviour and illegal parking in both Hoe Street and High Street, where there is a high concentration of popular takeaways.

Councillor Clyde Loakes, the co-deputy leader of Waltham Forest Council, said the operation “came together as a result of ongoing conversations between local residents and council officers” and sent a “strong message to those unwilling to share our roads responsibly”.

“Taking action against inconsiderate road users - including the seizure of illegal and abandoned vehicles - is key to fostering a healthy and functional road sharing culture and is a top priority for residents,” he said.

He added that e-bikes and scooters pose a “major risk” to the riders, pointing to London Fire Brigade data that showed there were at least 181 charger/battery fire call-outs in 2025.

“Waltham Forest Council supports calls to compel food delivery platforms to enforce safety standards for drivers,” the Cllr Loakes added.

Current guidelines, such as those published by Deliveroo, state that e-bike riders should only buy their vehicles from reputable sellers and only use compatible batteries.

# Two Chingford councillors defect to Reform UK

by Marco Marcelline

**T**wo Chingford councillors have defected from the Conservative Party and joined Reform UK, with both saying the Tories had “lost their way”.

Councillors Marion Fitzgerald and Tim James, who represent the Hatch Lane and Highams Park North ward, join the existing Reform UK councillor Justin Halabi to form a three-member group in the town hall.

Cllr Fitzgerald has served as a Conservative councillor in Chingford since 1998, while Walthamstow resident and former banker Tim James has served as a councillor since 2014.

Highams Park North and Hatch Lane ward is tightly fought between left and right parties. In the 2022 local elections, Labour was just 57 votes short of winning a seat there.

Commenting following her defection, Cllr Fitzgerald said: “After many decades serving the Conservative Party, I have made the decision to join Reform UK – a decision which I

am proud of and will best serve my constituents.

“Nationally and locally, I support the policies, aims and objectives of the party which has led to my defection, and my views align with that of Reform UK. I look forward to continuing to serve my constituents, thousands of whom have turned to me for help over the years, as a Reform UK councillor.”

Cllr James said: “I am proud to be joining Reform UK as it has been clear for some time that the Conservative Party has lost its way. It no longer offers solutions to the many problems they have created on a national and local level.



Cllr Marion Fitzgerald  
Credit Reform UK

“Reform UK is the only party which is listening to the concerns of the public and understands the need for change. As a councillor for the party, I can now best represent my constituency and strive towards improving Waltham Forest alongside my fellow council members.”

Waltham Forest Tory leader Emma Best said that both councillors had “failed in their pursuit to be readopted as Conservative councillors”, but wished them well.

Speaking to the *Echo*, Cllr Fitzgerald called her deselection “unjust”, stating she hadn’t been told why she could no longer stand as a Tory candidate.

Cllr Best said she could not comment further on the deselection as she did not sit on the candidate approval panel, which assesses councillor campaigning and performance.

The Tory group leader added: “Our focus [as Conservatives] is the local elections and we are confident that all out candidates represent a cross-section of true community champions that work tirelessly for their

neighbours. Waltham Forest Conservatives are proud of how active we are in supporting residents and making sure we have councillors dedicated to our community.”

The joint defection means that Cllr Fitzgerald and Cllr James join their fellow Hatch Lane and Highams Park North ward colleague Justin Halabi on the Reform benches in the town hall, after he jumped ship in August 2025.

The *Echo* understands a Waltham Forest Reform UK group leader will be decided in due course. The Nigel Farage-led party plans to stand candidates in every London ward in May.



Cllr Tim James  
Credit Reform UK

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## NEWS

# Council clashes with government over state of borough's roads

Waltham Forest Council has disputed the DfT's 'red' rating, arguing that the borough is actually one of the quickest in the country to repair potholes

by Marco Marcelline

**W**altham Forest Council and the Department for Transport (DfT) have been embroiled in a war of words over the state of the borough's roads, after a DfT report last month ranked Waltham Forest's highways as among the worst in the country.

The borough received a 'red' rating by the DfT for how it utilised government funding it received to fix potholes and maintain roads last year.

The *Echo* understands the council is demanding that the DfT revise their scoring, a move that would require ministerial approval.

Council deputy leader Clyde Loakes said the town hall was "incredibly disappointed" by the DfT's rankings, and urged it to "revisit the data and analyse it correctly so that they can accurately represent the situation on the ground".

Cllr Loakes also pointed to research by GoCompare that found Waltham Forest took on average one day to complete pothole repairs.

But the DfT slapped down the council's complaints, stating the suggestion of mishandled or ignored data was "categorically untrue".

A DfT spokesperson said: "The ratings follow a clear, published methodology using data from official statistics that local authorities provided themselves."

The ratings grade 154 local authorities as red, amber or green based on current road condition and how effectively they are spending the government's total £7.3billion funding to fix potholes and invest in long term measures to maintain roads.

The red, amber, and green ratings are based on three key areas: the condition of local roads, how much local authorities are spending on road repairs, and whether they are following best practice in maintaining highways.

4,385 potholes were repaired by the council last year (2024/25), compared



Credit Matt Hoffman via Unsplash

to 5,756 the year before (2023/24).

A letter sent by the council's chief executive Linzi Roberts-Egan to Waltham Forest Tory leader Emma Best has laid bare the extent of Waltham Forest's disagreements with the DfT.

In it, Roberts-Egan declares several DfT findings to be inaccurate and a misrepresentation of the facts on the ground. One of the areas she challenges the government is on its claim that the borough was set to do zero kilometres of preventative work this year.

She writes: "The DfT gave surface dressing as an example of preventative treatment. This treatment is not suitable for an urban environment like Waltham Forest and is used more effectively on rural roads.

"This technique was tried in the past and led to numerous complaints at the time as the tar coated chippings were spread over a wide area on the carriageway and footway and relied on vehicles driving over it many times to bed it in.

"Instead, we undertake the traditional method of removing the top layer of the road surface and relaying it for preventative surfacing treatment. Therefore, in response to this question, we said we had no plans to undertake surface treatment in Waltham Forest and this was represented as no

preventative work in Waltham Forest."

A further bone of contention was the DfT scoring the borough 45.7 out of 100 for its highway maintenance spend compared to its highway maintenance block allocation – with the score being among the lowest in the country.

Roberts-Egan instead wrote that the borough spends "60% of its maintenance budget on treatment" and pointed to repairs commencing in January on the Cavendish Path bridge over the River Ching.

Speaking to the *Echo*, Cllr Best said: "It really is saying something that a Labour government is severely criticising its own Labour council for the state of our roads. It is a disgrace that the condition of some of our roads were rated as the worst in the country.

"It is also shocking to discover that the council has not used a proper [government mandated] SCANNER survey to assess the conditions of our roads since 2020. The council has been marking their own homework by doing it themselves."

The *Echo* understands that the council had planned a further full road network survey in 2025 but decided to hold off to allow the DfT to publish its updated best practice guidance for condition surveys. This guidance was published in September, which was after the DfT requested road condition data for its rankings.

Cllr Loakes added: "Like other councils, including Greenwich and Kensington & Chelsea, we have serious concerns about how the DfT has reached its conclusions. Disappointingly, we have not yet heard back from anyone at the department following the constructive discussion we arranged on Monday, 12th January.

"We remain hopeful they will assess the Highway Inspection Data we provided and update our rating so that it accurately reflects the situation on the ground in Waltham Forest."

See letter, page-14

Continued from Page-1



Striking drivers at Leamington Interchange Bus Company in Leyton Credit Unite

were singled out.

"We carried out widespread leafleting and held meetings to explain to members that this was not only an attack on reps, but on the workforce as a whole.

"There are around 450 drivers based at this garage, and membership has now reached about 350. Management later reinstated the rep with a final written warning. However, on his first day back at work, he experienced hostility from management. This shows clearly how workers at the depot are being treated."

He added that he wanted "a change in management and to be treated fairly, with dignity and respect".

A Stagecoach spokesperson told the *Echo* that it "strongly refutes" Unite's allegations of union victimisation and bullying, while also saying the dispute is "not about pay".

They said: "We recognise the important role of our recognised trade union and would not tolerate victimisation of union representatives for carrying out their duties.

"Any disciplinary matters are handled through long-established, trade-union-agreed procedures that apply equally to all employees and include the right to representation and appeal.

"We have made extensive efforts to resolve this matter, including agreeing to independent mediation, and remain open to further dialogue."

However, Unite regional officer John Murphy said: "We understand that those who rely on these bus services will be concerned to hear of industrial action, but this dispute is entirely the fault of the employer for bullying hardworking members of its workforce.

"The ballot result shows the strength of solidarity between bus drivers and their colleagues who have been affected by union busting. Management still has a chance to stop this disruptive action, but it relies on them radically changing their behaviour towards our reps."

The strike will significantly disrupt a total of 13 routes that run across East London, including the 97 which runs between Chingford and Stratford, and the W13 from Leyton Mills to Woodford.

Transport for London (TfL) says little to no service is expected on the other following routes: 58, 135, 236, 276, 308, 339, 488, D8, W13, and 678.

For more details on the industrial action and tools to plan your journey, visit: [tfl.gov.uk/campaign/strikes](https://tfl.gov.uk/campaign/strikes)

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## HOUSING

# ‘The honeymoon is over’: Residents of flagship Walthamstow newbuild hit by leaks, broken lifts – and ‘silent’ council



Shared ownership resident Tahara Barzegar

by Marco Marcelline

*Leaseholders and tenants at Precision House in Wood Street have battled flooding, regularly out of service lifts, and ‘maddening silence’ from their landlord Waltham Forest Council*

**R**esidents living in a new-build block of flats in Wood Street, Walthamstow say they have faced a catalogue of issues including leaks, flooding, lifts breaking down, as well as antisocial behaviour since they moved in.

When Precision House was completed by construction firm The Hill Group in November 2024, Waltham Forest Council hailed it as a flagship “100% affordable housing scheme”, proudly stating that four in ten of the flats (29 of 67) were for social rent, with the remaining being for shared ownership tenants.

Council leader Grace Williams said at the time: “The quality of these homes is second to none and [they] have been designed to be environmentally sustainable and lower people’s energy bills.”

Tahara Barzegar was initially satisfied with her move into Precision House in August 2025, with it being her first solo apartment.

She says: “I was so excited to move into this flat; it’s my first ever purchase, and I genuinely love living in Walthamstow. I never thought I’d be able to get my foot on



The hole in the ceiling which water poured out of

the housing ladder, so the fact that I can say I actually own a part of this flat, and potentially eventually all of it, is something so special.”

The honeymoon soon faded, however, as Tahara began to notice the building’s two lifts were regularly breaking down.

From late October through November, a WhatsApp group for tenants on her floor was constantly updated with the status of the lifts; residents would write that a lift had stopped working, before another tenant would chime in, either hours or a day later, to say it was fine to use again.

Both lifts in the eleven-storey building were out of service for an entire weekend in November, Tahara says, leaving a young mum on her floor having to make her young children crawl up and down the stairs as she was unable to carry them.

The lift issues were made worse, Tahara says, by “almost non-existent” communication from the council regarding misrepairs. Under a two-year warranty signed with freeholder Waltham Forest that expires this November, Hill Group is liable for most repair problems. However, Tahara adds the firm regularly denied responsibility, leaving residents in a “state of complete confusion and frustration”.

The *Echo* understands that one of the lifts has been functioning without issue since its control panel part was replaced by contractors in late November.

However, according to a shared ownership resident who asked not to be named, the second lift is still out of service because the supplier for a replacement part has

missed two deadlines.

This part had been due to be delivered and installed on Saturday, 17th January, he said, adding that this repair update was not sent en-masse to all residents but to an individual tenant instead.

In addition to the lifts breaking down, constant leaks in the ground floor last month eventually resulted in water pouring down from a hole in the ceiling, flooding an entire corridor.

When the *Echo* visited Precision House on Friday, 9th January, muddied puddles of water were present across the lobby and ground floor corridor which leads to the communal garden at the back of the building.

Weeks of leaks, believed to be caused by a serious pipework blockage, appear to have been resolved on Tuesday, 13th January, when contractors arrived to dig a hole in the back garden to get to the sewage mains.

Another resident, Kalliope Costa, moved into her shared ownership flat at Precision House in March 2025 and says she only began encountering issues in the past few months.

She says: “It seems to have really deteriorated quite quickly; my main concern is, if this building isn’t maintained and it already looks like this after six months, what will it look like in another six months?”

In September, shared ownership residents including Kalliope received a letter from the council’s home ownership officer stating that they owed £4,277 in outstanding rent and service charges.

The letter warned residents that it was “imperative” they clear the outstanding amount or they would be “breaking their lease agreement”.

A panicked Kalliope, who had been consistently paying £139 a month in service charges since she moved in, rang the council demanding clarity, and was later told that the letter was sent in error.

Reflecting on the saga, she told the *Echo*: “I’ve got a hectic and stressful job and I don’t want to come back home and see all these issues; it’s exhausting. All I want is consistent and actual communication from the council; they don’t tell us anything.”

Antisocial behaviour has also blighted the building, Tahara and Kalliope both say. Alongside dealing with rampant parcel thefts, residents were forced to clean up vomit from a communal staircase one weekend.

Tahara told the *Echo*: “What’s been hardest [to deal with] isn’t that repairs are needed, it’s the silence.

“When things go wrong, there’s no clear communication about what’s happening, who’s responsible, how long it will take, or whether costs will be pushed onto residents.

“Living with that uncertainty is exhausting. It leaves me feeling ignored, anxious, and constantly on edge in my own home. I’m not trying to cause problems, I just want someone to acknowledge us, explain what’s going on, and listen.”

Councillor Ahsan Khan, deputy leader and cabinet member for housing and regeneration, apologised to the residents of Precision House for the problems they have experienced.

He told the *Echo*: “We are working closely with our contractor Hill Group, who is responsible for most maintenance and repairs until November 2026, to make sure these issues are resolved.

“We will shortly be setting up a meeting with residents to discuss any management issues or concerns they have. I am pleased that the leak affecting the lobby was fixed on Tuesday 13th January.

“The council is aware that some shared ownership residents received a letter containing incorrect information in September 2025. We have already spoken to those affected to say sorry for the error.”

A spokesperson for Hill Group said: “We are committed to providing high-quality homes for residents across all of our developments, and we are working closely with Waltham Forest to address any remedial issues at Precision House that fall within our contractual responsibilities.”



Tahara Barzegar

**“What’s been hardest isn’t that repairs are needed, it’s the silence”**

## NEWS

# 18-storey tower in Hoe Street gets planning permission

*All 66 flats will be rented and 17 of these will be 'affordable' – or rented at below the market rate*

CGI impressions of the tower  
Credit HAL Architects



by Sebastian Mann, Local Democracy Reporter

**A**n 18-storey tower made up of 66 new flats in Walthamstow has been approved.

Waltham Forest Council's planning committee, made up of elected councillors, green-lit the Hoe Street scheme at a meeting on Tuesday, 13th January.

The built-to-rent flats will comprise 28 one-bed units, 34 two-beds, and four three-beds. 17 flats will be classed as 'affordable housing,' aimed at families who cannot afford market-rate homes.

Built-to-rent homes cannot be owned by residents and are instead managed by professional proprietors.

The ground floor will be used for new shops and other commercial units.

Despite its height, planning officers say the tower will be in-keeping with the area, pointing to the proximity of the 16-storey Juniper House, the 14-storey Travelodge hotel, and the twelve-storey Gateway Apartments building.

It will be part of an "existing cluster of tall buildings," the planning team told councillors, and would only lead to a "minor loss" of open skyline.

Though councillors ultimately agreed the public benefits outweighed any harm to the town centre, six formal objections were received ahead of the meeting.

One objector, who lives directly opposite the site, said it would be "overbearing" on existing residents.

She wrote: "For those of us living nearby, this'll mean darker homes, a more oppressive environment, and uncertainty around safety and comfort. We therefore urge the committee to

refuse this application."

A representative for the applicant, Providence Capital Securities, said the plans' impact on lighting had been "accepted and approved" by independent assessors.

The council's draft Local Plan, which outlines plans for new housing in the borough up through 2035, identifies the site as suitable for an 18-storey block.

The representative said: "If you were ever going to build homes in this borough, this is the location you would do it in."

He added it was "precisely the type of proposal" the planning committee is designed to approve.

Waltham Forest Council is keen to see more permanent homes built in the borough, as it faces increased strain on its temporary housing budget.

An initial round of proposals were backed by the committee in 2022, but a raft of changes have since been implemented due to changing regulations.

A second stairway has been added in a bid to improve fire safety, and a yard area to the west has been made private.

The council's planning team said it was an improved development in terms of design, with more urban greening and more amenity space. Additionally, officers support the applicant's contribution of £100,000 to nearby playgrounds to support new families moving in.

A part two- and three-storey building – made up of flats and a vacant solicitors' office – will be torn down to make way for the new tower.



## Waltham Forest residents living in temporary housing almost doubles in three years

*Around 1,700 households are in temporary housing, according to council data from October – almost a 90% increase on the 900 households recorded in 2022*

by Sebastian Mann, Local Democracy Reporter

**T**he number of Waltham Forest residents living in temporary housing has almost doubled in three years, leading to "significant" financial pressure.

Around 1,700 households are in temporary housing, according to council data from October – almost a 90% increase on the 900 households recorded in 2022.

"This has significant financial implications for the council and means that more and more households are living in conditions that might be detrimental to their wellbeing," Charlie Conyers, Waltham Forest Council's assistant director of accommodation options and allocations, said in a report published in January.

The report revealed the council is now facing a £14.4million overspend in its temporary housing budget, which it will need to rein in ahead of the new financial year.

In 2024/25, the council spent a total of £20.4m, which was double what it budgeted for.

The council is exploring a number

of options. It is pushing for more homes to be built in the borough – having approved a new 18-storey tower in Walthamstow last month – and is even looking into moving residents into social housing outside London.

Its latest bid to save money is to alter the length of time it leases temporary accommodation from between three and five years to a minimum of ten years and a day.

Under housing regulations, councils can only claim back 90% of what they spend on renting properties if the lease is under a decade.

By extending them to ten years and a day, Waltham Forest says it will be eligible for a 100% subsidy.

Enfield, Hackney and Greenwich councils have adopted similar schemes.

Waltham Forest is not alone in its woes; a report by the London School of Economics revealed that temporary accommodation budgets across London are in the red by a combined total of £740m.

The equivalent of 11% of the average household's council tax bill is now spent on temporary accommodation, equal to one in every nine pounds spent.

## NEWS

# Palestine group slams council for role in cancelling controversial 7th October talks

by Marco Marcelline

*Waltham Forest Palestine Solidarity Campaign had been due to hold a talk 'debunking mainstream narratives' about the 7th October attacks last month*

A free speech row has broken out after Waltham Forest Council reportedly intervened to shut down an event that would have explored “alternative” narratives around the 7th October attacks in Israel, amid concerns from Jewish residents.

Waltham Forest Palestine Solidarity Campaign (WFPSC) had been due to hold a talk with the *Electronic Intifada* journalist Asa Winstanley entitled “What really happened on October 7th” at the council-owned William Morris Community Centre in Walthamstow on Friday, 9th January.

In promotional material for the event shared on social media, organisers said the event would have disregarded “debunked” and “unverified mainstream narratives” around the 7th October attacks, and instead “explored what really happened in an objective way”.

Over 1,200 Israelis were murdered by Hamas fighters who broke through the Gaza border on 7th October 2023, taking 250 Israelis hostage.

More than 71,000 Palestinians have been killed in Israel’s brutal response, which is regarded by human rights organisations, the UN and war scholars as a genocide.

WFPSC was informed on Friday 2nd January by the William Morris Community Centre’s chair that their event was cancelled “following correspondence from the Charity Commission who expressed concerns”.

The *Echo* understands that the council had also contacted the centre with its own concerns about the event before the decision was made to cancel it.

In a statement released on Facebook, WFPSC decried the event cancellation as “deeply shameful”, adding: “Cancelling an event that challenges mainstream media reporting creates a chilling effect on all critiques of dominant narratives, particularly when cancellation is executed unilaterally and without consulting those affected.”

The talk would have avoided exclusively blaming Hamas for the atrocities committed on 7th October, and instead looked at how the Israel Defence Force



Activists calling for the return of Hamas-held hostages at a protest in Manchester in January 2025, Credit: Photo by Ian Betley on Unsplash

(IDF) response that day contributed to Israeli civilian fatalities.

According to various media investigations, including one by the Israeli newspaper *Haaretz*, IDF officials invoked the Hannibal Directive on 7th October, which involved telling units to use all necessary force to prevent the capture and hostage-taking of Israeli soldiers by Hamas.

In his reporting for the pro-Palestine publication *Electronic Intifada*, Winstanley has repeatedly said the directive’s issuance is evidence that Israel killed “hundreds” of its own people.

The IDF has admitted that “there was significant difficulty distinguishing between IDF troops, civilians and terrorists”, and that “some Israeli civilians were killed in friendly fire incidents”.

Meanwhile, an *Al Jazeera* investigation that analysed hours of footage from CCTV, dashcams, personal phones and headcams of dead Hamas fighters found that 18 Israelis were mistakenly killed by the IDF that day.

There is however no substantiated evidence that proves Winstanley’s view that the IDF killed “hundreds” of its own people on 7th October.

Winstanley has also written that bodycam footage captured by Hamas fighters that show civilian killings were “released by the Israeli occupation authorities and are highly likely to have been subjected to selective editing”.

However, unedited dashcam footage viewed and verified by Human Rights Watch has shown Hamas fighters fatally shooting Israelis dressed in civilian

clothes at several locations including a kibbutz, a bomb shelter, and at the Nova music festival.

Winstanley has been accused by critics of “downplaying” or “minimising” the brutality of Hamas’ actions in Israel on 7th October.

Last year, the journalist said a joke about kidnapped Nova festival-goers was the “the best tweet of all time”.

Local resident Millie Rose-Gray, who has family living in Israel, saw the publicised event while scrolling Facebook on Saturday, 27th December. She told the *Echo* that the event immediately brought up “major red flags” for her.

Millie said: “I’m Jewish and I know people who have been directly affected by what happened on 7th October; I remember ringing my siblings in Israel in a blind panic that day because I didn’t know where they were and I was so scared for them. So to see an event that is downplaying Israeli suffering was very concerning.”

Millie added that she could not understand why the event organisers would want to challenge the consensus around 7th October, stating: “The terrorism that unfolded that day was well documented on video by Hamas themselves, so I cannot comprehend how you can discuss alternative views of that day.”

Feeling that the event was a potential “breeding ground for terrorist sympathisers”, Millie reacted by first calling the police, who declined to assist her, before contacting various organisations including the Charity Commission, Campaign Against Antisemitism and UK Lawyers

for Israel.

In emails to those parties, Millie wrote that the event risked “legitimising terrorism or dehumanising an entire people, and undermining public safety and community cohesion”.

A spokesperson for the Charity Commission told the *Echo* it had been “assessing concerns raised about the event”. Ahead of Friday, 9th January, the commission said it wrote to William Morris Community Centre’s trustees “setting out potential areas of regulatory interest, explaining charity law, and asking for information and documentation from the trustees”.

The spokesperson continued: “The trustees, in response, promptly informed us that they had cancelled the event. We did not require or request this. Our role is not to make decisions for trustees, but instead to ensure that trustees are following our guidance when making decisions on behalf of their charity, including about events held at, or in the name of their charity.”

The council has not publicly confirmed that it contacted the venue with concerns, but leader Grace Williams told the *Echo*: “I am pleased that [the community centre] have confirmed to me that they have taken the decision to cancel this event given the concerns that have been expressed since it was advertised.”

The *Echo* understands that WFPSC is looking for a new venue in the borough to host future talks and events, while also seeking to challenge the grounds on which the decision to cancel the January talk was made.

## NEWS

# Tackle youth knife crime with more school counsellors and mental health support, experts say

*Waltham Forest's Community Safety Partnership and the Safeguard Children Board has published a series of recommendations amid rising knife crime in the borough*

by **Sebastian Mann**,  
Local Democracy Reporter

A series of anti-violence recommendations have been published after two Waltham Forest boys were stabbed to death in 2023.

A total of eleven teenagers – mostly black-British – were victims of knife violence between March and July that year, which resulted in three more being convicted of murder.

Their ages ranged from 14 to 17 years, while the three killers were all aged 16. Of the 14 involved, just one was a girl.

Waltham Forest's Community Safety Partnership and the Safeguard Children Board published a thematic review of the violent episodes in January, almost three years on.



The review found that eleven had experienced disruptions to their education – with seven having been permanently suspended – and ten had previous experience with the criminal justice system.

Three had been diagnosed with autism and attention deficit disorder, and five were undiagnosed but suspected.

There were “professional concerns for almost all of the children and families and for most, these had been emerging for at least a year,” the report said.

For those younger than 18, serious violence “tends to be strongly associated with the school day”, the report adds.

Just shy of 70% of offences involving a victim under 18 take place on a school day, and almost one-third occur between 3pm and 5pm.

There are “seasonal and temporal peaks” in serious violence overall.

In the last three years, serious violence has typically been higher in the early summer months of May through July.

The report found that young black men face the highest rate of victimisation for knife injury offences, at double the rate of any other ethnic group.

The lengthy review concluded with six recommendations. They included working with schools to make them safer and more supportive, repairing trust between young people and the police, and bolstering mental health support – specifically for young black men.

A new community cohesion team will focus on tackling hate crimes in schools, while the schools themselves will expand access to on-site counsellors and after-school clubs.

The council's youth services team is also working with the employment service, hosting workshops and promoting opportunities in creative, construction and other industries. They include apprenticeships, work experience, and mentoring.

Other recommendations include widening access to youth services and “positive opportunities” therein, and enhancing the community safety partnership by improving its ability to monitor social media and the early identification of special educational needs in children from ethnic minorities.

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## ARTS &amp; CULTURE

## Review: 'The Night I Borrowed Time'

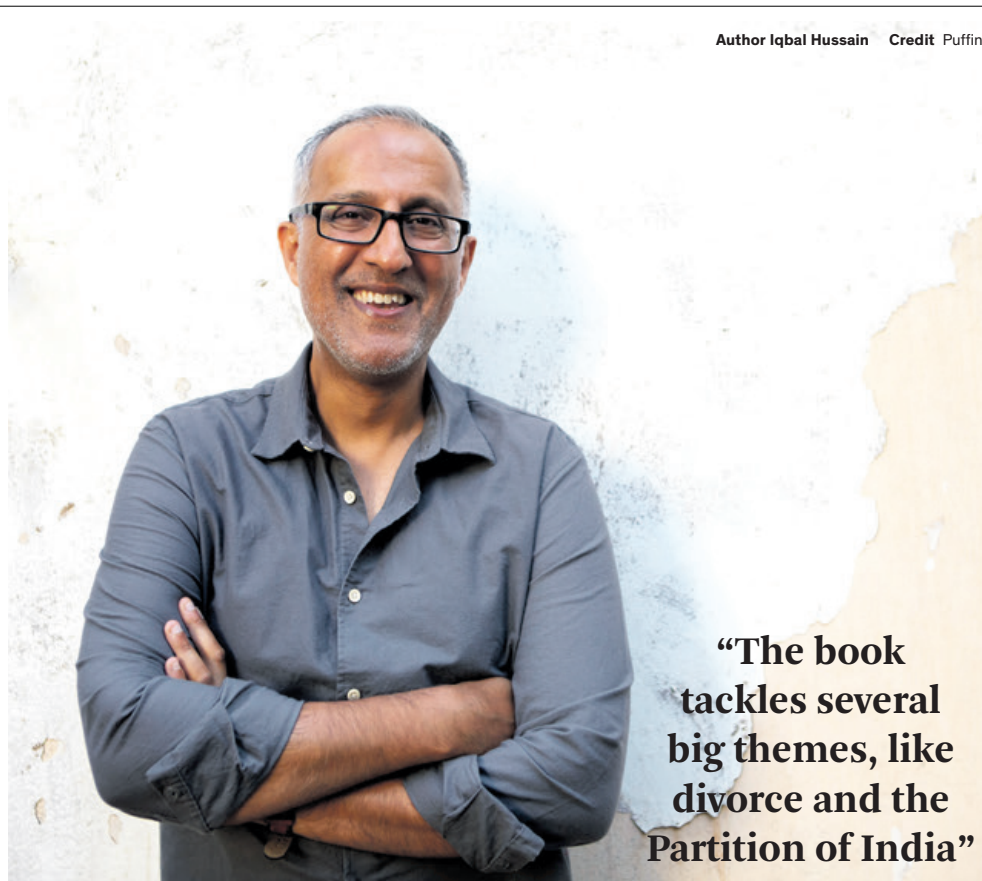
Sarah Fairbairn reviews a 'thrilling' debut children's novel by Walthamstow author Iqbal Hussain

**A** local author's debut children's novel was among the first to be published under a new imprint from a beloved publisher this January, as Puffin Press launched three books aimed at the most voracious young book worms.

*The Night I Borrowed Time* is the thrilling story of Zubair, an eleven-year old seventh son of Pakistani heritage who discovers that the family heirloom passed to him by his gran has the power to take him back in time.

Although his first time-travel experiments are small scale, Zubair's not just interested in going back to ace last week's maths test. Stresses at home and a revelation about a tragedy in his family's past lead him all the way back to 1947, to the Partition of India and to the root of his own parents' marriage.

As author Iqbal Hussain told me: "The book tackles several big themes, including divorce and the Partition of India. Both felt important to explore. So many children grow up in households where their parents are struggling to get along, and I



Author Iqbal Hussain Credit Puffin

"The book tackles several big themes, like divorce and the Partition of India"

wanted them to see themselves reflected in my words – and to know that it's not their fault. Grown-ups are fallible.

"The Partition was one of the largest movements of people in history, yet it isn't a mandatory subject in UK schools. With so many children from South Asian backgrounds, it feels like too important

a piece of history to ignore. Its repercussions are still felt today."

As Zubair works through his new ability and figures out the rules of time travel, he discovers it doesn't always go smoothly. Sometimes a trade-off has to be made, and some things just can't be fixed, no matter how much you would like to

stick the broken pieces back together.

Author Iqbal adds: "The one message I'd like readers to take from my book is that fate can't be controlled, as much as we might sometimes want it to be – and that that's okay. Things simply just *are*, for better or worse, and we're often better off embracing what we have rather than wishing for something we don't."

'The Night I Borrowed Time' is available to purchase at all good book stores (£8.99)



'The Night I Borrowed Time' book cover Credit Puffin

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We make local news freely available to people in Waltham Forest but local journalism is not free to produce.

Last year, the Echo published 1,073 news stories. We printed and distributed 180,000 free copies of the newspaper.

We covered important news stories such as the closure of

The Markfield Centre and its impact on adults with special needs and their families.

We published positive features on local sports, arts and charitable activities, celebrating the amazing creativity and community spirit of Waltham Forest residents.

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# LETTERS

## Unaffordable housing

Dear WFE

WALTHAM FOREST COUNCIL has given the go-ahead for an 18-storey tower block to be built by private, money-grubbing developers on the site of Barclays bank and a solicitors' office on Hoe Street near Walthamstow Central station.

So, are we supposed to get excited about the measly offer to allow 17 of the proposed 66 flats to be rented at a slight discount – so-called “affordable” but in reality, unaffordable levels?

This time last year there were over 9,500 households on the council's housing waiting list. Many young people can't even get onto the waiting list and have to remain in their parents' homes well into their thirties.

The councillors have declared they want to build 27,000 new homes by 2035. Sounds good – but they are not for the people languishing on the waiting list.

Private property companies, who take the rents and all the profits, build the homes and the council gets thrown a few crumbs for desperate families. Labour councillors have done very little to give us hope.

We say all the flats on this site plus the 500 flats in the two high blocks in Selborne Walk should be allocated to the needy first such as those on the waiting list, and they should be rented at the level of current council rents.

That's why the Waltham Forest Socialist Party says what's needed is a workers' list of candidates ready to fight for our community, not the big developers and bosses. We say cap all rents at prices that are genuinely affordable for working-class and young people, seize empty private housing, and create jobs to build council homes where needed.

There must be no more austerity cuts or austerity taxes, and all the services and amenities lost over the years of austerity must be restored. Our families and young people need a future.

Waltham Forest  
Socialist Party

## Rubbish roads

Dear WFE

I AM WRITING TO EXPRESS growing concern shared by many residents about the condition of our local streets and high streets.

In recent months, there has been an increasing number of reports of nails and other sharp objects embedded in car tyres, alongside a worsening problem with potholes. These issues are not only costly and inconvenient for motorists, but they also pose genuine safety risks. At the same time, kerb cleaning appears to be sporadic or absent in many areas, allowing debris (including nails) to accumulate along roadsides.

Our high streets, which should be welcoming and well-maintained, also seem to be suffering from a lack of regular jet washing. Grime-stained pavements and neglected public spaces do little to encourage footfall or civic pride, especially at a time when local businesses are already under pressure.

Individually, these issues may seem minor but collectively, they point to a slow but noticeable decline in basic standards of street maintenance that residents rely on and expect.

This raises an important question: why do these standards appear to be gradually diminishing, and what is being done to address this before the problem becomes the norm rather than the exception?

Local resident and business owner, name withheld

## Congestion

Dear WFE

DECEMBER'S ECHO HIGHLIGHTED the average speed of buses throughout London.

Waltham Forest's stats on this must be awful since they decided to close every side street to through traffic between busy Hoe Street and Forest Road, so when either road is congested obvious alternative routes cannot be accessed.

Side streets with no through traffic may well be a utopia for privileged residents but they needlessly cause traffic jams for others.

Geoff Crane, Chingford

## Wood burning

Dear WFE

WE ARE GLAD TO SEE THE government acknowledging that the pollution emitted from living rooms is too much and too harmful. Almost daily people get in touch to tell us about being smoked out of their homes and

gardens, of non-stop coughing and wheezing during the winter despite their neighbours burning in a legal way across the country.

The government's consultation on this does not go far enough however – it only suggests measures that will reduce wood burning from new stoves but does not address the huge levels of pollution emitted by existing stoves and fireplaces. Hopefully, in line with scientists and health professionals the final outcome will be more aligned with the needs of public and children's health. Frankly, non-essential wood burning needs to end.

Jemima Hartshorn, Founder and Director Mums for Lungs

## Reading volunteers

Dear WFE

READ EASY WALTHAM FOREST provides free, confidential, one-to-one reading coaching for adults.

Around one in 13 adults in Waltham Forest struggles with reading, meaning that they would struggle to understand labels on food or household bills. People learn with Read Easy to gain confidence at work, support their children or grandchildren at school, or manage everyday tasks more independently.

2026 has recently been announced as the National Year of Reading, a major national campaign to get millions more people reading for pleasure and address a decline in reading among both adults and children. As a result, more adults will be seeking to improve their reading skills and Read Easy Waltham Forest has plans to grow in size.

The group started in 2023 and is currently supporting 15 readers, who work with trained volunteer coaches. Alongside the coaches, a small team of volunteers manages the group, including fundraising and matching readers with coaches.

The charity is now seeking a new team leader, an important volunteer role with overall responsibility for running and overseeing the direction of the group. The national Read Easy organisation provides extensive guidance and support, and no prior experience in teaching or literacy work is required.

Anyone interested in finding out more is encouraged to contact [wforestrecruiter@readeasy.org.uk](mailto:wforestrecruiter@readeasy.org.uk) or visit [readeasy.org.uk/groups/walthamforest/](http://readeasy.org.uk/groups/walthamforest/)

Read Easy Waltham Forest

## Pothole problems

Dear WFE

IT REALLY IS SAYING SOMETHING that a Labour government is severely criticising its own Labour council for the state of our roads [*Council clashes with government over state of borough's roads*, pg.6]. It is a disgrace that the condition of some of our roads were rated as the worst in the country.

It is also shocking to discover that the council has not used a proper [government mandated] SCANNER survey to assess the

conditions of our roads since 2020. The council has been marking their own homework by doing it themselves.

The council also needs to answer why we are only resurfacing 6km of roads when most comparable outer London boroughs like Redbridge, Barnet and Brent are doing double or triple the amount of resurfacing.

Maybe if the Labour councillors had accepted our suggestions over the years to increase the roads budget our roads might not be in this sorry state.

Councillor Emma Best, Waltham Forest Conservatives leader

# NEWS



## Civil servant made OBE in New Year's Honours List

Walthamstow civil servant Kemi Ademola has been made an OBE for services to bereaved families across faith communities.

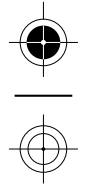
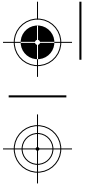
Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) employee Kemi leads support for 'Tell Us Once', a service that helps grieving families notify government departments about the death of a loved one in a single step.

She works directly with community faith leaders and funeral

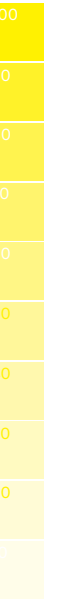
directors to raise awareness of the service and ensure families know help is available when they need it most.

Since joining DWP in 2001, Kemi has spent most of her career in frontline roles in various jobcentres, working directly with communities.

Reacting to her award, Kemi said: "I find it both inspiring and deeply humbling, a powerful reminder that when passion is paired with purpose, lives can be transformed."



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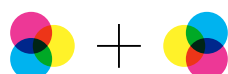
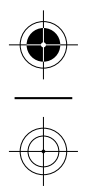
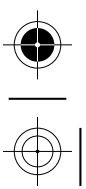
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# AROUND THE BOROUGH

## LEYTON

### Orient fan wins £15k from crossbar challenge

by Marco Marcelline

**A** Leyton Orient fan took home £15,000 after winning a half-time crossbar challenge at Leyton Orient Stadium on Saturday, 10th January.

Graham Pringle came out on top as he attempted the BetWright-Bangers N' Cash Crossbar Challenge during the O's 1-1 League One draw with Cardiff City.

The challenge was launched at the beginning of the season with an initial prize pot of £3,000 available for anyone able to strike the crossbar from the edge of the D during the half-time break.

The prize pot increased by a further £1,000 with each passing home game as a number of Orient fans failed to strike the woodwork. However, Graham became the first supporter to buck that trend as he launched into wild celebrations after hitting the crossbar to take home the five-figure sum.

Graham said: "You can't describe the feeling of hitting the crossbar in front of the Leyton Orient fans. I said to my wife afterwards it's probably the second best thing that's ever happened in



Graham Pringle after hitting the crossbar Credit BetWright

my life, after marrying her. It was unbelievable, a fantastic feeling.

"After missing my first attempt, I thought I'd hit my second one harder and right down the middle – I was over the moon. The buzz of being out here, irrespective of winning the money, was just brilliant."

As part of the competition, participating supporters are initially given one attempt to hit the crossbar. Should they miss that they are then offered the chance to pick one of three cards, two of which offer a consolation prize, with the other card providing a second attempt.

## BLACKHORSE ROAD

### Council secures funding for creative businesses

**W**altham Forest is set to benefit from £70,000 from the Mayor Sir Sadiq Khan to support artists and creative businesses located in the borough's Creative Enterprise Zone (CEZ).

The borough is one of nine to receive a share of a £630,000 pot to continue developing its CEZ in Blackhorse Lane.

The Mayor of London says the funding will help "unlock affordable studio and workspace, support local creative businesses, and protect the cultural communities that have helped define neighbourhoods across Waltham Forest".

In 2021, Blackhorse Lane was designated a Creative Enterprise Zone, and in 2023 the zone was officially launched as



Blackhorse Collective.

Waltham Forest Council has said the establishment of the zone "recognises the high quality of the area's existing businesses, its rich history of making, and its potential for growth, while providing affordably priced spaces for artists and creative

businesses, and creative training and employment opportunities for local people".

The council adds that the CEZ will "ensure Blackhorse Lane's status as a breeding ground for creativity for many years to come".

A 2023 report on CEZs showed that between 2018 and 2021, creative businesses in CEZs grew by 22%, at a time when London as a whole saw a fall of nearly 4%.

Alongside Waltham Forest, boroughs including Croydon, Hackney, Tower Hamlets, Lewisham, Lambeth, Hounslow, Ealing, Haringey and Hammersmith and Fulham will receive funding. The capital's remaining zones in North Paddington, Brent and Islington will also be able to reapply for funding later this year.

## WALTHAMSTOW CENTRAL

### Plans to demolish service garage for new homes

by Sebastian Mann,  
Local Democracy Reporter

**P**roposals have been put forward to demolish a service garage by Walthamstow Central Station to make way for seven new flats.

Walthamstow Central Garage has applied for outline planning consent to tear down D&A Autos, in Station Approach off Hoe Street.

The homes, spread across two two-storey buildings, would comprise two three-bedroom flats, three two-bedroom flats and two one-beds. New shrubbery will be planted, and the developers will install new cycling sheds and bin stores.

It would be walking distance from Walthamstow High Street, and set amongst a pre-existing mix of homes, businesses and shops.

In a design statement submitted to Waltham Forest Council's planning department, the applicants said the garage represented an "ideal opportunity" to build homes that "meet local need".

The application also references recent guidance from the government, published in

November, that says "house-building near well-connected train stations will receive a default 'yes' in future if they meet certain rules, ensuring more high-quality, affordable homes are built in and around our key towns and cities, saving commuters time and boosting access to housing".

The applicant also hopes to reduce the visual impact on neighbours in Priory Avenue by using pitched roofs to lower the height and increasing foliage and shrubbery.

Previous plans to build seven homes on the site were refused by the town hall over concerns regarding transport and the impact on the roads and pavements.

Walthamstow Central garage  
Credit Google Streetview



## LEYTONSTONE

### Firefighters rescue children trapped on frozen pond

**F**irefighters rescued two children who were trapped on a frozen pond in Leytonstone during a cold snap last month.

London Fire Brigade (LFB) crews were called at 4.44pm on Wednesday, 7th January to two boys who were stuck on an island in the middle of Hollow Pond, unable to make it back to the edge due to melting ice. Crews from Leyton, Walthamstow and East Ham used inflatable rescue boats and specialist water rescue

equipment to reach the boys and bring them to safety.

There were no reports of any injuries and the incident was over by 5.35pm. The incident came just days after people fell into water after attempting to rescue a dog that got into difficulty in a frozen Epping Forest lake on Monday, 4th January.

Both men were able to get out of the water and were left in the care of the ambulance service, and the dog was safely reunited with its owners.

# LOCAL NOTICES

Published: 30th January 2026

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

Notice of application for the grant of a Premises Licence under section 17 of the Licensing Act 2003.

Notice is hereby given that **EL MISIONERO LIMITED** has applied to the London Borough of Waltham Forest for the grant of a Premises Licence at **WEIRDROUGH BAKERY, 17 A STATION ROAD, E17 8AA, LONDON**. The nature of the application is as follows:

- To permit the sale of alcohol (on and off ) Monday to Sunday, 11:00-23:00

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 **27/02/2026**.

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.

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

Notice of application for the grant of a Premises Licence under section 17 of the Licensing Act 2003.

Notice is hereby given that **R K VIRDEE** has applied to the London Borough of Waltham Forest for the grant of a Premises License at **Corner 107 Ltd, 107 Station Road, Chingford E4 7BU**. The nature of the application is as follows:

- To permit the sale of alcohol, Monday – Sunday, 7 days

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 **26th February 2026**.

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.



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

Email for a quote to [licences@socialspider.com](mailto:licences@socialspider.com) or call Klaudia Kiss 07732 000 430 or Mark Brown 07728 520 116

Next publication date: 27th February | Booking deadline: 25th February

## Sign up to the Echo's weekly newsletter

We have a weekly newsletter to keep readers up-to-date with the latest news, features and comment from the Echo website



Sign up: [eepurl.com/imPSws](http://eepurl.com/imPSws)

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\*a selection of our regular stockists, but it is not an exhaustive list

# LISTINGS

## WALK

**World Wetlands Day Guided Tour**  
Monday, 2nd February, 7.30–9am  
London Wildlife Trust,  
2 Forest Road N17 9NH

Join us on an out-of-hours guided tour around the reserve, led by a member of the Walthamstow Wetlands on site team, to learn about the heritage of the area, the diverse habitats around the site and some of the wildlife that can be seen. Discover why wetlands are so important, the different types and the threats they are facing, as well as about our current projects. This is a gentle tour around the reserve on paths – there may be some gentle inclines so strong stout footwear is recommended.

Search 'World Wetlands Day Guided Tour' on Eventbrite for tickets

## SUPER BOWL

**NFL Super Bowl Party**  
Sunday 8th February, 8.30pm–3am  
Big Penny Social, 1 Priestley Way  
E17 6AL

Join NFL UK at Big Penny Social for the Official Super Bowl LX Party London, the ultimate viewing experience. Expect electric fan energy, big-game atmosphere, and unforgettable moments you won't want to miss. Puerto Rican trapstar Bad Bunny is set to deliver a halftime show for the ages.

**Tickets from £20**  
Visit [bigpennysocial.co.uk/whats-on](http://bigpennysocial.co.uk/whats-on)

## COMEDY

**Signature Brew Comedy Club – Valentines Special**  
Saturday, 14th February, 7pm  
Signature Brew Blackhorse Road,  
Blackhorse Ln, Unit 15 E17 5QJ

Whether you're celebrating Valentine's, Galentine's, Palentine's or just fancy a top tier Saturday night out, reserve your seats for our special comedy club at the Brewery, starring Sarah Keyworth, Lily Phillips, and Steve Bugeja.

**Tickets from £21**  
Visit [tixr.com/groups/signaturebrew/events](http://tixr.com/groups/signaturebrew/events)

## WORKSHOP

**Make your own lampshade workshop**  
Sunday 15th February, 2pm–4pm  
Leyton Green Gallery, 782 High Road  
Leyton E10 6AE

Come join local maker Kala Paul-Worika and learn how to make your very own lampshade. Choose from a selection of material on the day or bring your own – approximately 70cmx28cm to fit a 20cm diameter drum lampshade. Medium-weight cotton which is not too thick works best. Unlimited refreshments (tea, coffee, juice, biscuits) provided.

Search 'Make Your Own Lampshade' on Eventbrite

## FAMILY

**Chinese New Year Arts & Crafts**  
Wednesday, 18th February,  
from 3.30pm  
Leytonstone Library,  
Church Lane E11 1HG

Get ready to celebrate Chinese New Year with fun craft at Leytonstone Library! This year celebrates the year of the Horse. The festival ushers in a fresh lunar year with family reunions, feast-filled dinners and widespread decorations in vibrant reds to symbolise good fortune.

Come join us at Leytonstone Library to celebrate the new lunar year, and create your own horse themed lantern! Free family activity. All children (5+) must be accompanied and supported by their parents/guardian

Free  
Search 'Chinese New Year  
Leytonstone Library' on Eventbrite

## TALK

**Troy: The New Evidence  
by Bruce Johnson**  
Wednesday 25th February, 7.30pm  
Walthamstow Trades Hall, 61–63  
Tower Hamlets Rd E17 4RQ

The Legend of Troy is a marvel of cultural heritage, a complex blend of facts and legends. Stories of the ten year siege and the wooden horse are entertaining, but often incomplete or self-contradictory. In the last hundred years archaeologists have discovered physical evidence and written accounts which shed new light on the old stories.

The talk will use evidence from recent archaeological digs and from Hittite tablets to support new explanations of why the Trojan War began, and how it ended, who the Amazons were and the real identity of Achilles.

**Tickets from £4**  
Visit [wegottickets.com/f/15132](http://wegottickets.com/f/15132)

## STAND UP

**East is East Comedy**  
Tuesday 10th February, 7pm–9pm  
Red Lion, 640 High Road  
Leytonstone E11 3AA

A monthly stand up show featuring some of the best comedians on TV. For the first show we are thrilled to have Horatio Gould as our headliner!

Co-star of Fin Vs History and Boys Gone Wild, Horatio has been taking the comedy world by storm. With his podcast regularly at the top of the charts and live tours selling out up and down the country, this is the perfect opportunity to see one of the UK's most exciting breakthrough acts!

For 15% off, use discount code LION26.

**Book tickets (from £12) here:**  
[fatsoma.com/e/88g5ymob](http://fatsoma.com/e/88g5ymob)

## WEAVING

**Mark Bushell's Basket Weaving Workshops**  
Mondays to Saturdays  
until Friday 13th February  
228 Chingford Mount Road  
E4 8JL

Mark Bushell is back again for his famous local basket weaving workshops running daily from Monday to Saturday until Friday 13th February.

There are two three hour classes daily, with a cost of £20 per class. All tools and materials are included and this event is suitable for beginners, novices and those of you with some experience

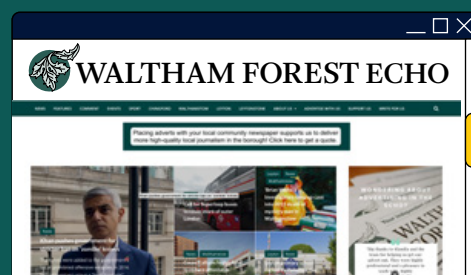
Classes run from 10.30 am to 1.30pm and then from 2pm until 5pm. All ages welcome (under 18's must be accompanied by an adult). Please book in advance to ensure you get a place.

**To book your session (£20) via text or WhatsApp:**  
Call 07702 417 203

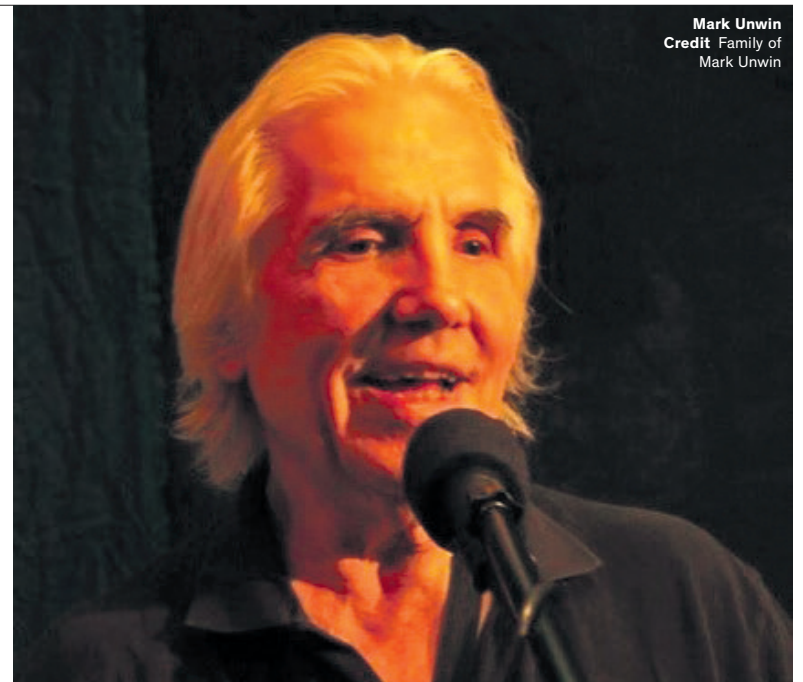
We can include low-cost community events taking place in Waltham Forest. For next month's listings, email the details of your event to [wfecho@socialspider.com](mailto:wfecho@socialspider.com) by Monday 16th February.

## Are you enjoying Waltham Forest Echo?

If you want more, you can find new stories every day online at [walthamforestecho.co.uk](http://walthamforestecho.co.uk)



# OBITUARY



Mark Unwin  
Credit: Family of  
Mark Unwin

## Walthamstow musician and devoted spud grower honoured with potato tribute

*Friends and family of Mark Urwin, who had passionately grown potatoes in his allotment for 25 years, paid tribute to him with a basket of his own spuds*

**A** Walthamstow local has been honoured with a uniquely personal celebration of his life – complete with a basket of home-grown potatoes.

Musician Mark Unwin, 76, had lived in Walthamstow since 1986. A regular at open mic nights, he became known for his witty, self-penned songs about local life, including his cult favourite *Demography of Walthamstow*.

A devoted allotment owner, Mark's patch was his pride and joy for 25 years, and potatoes were his greatest passion – making the decision to swap traditional floral tributes for a basket of his own spuds a fitting touch. On the day of his final farewell, Mark's well-worn allotment hat and a single red rose sat alongside them.

The service was filled entirely with Mark's own music, with three original tracks and a video of him performing at his allotment, capturing his humour and creativity. Guests were invited to wear whatever they felt comfortable in, a nod to Mark's colourful personality.

The service ended with a line from one of Mark's songs,

encouraging him to "Sashay away in Weymouth Bay".

Jacqueline Shannon, funeral director at Co-op Funeralcare Walthamstow, said: "Mark's service was incredibly joyful and personal. Every detail reflected his personality – from the potatoes and allotment hat to the music he wrote himself.

"It was a true celebration of Mark and how much he meant to the community, and we were delighted to assist his family in ensuring his final farewell was true to who he was."



Instead of flowers, friends and family paid tribute with a basket of spuds Credit: Co-op Funeralcare

## SPORT

Walthamstow FC manager Colin Reid (left) lasted less than a month in the job  
Credit: Bill Badger



## Change at the top

David O'Driscoll writes about what has so far been a tumultuous start to first half of the season for Walthamstow FC, with new manager Colin Reid leaving after less than one month in charge

**W**althamstow's difficult start to the season has led to the inevitable change at the top, with first Vinny Murphy leaving the club, followed quickly by his replacement, Colin Reid.

They have now opted for an experienced double act, Andy Leese and John Meakes. Both have extensive experience in the non-league game in the south of England, having worked together very successfully at Cheshunt and Enfield.

Here, they regularly guided their teams into the play-offs. Leese was most recently with Hayes and Yeading United, where he led the club to a sixth-placed finish last season.

Walthamstow are currently just outside the relegation zone of the Isthmian League North.

At the beginning of the season, their ambition was to be at the other end of the league.

Walthamstow are in the bottom section

due to their recent woeful form. While it is a long season, it looks like the club are in a relegation fight with four clubs at risk of relegation, and they are placed sixth bottom. They currently have 18 matches left to turn their season around.

Speaking to many fans at Wadham Lodge, they have been unimpressed by many performances and often puzzled by the team's tactics with there having been a lot of chopping and changing of players.

For example, at a recent game I did not recognise four of the players. This has likely resulted in some pretty lame performances; a particular low point was their 4-0 home thrashing at the hands of local rivals Redbridge.

This was followed by two further losses, including a 6-0 drubbing at Waltham Abbey. So it's come as no surprise that they pulled the plug on Murphy. Colin Reid was an interesting choice as a replacement.

While Reid has an impressive CV (he began his coaching at Spurs, where he coached Peter Crouch, amongst others), Reid was unable to turn Walthamstow's fortunes around, and it seems he decided to leave.

What is striking about Leese is that he is highly qualified, holding a UEFA A coaching badge, which is required to coach in the professional game, whereas many non-league coaches do not.

So all Walthamstow fans will be hoping Leese and Meakes will utilise his coaching knowledge and contacts to bring in some new players and help the club move upwards again.

## Leyton Orient partners with global live events company amid new stadium plans

by Marco Marcelline

**L**eyton Orient FC has announced it is partnering with leading live events company Legends Global as it works on plans for a brand new "world-class" stadium.

Legends Global is a partner to over 450 venues worldwide, helping to host 20,000 events attended by over 165 million guests a year.

The company offers services including "feasibility and consulting, owner's rep, sales, partnerships, venue management, hospitality, merchandise, content and booking".

In October 2025, the club confirmed it had partnered with Waltham Forest Council to deliver a new "world-class" stadium for the club within the borough by 2031.

The club is keen to move to a location near its current Brisbane Road home in Leyton, with the stadium set to be large enough to support the League One club's Championship ambitions.

Leyton Orient CEO Mark Devlin stated the move was necessary because surrounding residences prevent increasing the current site capacity from 9,271 to a desired "12,000-14,000".

The stadium is planned alongside a "zero-carbon" sports campus that will include "new youth and multi-gender



Leyton Orient's current home in Brisbane Road Credit: Steve Daniels

sports facilities" on top of publicly accessible green spaces with new pedestrian/cycle links to the wider area.

In November 2025, global firm Populous was appointed to lead the design of the new stadium and multi-sport campus project. The esteemed architecture firm have been responsible for designing the 2012 London Olympics Stadium and the Las Vegas Sphere, a massive, spherical entertainment venue featuring a gigantic wraparound LED screen inside.

Announcing the latest partnership with Legends Global, Leyton Orient's David Gandler said: "This is a significant step forward for Leyton Orient and for our long-term vision. As we work towards delivering a new stadium and multi-sport campus that serves our supporters, our community and future generations, having a partner of Legends' calibre alongside us gives us enormous confidence in what we can achieve."

Advertisement

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We also thank our patrons for their generous support: Steve Coles, Graham Larkbey, Sue Grant, Carmen Trachenko, Co-Op Funeral Care

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