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# WALTHAM FOREST ECHO

Free  
Mar 2026, N° 132

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Council revives Highams Park clubhouse rebuild plans

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Supporters of campaign group We Own It handing in a petition of over 20,000 signatures to water regulator Ofwat, calling for a proposed Thames Water takeover deal to be rejected Credit We Own It

## Council unveils plans for new SEND school

Waltham Forest Council has unveiled proposals to create a new school site for up to 100 children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), in partnership with Lime Trust.

The proposed site is a council-owned building currently occupied by Chapel End Early Years Centre on Brookcroft Road in Walthamstow. The centre is set to relocate this summer to join its partner site at Chapel End Infant School under existing plans, freeing up the building for reuse.

If approved, the site would operate as an extension of Lime Academy Hornbeam, with the school set to initially admit 40 pupils from September 2026, with numbers rising incrementally to reach full capacity of 100 places over the following three years.

The expansion forms part of the council's statutory duty to ensure there are sufficient school places for children and young people with SEND.

The local authority says the new site would "allow more pupils to access high-quality, nurturing education close to home, helping to maintain community connections and reduce reliance on out-of-borough placements, which can mean longer travel times for families".

Lime Academy Hornbeam currently operates across two sites. Under the proposals, it would move to a three-site model.

Lime Trust says relocating primary provision at Brookcroft Road would "create an environment tailored to younger pupils,

## MPs urged to oppose Thames Water deal amid local sewage pollution

by Marco Marcelline

Campaigners have urged Waltham Forest MPs to speak out against a Thames Water deal which they say would put the borough at risk of illegal sewage levels until 2040.

Thames Water is on the brink of financial collapse, and the company's creditors, which includes major hedge funds, asset managers, and pension funds, are currently negotiating with Ofwat to determine its future and prevent the company from falling into government-controlled special administration.

As part of their bid to take control of Thames Water, its creditors are asking for leniency on environmental regulations until 2040, instead offering to follow its own rules and regulations.

This comes after the Environment Agency named Thames Water as the worst offender for serious pollution incidents in 2024.

Thames Water released sewage into the River Lea and its tributaries 1,060 times in 2023, according to the latest available data from the Environment Agency, with the River Ching and Dagenham Brook experiencing the most sewage spills in the borough.

In December 2025, the River

Ching Action Group identified two heavily polluting outfalls, which resulted in high levels of ammonia and phosphate in the river downstream of them. In response, Thames Water has said it will begin an investigation into these outfalls this year.

Campaign group We Own It has co-ordinated an open letter to Ofwat and the Environment Secretary, calling on them to reject the creditors' proposal. They are asking all MPs in the Thames Water region to sign, and say 'no' to illegal sewage until 2040.

No Waltham Forest MP has signed the letter which was sent to Ofwat and the government in

mid-February.

Leyton and Wanstead MP Calvin Bailey said: "It's always in the interest of organisations like We Own It to make out that not using exactly their language or methods represents a failure to act. But there is no reason we should accept this political tactic.

"Rather than pretending that decades of underinvestment, disgraceful exploitation and pollution can be solved overnight at no cost, I have been working with Labour colleagues to hold Thames Water to account through scrutiny and new laws to

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## NEWS

# Council seeks £19m bailout as it struggles to balance books

*Waltham Forest Council leader Grace Williams has called a decision to apply for the government loan 'financially responsible and morally correct'*

by Sebastian Mann, Local Democracy Reporter

**W**altham Forest Council will need to borrow up to £19million to balance its books after years of financial strife.

The town hall says it has applied for 'exceptional financial support' through the government, as well as increasing council tax by 4.99% in April.

In early September 2025, Waltham Forest councillors were told it was set to go over budget by £31.4m.

The announcement was made ahead of Waltham Forest's 2026/27 budget which was scrutinised by councillors last month.

The main focus will be on social care and housing, which accounts for 72% of the council's current expenditure.

Council leader Grace Williams, who has long warned of "difficult" circumstances, said: "We will focus on services for our most vulnerable residents in particular, not only because – by law – we must help them whenever they are in greatest need, but also because it is morally right we do so."

"This is where almost three quarters of our money goes –

## Council's projected expenditure in 2025/26



Adult social care
Children's services inc. SEND, social care
Neighbourhood services inc. highways and waste and recycling
Temporary accommodation
Culture, libraries, adult learning services
Central support functions
Regeneration, property services and other – housing general fund

a staggering 72 pence in every pound the council spends."

She called the decision to apply for the loan "financially responsible and morally correct".

"We have a very clear purpose for the use of these funds and a plan to quickly pay back the loan," Cllr Williams said. "The extra money will protect services while balancing our budget in the

short term.

"It will free up the time and resources necessary to accelerate a plan to fundamentally change the way the council works.

"Benefits will be felt across all of the areas that matter most to local people – from bin collections and road repairs to maintaining local parks and supporting culture."

Temporary housing demand in the borough has increased by 80% over the past two years. It now costs Waltham Forest £24m a year, against a budget of £10m.

The cost of adult social care has risen by 13% since 2023/24, according to earlier figures, and providers going out of business meant the council was left with "expensive" alternatives.

The council says the loan will "fully secure" its financial position, and keep a minimum of £30m in reserves by 2029. This helps keep the council tax hike below 5%, the town hall says.

The council will receive £18m more from the government next year to help address historic shortfalls in funding, but the town hall says this will not do much to plug its £33m total overspend.

In a bid to save more money in the future, Cllr Williams says the council will "act far earlier" and help families before they



Council leader Grace Williams  
Credit Waltham Forest Council

"reach crisis point", which will "reduce the need for our highest cost services".

Waltham Forest Tory deputy Afzal Akram said: "There are no days off for Waltham Forest Labour when it comes to wasting residents' money. They are now even using the taxpayers credit card to balance their budget.

"We know that financial choices for councils are hard across the country but it is Labour's choices that have led us here. Atrocious money management by the Labour administration now means the council is putting the cost of a three year £70m plus loan on every household for the next 20 years."

Continued from Page-1

stop them looting public assets."

Walthamstow MP Stella Creasy said: "Given the volume of correspondence we receive I prioritise correspondence from local residents. It's untrue that I have not raised any concerns with Thames Water about their conduct, pollution or that I have not advocated for public ownership through the mutualisation of Thames Water."

Chingford and Woodford Green MP Sir Iain Duncan Smith did not respond to a request for comment before the *Echo* went to print.

We Own It's lead campaigner Sophie Conquest said: "The name of every single MP in the Thames Water region should be on this open letter – because it's so simple. Do they think water

companies should be allowed to get away with polluting - illegally – for profit, or do they not?"

"Thames Water already has an abysmal environmental record, and it has let down so many households so many times. Why should they be rewarded for their failure?"

"This is also about our water system as a whole – letting water companies decide the terms of their own regulation would set an incredibly dangerous new precedent for the water industry."

Meanwhile, the company's ageing Coppermills Water Treatment Works in Walthamstow has drawn considerable concern amid reports that a "single fault" there could cut off water supply for millions of Londoners.

The Walthamstow site is Thames



River Ching pictured in the summer

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

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 incident 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.

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".

Ofwat approved a £400million improvement programme for Coppermills in 2024, with the work set to begin this spring and finish in summer 2022.



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## FEATURE

# The fight to keep a treasured E11 music venue's legacy alive

As independent nightlife venues across London shut their doors, the new operators of 7 Church Lane are proudly bucking the trend

by Marco Marcelline

**B**ehind the black frontage of 7 Church Lane in Leytonstone, work is quietly underway. After nearly two years sitting empty, the former Luna Lounge building is set to reopen later this year as a live music and cultural venue headed by new operators.

At a time when independent nightlife venues across London are shutting their doors, the decision to preserve the council-owned site as a dedicated music space is a decidedly welcome breath of fresh air.

Last month, Waltham Forest Council confirmed it had appointed a new team to run 7 Church Lane: Simon Singleton (founder of festival Shake The High Road), Jon Clifford of Dreamhouse Records, music industry veteran Toby L, and Danny, Peter and Luke of bars Leyton Calling and Chop Shop Tavern.

Rather than reopening solely as a gig spot, the group plans to transform the entire building into a multi-layered cultural hub.

During the day, 7 Church Lane will operate as a café, welcoming local residents, freelancers and families.

Dreamhouse Records will establish a permanent vinyl record shop, bringing curated releases and in-store events to Church Lane. The basement, previously used as the main performance space, will double as a rehearsal and education area, offering opportunities for young musicians to practice their craft.

And at night, the building will shift into live mode: a music-focused bar upstairs and a dedicated live venue downstairs, hosting gigs, club nights, talks and other creative events.

“Like Luna we want it to be active all week,” Singleton says. “Not just a Friday and Saturday night space, but somewhere embedded in the community.”

The venue's name will be revealed ahead of a full late-summer launch programme featuring a month of live events.

For Singleton, the building holds long-standing significance.

“I put on my first event in Luna in 2016,” he says. “I’ve spent a lot of time

From left to right: Cllr Ahsan Khan, Jon Clifford, Simon Singleton, Danny Saunders, Cllr Clyde Loakes, and Cllr Rosalind Doré outside 7 Church Lane Credit Waltham Forest Council



there and it's very close to my heart.”

He describes live music as “a key part” of the new venue and says his team's ambition is to create a space that is both professionally run and culturally open.

Any new venture at 7 Church Lane inevitably sits in the shadow of Luna Lounge, which operated for nearly 20 years before closing in July 2024.

Singleton says he has spent time revisiting old footage of Luna over the years.

“I’ve been watching quite a lot of old videos, and it really reminded me how amazingly inclusive and open it was. Musically, it was so unfixed in one style. One night it was crazy jazz, the next heavy metal, then folk, then punk, then DJs.”

That breadth is something the new team wants to preserve.

“We definitely want that openness and energy to continue,” Singleton says. “We don’t want it to feel ultra-premium or polished or unwelcoming. It’s got to be somewhere new music is at the heart of, not somewhere snooty or pretentious.”

“Some nights will be for some people, some nights will be for other people. It’s not going to just be one genre. We want our programming to be progressive, experimental and open-minded.”

Under founder Suja Khaled, Luna built a reputation as one of east London's most energetic grassroots venues. After his sudden death in 2021, the business passed to Declan Walsh, whose tenure was marked by financial strain, licensing disputes and an unsuccessful £75,000 crowdfunding appeal in 2024.

The venue closed weeks after the fundraiser ended.

As Luna stayed shut, a group of former staff launched a petition last year calling for them to take over the space. The petition gained more than 1,000 signatures.

The creator of that petition, who asked not to be named but described himself as a former operations manager at Luna, says he informally approached Singleton in 2024 to discuss collaborating on a potential bid for the space.

Singleton confirms the two met for coffee but says there was “no formal discussion whatsoever”.

“They said they’d had an idea and I said, ‘Keep me posted, and if there’s any way I can help, let me know.’ I never heard from them again.”

Though the former operations manager's petition was eventually overlooked by the council, he said he holds no personal ill-

will towards the new operators, and adds that he supports the decision to rename the venue.

He said: “There’s absolutely no way the spirit of the original Luna could have been recreated. A new name is probably the right thing.”

Singleton also draws a line between his venture and Luna, stating that “sustainability” is central to 7 Church Lane's financial model.

“Luna was very successful as a kind of party bar atmosphere,” he says. “But we want to make the venue sustainable long-term – and attractive to people not just from the local area.”

“We want to work with lots of promoters who’ll bring exciting new acts, and use our contacts and industry experience to try and have some really special guests.”

What’s for certain is that Luna Lounge, with all its intensity and controversy, is over.

Whether the new venture can recapture the raw electricity that once defined 7 Church Lane remains to be seen, but after nearly two years of silence, the stage lights are warming up again, and that alone feels worth celebrating.

Find out more about 7 Church Lane here: [Instagram.com/sevenchurchlane](https://www.instagram.com/sevenchurchlane)

# NEWS

Credit Graham Pearson for William Morris Gallery



An installation at William Morris Gallery's ongoing exhibition 'Women in Print: 150 Years of Liberty Textiles'. Conceived in partnership with Liberty Fabrics on the occasion of the design house's 150th anniversary, this major exhibition highlights the pivotal role and contributions of women textile designers. It features over 100 works, spanning garments, fabric, original designs, film and historic photographs and is on show until Sunday 21st June. Find out more: [wmgallery.org.uk](http://wmgallery.org.uk)

## Call for councils to keep 50% of proposed tourist levy for local services

*The government is currently consulting on proposals which would allow the Mayor of London to introduce local overnight visitor levies*

by Marco Marcelline

London Councils is calling for the government to ensure that boroughs are able to retain at least 50% of funds raised in their area by a future overnight visitor levy in order to fund local services that support tourism and invest in measures to support growth in the capital.

The government is currently consulting on proposals which would allow city mayors in England to introduce local overnight visitor levies, devolving new fiscal powers to London and other regions.

As part of the national framework for the overnight visitor levy, London Councils is proposing that – by default – local

authorities are able to retain at least 50% of revenues collected in their area.

The collective of London boroughs say this would ensure councils “receive a share of funding that reflects the additional resource required to support the tourist economy in their area and manage its impact on the local community through extra investment in services such as street cleansing, licensing, local business support and community safety”.

The group added: “It would provide assurance to hotels, businesses and the hospitality industry that the introduction of an overnight visitor levy would directly support and benefit them, knowing that a portion of the money raised would be

invested back into the specific areas they operate in to fund services they rely on and support local economic growth.

“A minimum revenue share for local authorities would also act as a pro-growth incentive for councils to support the growth of the tourist economy in their area.”

Claire Holland, chair of London Councils, said: “It is vital that London boroughs retain a fair portion of funds raised by an overnight visitor levy to ensure we are adequately equipped to invest in local services which both support the tourist economy and mitigate the impact of tourism in our local areas.

“Boroughs shoulder many of the day-to-day costs associated

with tourism – from maintaining streets and transports hubs, to supporting cultural venues and managing community safety pressures – helping to keep London attractive, clean, and safe.

“By allowing boroughs to retain 50% of the revenues raised in their area to reinvest directly in the local services and public spaces that visitors depend on, we will be able to support the growth of tourism in our city and provide confidence to businesses that this will benefit them.

“We look forward to working with the government and the mayor on the design and implementation of the levy to ensure this is a success for Londoners and our tourist industry.”



## City Hall announces £1.5bn loan scheme to ‘rescue’ stalled housebuilding

by Kumail Jaffer,  
Local Democracy Reporter

City Hall has launched a massive £1.5billion intervention to rescue London’s stalled housing market, deploying ultra-low interest loans to replicate Vienna’s gold-standard social housing model, City Hall has announced.

London will benefit from the government-backed loans to boost lagging housebuilding in the capital. The funding – which represents 60% of the £2.5bn national scheme – means loans will be offered to housing associations at an interest rate of 0.1% over 25 years to encourage mass development.

It is a scheme which ministers and Mayor of London Sir Sadiq Khan are hoping will kickstart the delivery of both market and affordable housing, as well as unlocking sites currently stalled by developers.

Deputy mayor Tom Copley said the low-interest loans “have echoes of Vienna’s renowned social housing funding model”.

The Austrian capital’s strategy is globally renowned for its financial stability and affordability. There are 182 limited-profit housing associations – social housing providers allowed to turn a small profit – which own around 40% of homes for rent in the city.

These are then mandated to provide rental accommodation at rates typically 25% below market value, ensuring properties aren’t out of reach for lower and middle-income residents.

In 2023, the average rent per square metre in Vienna was €10.50, according to analysis from consultants Deloitte, while Londoners were paying well over €30 per square metre, the highest in Europe.

Developers receive subsidies to enable them to keep fixed costs and rents at a lower level, with a low-interest loan covering more than a third of construction costs.

The current scheme is also looking to build affordable homes primarily to clear London’s council housing waiting list, rather than, like Vienna, create a market where people of all incomes actively choose to rent.

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## NEWS

# Leytonstone retiree pleads guilty over role in Paralympian's death

UK Athletics former head of sport Keith Davis has pleaded guilty to a health and safety offence after a discus cage UAE athlete Abdullah Hayayei was training in collapsed in 2017

by Marco Marcelline

**A** former Athletics UK head of sport has pleaded guilty to a health and safety offence, nearly nine years after the para-athlete Abdullah Hayayei, 36, died while training for the 2017 World Para Athletics Championships in London.

Keith Davis, 78, of Bushwood, Leytonstone, will face sentencing alongside his former employer UK Athletics, which pleaded guilty to corporate manslaughter over Hayayei's death.

Hayayei was a professional para-athlete who was in London representing the United Arab Emirates in discus at the 2017 World Para Athletics Championships. While training at Newham Leisure Centre in Prince Regent Lane on 11th July 2017, Hayayei was seriously injured after the throwing cage he was training in collapsed.

Police and other emergency services were called, but despite the best efforts of medical staff he was pronounced dead at the scene.

A Met investigation was launched



Abdullah Hayayei died after being crushed by a training cage at Newham Leisure Centre in 2017. Credit: GLL

in collaboration with Newham Council's health and safety team and it was discovered that the stabilising metal lattice base plates of the discus cage were missing.

It was later established that these components – ten ladder-like metal connectors linking the cage's bases and posts – had been missing or unused for around five years, between 2012 and 2017, significantly reducing stability.

The cage base was essential to allow the structure to resist wind forces effectively.

UK Athletics owned the discus

cage and was responsible for its safety at its events. Davies was involved in the purchase of the cage before the 2012 London Olympics and led its assembly and use until July 2017.

In November 2017 Davies was interviewed under caution in connection with the investigation. Both he and UK Athletics were then charged in January 2025. They had pleaded not guilty at an earlier hearing in March 2025.

But on Friday, 20th February, Davies pleaded guilty to failing to take reasonable care for health and safety, contrary to section seven and 33 of the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974.

Sentencing will take place on a date to be fixed at the Old Bailey.

Hayayei joined the UAE military after leaving school and aspired to be a paratrooper, but at age 21 he was seriously injured during a parachute training exercise. He was struck on the head by a metal rod connected to a parachute and he required operations to correct nerve damage to his neck, which had caused serious problems with his right hand, arm and leg.

He retired from the military

but then took up discus, a sport which he excelled in.

Hayayei competed at the Rio Paralympics in 2016, where he placed seventh in the shot put final and sixth in the javelin. It was his first Paralympics and he had planned on competing in the Tokyo Paralympics four years later.

He competed in the F34 class for athletes with moderate to severe hypertononia (extreme muscle tone, resulting in stiffness or rigidity) in both legs, causing significant difficulties in standing, balancing and walking.

In a statement UK Athletics said: "We deeply regret that the incident in July 2017 resulted in the tragic loss of Abdullah Hayayei's life. Our deepest thoughts and sympathy remain with his family, friends, teammates and all those affected by the events of that day.

"As you will appreciate, due to the ongoing court proceedings UK Athletics is unable to comment any further at this time."

UK Athletics could face a fine of between £1.2m and £5m for corporate manslaughter.

Continued from Page-1



The proposed site is a council-owned building currently occupied by Chapel End Early Years Centre on Brookcroft Road in Walthamstow. Credit: Waltham Forest Council

including use of existing outdoor space to support 'forest school-style learning' as part of a broad and balanced curriculum".

The council says development works would consist of minor internal adaptations to make the building suitable for specialist use, including the creation of sensory and therapeutic spaces. Work is expected to begin in summer 2026, subject to approval.

Although disruption to residents is expected to be minimal, a full transport assessment will be carried out as part of the change of use planning application to assess the impact on local traffic and access.

The proposals are subject to a formal consultation led by Lime Trust, which ran until Thursday, 26th February.

Cabinet member for children and young people, Kizzy Gardiner, said: "Parents often tell us that children thrive when they are educated close to home in the local communities that know and love them.

"We are delighted to be able to open this site up to families of children with SEND and expand our school network to include 100 additional SEND places. These families will have the comfort of knowing their child is being educated nearby.

"There has been an unprecedented increase in the number of children with SEND over recent years. This new school, led by experienced partners at the Lime Trust, will mean more children can be educated in their community. It helps support our mission to ensure every family has every opportunity in Waltham Forest."

## Residents oppose German Doner Kebab's plan to shut at 3am

by Sebastian Mann, Local Democracy Reporter

**A** Leytonstone takeaway's bid to close at 3am has been rejected after neighbours complained.

The operators of the German Doner Kebab restaurant in High Road Leytonstone had applied to Waltham Forest Council to close their doors at 3am on weekends and 1am on weekdays.

Though the operators said they were "fully committed" to preventing crime and public nuisance, two

locals formally objected to the plans.

The council's licensing committee ultimately decided to extend weekend opening from 11pm to only 1am, and maintain 11pm closing on weekdays.

In a letter to the council, a High Road resident said that closing at 3am – which coincides with the closure of local bars – would "inevitably exacerbate" alleged issues such as antisocial behaviour and begging.

He also expressed concern that a lack of seating would "force crowds to congregate on the

seat," though the operators say they will disperse customers.

Another local, a woman living in High Road, said the area had been identified to police as "particularly unsafe" during a women's safety walk.

In a form submitted to Waltham Forest, the applicants said they will "take all reasonable steps to ensure that our premises operates responsibly, particularly during late-night hours".

They pointed to a "comprehensive digital color CCTV system" that is capable of facial recogni-

tion across the entire venue.

Additionally, staff are trained in conflict management and "recognising and reporting suspicious behaviour".

"Prominent, clear and legible notices" will also be posted at the exits asking customers to "leave the premises and the area quietly" and to bin their litter.

GDK was founded in Dubai in 2013 and has more than 160 restaurants throughout the UK, Canada, the United Arab Emirates, the United States, Saudi Arabia and Sweden.

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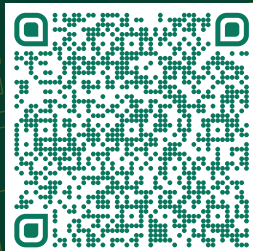
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## NEWS

# Council urged to free up underused public land for growing food

*The Waltham Forest Right to Grow campaign has called on the town hall to expand access to food growing in the borough*

Residents took part in a day of action last month by planting edible plants in spots across the borough. Credit: Waltham Forest Right to Grow



by Marco Marcelline

Residents across the borough participated in a coordinated protest last month calling for the right to grow food on underused council-owned public land.

The action, organised by Waltham Forest Right to Grow, saw a total of 92 edible plants distributed to more than 50 local residents, who worked in small groups to plant on underused land in their neighbourhoods.

The community action forms part of a growing national 'Right to Grow' movement, which is calling on councils across the country to formally support residents to grow food on public land.

In March 2025, Southwark became the first London borough to adopt the Right to Grow motion, and local campaigners say the council must listen to the hundreds of residents who support it here in Waltham Forest.

Waltham Forest Right to Grow's central demands are a "clear and accessible" process for residents to grow food on council-owned public land, a dedicated community food

officer role within the council, and a small start-up fund to support new and emerging community gardens.

"People are already growing food, building community, and improving local spaces – often without any formal support," said a spokesperson for Waltham Forest Right to Grow.

"What's missing is a clear commitment from the council to support this energy and make food growing on public land easier, not harder."

Responding to the action, council deputy leader Clyde Loakes said the town hall had already offered the campaign group "first refusal on secure, vacant allotment sites" across the borough for use as community growing spaces, but they were "very disappointingly" turned down.

The *Echo* understands that five sites were offered, with one in Highams Park, two in Walthamstow, and two in Chingford. Cherrydown Close in Chingford was pushed as a particularly appealing plot because of its 300sqm size, two sheds, water tank, and on-site greenhouse.

Waltham Forest Right to Grow told the *Echo* that it rejected the sites because they sit "an hour away" by public transport from many of its members, who live in Leyton and Leytonstone where "access to growing space is most limited, and food insecurity is most acute".

The campaign added: "We did not turn down the opportunity to grow food; we turned down relocating food growing away from these neighbourhoods. For community food growing to work, it needs to be close to people's homes so it can fit into busy lives. A Right to Grow is about embedding food growing into neighbourhoods, not relocating it out of reach."

Cllr Loakes has however maintained that the council's offer remains on the table "at least for the next week", stating he hopes the group will accept it.

Criticising the group's strategy, he added: "Identifying random parcels of land that aren't secure and do not have supplies or infrastructure to successfully maintain food growing, as well as starting the often challenging process of finding out who actually owns them, who may have historic permissions to use them, and whether there is any existing or planned essential infrastructure underlying them will be a difficult, time-consuming process that may not result in success."

"Why go down this difficult and challenging route, when a far easier and straightforward opportunity has been identified and offered?"

Waltham Forest Right to Grow said it "remains keen" to work with the council, but that constructive working "requires a willingness to expand access [to food growing sites] rather than contain it".

**To find out more about Waltham Forest Right to Grow:**  
Visit [wfrtg.org.uk](http://wfrtg.org.uk)

**More information on Waltham Forest Council's Food Innovation Fund and organisations that received grants to support food growing is available on the council website.**



## Schools face reduced attainment or closure amid declining pupil rolls

*There are now 27% fewer nursery children in the borough than there were ten years ago, with numbers dropping by 7% between 2023/24 and 2024/25 alone*

by Marco Marcelline

Demand for school places in Waltham Forest and across London is continuing to decline, "raising the risk of school closures and reduced curriculum options", according to a new report from London Councils.

School Capacity Survey (SCAP) data from all 32 London boroughs shows a forecast decline of 3.8% in year seven places and 2.5% in reception places between 2025/6 and 2029/30.

As school funding is allocated on a per-pupil basis, London Councils, a collective of local authorities in the capital, estimates that the forecast decline in demand for school places would lead to around £15million in funding cuts for primary schools and £30m for secondary schools.

There were around 90 school closures or mergers across the capital in the last five years.

Other schools have reduced their published admission numbers (PAN) – the number of children admitted to a school or year group in a given year – to remain viable.

Since 2021/22, the number of Waltham Forest controlled primary schools with a PAN of 90 or 120 has dropped from twelve to just eight.

Meanwhile, there were twelve primary schools with a PAN of 30 or 60 in 2021/22 but there will be 16 in 2026/27.

Edinburgh Primary School in Walthamstow is joining four other schools

in the 2026/27 academic year which will have a maximum of 30 pupils per year. Despite having a capacity of 630 pupils, just 182 are enrolled at Edinburgh.

The number of year seven pupils enrolled in the borough's schools fell 5.38% from 3,085 in 2023/24 to 2,915 in 2024/25.

According to the Office for National Statistics (ONS), Waltham Forest saw England's largest percentage-point rise in the proportion of households including a couple but no children (from 11.4% in 2011 to 14.8% in 2021).

Meanwhile, the borough's birth rate dropped 3% from 2014 to 2019, with 4,618 births in 2014 compared to 4,482 newborns in 2019.

London Councils says that without additional support, falling pupil numbers and subsequent reduced funding "risk limiting young people's education, widening inequalities, restricting opportunities".

The group is calling on the government to ensure that schools receive sustainable and adequate funding, with a spokesperson adding: "The government should work with London Councils and key education partners to support the secondary sector to mitigate the impact of falling rolls, with a particular focus on maintaining a broad and balanced curriculum, sustaining enrichment opportunities, and protecting inclusive special educational needs provision."

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## POLITICS

# China lifts travel ban on Chingford MP Sir Iain Duncan Smith

Duncan Smith, who is a staunch critic of the Chinese government, had a travel ban placed on him and several other parliamentarians in 2021

by Marco Marcelline

China has lifted a travel ban it had placed on Chingford and Woodford Green MP Sir Iain Duncan Smith and three other MPs following Prime Minister Sir Keir Starmer's visit to the country in late January.

Speaking to reporters in Shanghai on Friday, 30th January, Starmer said: "This has been a real cause for concern across parliament. And therefore I did raise it and we had a discussion.

"And as a result, it's clear from the Chinese that the restrictions no longer apply. And President Xi said what that means is that all parliamentarians are free to travel to China."

Duncan Smith has been outspoken in his criticisms of the Chinese state for many years. Alongside highlighting human rights abuses committed by the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) regime, he has opposed the transfer of the Chagos Islands to Mauritius, a country with close ties to the CCP.

China imposed the parliamentary travel bans in 2021 in response to sanctions that had been placed on four Chinese officials and a state-run organisation involved in human rights abuses in Xinjiang province, including against the Uyghur Muslim minority.

Since 2017, China has put more than one million Uyghurs into internment camps, according to Amnesty International.

In 2022, the UN high commissioner for human rights said Beijing's treatment of ethnic minorities in Xinjiang may constitute "crimes against humanity".

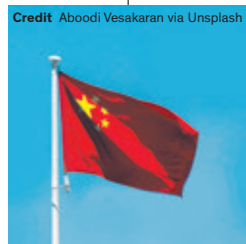
The Inter-Parliamentary Alliance on China (IPAC), of which Duncan Smith is a member, quickly released a statement stating they "took no comfort" in the decision and will continue to voice their opposition to China.

They said: "We have learned through media reporting that the People's Republic of China has lifted the sanctions imposed on us in 2021 for raising concerns in parliament about human rights abuses in China.

"We were not contacted by anyone in government prior to this decision being made public, and we expect clear assurances that UK sanctions against the four Chinese government officials responsible for genocide remain firmly in place."

The group continued: "The selective lifting of sanctions solely on sitting parliamentarians is wrong. Parliament exists to represent and defend the people of the United Kingdom.

"Seeking or accepting preferential treatment for current MPs and peers sends a damaging signal that some are more deserving of protection than others. While British citizen Jimmy Lai remains imprisoned, and Uyghurs continue to suffer atrocity crimes, we take no comfort in this decision and will not be silenced."



Credit Aboodi Vesakaran via Unsplash



Sir Iain Duncan Smith Credit UK Parliament

# Green Party leader eyes Walthamstow seat battle



Zack Polanski Credit Green Party

Green Party leader Zack Polanski has said he may stand in Walthamstow at the next general election.

The former E17 resident told *The Times* that he was debating standing in either Hackney South and Shoreditch, Hackney North and Stoke Newington,

Walthamstow, or Tottenham.

Polanski, who now lives in Hackney, told the newspaper: "I'd definitely consider Hackney, but also Walthamstow, Tottenham, kind of round about where I live. I think London's interesting in that way because on my bike you can be in any of those constituencies within about ten minutes of cycling. But yes, I will definitely be running for MP somewhere in that area."

Walthamstow has been held by Labour and Co-operative Party MP Stella Creasy since 2010.

Creasy secured a 17,966 vote lead over the second placed candidate, a Green, in 2024. However, this is a marked decrease from the 30,862 majority she secured in 2019.

Should Polanski choose to stand in Walthamstow, he could count on a growing base of local Green volunteers and members to support his campaign; the Greens

say membership in Waltham Forest surged from 630 in September 2025 to over 1,400 by November, a 122% increase.

Recent polling is nonetheless divided on Greens' chances in the next general election: Electoral Calculus has put Polanski's party on course to win 29 of London's 75 parliamentary seats, while YouGov predicted in September that it would win none.



Stella Creasy Credit UK Parliament

# Council urges Home Office to rethink permanent settlement changes

by Marco Marcelline

Community leaders and senior councillors have called on Home Secretary Shabana Mahmood to "fundamentally rethink" planned changes to permanent residency rules.

In a joint statement, councillor Andrew Dixon, the cabinet member for stronger communities joined co-chair of Waltham Forest Borough of Sanctuary Averil Pooten-Watan in warning that the proposals could "deepen child poverty and increase homelessness" amongst people with asylum or refugee backgrounds.

The Home Office has unveiled plans to increase the standard route to permanent settlement from five to ten years. For some groups, the pathway to permanent residency could be stretched to 15 or even 20 years, with elements applied retrospectively.

Waltham Forest has been a



Home Secretary Shabana Mahmood Credit Wikimedia Commons

borough of sanctuary since 2023, which sees the council, voluntary organisations and public services working in tandem to build a "culture of welcome for people seeking sanctuary".

In their statement, Cllr Dixon and Pooten-Watan acknowledged that the immigration system must be "effective", but warned current plans would complicate the ability of families to integrate and contribute to society.

They said: "Expanding the number of families excluded from mainstream support, and

penalising access to public funds, risks significantly increasing destitution and homelessness.

"As well as the devastating impact on individuals and families affected, this will likely lead to significantly increased pressure on council services and resources, including child social care, and increased pressure on voluntary sector safety nets, with knock-on impacts for everyone in our borough."

The pair continued: "Much longer waits for permanent residency would increase insecurity and uncertainty, making it harder for migrants to integrate, secure employment, and contribute fully to our local community and economy.

"As such, we are urging the home secretary to fully consider the potential impact of these proposals and to fundamentally rethink the approach to settlement outlined in the consultation."

The Home Office was contacted for comment.

# ELECTION 2026



# How the local election could be won

With two months until polling day, the race for control of Waltham Forest Town Hall has begun

by Marco Marcelline

**T**his year's local election is set to be the most exciting in generations as Labour faces a multi-pronged challenge to its incumbency amid surging support for the Greens in the south of the borough while Reform UK and the Conservatives battle it out for seats in the north.

### Chingford and Highams Park

Reform has confirmed it will field candidates in all the borough's wards, but their biggest chance of success will be in right-leaning Chingford, where the Conservatives are mounting a strong campaign in defence of their ten seats.

That campaign may have been somewhat rocked by the announcement of three defections to Reform in recent months, even if they were councillors that had already been deselected by the Tories.

Leaving the Conservative Party in January, Highams Park North and Hatch Lane councillors Tim James and Marion Fitzgerald both said their former party had "lost its way".

However, despite dire national polling, the Tories may hold onto their seats in Chingford due to their active local presence and campaigning on issues ranging from the abolition of free parking, flytipping, and overdevelopment.

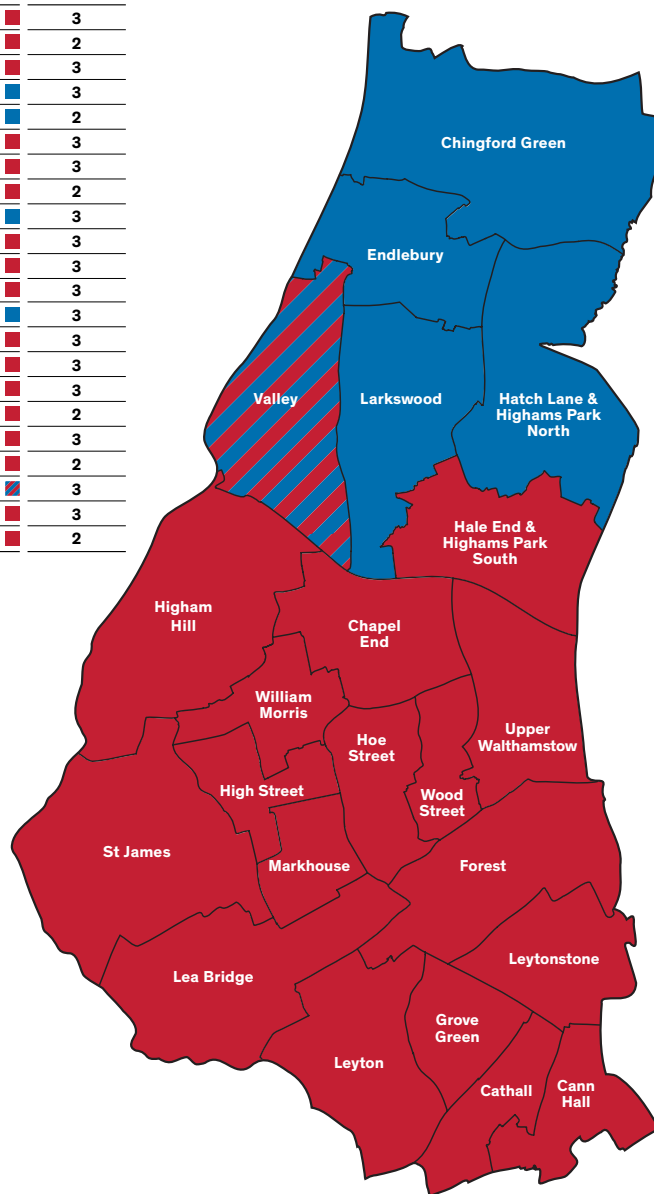
Meanwhile, left-leaning voters in Larkwood and Valley wards will have the option of voting in candidates belonging to an independent community group backed by the former Labour politician Faiza Shaheen.

Chingford & Woodford Green Community Independents (CWGCI) grew out of the 2024 General Election, when the Labour Party deselected Shaheen and picked Brent councillor Shama Tatler to run in her place. Shaheen then stood as an independent and achieved an almost identical vote share to Tatler, who came second behind incumbent Sir Iain Duncan Smith.

The group say they will challenge "politics as usual" and give local residents a "stronger voice in decisions affecting their area".

They're also pushing for "the improvement of youth safety and local services, holding developers to account, the reopening of the Broadmead Road bridge, the development of a community plan for South Chingford, and the creation of people's assemblies".

Ward	Cllrs elected
Cann Hall	3
Cathall	2
Chapel End	3
Chingford Green	3
Endlebury	2
Forest	3
Grove Green	3
Hale End & Highams Park South	2
Hatch Lane & Highams Park North	3
High Street	3
Higham Hill	3
Hoe Street	3
Larkwood	3
Lea Bridge	3
Leyton	3
Leytonstone	3
Markhouse	2
St James	3
Upper Walthamstow	2
Valley	3
William Morris	3
Wood Street	2



*"This year's local election is set to be the most exciting in generations as Labour faces a multi-pronged challenge"*

### Walthamstow

Labour's energies are going to be focused on retaining their majority in the more densely populated south of the borough.

But these are exactly the seats where Labour faces a significant challenge from left-leaning voters who are picking the Greens for the first time.

Labour have a right to be worried; the Greens say membership in Waltham Forest has surged from 630 in September 2025 to over 1,400 in November, a 122% increase.

In the 2022 local elections, Green Party candidates came second behind Labour in twelve of 22 Waltham Forest wards,



seven of which were in Walthamstow.

Given Labour presently has a 16-seat majority, in the perhaps overly optimistic scenario that the Greens come first in every single ward which they came second in 2022, the self-described "ecopopulists" would only need to snatch four more seats to wipe out Labour's long-held majority control of the town hall.

Such an event could result in a Labour-Green coalition, which would be the first instance of shared governance at the town hall since 2006, when Labour governed with the Liberal Democrats.

St James is one of the more likely Walthamstow wards to turn Green in May; in 2022, the Green candidate came 463 votes short of winning a seat.

The area is one of many in Walthamstow where there has been upset over planned high-rise student housing, and the Greens have sought to capitalise on broader debates around development density and infrastructure capacity by positioning themselves as both pro-environment and pro-community consultation.

### Leyton and Leytonstone

However, while Labour definitely faces the first test to its large majority since 2010, the party could be helped out by a more crowded field on the left than usual.

In Leyton and Leytonstone, demographic change over the past decade has made many wards competitive.

Amid disquiet over Labour's record on Gaza, Your Party, the turbulent outfit launched by Jeremy Corbyn and fellow ex-Labour MP Zarah Sultana last year, could split the left-wing anti-Labour vote in two.

The Liberal Democrats could also split the left-of-centre vote in several Leyton and Leytonstone wards such as Grove Green where they gained one third of votes in 2022. The party has been targeting the area heavily, focusing on local campaigning around street safety, potholes, haphazard bin collections, and Whipps Cross Hospital.

While Labour retains a fairly strong activist base and sizable majorities, even small swings in multi-member wards could produce surprise results if opposition votes concentrate effectively.

Ultimately, the picture in Leyton and Leytonstone is less about a single insurgent force and more about fragmentation. If the Greens turn second-place finishes into wins, they could quickly chip away at Labour's southern dominance. But if votes splinter off between the Greens, Liberal Democrats, Your Party, TUSC, and Reform, Labour may find its majority dented but not decisively broken.

# PHOTOGRAPHY



## What Mums Eat by Chiron Cole



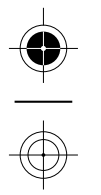
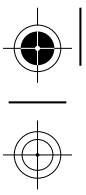
**L**ocal photographer and mother of two Chiron Cole presents intimate photographic portraits and testimonies that reveal how mothers are actually eating in the early stages of motherhood. The exhibition helps to make maternal eating habits visible, offering cultural context to the initiative and highlighting the gap between what mothers need and what daily life often allows.

Chiron says she developed the idea through close observation of postnatal life. Speaking about the exhibition, she said: “Again and again, I saw mothers surviving on scraps, eating standing up, finishing children’s leftovers, or not eating at all. It became clear that this wasn’t a personal failure, but a structural one. *What Mums Eat* starts with food because when mothers eat well, everyone benefits.”

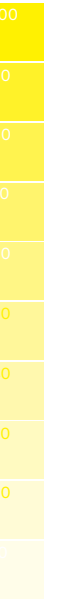
The exhibition *What Mums Eat* runs from Friday 13th–Sunday 22nd March at Three Rooms, 74 Beulah Road, E17 9LE. Find out more: [whatmumseat.com](http://whatmumseat.com)

We want your photos! To feature in our April issue please send in your images to [wfecho@socialspider.com](mailto:wfecho@socialspider.com) by Monday 16th March

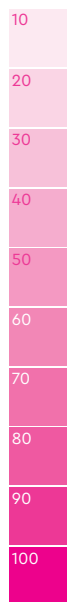




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# ARTS & CULTURE

Hayden Thorpe Credit Eeva Rinne



## Nature's rhythm

*Long-time local resident and musician Hayden Thorpe is releasing a 'sonic map' of Walthamstow Wetlands*

by Marco Marcelline

**T**he reservoirs and reedbeds of Walthamstow Wetlands have long been a quiet refuge for indie musician Hayden Thorpe.

Now, the former Wild Beasts frontman is turning his fondness for the urban nature reserve into something entirely new: a location-triggered "sonic map" that will allow visitors to experience an album that can only be heard inside the wetlands.

Launching in mid-March, the project invites visitors to put on headphones, connect to a digital map on their phone, and walk. As they enter different areas of the wetlands, music will gently bleed into their ears – with each reservoir unlocking a different piece of Thorpe's new soundtrack.

"We're used to organising music in time – track one, track two, track three," Thorpe says, "but this is organised in geography. We're sequencing the music by map location rather than by minutes."

The idea is simple but radical: you cannot properly hear this album unless you are physically there.

"It gives people a lens with which to see the magic of a place," he explains. "A pylon can either be a huge lump of steel - or it can be a giant upon which a peregrine is resting. Sometimes you need a hand to witness a place as it really is."

Around ten songs, one for each reservoir, will form what Thorpe describes not as an album, but a "soundtrack".

Speaking about his recording process he says: "It's funny. You start out with expectations of what you're going to make. But once you submit to what the wetlands say to you, it takes on a life of its own."

Thorpe has lived in and around Walthamstow for 15 years. Originally from Cumbria, he moved to the area after spotting a "big bunch of green" on a map of London.

"I felt like I could probably get by in London if I had proximity to that space – being Cumbrian, I needed that expanse and that horizon to feel sane."

When the wetlands opened to the public in October 2017 – after more than a century and a half of being closed off as a working reservoir site – it was, he says, a "eureka moment".

Since then, the space has become both sanctuary and creative wellspring – a place to think, and begin shaping ideas that would later become songs.

Thorpe first found success as lead singer of indie pop band Wild Beasts, releasing five albums and earning a Mercury Prize nomination before the band played their final headline shows in 2018.

Since then, he has built a solo career, dropping his debut album *Diviner* in



An aerial view of the Walthamstow Wetlands  
Credit Wikimedia Commons

2019, before 2021's *Moonduft For My Diamond*.

2024's *Ness*, created in collaboration with nature writer Robert Macfarlane and inspired by the old military testing site Orford Ness in Suffolk, marked a shift away from purely personal songwriting.

"Up until that point, I'd predominantly been concerned with my own story. But surely there's a conversation to be had about the wonder and richness of the outside world."

The wetlands project continues that evolution – but in a way that feels deeply personal.

In the wetlands, sirens, pylons and machinery exist alongside migratory birds and ancient reedbeds.

That duality is central to both the music and an accompanying three-month exhibition at the Engine House from March.

"The wetlands is this magical wild space marooned in a city of ten million people. The ancient songbirds you hear exist alongside incredible progress and machinery. It's happened so quickly that we're still reckoning with it."

Rather than casting judgement on what is "natural" and what is "inorganic", the exhibition explores the harmony and dissonance between them.

"You have to be as intrigued by the sound of a siren as the sound of a godwit," Hayden says. "Those two create a strange harmony."

The exhibition will run at the Walthamstow Wetlands Engine House from Friday 20th March for three months, with a sonic map designed to guide visitors through the area as they listen



The mural in Tilbury Road Credit Dave Gilchrist

## Mural of dancing Palestinians unveiled

by Marco Marcelline

**A** colourful mural of Palestinian dancers was unveiled in Leyton's Tilbury Road last month.

The artwork coincides with a visit to Waltham Forest by eight young people from villages, towns and refugee camps across the West Bank and Jerusalem, hosted in partnership with the Palestinian youth project Beyond the Checkpoints.

Local resident Maito Jobbe Duval says she came up with the idea for a mural in March 2025.

Speaking to the *Echo*, she said: "It was a very dark moment in the Gaza genocide; the Gaza Humanitarian Foundation (GHF) had been set up by Israel and the United States and starving people were getting shot at while trying to get the only food they could."

"I was having a drink in a Tilbury Road bar during that time and as I looked around at the industrial landscape and empty walls in the car park in front of me, I decided that something could and should be done."

With the help of Danny Saunders from the bar Leyton Calling, and local artist Tim Sanders, the mural went from an idea to reality.

Maito says: "We found a beautiful wall, crowd-funded money to pay for artist fees, and then we figured out what mural we wanted to paint."

Maito and Tim wrestled with various ideas before settling on a depiction of young Palestinians doing the traditional Dabke dance, which features synchronized, high-energy stomping, kicking, and jumping, typically led by a "ras" (leader) who waves a handkerchief while moving to rhythms from instruments like the oud, mijwiz and tabl.

Tim, who witnessed the dance on trips to Nablus in the West Bank, said: "Its message is poignant. It says: 'We're here and it doesn't matter how much you oppress us with your tanks, restrictions, and walls, we will still dance.'"



Palestinian teenagers danced the Dabke at the unveiling on Friday, 6th February Credit Dave Gilchrist

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# AROUND THE BOROUGH

## NORTH CHINGFORD

### Chingford Police Station front desk shuts

by Sebastian Mann,  
Local Democracy Reporter

The Metropolitan Police has confirmed the closure of the front desk at Chingford Police Station, in Kings Head Hill, on Saturday, 28th February.

The main functions of front counters are reporting crimes, seeking advice, and accessing victim services.

The closure was announced last October, prompting criticism from local leaders such as Chingford and Woodford Green MP Sir Iain Duncan Smith.

He called the decision “deeply disappointing” and said it would “significantly affect accessibility” for elderly and vulnerable residents, many of whom “rely on face-to-face policing services and are unable to use the Met’s digital or phone-based alternative”.

Chingford’s is one of ten desks across London to close as the force looks to close a £260million budget gap.

Other 24-hour counters set



Chingford Police Station in Kings Head Hill

to be shuttered include those in Kensington, Twickenham and Wimbledon. Just two counters will remain open 24 hours a day: Lewisham and Charing Cross.

Reducing their hours will still save £7m and free up 2,900 man-hours, the force says.

A spokesperson for the Met said: “The closures form part of a number of tough choices the Met is having to make in order to operate within a shrinking budget while tackling neigh-

bourhood crime and ensuring communities see a more visible police presence.”

They come after “months of engagement with partners, stakeholders and trade unions,” the spokesperson added.

In-person reporting of crimes has fallen by around 60% since 2012, data from the Met reveals.

It now forms just 5% of total crime reporting, with people now reporting offences online, over the phone, or directly to officers.

## HIGHAMS PARK

### Highams Park singer wins first ever Grammy

by Marco Marcelline

Highams Park singer Olivia Dean won her first-ever Grammy Award last month.

Accepting the ‘Best New Artist’ award from previous winner Chappell Roan, she said: “I never really imagined that I’d be up here, let alone nominated, so thank you so much.”

Dean also touched on her immigrant heritage, saying: “I’m up here as a granddaughter of an immigrant. I’m a product of bravery and I think those people ought to be celebrated. We’re nothing without each other.”

A self-taught singer-songwriter and guitarist who has been performing since the age of eight, Dean grew up in Highams Park with her Jamaican-Guyanese mum, English dad, and her



Olivia Dean has achieved global success with her second album ‘The Art of Loving’  
Credit Harald Krichel

younger brother.

After going to primary school locally, she attended the prestigious Brit School in Croydon, whose alumni include singers

Amy Winehouse and RAYE, and the rapper Loyle Carner.

Dean, 26, reached number one in the UK with her second album *The Art of Loving*, and hit single *Man I Need in September* last year.

Dean recently made headlines after writing an open letter to ticketing companies including Ticketmaster and LiveNation after resale tickets to her shows were listed at more than 14 times their original face value.

Calling the resale prices “disgusting” and “vile”, Dean demanded that fans were refunded and a price cap put in place to prevent future rip-offs. Ticketmaster quickly apologised for the debacle and followed through on her demands.

She is set to embark on a sold-out six-date run at the O2 Arena this spring.

## WALTHAMSTOW

### Paramedics launch defibrillator appeal in honour of beloved cat

by Marco Marcelline

Heartbroken Walthamstow Ambulance Station staff are seeking to honour the life of station cat Defib by raising money for public-access defibrillators in the community.

Defib, who passed away in late January, was a treasured feline at the Wadham Road station, and a plan by management to rehouse him in late 2024 prompted a petition signed by over 60,000 people.

Speaking to the *Echo* previously, the person who started the petition said Defib was a core and valued part of the team.

They said: “He’s part of the staff, people go to the station to specifically visit him. They love him. Defib is a loving, gorgeous cat. He’s a little bit needy, and loves cuddles. He also makes a meow that sounds like an ambulance siren.”

Now, staff are seeking to

extend his legacy by raising funds through the London Ambulance Charity to support the London Heart Starters Campaign.

This initiative aims to increase the number of public-access defibrillators (PAD) across the capital and provide life-saving training to the community, with each PAD costing a total of £1,600 to purchase and install.

A defibrillator saves lives during cardiac arrest by delivering a high-energy electric shock to the heart.



Defib the cat

You can donate here:  
[londonambulancecharity.org.uk/InMemoryOf/in-memory-of-defib-keeping-hearts-beating-in-london](https://londonambulancecharity.org.uk/InMemoryOf/in-memory-of-defib-keeping-hearts-beating-in-london)

## CHINGFORD MOUNT

### Bar at centre of stabbing faces licence challenge

A Chingford Mount bar connected to a stabbing could lose its licence after the Metropolitan Police submitted a review application to Waltham Forest Council.

Two men were hospitalised with stab injuries following a disturbance that began inside Scorpion Lounge in Hall Lane in the early hours of Sunday, 1st February.

Two men, aged 33 and 30, were later arrested on suspicion of causing grievous bodily harm but have since been released on bail while the Met’s investigation continues.

Following the stabbings, the Met submitted an application

to the council for a review of the Scorpion Lounge’s licence, which had been issued in January 2025.

Confirming the move, a council spokesperson said: “Council officers are working closely with police colleagues and will continue to provide all necessary support as the investigation progresses. It is further understood that the premises will remain closed at this time.”

Scorpion Lounge did not respond to a request for comment.

Any person who wishes to comment on the application for the review of the licence may do so by emailing [licensing@walthamforest.gov.uk](mailto:licensing@walthamforest.gov.uk) no later than Tuesday, 3rd March

# LOCAL NOTICES

Published: 27th February 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 **EAST LONDON BREWING COMPANY LIMITED** has applied to the London Borough of Waltham Forest for the grant of a Premises Licence at **EAST LONDON BREWING CO LTD, UNIT 2 LOCKWOOD WAY, WALTHAMSTOW, LONDON, E17 5RB**. The nature of the application is as follows:

- To permit the sale of alcohol / provision of films / hours the premises are open to the public – Sunday to Wednesday 09:00–22:00, Thursday to Saturday 09:00–24:00. Provision of recorded music, Thursday to Saturday 23:00–24:00

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 **20th March 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.

## LICENCES FOR SPECIAL TREATMENT PUBLIC NOTICE

NOTICE IS GIVEN THAT **Thien Hieu Tran** has applied to the London Borough of Waltham Forest for a Special Treatment Licence for:

- Nail extensions
- Manicure
- Pedicure
- Body waxing
- Licence for the premises: **E17 Nails, 170 Hoe Street, Walthamstow E17 4QH**

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.

## LICENCES FOR SPECIAL TREATMENT PUBLIC NOTICE

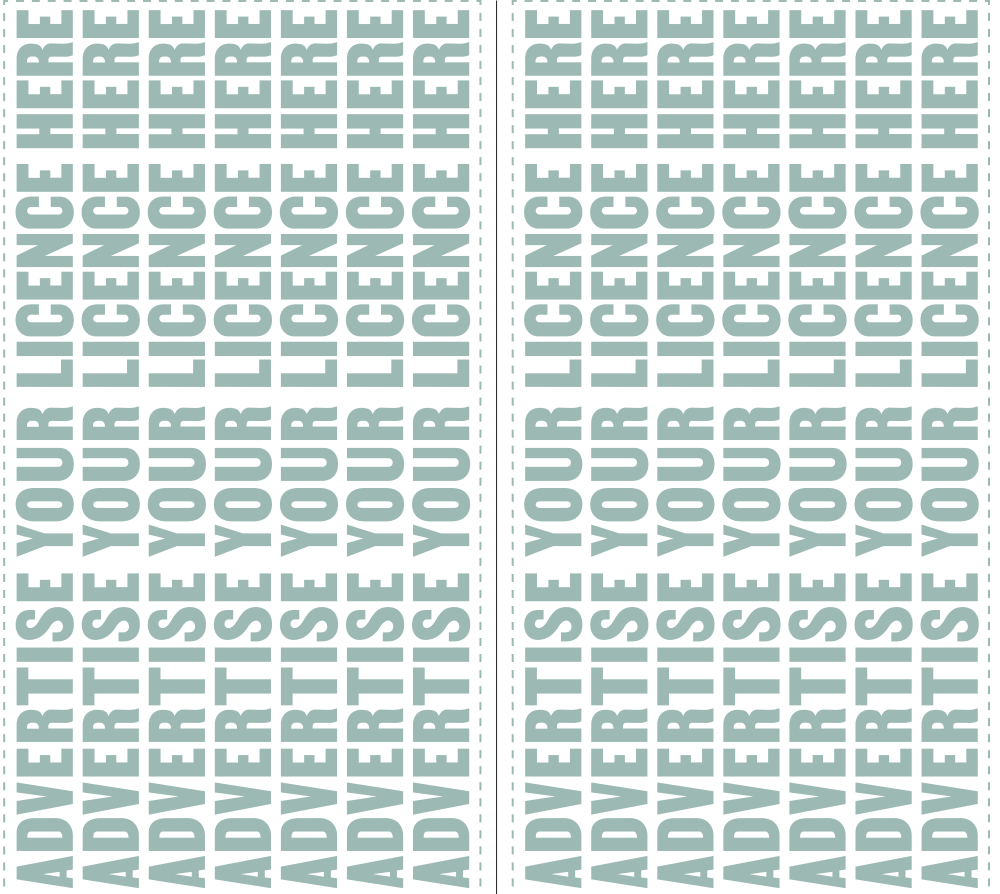
NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that **MAGIC SLIM&BEAUTY LTD** has applied to the London Borough of Waltham Forest for a Special Treatments Licence for the premises at: **Magic Slim & Beauty, 214 High Road, Leytonstone, London E11 3HU**. The application is for:

- Laser Hair Removal; Manicure and Pedicure; Electrical Treatments (including Ultrasonic, Radio Frequency and Electrical Muscle Stimulation); Light Treatments (including Infrared); Massage; Waxing; Hydration and Skin Treatments using Electrical Equipment.

Any person wishing to make representations regarding this application must give notice in writing to the Licensing Authority at the London Borough of Waltham Forest within 28 days of this notice.

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

Dated: 27th February 2026



**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 March | Booking deadline: 25th March

Advertisement

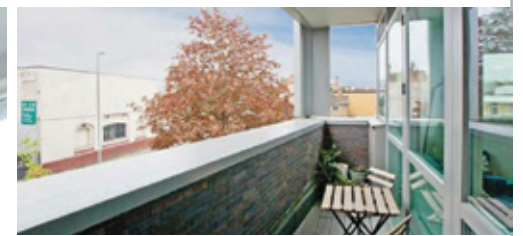


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 63 St James Street, E17 7PJ



Nestled on the vibrant Clacton Road in London, this charming two-bedroom house was sold chain free presenting an excellent opportunity for the new owners who were seeking a comfortable and versatile living space. With its high ceilings, the property exuded a sense of openness and light, creating an inviting atmosphere that was perfect for both relaxation and entertaining.

Get ready for **Sprint Sales** including a free market appraisal with Coppermills



A stunning and spacious two-bedroom, two-bathroom apartment, situated on the first floor of an impressive new development, located in the heart of the St James Street area of Walthamstow. Hopps house is within walking distance of an array of artisan shops and cafes, and one of the longest markets in Europe. Jump on the overground and in 15 mins arrive in central London.

Get ready for **Sprint Sales** including a free market appraisal with Coppermills

# LETTERS

## Financial mismanagement

Dear WFE

LABOUR LIKES TO BOAST that Waltham Forest Council is well run and financially responsible. That claim has now completely collapsed as it seeks an emergency government bailout.

The Labour-run council has shown a consistent pattern of financial mismanagement. Labour voted to hike councillors' pay while cutting council tax support for those who need it most.

It rakes in millions from parking fines, yet still ranks among the worst local authorities for road conditions. And it has quite literally flushed money down the loo by installing heated toilet seats in the town hall – a symbol of a council completely out of touch with residents' priorities.

In 2022, council leader Grace Williams told voters that only a Labour government could deliver the funding Waltham Forest needed.

Four years later, that promise lies in tatters as she goes cap in hand to a Labour government for an emergency £19million loan, with no clear plan for how it will be repaid, or whether this loan will be enough to stave off severe cuts and bankruptcy.

This is not responsible leadership. It's a betrayal of residents' trust – and local people are paying the price!

Alex Marshall-Lewis,  
Chair, Waltham Forest  
Liberal Democrats

## Harvest

Dear WFE

EVERY YEAR LONDON quietly produces an orchard's worth of fruit. Too much drops, bruises, and disappears into the compost heap. In 2025 three fruit picking groups alone harvested over five tonnes of fruit that they donated to food banks and schools, made into chutney and juice and shared at community events.

We're looking for people who want to start a group to harvest in their local area – you might already be part of a community group and want to add to its activities, or set up something completely new.

You'll be guided and coached

by fruit picking expert Michael Stuart from Kensal to Kilburn Fruit Harvesters, and London National Park City will provide you with tools and resources.

If you want to set up a harvesting group in Waltham Forest visit: [nationalparkcity.london/london-fruit-harvest](http://nationalparkcity.london/london-fruit-harvest).

Michael Stuart, London  
National Park City

## Support local shops

Dear WFE

THE OTHER WEEK I WENT into an electrical shop on Leyton High Road, which felt like Aladdin's cave: floor-to-ceiling boxes, lights hanging in every available space, and a narrow path leading to the counter.

An elderly man stood quietly against the wall. I asked if he was waiting to be served.

"No," he replied.

From behind the counter, the shop owner piped up. "He's always here," he said, before adding: "That's Stan. Stan the Man."

The man behind the counter is Tony, who owns the shop. I asked if a lamp I'd brought could be fixed. He took it, examined it briefly, and pronounced, simply, "Yes." Just like that, something was repaired instead of thrown away.

As Tony worked on my lamp, he served a stream of electricians. Stan and I chatted. He's 85 and has known the shop for decades, including its previous owner. He still runs his own commercial and domestic electrical business and loves going out on jobs, he told me.

In this age of throwaway convenience, I'll always remember Stan the Man and how wonderful it felt to find a local business willing to fix my light. Had they not, it would almost certainly have ended up in the bin. What a waste that would have been.

Rosie Douglas  
Leyton

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 March.

## SEWING

**Eco-Fashion Adult Workshop**  
Tuesday 3rd March, 7.30pm  
George Tomlinson Primary School,  
Harrington Road, Leytonstone  
E11 4QN

In this hands-on workshop, you'll use simple sewing and creative upcycling techniques to transform a piece of clothing you already own. Whether it's refreshing a well-loved item or giving new life to something you never wear, this session is all about experimenting, slowing down, and having fun – no sewing experience needed.

This is an open-format workshop, meaning there's no fixed project to follow. You bring one item of clothing you'd like to transform, and Aurélie will guide you with ideas, techniques, and one-to-one support. You're free to sew, patch, embellish or experiment in your own way. All tools and materials are provided – just bring your garment and your curiosity.

**Book tickets (£16): Search 'Eco-Fashion Adult Workshops' on Eventbrite**

## WORKSHOP

**Ring Carving Workshop**  
Thursday 5th March, 7pm  
William the Fourth Pub,  
816 High Road, Leyton E10 6AE

Learn the ancient art of wax carving! You'll learn how to carve your very own ring in jeweller's wax – no experience needed. Using hard jeweller's wax, you'll sculpt, carve, and shape your design into life, creating a unique ring model.

Workshop tickets are £35, and you can choose to have your finished design cast in silver afterwards at an additional cost if you fall in love with it (spoiler: you will). Don't worry if you've never held a carving tool before, this workshop is perfect for beginners (although you do need to be 18 years or over).

**Book tickets (£16): Search 'Eco-Fashion Adult Workshops' on Eventbrite**

## LIVE MUSIC

**Grapes of Wrath**  
Friday 6th of March, 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, this month we have local bands: tethered (London punk'mo), Higher Walls (London hardcore quad) and Millpool (Jazz-tinged post-hardcore quartet). Doors from 7pm. Get your tickets now!

**Tickets from £10 (16+):** [wegottickets.com/f/15129](http://wegottickets.com/f/15129)

## SECOND HAND

**Pre-loved stalls**  
Saturday 7th March, 10am–1pm  
St John's Church, 825 High Road  
Leytonstone London E11 1HH

Leytonstone Festival will be holding a fundraising event with stalls selling pre-

# LISTINGS

loved stalls at St John's Church yard. Come and browse through stalls selling lovely items and grab yourself a bargain! The event is free to attend. If you require a stall this is £5 cash on the day.

**Contact Angela for a stall:**  
Call 07908 191 768

## FUNDRAISER

**Ravenswood's Eat or Heat fundraiser**  
Saturday 7th March, from 12pm  
Ravenswood Industrial Estate,  
Shernhall Street, Walthamstow  
E17 9HQ

The annual multi-venue fundraiser, raising much needed donations for East London Eat or Heat. Feast your eyes on the first wave of artists we're announcing, Carnival royalty Norman Jay (MBE), DnB don DJ Hype, Underground hero Just Grace and many more to come!

You know the drill- big names, local crate diggers, family friendly in the day, ravers in the night, all raising money for Eat Or Heat.

It's always an incredible day of music across the venues of Ravenswood Industrial Estate, Walthamstow. To date we've raised over £75,000, thanks to the generosity of punters, venues and sponsors! The event is free with donations on the day strongly encouraged.

Free

## MARKET

**The YOUTH MRKT**  
Saturday 7th March, 9am–3pm  
Walthamstow Market, High Street  
E17 7JN

The YOUTH MRKT is a stall on Walthamstow Market, giving young people a real, low-risk space to try out their business ideas and learn what works by actually doing it. From clothing brands created in memory of lost friends, to lip gloss lines and cupcake stalls, young people design, price, sell and adapt their products month by month based on real customer feedback.

Free

## CABARET

**Party Like It's 1899**  
Thursday 12th–Saturday  
14th March, 8pm  
Ye Olde Rose and Crown Theatre  
Pub, Hoe Street E17 4SA

Welcome to London's finest music hall, the Walthamstow Palace of Earthly Delights. Cluster Cabaret Theatre conjures a turn-of-the-century variety show, as time slips its leash, and secrets sing. Witty, wild and joyfully anachronistic – light up the shadows because tomorrow may never come. This musical cabaret is brought to life by performer Lizzy Renihan and members of her choir, Natural Voices. Our host is, star of stage and screen, Ian Burfield.

**Ticket from £8:**  
**Visit** [tickettailor.com/events/cluster/2042500](http://tickettailor.com/events/cluster/2042500)

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 March.

## PUB QUIZ

**Bring Your Mum Pub Quiz**  
Sunday 15th March, 11am–4.30pm  
Big Penny Social, 1 Priestley Way  
E17 6AL

For a bit of family-friendly fun, join Bring Your Mum Pub Quiz, hosted by Anthony, the mastermind behind 'Bring Your Baby Pub Quiz'. Designed for all ages, from five to 75, this quiz is full of original, lovingly written questions that everyone can enjoy. Teams of up to six (adults and children over 7) are allowed, if your group is bigger, don't worry, we'll seat you together and you can decide on the day who competes! Non-quizzing little ones are welcome to bring toys and games to keep busy.

**To get tickets:**  
**Visit** [bigpennysocial.co.uk/whats-on/mothers-day](http://bigpennysocial.co.uk/whats-on/mothers-day)

## COMEDY

**Ed Gamble**  
Wednesday 18th March, 7.30pm  
Red Lion Pub, 640 High Rd  
Leytonstone E11 3AA

Live from the Red Lion, East is East Comedy is back with one of the biggest acts in the country, Ed Gamble. Star of 'Off Menu', and 'The Traitors: Uncloaked', he'll be joined by some exciting guests and a carefully curated lineup of the best up-and-comers on the circuit. Don't miss out!

**Tickets £25**  
**Visit** [fatsoma.com/e/fjjuhnz](http://fatsoma.com/e/fjjuhnz)

## COMMUNITY

**Open House Festival**  
Saturday 21st March, 10am–4pm  
Good Shepherds Studios, 15a  
Davies Lane, Leytonstone E11 3DR

It's back! Open House 2026 is going to be a day filled with the people involved in bringing life to Good Shepherd Studios, Our Pastures Community Garden and the Pastures Centre. The day will include building tours of Good Shepherd Studios, workshops, stalls and community picnic (bring your own) hosted by Our Pastures Community Garden, short films and more.

Free

## CLASSICAL

**Mozart Jupiter Symphony**  
Saturday 21st March, 7.30pm  
St John's Church, 825 High Road  
Leytonstone E11 1HH

The Orchestra of the World performs Mozart, Grieg, Brahms, Beethoven and Aurora Europa by Catalan composer Josep Maria Valls i Xufre.

**Tickets (£22), search 'Mozart Jupiter Symphony' on Eventbrite**

## SPORT

# Council revives long-promised sports pavilion rebuild plans

The Rolls Park pavilion, used by West Essex Sports Club, has been closed since September 2020 owing to subsidence concerns

by Marco Marcelline

**W**altham Forest Council has announced it will fund the promised rebuild of a sinking clubhouse in Rolls Park – nearly six years after it was first shut.

In a joint statement released on social media, councillors Rosalind Doré and Ahsan Khan said funds had been secured from the council’s capital programme combined with an insurance settlement from the previous facility.

The Rolls Park pavilion, used by West Essex Sports Club, has been closed since September 2020 owing to subsidence concerns.

Through sucking up moisture in the soil, nearby trees had made the soil beneath the building’s foundation unstable, causing it to sink into the ground.

In late 2023, the council announced it would use a £1.17m insurance award payout to tear down and replace the sports pavilion.



At the time, the council had aimed to deliver the new pavilion before 2025, with work starting on the site in June 2024.

However, the project was delayed and then scaled down to just a third of its original size after the council ran into build cost-inflation and identified difficult geological conditions and a Thames Water main near the pavilion.

The move prompted harsh criticism from

the West Essex Sports Club who were dismayed by the delay, saying the lack of a proper clubhouse was severely limiting the club’s appeal to new members.

But in a surprise announcement, Cllr Doré and Cllr Khan said the council had committed fresh funding to the project.

They said: “The clubhouse will serve the hundreds of members of the West Essex Cricket and Football Club, based in Rolls

Park, and the project will be developed in close collaboration with club members.

“This work will build on the council’s successful opening of the neighbouring Rolls Park Sports Ground in 2025, a government-funded project which added a new Airhall, allowing tennis to be played year-round, and six resurfaced tennis courts as the council continues to invest in improving sports and leisure facilities in the area.

“Once the programme of works has been created, a timeline for development of the project will be published.”

Management committee chair Tony McNally told the *Echo* that the committee was “delighted” that the council had “finally” found funds to rebuild the clubhouse.

He said: “We have been offering sport to Waltham Forest residents for over 100 years and look forward to working with the council to deliver a facility that will allow us to continue to do so for the foreseeable future.”

While updated design plans have not yet been revealed, previously promised plans for the clubhouse included a new club room, the introduction of disabled access toilets and changing facilities for men and women, and the allocation of use of the building for community activities and events.

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