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WALTHAM FOREST ECHO

Free
Apr 2026, N° 133

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North Chingford photographer Nicky Bamber captured the faces behind female-run businesses in Station Road earlier this year – you can see the rest of her photography from exhibition 'Her Work, Her Story' on page 14 ► Credit Nicky Bamber

‘Fined first, questions later’: Anger grows at waste enforcement agency’s ‘aggressive’ tactics

by Marco Marcelline

Residents, visitors and small business owners across Waltham Forest say they are being wrongly fined and left intimidated after “aggressive” encounters with the council’s outsourced waste enforcement contractors, 3GS and NES.

Some have told the *Echo* their experiences have left them in fear of putting out their own rubbish or welcoming visitors to the borough.

In February, a French visitor attending a music festival at Walthamstow Trades Hall was stopped in Hoe Street and issued a £100 fine for holding an open can of beer.

Festival organiser Charlie Woolley said the woman was “aggressively” approached by two 3GS officers who demanded her ID before explaining why she had been stopped.

Although the area is covered by a Public Spaces Protection Order (PSPO) restricting street drinking, the order requires officers to first issue a warning and give the

person an opportunity to surrender the drink. Charlie says no such warning was given.

Attempts to challenge the fine on her behalf led to what he describes as “an incredibly opaque” process: a non-functional phone number, and an email address that offered no clear appeals route.

Continued on page 2 ►

Labour backs Lime bikes in pre-election ‘U-turn’

Waltham Forest Labour has rowed back on its previous opposition to dockless bike schemes in the borough.

The party’s local manifesto for next month’s elections says it will “work with dockless bike providers to introduce a scheme which works for all residents”, a major shift in policy that would bring Waltham Forest in line with many London boroughs, if enacted.

The move follows growing public pressure on the issue. Last year, more than 750 residents signed a petition calling for Lime bikes to be permitted in the borough, with many citing poor transport links in parts of Leytonstone and Leyton.

Residents told the *Echo* that e-bikes offer “safer late-night travel”, and a more convenient alternative to trains and buses.

Waltham Forest’s only previous dockless scheme – a 2017 trial with Irish firm Urbo – collapsed within ten months.

Council deputy leader Clyde Loakes previously argued that operators struggled to maintain bikes in outer London and that poorly parked rentals created hazards for disabled residents, and older people.

Lime welcomed the shift, saying its bikes would be a “natural next step” for a borough already seen as a cycling hub.

Waltham Forest Tory leader Emma Best, however, called Labour’s move a pre-election “U-turn” aimed at preventing voters switching to the Greens.

NEWS



FELLOWSHIP IS LIFE

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Leigh Wraith and her partner Iain

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Anyone who has received a fixed penalty notice (FPN) by contractors such as 3GS or NES cannot formally appeal it; instead any challenges must be informally shared via email up to 14 days after an FPN has been issued.

Following a response from 3GS insisting that there were "no formal grounds for appeal", Charlie contacted the council, the police, and Walthamstow MP Stella Creasy's office.

An email seen by the *Echo* from council deputy leader Clyde Loakes confirms the fine had been issued incorrectly, with Cllr Loakes saying the officer had "failed to understand the conditions of the PSPO".

Charlie says the case raises wider concerns about the council's due diligence in monitoring their contractors' behaviour, adding: "3GS are acting with impunity on the streets of Waltham Forest. Officers with little to no training are handing out fines to which there is little recourse."

He has since requested the body-cam footage under the Data Protection Act.

Meanwhile, a new business in St James Street said they had been "harassed" and threatened with prosecution despite using council-authorized waste bags to dispose of their rubbish.

The business owner, who asked to stay anonymous, said she and her business partner received multiple letters from NES accusing them of fly-tipping, even after providing evidence of a valid waste transfer notice. One case was closed in December, only for threatening letters about a new alleged offence to arrive weeks later.

She described seeing enforcement officers leaf through bags at 1am outside her business in order to find letters with addresses on them. At one point the situation had left the pair at "their wits' end", she said.

The entrepreneur continued: "We pay a considerable amount for authorised collections by [business waste management company] First Mile, yet we were being threatened with criminal prosecution for using the service exactly as instructed."

In one instance, NES claimed the waste had been left out on a "no collection day", despite the business having daily collections arranged with First Mile. In another, they alleged the waste was in a black bin bag – but provided no photographic evidence.

While both fines they received were eventually dropped when the pair reprovided proof of a waste transfer notice, the experience had left them questioning whether they can continue operating in the borough.

They said: "We live here, we work here, and we report fly-tipping regularly. But we were being targeted for doing everything by the book."

Leigh Wraith, who moved to Leytonstone in January, says she followed instructions from the local library about when to put out household waste. She had placed bags out on a Sunday night for a Monday morning collection – a practice the library had confirmed was acceptable.

But days later, Leigh received a letter from 3GS containing photos of a split bin bag and an Amazon parcel with her address. The letter did not specify the alleged offence, only that she had seven days to respond.

Despite explaining that she was new to the area and had followed council guidance, Leigh was issued a £550 fixed penalty notice, with 3GS warning the amount could rise to £8,000 – a figure later admitted to be incorrectly inflated from £800.

A council library staff member, who reviewed the photos, reportedly told Leigh that "3GS are known for fining people for things that would not be an

issue", adding that residents are allowed to leave bags out overnight for morning collections, and that the split bag may have been caused by foxes and should not have resulted in a fine.

Leigh says the experience has been "intimidatory", adding: "They couldn't even tell me what the rules were, yet they were enforcing them. It feels like a trap."

These cases mirror a story the *Echo* reported last year, when Leyton resident Daniel Dixon was fined £300 after 3GS officers reconstructed a torn book parcel found in a public bin to identify him. Daniel said he had "no idea" that discarding a cardboard wrapper in a public bin could be considered fly-tipping.

Footage from the incident showed contractors rifling through rubbish next to a large fly-tip of furniture and household waste. Daniel described the fine as "outrageous".

At the time, Cllr Loakes defended the practice as part of routine evidence-gathering at fly-tipping hotspots.

Across all the cases, residents and businesses described no clear appeals process, non-functional phone numbers, contradictory explanations, escalating threats of prosecution, presumption of guilt, and fines issued even when council guidance was followed.

Those affected are calling for the council to urgently review its contract with 3GS/NES, citing concerns about training, accountability, and the financial pressure placed on residents.

Charlie says the issue goes beyond individual mistakes, stating: "This is a systemic problem. People are being fined first and asked questions later – if at all."

The St James Street business owner adds: "They should be tackling people dumping mattresses in alleyways, not businesses trying to follow the rules."

Cllr Loakes said: "Our residents expect enforcement officers and contractors to take the necessary action to protect our shared environment – including through extensive evidence checks.

"However, we recognise that enforcement can feel stressful for those involved and that officers may not always get it right. That is why we give residents every opportunity to appeal fines, as well as viewing mistakes as learning opportunities to strengthen officer training and improve the service."

Read the full version of this article online: walthamforestecho.co.uk

City Airport consults on plans to allow larger planes

London City Airport has launched a public consultation on plans to introduce a shallower landing approach, a change it says would allow larger, more modern planes to use the airport.

The proposal would add an additional 4.49-degree approach angle, alongside the airport's existing 5.5-degree steep approach, which would remain in use for most aircraft.

Many planes fly over Waltham Forest on their approach to City Airport.

The airport says the change would not alter flightpaths over the ground, but would slightly lower the altitude of some aircraft during the final stages of landing.

City Airport says the new approach would enable aircraft such as the Airbus A320neo, used by EasyJet and WizzAir, to operate at the airport.

These planes can carry significantly more passengers than the aircraft most commonly used at present, allowing the airport to reach its approved annual passenger cap of nine million with fewer flights than would otherwise be required.

With the new approach, it estimates there would be around 76,500 fewer flights over a twelve year period compared with doing nothing.

The airport also says the proposal would reduce overall noise exposure in the long term, with fewer people affected by daytime aircraft noise and around 10,000 fewer people experiencing early-morning noise during the most sensitive period.

The consultation stage runs until 17th May 2026, after which responses will be reviewed before a final proposal is submitted to the regulator later this year. If approved, the changes could be implemented from January 2027.

Take part in the consultation and find out more here: londoncityairport.com/corporate/airspace-change-process



An Airbus A320 is significantly larger than current planes that land at the airport, Credit Wikimedia

NEWS

Residents ponder future of demolished Highams Park Lake boathouse

The boathouse was destroyed by a fire last September and has now been demolished, prompting locals to consider what should replace it

The burnt out boathouse before it was demolished in March,
Credit Evie Goodwin



by Evie Goodwin

A burnt-out boathouse at Highams Park Lake has been demolished, having stood on the lakeside for more than 50 years – and leaving behind questions about what should replace it.

Contractors began demolition on 16th February following a fire that destroyed the two-storey building last September, taking about three weeks to complete their works.

All buildings and fencing on the site have now been removed apart from an electrical outbuilding, which remains fenced off. The concrete base and the retaining wall in front of the former boathouse have also been left in place for the time being while the conservators decide what to do with the site.

The boathouse was destroyed in a fire in the early hours of 24th September 2025. Six fire engines and around 30 firefighters attended the blaze, which was brought under control later that morning.

Tristan Vetta, from landowner City of London Corporation, previously told the Highams Park Planning Group (HPPG) that although the cause of the fire has not been confirmed, “it is most likely accidental arson caused by intruders trying to steal metal

for decades.

Although usage had declined in recent years – with the Scouts returning the keys around two years before the fire – the building remained a familiar landmark for visitors to the park.

Because the structure was built into the lake’s retaining dam, redevelopment options are limited by engineering and environmental constraints.

City of London has indicated there are no plans to build housing or a car park on the site.

Instead the corporation says it is considering landscaping and “reprofiling” of the land to create a more open approach to the lake. However, a final decision has not yet been made.

Local residents are already being asked for their views on what should happen next.

A recent community survey from the Hatch Lane & Highams Park North Conservatives asks people how often they visit Highams Park and what they use it for – from walking and wildlife to family time and exercise.

The Tories said: “Following the recent fire at the boathouse by Highams Park Lake, many residents have spoken to us on the doorstep about how much the lake and park mean to them.

“Highams Park is one of the most valued and well-used green spaces in our area. The lake is

a beautiful, tranquil oasis for everyone. The fire has understandably raised questions about the future of the boathouse and how this part of the park should be used going forward.”

The survey presents options including a visitor centre, a community space for local groups, a café or refreshment area, an education hub, or a mixture of these.

Gordon Turpin, chair of the Highams Park Planning Group, said the City of London has indicated it will consult residents on future proposals and may use the group to help reach people locally, though details of that consultation have not yet been announced.



Post-demolition
Credit Evie Goodwin

With the demolition now complete, the focus has shifted firmly to the future of the site, and whether this prominent lakeside space will become landscaped open ground or once again serve as a community used space in the heart of Highams Park.



Highams Park Lake
pictured in the summer



Council receives £3m TfL grant for ‘greener’ streets

by Sebastian Mann,
Local Democracy Reporter

Waltham Forest Council will receive more than £3million towards “safer, greener and more accessible streets across the borough,” Transport for London (TfL) has confirmed.

The funding comes as part of a city-wide £94.8m package, the second annual investment from the authority.

Councillor Clyde Loakes, who serves as co-deputy leader and the cabinet member for climate and air quality, said the £3.089m was “more than we were anticipating”.

“This funding, together with our own investment, will help fund the development, delivery, and completion of important schemes across the borough,” he said.

Over the next year, the council will develop bus priority schemes in Chingford and Leyton, which it says will improve traffic flow and cut travel times.

Various neighbourhood schemes are also being drawn up for Higham Hill, Forest, and Chapel End wards in Walthamstow, on top of ongoing regeneration works in Forest Road and Whipps Cross Road, Cllr Loakes added.

Money will also go towards “important redesigns” of the junction at Grove Green Road and Cathall Road and “filling the gaps and upgrading the cycling infrastructure” along Billet Road.

“It will also allow us to look at improving Shernhall Street and develop designs for future consultation for Leytonstone High Road, following last year’s perception survey,” he said.

Cllr Loakes added: “70% of Waltham Forest residents already walk, cycle, or use public transport daily.

“With this funding from TfL, we will be able to do even more to encourage people to consider active travel or public transport as the default mode of transportation through these schemes – especially for those short local journeys.”

NEWS



Credit Russell Boyce

Ishtiaq Hussain, a volunteer for non-profit The Brothers Project, loads up the final basket of food parcels just before they are taken outside the Jamia Masjid Ghousia Mosque in Lea Bridge Road to be handed out as free food donations. See more of Russell's photography of The Brothers Project here: russellboyce.com/brothersproject.html

Call for speed cameras to curb speeding in High Road Leytonstone

by Marco Marcelline

Residents have expressed alarm over “regular speeding and reckless driving” along High Road Leytonstone, after a car was totalled in a crash last month.

In the early hours of Tuesday, 10th March a car mounted the pavement and ploughed into a brick wall just south of Leytonstone High Road Station.

Photos of the crash scene show a car with its front completely crushed while a wall and fence for a housing estate is partially destroyed, with bricks scattered across the pavement.

According to the Metropolitan Police, after being discharged from hospital, the driver was arrested on suspicion of driving under the influence of drink or drugs.

Local resident Alex Smith spoke to the *Echo* about regular speeding on the High Road, saying he felt it was too dangerous to let his young son cycle on it.

He said: “Cars routinely speed and drive dangerously, seemingly without consequence – or at least

without any fear of consequence – and it is extremely rare to see drivers keeping to the 20mph limit. When I do drive, always at 20mph, I am often beeped at and sometimes overtaken.”

Appealing for speed cameras to be placed along the road, he added: “What needs to happen before the authorities start taking safety on this road seriously? Does there need to be an even more serious accident before meaningful action is taken?”

Another resident, writing on Facebook, said: “I have been nearly knocked over so many times. That section of the High Road is really frightening as some drivers see the long straight road as a nice opportunity to give it

some rig.”

Locals have pointed out that there are no speed cameras or adequate deterrents along the High Road, despite several having been installed in nearby Whipps Cross Road.

Council deputy leader Clyde Loakes, and cabinet member for climate and air quality, told the *Echo* that the town hall had long been asking for speed camera installation and enforcement powers to be taken out of Transport for London (TfL) and the Met's hands.

He said: “We will continue to lobby to be granted the ability to enforce speeding and do even more to keep all road users safe from the minority of drivers

who do not think the rules apply to them.

“We share residents' concerns about dangerous driving on the High Road. The council is currently only able to consider preventative measures. Following a perception survey carried out in autumn 2025, in which many respondents expressed and repeated their serious concerns about dangerous driving behaviours and speeding, we are carefully looking at interventions to further calm traffic and make the area safer for pedestrians and cyclists.”

A TfL spokesperson said: “We are planning for the future expansion of our safety camera network, with new locations to be identified through a robust, risk-based approach and in close collaboration with London boroughs.

“We continue to closely monitor data from the road network across the borough and would carefully consider any proposals from the council for changes or new camera locations to ensure they deliver the greatest possible safety benefits.”



A serious crash in the High Road on Tuesday, 10th March Credit Alex Smith

Council creates senior officer role to oversee cuts and bailout

by Sebastian Mann, Local Democracy Reporter

Waltham Forest Council will appoint a new ‘strategic director for strategy, change and communities’ to oversee £40-million of cuts and manage a government bailout.

It will be their job to oversee savings across council services over the next three years in a bid to resolve financial turmoil.

They will also manage the £19m government bailout, signed off by councillors last month amid “significant” financial pressures, and work to introduce a “prevention-led” model of governance.

Going forward, council leader Grace Williams has committed to “regular updates” on how the ‘exceptional financial support’ (EFS) is being spent.

She told top officials at a cabinet meeting on Tuesday, 17th March it was “vital” to have “the right people in place,” and that would require a new position being created.

The terms of EFS loans require councils to produce a “credible plan” for both financial recovery and transformation, which Cllr Williams says “needs to be coherent”.

Waltham Forest says it will also improve its capacity to “deliver complex change at pace” and take a “preventative” approach that reduces long-term demand.

Finance officials previously said they would only use it if it was “absolutely necessary”. Once a council draws EFS, it becomes an active loan with interest.

In February, Cllr Williams claimed the loan would “help us protect our services that matter most to people” while “balancing the budget in the short term”.

She said it would keep around £30m in the council's reserves and remove the need for further borrowing.

The Conservative group, who form the official opposition in the council chamber, accused the authority of relying on the “tax-payers' credit card”.

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NEWS

‘My child won’t stop crying’: Parents shocked as Walthamstow primary slashes SEND support

Parents at Hillyfield Primary Academy say their special needs children lost their one-to-one teaching assistants “overnight” after a staffing review

Hillyfield Primary Academy's Lloyd Park site
Credit Hayhurst & Co Architects



by Marco Marcelline

Parents at one of Walthamstow’s largest primary schools have slammed a decision to cut support staff for children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) following a staffing review.

Families at Hillyfield Primary Academy, which operates two sites in Lloyd Park and Higham Hill, say some children lost their one-to-one teaching assistants “overnight”, disrupting their education and leaving them distressed.

On Friday 6th March, the school emailed parents at its Lloyd Park site, informing them of changes to learning support assistants following advice it received to cut agency staff spending by the Department for Education (DfE).

The *Echo* understands that some agency staff had turned up to school the following Monday unaware of their jobs having been cut, and were in tears upon being told.

The email reads: “Following a thorough staffing review, we have been advised by a school

resource management advisor, who has been commissioned by the DfE, to significantly reduce agency staff spend. This has been reviewed by senior leadership and the decision has been made to reduce agency staffing where possible.

“While we understand that staffing changes can be difficult for some pupils initially, we trust that having an allocated member of [non-agency] Hillyfield staff to support your child will help with this transition.”

A petition against the decision has gathered more than 600 signatures.

The petition starter, Sangeetha Thurairatnam, told the *Echo* that her youngest daughter, who has autism, had been left bereft by the loss of her one-to-one support worker.

“She now has to share a different assistant with another child, and she has been crying. She doesn’t want to go to school anymore. This situation isn’t fair.”

Mother-of-two Michelle Niroula ed those feelings, saying: “I feel betrayed. It’s heartbreaking for all of us. Up until last week there were four staff members in

my daughter’s classroom – now there are three.

“My children’s education is going to be affected unless they reinstate the support workers and put in a proper plan on how to support kids with special needs.”

One parent who asked to stay anonymous said the move would impact all children on top of adding more stress and workload onto already overwhelmed staff.

They told the *Echo*: “This is having a huge impact on not only SEND children but neurotypical children who are having to learn in an environment where kids in their class are severely disregulated.

“Parents have complained to the senior leadership team as a class (with 25 signatures) but have yet to receive a response.”

In February, staff who were members of the National Education Union (NEU), went on strike for three days over pay, excessive workload, and management concerns.

Claire Bithell, a member of the campaign group Waltham Forest SEND Crisis, said families had been left shocked by

the changes.

She told the *Echo*: “It is alarming to hear of rapid changes to the education support for children with special needs and disability in this school.

“These changes appear to have happened without any consultation with parents and carers, and despite the support being detailed in the children’s education health and care plans, which are legally binding documents.”

She added: “School is hard enough for children with additional needs, without essential support being removed unexpectedly and without warning.

“There is no justification for this behaviour, which is highly distressing for children and could harm their education and their health.”

Hillyfield Primary Academy is one of the largest primary schools in the borough and includes an autism resource provision and sensory room at its Lloyd Park site.

Parents are demanding that the school clarify how children’s interventions and daily support will continue, what measures will be taken to minimise disruption, and whether the changes will affect safeguarding or access to support.

In response to the concerns, a spokesperson for Hillyfield Primary Academy said the school remained committed to supporting pupils and engaging with families.

“We recognise that changes can raise understandable questions from families, and the school is engaging directly with parents and staff to provide reassurance and further information.

“The wellbeing, safety and support of our pupils remains our highest priority.”

The DfE was contacted for comment.

You can read the petition here: change.org/p/hillyfield-academy-parents-urgent-petition-protect-children-s-support-interventions

Walthamstow MP Stella Creasy
Credit UK Parliament



Stella Creasy slams Labour’s ‘cruel’ refugee plans

Walthamstow MP Stella Creasy has vocally opposed her party’s “cruel” move to return refugees if their home country is deemed safe.

The Labour and Co-operative MP last month warned that the policy, pushed forward by Home Secretary Shabana Mahmood, risked an “inevitable Windrush-style scandal that no [Labour MP] stood on a manifesto to implement”.

Among one of the more hard-line policies Mahmood has proposed is to apply the proposed rule changes to the hundreds of thousands of non-EU migrants and their dependents who arrived between 2022 and 2024, when the Conservative government at the time significantly eased requirements for work visas.

For some groups, like benefit claimants, the pathway to permanent residency could be stretched to 15 or even 20 years.

Creasy, who in a *Guardian* article called on her party to be “True Labour not Blue Labour”, added: “There’s no ‘fairness’ in repeatedly spending money on asking victims of trafficking and civil war if they are still in that category – especially when we have already given them refugee status so confirmed they are at risk of harm.

“Ukrainians, Iranians [and] Afghans alike will all now live in a perpetual state of limbo, not able to plan any kind of life either here or in their home nation because they can’t guarantee their status, making them easier to exploit too.”

There is currently no confirmed date for a parliamentary vote on Mahmood’s refugee changes.

A vote will come only after a bill is formally introduced, which has not yet happened.

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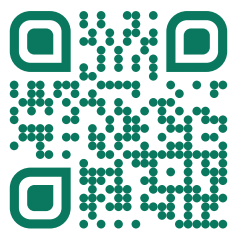
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NEWS

Walthamstow's Harmony Hall shuts after landlord imposes 163% rent hike

Harmony Hall in Truro Road shut at the end of March after its owners said it would no longer offer CREST, the charity which manages the site, a below market rate rent



Harmony Hall in Truro Road

by Marco Marcelline

Walthamstow's Harmony Hall shut at the end of March after its owner imposed a 163% rent increase on the charity which manages the site.

In November 2025, Shaftesbury Group, the sole trustees of Harmony Hall freeholder Marsh Street Mission (MSM), raised the annual rent CREST pays them from £24,700 to £65,000.

CREST informed Shaftesbury Group that it would cease operating the hall, pending a six-month follow-on lease to ensure an orderly transition for the many groups and clubs who pay CREST to use the space.

CREST provides various support services for people with mental health issues, and a day service for older adults with disabilities or dementia. These services will still continue as CREST does not

use Harmony Hall for them.

Speaking to the *Echo*, CREST's operations director Chris O'Sullivan said the charity "could not justify passing on such a big rent increase to Harmony Hall users".

Harmony Hall is used as a base for exercise classes, religious groups, and theatre clubs, and it has a weekly footfall of 900 people.

Chris said: "We've been here since 1999 and it's a shame but there was no other option for us but to leave Harmony Hall; there was no way users could have afforded such a steep rent increase."

Shaftesbury Group said: "We recognise the valuable community services CREST provides. CREST has been occupying Harmony Hall at a rent significantly below the market level.

"Formal guidance from the Charity Commission and our legal advisors has made it clear that the trustee is required to ensure that

MSM's assets are let at a market rent. The trustee cannot continue to lease the property at a subsidised rate.

"We remain committed to fulfilling our duties as trustee and ensuring the charity's assets are managed appropriately."

The *Echo* understands numerous parties have expressed interest in the site since it went on the market, with viewings taking place since the start of the year.

MSM previously applied for permission to sell Harmony Hall, but the building was not put up for sale.

And in 2023, owners MSM attempted to get the Charity Commission to lift the building's covenant that states it must be used for Christian purposes.

At the time, MSM had argued that the space was "not used primarily and overtly for Christian mission purposes". The Charity Commission however chose not to lift the covenant.

In a statement on their website announcing Harmony Hall's closure CREST said: "It is with regret that after 27 years of running the building, [we have] made the difficult decision to close Harmony Hall.

"The last day the centre will be open for users will be Friday 27th March. The charity regrets having made this decision, one that is sadly unavoidable due to the landlords increasing the rent beyond a level that is affordable, and as such, cannot be passed onto any existing or prospective hirers.

"Therefore, we have no alternative but to render our tenancy. The CREST management committee and staff wish to extend their gratitude to all the building users who have used the premises over a great many years and wish them well for the future."

Find out more about the work CREST does here: crestwf.org.uk



The Highams Park signal box

Iconic Highams Park signal box to reopen as community hub

Network Rail has agreed for it to be rented out after nearly seven years sitting empty

by Marco Marcelline

An iconic signal box in Highams Park is set to return to use after locals banded together to secure a 50-year lease with owners Network Rail.

Highams Park Community CIC announced they had secured the lease on their website last month.

Revealing they planned to turn the signal box into a small community hub, they said: "We are very grateful to have been given this opportunity by Network Rail and our goals for taking on the Signal Box are twofold: firstly, to preserve the building as an iconic feature of Highams Park town centre; and secondly, to provide a small affordable hub for community activities."

Built in 1925, the signal box sits beside the level crossing next to Highams Park Station. It became redundant in 2002 when signalling was modernised and Network Rail earmarked it for demolition.

Residents successfully campaigned to save it, but the building stood empty for many years while practical reuse was explored.

After a long period of negotiations, funding challenges and restoration work, the signal box finally reopened in 2017 as La Boîte, a small café and creperie.

But La Boîte shut two years later due to a dispute between the café and Network Rail over drainage system problems.

Owing to "operational constraints" it is not possible to return the building to use as a café, Highams Park Community CIC says, but permission has been granted to hire the space out for a wide range of community uses.

These uses include offices, meeting and exhibition space, a community hub "or any reasonable ancillary use or event that promotes local engagement, creativity, wellbeing or enterprise," the CIC says.

The group added: "The building has been unoccupied for nearly seven years now and is in poor condition both internally and externally, so it will take us a while to return it to a usable condition but we'll let you know when it is ready for use."

A Network Rail spokesperson said: "We recognise the strong local interest in retaining the Highams Park signal box and welcome the agreement with the Highams Park Community CIC to find a use for this locally listed building. While our priority remains the safe and reliable operation of the railway, it is exciting to see this historic building preserved and brought back into use for the benefit of the community."

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HOUSING

Councillors green light 26 storey towers at former gasworks

770 homes will be built at the Lea Bridge site despite backlash from residents



A CGI illustration of how the development is set to look like Credit St William Homes/Berkeley/Kanda Consulting

by Sebastian Mann, Local Democracy Reporter

Plans for tower blocks spanning 770 homes have been approved by Waltham Forest Council, despite strong opposition from locals.

Proposals for the former Lea Bridge gas works were greenlit by Labour councillors for the third time at a meeting last month.

The development will also feature a 50-place nursery, as well as walking and cycling routes to the nearby marshes and Lea Valley

Regional Park.

The housing scheme has substantially grown in size since Berkeley Homes' plans for 573 flats were rubber-stamped in 2023.

A second round of plans, upping the count to 643 homes, was provisionally approved last year and councillors have now backed a second increase of 127, bringing the total number of flats to 770.

The towers will stand as tall as 26 storeys, up from the previously approved limits of 18 and 21 storeys.

A representative from Berkeley Homes said the "regulatory

and economic landscape" had shifted "significantly" over the past eight years, and the changes meant the homes would be "compliant and, crucially, deliverable".

He added that "rising build costs, inflation, regulatory pressures, a softening sales market and an acute housing crisis" had created "major delivery challenges," which require "cross-sector collaboration".

But while councillors who supported the plans pointed to the borough-wide shortage of housing, locals have staunchly opposed the ballooning project.

In an impassioned address to the planning committee, Walthamstow resident Liz Biggs said it was "time to say no," adding: "This council declared a climate emergency.

"You cannot reach Net Zero 2030 by stacking concrete 26 storeys high."

They have also attacked the "disappearing" number of affordable homes.

The share of affordable homes – aimed at buyers who cannot afford to get on the property ladder – shrunk from 27% to 21%

in 2024, and the developers now say it is "subject to viability".

Berkeley Homes said the scheme could not "vially" deliver affordable housing without a grant, and the offer of 123 homes was dependent.

"We are trading 26-storey towers for a vague promise of 'maybe' providing homes," Lea Bridge resident and Green Party candidate Solène Fabios said.

"There is zero social rent tenure. This is a private profit-grab, plain and simple."

She added: "As local residents predicted, this isn't a housing crisis response; it's 'tower inflation.' Every time they delay, the buildings get taller and the community benefits disappear."

The former gasworks site is in the north western corner of Leyton Jubilee Park, bordering a residential street and some low-rise industrial buildings.

Though Conservative councillor John Moss opposed the plans, they were ultimately approved by the four other committee members.

Residents are invited to give their own feedback on the proposals until Tuesday 7th April

Visit talk.walthamforest.gov.uk



Rowan House in Cecil Road, Leytonstone, Credit Waltham Forest Council



130 Trumpington Road Credit Waltham Forest Council

Plans to turn empty council buildings into temporary housing

Waltham Forest Council has announced plans to convert two vacant council-owned buildings into temporary housing.

Former office Rowan House in Cecil Road, Leytonstone, and a closed adult social care home in Trumpington Road, Cann Hall will be brought back into use as homes for local households who have become homeless.

Rowan House will be turned into 17 new self-contained homes, including twelve larger family homes, while 130 Trumpington Road will be converted into 14 homes, with ten of these being larger family homes.

Both sites are set to gain a "modern, energy-efficient" heating system, new windows, doors and landscaping to improve their external appearance, as well as upgraded lighting, new CCTV, and secure door-entry.

The council says it intends to submit planning applications in May to change the use of the buildings to temporary accommodation.

No extensions or major external changes planned to the buildings, with the focus being on internal refurbishment.

The council explained why the sites were chosen on a consultation page, stating: "They are already owned by [us], so we don't need to buy any new land. They are currently empty, which means they can be brought back into use quickly, and only internal changes are needed, making them cost-effective to convert."

Residents are invited to give their own feedback on the proposals until Tuesday, 7th April:

Visit talk.walthamforest.gov.uk

Leytonstone flats rejected for third time amid privacy concerns

by Marco Marcelline

A four-storey High Road Leytonstone development containing seven flats was rejected by councillors for a third time, as local residents cited concerns about privacy and "overdevelopment".

Rejecting the development, planning committee chair Jenny Gray stated she saw little difference between Clements & Porter Architects' previously refused proposal and the latest one.

The decision came despite council planning officers' satisfaction with changes that had

been made to meet privacy and noise concerns.

But neighbours and councillors said that these alterations, namely the removal of a communal terrace and increased screening to Davies Lane, were not substantial enough.

Mike Bristow, whose Davies Lane residence sits next door to the development, told the committee that the building would "unacceptably" overlook his home.

He said: "My privacy will be breached by flat two's balcony, which overlooks the windows of my rear bedroom and bathroom. It cannot be right that the council considers the privacy of my gar-



A sketch of the proposed 562 Leytonstone High Road building (centre) Credit Clements & Porter Architects

den but not my bedroom. It is not reasonable to situate an open socialising space 1.5 metres away from a bedroom window – it's ridiculously close."

A representative for Clements & Porter Architects defended the project, stating: "The existing site is occupied by a two

storey building at the front and a two storey warehouse with a pitched roof next to 1 Davies Lane. The two storey warehouse is unsightly which does impact No.1. We feel that what we are doing is optimising this and getting rid of an eyesore."z

She added: "We believe we have dealt very well with all the objections that have been put forward."

But Leytonstone ward councillor Marie Pye reiterated concerns that the proposal was not "substantially different" from what had previously been rejected and the development was unanimously voted down.

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FEATURE

(Left to right) Rollo Millership (Nourished Communities founder), Alex Piper (Coppermill Swifts Girls football lead), Patryk Chomicz (Nourished Communities general manager) Credit Ruth Board, Instagram: @RuthBoardPhoto



Nourishing the community

David O'Driscoll meets the founder of Nourished Communities, a deli bringing sustainable, locally sourced food to Walthamstow

The organic food market is experiencing its biggest boom in decades, with consumers mainly interested in making not only sustainable but also more health-conscious choices.

This is good news for Nourished Communities, a new venture in Walthamstow which focuses on this market. They have two branches in Walthamstow, one near St James Street Station, and the other in Blackhorse Lane.

I met with founder Rollo Millership at their Walthamstow factory. It was here that I saw their Argentinian cook make their wonderful, handmade enchiladas, which I can heartily recommend.

Nourished Communities is very much a labour of love for Rollo. He started working at farmers' markets when he was 14 years old and it was here that he learned about the food industry.

He told me: "We are proud to still work with many of these farmers and now represent over 200 independent producers and growers."

Rollo feels very committed to Walthamstow and is particularly keen to use local produce. There were a number of such items in the shop, including honey and a locally made hot sauce. He is also a supporter of local organisations, sponsoring one of the Coppermill Swifts Girls' teams.

In 2023, Nourished Communities hosted its first food festival in Blackhorse Road, bringing together over 100 independent food producers and speakers

on regenerative agriculture while offering workshops around fermenting and growing mushrooms from coffee granules. The festival drew over 2,000 people and they are keen to do it again.

What we eat and how we eat is a topic Rollo is incredibly passionate about, though he acknowledges that healthier foods aren't always affordable, saying: "Organic food costs more to produce generally, so it costs more for the consumer."

He does stress however that they have an impressive range of competitively priced extra virgin olive oil and a diverse vegetable box scheme, on top of an excellent range of beers and wines which are a hit on the online side of the business.

There are so many interesting products in their shops that would be difficult to find anywhere else; in fact it feels like an Aladdin's Cave.

With his wealth of contacts in the food industry, Rollo is keen to set up an alternative food supply system that would completely avoid the industrial farming or global supply chains that are used by supermarkets.

And when so much of our food and products are dominated by chains and conglomerates, it is refreshing to see an independent producer that is wholly focused on alternative, healthy, and outstanding local products. Give Nourished Communities a go!

Pop into Nourished Communities at 12 Blackhorse Lane or 28 St James Street

Find out more here: nourishedcommunities.com

ARTS & CULTURE

Centering joy

As local dance company Wee Movers celebrates its fifth anniversary, Ellie Waterhouse meets its founder Fiona Campbell

Rooted in contemporary dance, Wee Movers runs classes for children of all ages and abilities, providing a creative space where everyone can dance and express themselves in a non-judgemental environment.

Founder Fiona Campbell started the company during lockdown, having just had her second child. With a background as a professional dancer, she had a vision for a different approach to traditional dance classes.

"My childhood training was concerned with aesthetics and right and wrong," she explains. "So I thought, what if we actually flip that around and start from a place of enjoyment, creativity, imagination and ideas? We ask children to explore a theme, a

prop or a story through dance where they come up with the movement themselves."

Since launching, over 5,000 kids and their grown ups have taken part in Wee Movers classes. The company has even collaborated with institutions such as the British Museum and Young V&A, creating family dance workshops inspired by their collections.



A Wee Movers dance class
Credit Joe Twigg

Alongside weekly classes, Wee Movers hosts much-loved annual ceilidhs in partnership with Leyton-based café Deeney's, celebrating its Scottish roots.

Looking to the future, Fiona hopes to continue the trajectory of the last five years. "We want to be growing throughout the UK, and would especially love to work more with local schools. We've seen the difference dance can make. It allows children to slow down, listen, and interpret things like poetry or text in a completely different way."

Summer term bookings are now open via weemovers.co.uk. Information on 'Creative Schools' holiday clubs is also available online.

From Walthamstow to Rio

Chemistry teacher Emmanuel Opoku's knack for drumming has seen him perform in the biggest carnival in the world, writes Liedson Moreno Gomes



Emmanuel Opoku in Brazil

A Walthamstow chemistry teacher is balancing his job while leading a growing samba school in the UK – and drumming at the biggest carnival in the world.

Emmanuel Opoku, who teaches students via online platform MyEdSpace, says music has always been part of life. Born in Ghana, he moved to

London as a young child and quickly realised how deeply rhythm shaped his identity.

"When I came to the UK, I couldn't quite find the same style of music that I had grown up with in Ghana, so my music teachers ended up pointing me to the direction of samba, which being Afro-Brazilian, is quite similar to the music that was practised in Ghana as well."

His first major breakthrough came when he performed at Notting Hill Carnival as a teenager.

Since then, Emmanuel has travelled to Brazil to perform with samba schools there, an experience he calls "intense".

"As a performer, it's actually very stressful. Every movement, every beat is critiqued by

the judges so you always feel under scrutiny."

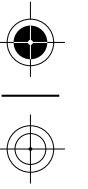
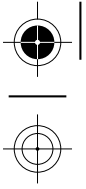
As a non-Brazilian musician, the pressure can weigh even more.

"Being a foreigner you're labelled with the 'gringo' status. So every time you play, everybody's just watching you a bit more than usual.

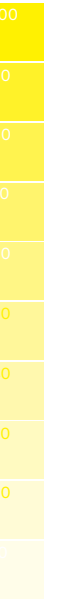
"This isn't just people's culture, it's their livelihoods. So you have people on the sidelines watching you thinking, 'why does this person deserve to play over me?'"

Back in London, Emmanuel manages samba group Imperio da Rainha, which performs at Notting Hill Carnival, all while teaching chemistry online.

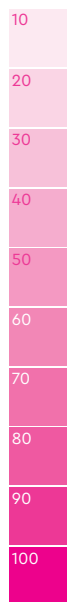
Emmanuel says his mission is simple: to share the spirit of samba in Walthamstow.



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Waltham Forest Echo issue #134 May

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Publication date: 24th April

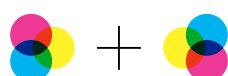
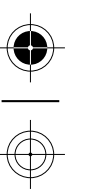
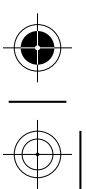
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PHOTOGRAPHY



Tina from Carole Langley Florist



Sharon from St. Best Jamaican

‘Her Work, Her Story’ by Nicky Bamber

I've been a portrait photographer for over 20 years and I've had my studio in Station Road, Chingford for eleven years.

Her Work, Her Story is my fourth annual exhibition for International Women's Day and it's always inspired by the unique and interesting women who have been my customers.

This year, I decided to go outside the studio and photograph women who run a business in Station Road. It's been a tough year to keep going in the current economic climate and I felt these photos really captured the determination, hard work, resilience and commitment to keep going their businesses going despite the odds.

It has been really well received by the North Chingford community and I'm proud to share it with the borough.

See more of Nicky's work here: www.nickybamber.co.uk | Instagram: @nickybamberphoto



Peri from Perry's Dry Cleaners



Mindy from Haven House Charity Shop



Claudia from Robins Pie and Mash

LETTERS

Fly-tipping Folly

Dear WFE

I AM WRITING TO YOU AS a concerned resident regarding the ongoing state of Folly Lane in Higham Hill.

For years, this lane has been treated as a lawless dumping ground. While I commend the council for sending crews to clear the rubbish, it has become a cycle of futility.

It is like fixing a broken window every day but never catching the person throwing the bricks. The council clears the site, and within 24 hours, the fly-tipping returns.

Across the borough, fly-tipping costs millions – surely it is cheaper to install permanent enforcement than to provide a daily cleaning service for criminals?

There is a high-level pole on the lane designed for CCTV, yet it sits empty. In an age of drones and AI enforcement, why is this “hotspot” left unmonitored?

Does the current system of reactive cleaning actually discourage the council from finding a permanent, tech-led solution?

It is shocking that in a city like London, such a dodgy and lawless spot is allowed to persist right around the corner from our homes. Residents are tired of surface-level fixes; we want enforcement.

Finn, Walthamstow

Endless roadworks

Dear WFE

FROM SOMEWHERE, THE council found the money to make the top end of Walthamstow High Street more beautiful and boost its image.

There was no consultation for this work, what a surprise! Yet if anyone takes a walk down the lower half of the High Street you will find plenty of uneven block paving that needs replacing.

Passing the still continuing cosmetic changes to the block tiling etc today, I saw the latest road works notice, proudly proclaiming a finish this spring.

Why was the work’s completion date extended three times, from September, then February and now ‘spring’? I wonder if

there penalties written into the contract when two stated completion dates were missed?

You can bet the council leader’s weekly e-bulletin Residents News does not, and has not given the subject any mention at all. I’m sure they are waiting to publicise the works with a photo when it’s all finished.

Keith Foster, Walthamstow

Iftar debate

Dear WFE

THE RECENT DEBATE surrounding the Open Iftar in Trafalgar Square has raised questions that go far beyond a single evening gathering.

If one community is permitted to express itself peacefully, then others should have the same right. Anything less risks creating a hierarchy of acceptance.

In our Ahmadi Muslim Community, Iftars are routinely open, inclusive gatherings aimed at sharing food and building understanding, not imposing beliefs. Experiences like these highlight the positive and unifying nature of such events.

Events like the Open Iftar are not about imposition but invitation. To characterise a short moment of prayer or reflection as “domination” is inaccurate and risks fuelling unnecessary division, contributing to a wider climate of Islamophobia. True domination would require coercion; there is no evidence of that here.

We should remain vigilant that

legitimate debate does not slip into rhetoric that unfairly singles out one group.

Britain’s strength lies in accommodating difference with mutual respect. Equality before the law must apply to all otherwise, we risk undermining cohesion.

Dr. Nasira Nuzhat, Walthamstow

Got an opinion on something in Waltham Forest? We accept letters of up to 150 words from people and organisations in the borough. Email wfecho@socialspider.com before the next deadline on Monday 13th April

EDITOR’S NOTE

Following a complaint received from Waltham Forest Palestine Solidarity Campaign (WFPSC) about the content of the article published in February’s issue [‘Local Palestine group slams council for role in shutting down controversial 7th October talk’] we have amended portions of the online piece to better reflect WFPSC’s stated intentions and scope of the event titled ‘What really happened on 7th October’.

These changes include publishing WFPSC’s promotional wording of the event in full and removing a line which stated the

event would have “disregarded” mainstream narratives. WFPSC says the event would have intended to examine how widely accepted claims about 7th October were reported, by whom, and on what evidential basis.

The article has also been amended to state WFPSC shared a detailed statement about the event prior to the original publication of this article.

We have also agreed to publish a comment piece from WFPSC responding to this article – you can read that on our website: walthamforestecho.co.uk

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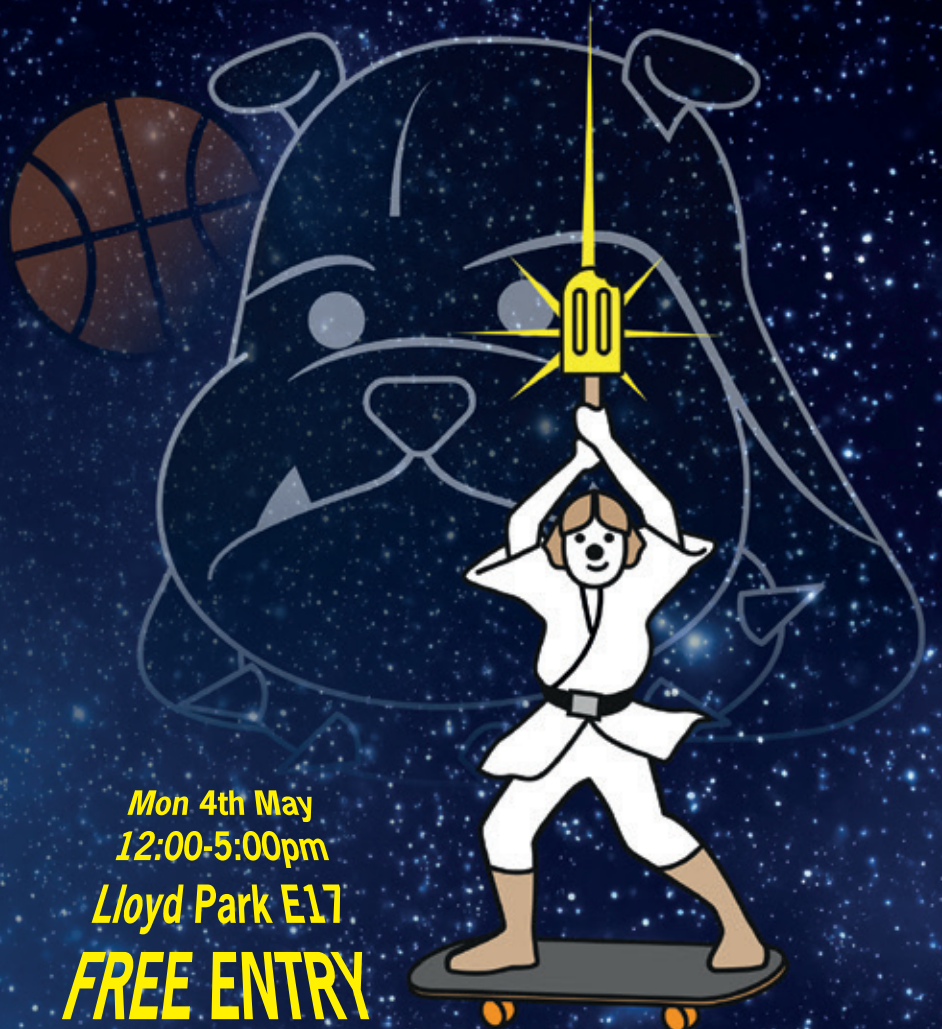


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AROUND THE BOROUGH

ST JAMES STREET

Retiree to walk one million steps for community centre



Richard Bennett Credit The Mill

by Marco Marcelline

A long-time trustee of a Walthamstow community centre is set to celebrate his 70th birthday by walking 700km.

Richard Bennett is undertaking the challenge to raise funds for The Mill in Coppermill Lane, which has been operating for over 14 years.

Starting from Monday, 13th

April, Richard will walk the equivalent of 100km per week for the community hub, which offers inclusive activities and groups, a free kids playroom, an honesty library, various community events, and a welcoming living room for local residents of all ages.

He said: "I've seen the impact The Mill makes – giving people of all ages and backgrounds a

place to connect. Turning 70 felt like the right moment to celebrate the community spirit at The Mill and our belief in 'People Making Things Happen'."

The first week of his walk will see him trek from The Mill to Woolwich, before taking on the Thames Path all the way to Staines the following day (14th April).

On 18th April he will walk from Windsor to Maidenhead, before eventually making it to Oxford at the end of his second week, and the source of the Thames in Gloucester at the end of week three.

From there he will pass through Cirencester, Chippenham, and Bath before starting the Ridgeway National Trail through the Chiltern Hills.

His final week will see him take on the Lea Valley Walk from Lea-grave to Tottenham Lock before making it back to The Mill on Saturday, 30th May.

HIGHAMS PARK

Regal Cinema works begin

by Marco Marcelline

The redevelopment of a former Art Deco cinema in Highams Park into 33 flats, a café bar, and a two screen filmhouse is on track to finish in autumn 2027, Waltham Forest Council has said.

Mammoth Capital, which owns the Hale End Road site, began construction at the start of the year, and they plan to "retain" and "restore" the building's historic Art Deco front facade.

According to the council, there is a "range of interest" from cinema operators about taking over the two screens, though Mammoth Capital is responsible for marketing the space and agreeing the lease with an operator.

The primary entrance to the cinema will be through the original Art Deco frontage and original entrance, leading into the foyer

An illustration showing how the new cinema and building will look like, Credit Mammoth Capital



area while the café will be situated in the northern section of the ground floor.

The two cinema screens, located in the eastern section of the building, would provide 80 to 90 seats each. The cinema is currently projected to be open between 8am to midnight every day including bank holidays. The café bar would be open from 10am to 11pm every day.

The building opened in 1911 as the Highams Park Electric Theatre and was renamed The Regal Cinema in 1935 when it was partially rebuilt with an Art Deco style facade, a new entrance foyer, and a café.

The Regal Cinema closed on 11th September 1963 and has since been used as a bingo hall, snooker hall, bar and nightclub before it was left vacant in 2015.

CHINGFORD

Fire rips through Subway shop

A woman and child were hospitalised following a fire in a Subway shop in Chingford Mount last month.

Ten fire engines and around 70 firefighters were called to the Hall Lane fire at 11.35am on Saturday, 14th March.

The London Fire Brigade (LFB) said the fire caused the sandwich shop's roof and an interior staircase to collapse, while flats above the shop were also damaged.

One woman and a child left the building before the LFB arrived and were taken to hospital by London Ambulance crews.

Fire engines from Walthamstow, Chingford, Tottenham and other surrounding stations



The fire caused significant damage to flats above the Subway shop Credit London Fire Brigade

attended the scene, and the fire was brought under control at 1.49pm.

The cause of the fire is being investigated by the brigade's fire investigation unit and the Metropolitan Police.

WALTHAMSTOW

Off-licence approved despite fierce opposition

by Sebastian Mann, Local Democracy Reporter

A new off-licence will open in Walthamstow, despite fierce opposition from locals.

Local Corner Supermarket is the newest addition to Fulbourne Road, open from 7am until 11pm and licensed to sell alcohol between 10am and 10pm.

It was granted permission by Waltham Forest Council's licensing committee at a hearing on Thursday, 12th March.

14 objections were lodged against owner Guney Simsek's application, and seven residents attended the meeting in person to urge councillors to reject the scheme.

A spokesperson for the group said the area was "already saturated" with off-licences and a new shop would "dilute responsibility" and "increase the aggregate level of disorder".

They told councillors they had seen drunk people loitering

outside the previous off-licence – which the council says is entirely unrelated to Simsek's new business – at 8am, which could be "intimidating".

Others said in their letters to the authority that "many families" live in the area and green-lighting another outlet for alcohol sales was "inconsistent" with the town hall's responsibility to protect children from harm, as per its licensing objectives.

When asked by committee member councillor Richard Sweden why he had initially applied to sell alcohol from 8am, Simsek agreed this could be amended.

"I consume alcohol myself but not at 8am, and I think it's safe to say if you do you've got some kind of difficulty," Cllr Sweden said.

In response to specific concerns raised by residents, the applicant said he would disperse particularly troublesome customers, and call the police if they did not leave.

LOCAL NOTICES

Published: 27th March 2026

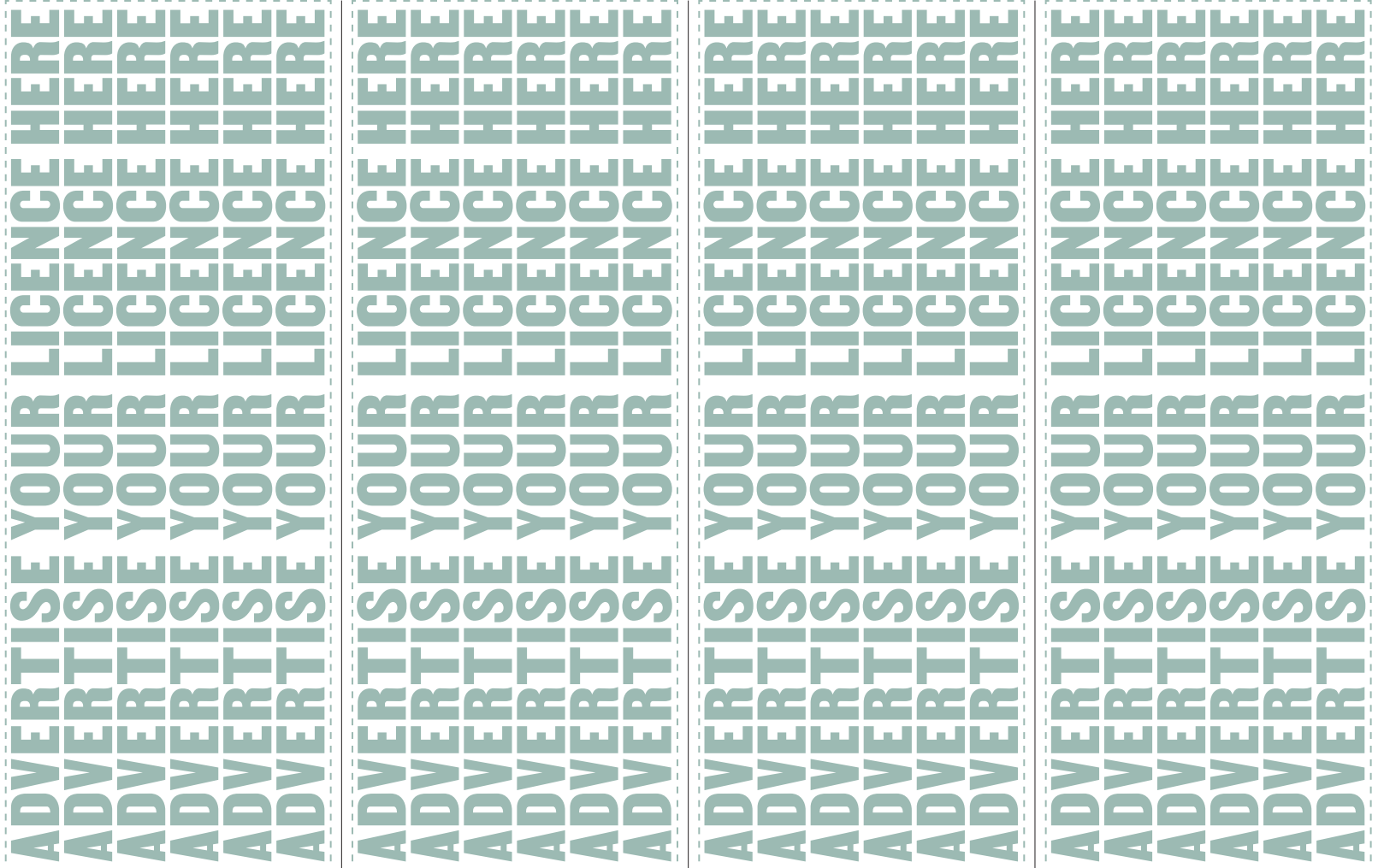
LICENCES FOR SPECIAL TREATMENT PUBLIC NOTICE

NOTICE IS GIVEN that **KATE MARY IRVINE** has applied to the London Borough of Waltham Forest for a Special Treatment Licence for:

- **Massage Services**
- **Licence for the premises is Kate Irvine at 65 Ashville Road, Leyton E11 4DS**

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.



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

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

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LISTINGS

COMEDY

Hand Leg Comedy

Thursday 2nd April, 7.30pm
Walthamstow Trades Hall, 61–63
Tower Hamlets Road E17 4RQ

A night of hand-picked rising stars on the UK comedy circuit, Hand Leg Comedy brings a relaxed, grassroots feel to one of Walthamstow's most beloved venues. Expect a mix of new material, sharp observational humour and a lively crowd. Get to see acts do great things with the artform itself, rather than quizzing you about where you live and work like a deranged meet-up group. Cheap drinks and a warm atmosphere make this a perfect midweek outing.

Tickets from £5: Search 'Hand Leg Comedy Walthamstow Trades Hall' on Eventbrite

LIVE MUSIC

The Wildhearts

Sunday 5th April, 7pm
Signature Brew, Unit 15, Blackhorse Lane E17 5QJ

British rock legends The Wildhearts hit Walthamstow for a high-energy night at Signature Brew. Known for their explosive live shows and devoted fanbase, expect loud guitars, huge choruses and a packed-out crowd.

Tickets from £20
Visit signaturebrew.co.uk

FAMILY

Easter Family Disco

Sunday 5th April, 12pm–4pm
Big Penny Social, 1 Priestley Way
E17 6AL

A joyful, family-friendly dancefloor with DJs spinning crowd-pleasers for all ages. Expect crafts, games, and plenty of space for little ones to run wild while grown-ups enjoy a drink. A perfect Easter Sunday outing. We'd recommend booking a table if you're staying for lunch after the event. Tickets are required for anyone over the age of three.

Tickets £7
Visit bigpennysocial.co.uk

CABARET

Panic! At The Drag Show

Thursday 9th April, 7.30pm
Walthamstow Trades Hall, 61–63
Tower Hamlets Road E17 4RQ

A gloriously chaotic mash-up of emo nostalgia and drag performance. Expect big costumes, bigger personalities, and a soundtrack packed with early-2000s anthems. Not one for the faint-hearted but absolutely one for the fun-loving. We sell tickets at staggered costs. Please pay honestly to your income and class background so the system works for everyone.

Tickets from £10
Visit outsavvy.com/event/34212

STAND UP

Paul Sinha + support

Thursday 9th April, 7pm
Ye Olde Rose and Crown Theatre
Pub, Hoe Street E17 4SA

Quizzer, comedian and Taskmaster favourite Paul Sinha headlines an intimate night of stand-up. With sharp wit and a brilliantly dry delivery, this is a chance to catch a major act in a small local venue. A trained medical doctor who is perhaps best known as the Sinnerman on the hugely popular ITV quiz show The Chase, Paul has been a successful comedian for a number of years, having been three times nominated for Best Club Comedian at the Chortle Awards, winning in 2014.

Tickets from £12
Visit tickettailor.com

WRESTLING

EVE Wrestling: Bruised, Battered and Hungover

Friday 10th April, 7pm
Big Penny Social, 1 Priestley Way
E17 6AL

High-energy, feminist wrestling returns with drama, athleticism and plenty of theatrical flair. Expect outrageous characters, gripping storylines and a fiercely supportive crowd.

Tickets from £15
Visit ewewrestling.com

PAINTING

Wine Glass Painting

Wednesday 15th April, 7pm–10pm
Swirl Wine Bar, Tilbury Road, Leyton
E10 6RE

Join us at Swirl Wine Bar for a relaxed night of wine glass painting, great conversation and a live vinyl DJ. Come with friends, a date, or come to meet someone new! No painting experience needed. Kim will guide you through simple designs so everyone leaves with their own painted wine glass. Expect good music, great vibes and a room full of friendly people.

Tickets from £20: Search 'Wine Glass Painting and Vinyl DJ' on Eventbrite

WORKSHOP

Screen Printing

Saturday 18th April, 1pm–5pm
Good Shepherd Studios, 15A Davies Ln, Leytonstone E11 3DR

Spend your afternoon learning about screen printing with a short introduction and live demonstration. You will get to screen print and get the feeling of the screen and the squeegee before making your own stencil designs and screen printing your pattern/words onto various fabrics. There will be refreshments available and we have the fabulous Back to Ours cafe downstairs for a treat during break time around mid way through.

Book tickets (£65):
tickettailor.com/events/tamasyngambell

FUNDRAISER

Live Music Fundraiser for Haven House

Sunday 26th April, from 6pm
O'Neills, 762 High Road,
Leytonstone, E11 3AW

Local promoter Magnolia Promotions is holding a charity music event. There will be at least five acts performing including Rusty Spoonz. Others playing on the day are Irish-born London based singer/songwriter Linda Moylan, local veterans, John Arthur and Graham Larkbey. Making up the evening's entertainment is Russ Chandler, a forceful singer and banjo player.

Buy tickets (£8) from Mike's Record Shop, Unit 14A Wood Street Indoor Market or call: 07393 480 918

We can include low-cost community events taking place in Waltham Forest. For next month's listings, email the details of your event to wfecho@socialspider.com by **Monday 13th April.**

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SPORT

How runners can avoid the injury trap

Runners in the Olympic Park, Stratford
Credit Tom Wheatley via Unsplash



to catch up and adapt to the stresses created by running, and respond positively.

A mix of running and walking is not only acceptable but it's often the smartest way to build up gradually. Two or three shorter runs per week are sometimes more effective than one long, demanding session.

Rest days aren't a sign of weakness; they're where progress happens. Light movement such as walking or gentle stretching can help your body adapt without overloading it.

It's also worth paying attention to early warning signs. A bit of stiffness or tightness is normal when you're starting out, but pain that lingers or worsens is your body asking for adjustment. Ignoring it rarely works in your favour.

One thing often overlooked is that running alone isn't enough. Adding some basic strength exercises and mobility to your routine, can transform your running abilities, your enjoyment of it, and your ability to progress, and run longer, harder and faster.

It doesn't need to be complicated, just consistent.

Running should feel like something that adds to your life, not something that breaks you down.

So as the lighter evenings return and the urge to lace your running shoes kicks in again, embrace it but just start small, build gradually, and you'll give yourself the best chance of staying active not just for spring, but well beyond it.

Loïc is a sports therapist at Blue Door Clinic, Walthamstow.
Visit bluedoorclinic.com

Walthamstow sports therapist Loïc Lefevre has treated every kind of running injury – here's his advice on how to avoid them

Every year, like clockwork, as the sunshine stretches, it brings a shift across London, and Waltham Forest.

The parks fill up, the marshes get busier, everyone seems to be running.

From Lloyd Park to the canal paths, it's the same scene: fresh trainers, renewed motivation, and that feeling that now is the time to get fit again.

And it's a great thing. Running is one of the simplest, most accessible ways to improve your health. But as a sports therapist, I can also tell when spring has arrived for another reason — it's when the same running-related injuries start appearing.

The issue isn't running itself. It's how we run.

After a quieter winter, many people go from very little activity straight into running two or three times a week, sometimes pushing distance or pace too quickly. The motivation is there, but the body hasn't had enough time to catch up.

Here's the key point: your fitness improves

faster than your tissues adapt. Muscles respond relatively quickly, but tendons and joints take longer to build tolerance.

When running load or volume increases too fast, that's when problems can begin – often showing up as joint pains and muscle aches.

The good news is that most of these issues are avoidable with a bit of structure and patience.

If you're getting back into running this spring, start slower than you think you need to. Any good running or fitness programme will use a principle called "progressive loading". In simpler terms, you have to slowly increase the demand on the body (i.e: effort / volume / intensity) so your body has time



Credit Miguel A Amutio via Unsplash

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 Produce more local journalism | Expand the size of the paper | Distribute to more locations

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