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Free
Oct 2026, N° 139

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Council faces further £43m bailout

by Sebastian Mann, Local
Democracy Reporter

Waltham Forest Council is expected to seek two more bailouts from the government, a report reveals.

The former Labour administration

was given a £19m bailout in February, referred to as 'exceptional financial support'.

Then-top councillors said it would "help us protect our services that matter most to people" while "balancing the budget in the short term".

However, a newly published report reveals the now Green-led council

will likely need to seek further financial support: another £19m in 2027/28, and £24m in 2028/29.

That would bring the total amount borrowed from Westminster to £62m.

Ursula Gamble, the council's finance director, said: "Local government finances have been under

sustained pressure for more than 16 years due to constraints in national funding and increasing demand for services.

"Councils are increasingly required to deliver more services with proportionately fewer resources."

She described the current financial position as "very challenging" and

said "actions are being taken now" to find savings over the next three years.

Since the start of the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020, Waltham Forest has faced "significant and sustained pressures" despite making millions in cuts.

Continued on page 2

NEWS



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OCT 2026
N° 139

Waltham Forest Echo is the borough's free community newspaper. We publish monthly and distribute 15,000 free copies of each issue

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WFE is published by Social Spider Community News:
socialspidercommunitynews.co.uk



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ABC audited distribution 14,365 circulation (average per issue). Free to read.

Published on 25/09/2026

Town hall forecasts need for £43m bailout

Continued from page 1

The combined impact of “high inflation, increased interest rates and growing demand for services” has knocked “financial resilience” and increased council spending across all services.

Earlier this month, council documents showed Waltham Forest was facing a £19m budget gap for 2026/27, the current financial year.

It is set to go over budget on temporary accommodation – for homeless residents – by £11m, and by a further £7.5m on social care.

Around 75% of the council's total budget is spent on these two areas, which limits the council's spending elsewhere.

This year, the town hall hopes to make £18.6m in cuts. In a bid to raise £22m to fund various schemes that will bring in savings down the line, it is looking at selling off land and buildings it owns.

The new report, due before the budget scrutiny committee, has also warned that the budget gap could rise to £47m over the next three years, if no further cuts are made.

An “optimistic” projection puts the figure at £31.7m, while the worst-case scenario would be closer to £60m.

Waltham Forest is facing such a dire forecast despite making £157m in cuts over the past decade, which includes £25m in the past two years alone.

It has also reduced the number of children in care by 10%, and seen the volume of households in temporary accommodation fall from a peak of 1,710 in September 2025 to 1,527 in April.

Councillor Em Dean, cabinet member for finance and resources, said: “There has been no change in the council's approach to EFS.

“We are not seeking more funding than was previously arranged. When the council applied for EFS in February 2026, the medium term financial strategy predicted a need for £19m in financial years 2026/27 and 2027/28, as well as £23m in 2028/29.

“The bailout comes despite recent cuts of £25m”

“We are focused on ensuring the council is operating on sound financial foundations. Of the £19m of EFS funding agreed by the government for this financial year, our current analysis suggests we will use approximately £6m of it.

“We are committed to not just maintaining but improving council services in a financially responsible way.

We will ensure the borough is financially resilient over the years to come.”

Councillor Emma Best, leader of the Waltham Forest Conservatives, said

the situation was the result of “mismanagement” by the former Labour administration and warned against pursuing “pet projects”.

She said: “We understand that all councils are under financial pressures due to the latest cuts of the Labour government.

“But to be considering taking out these eye watering loans really shows the financial mismanagement of the last Labour administration.

“There was too much unnecessary spending on projects that brought little or no benefit to our residents.

“It worries us that the new Green administration appears to want to continue with pet projects which ignore the reality of the authority's financial position. We hope they learn fast that this is a mistake.

“As a council we need to look after taxpayers' money by getting back to the council basics: collect the bins, sweep the streets and look after our children and vulnerable residents.”

Waltham Forest Labour said: “14 years of Conservative austerity slashed council funding, including ours, to bare bones. We worked extremely hard to protect our residents from the worst consequences and did so by taking difficult decisions.

“Waltham Forest Labour applied for EFS with a plan: to use funding specifically to redesign our services and fix structural issues. This work would ensure that every pound of resident's council tax is spent well.

“If the new Green administration feels the need to borrow more money, they clearly aren't delivering the plan we produced to put the council's finances on a firm footing but are governing without a plan. It is the residents who will pay.

“We fought for better funding in administration to help rectify Conservative austerity and received almost a quarter more funding from the national government last year.”

Green co-deputy leader and housing and regeneration cabinet member Eva Tabassam Credit Waltham Forest Council



‘Too many’ dissatisfied with council housing, Greens say

by Sebastian Mann,
Local Democracy Reporter

“Too many” Waltham Forest residents are homeless or are dissatisfied with their housing, a top Green councillor has said.

Eva Tabassam said at a cabinet meeting last month that “too many residents are still living in temporary accommodation, too many tenants are dissatisfied with aspects of our landlord service” and there were “still far too many homes that do not meet the standards our residents deserve”.

Around 1,527 households were living in temporary accommodation (TA) – which can include expensive hotels as well as private rent homes – in April.

On top of that, 61% of residents living in social housing – whose landlord is the council itself – said they were satisfied. That percentage has stayed exactly the same since 2022, according to a new report.

Meanwhile, 13% of homes in the borough do not meet the Decent Homes Standard – warm, safe and free from damp and mould. The council is working to lower this by another 5% this year, and the figure is down from 19% the year before.

Waltham Forest faces an “unprecedented housing crisis” characterised by “rising rents, limited housing supply, and increasing homelessness,” the cabinet member for housing said.

These factors are putting “enormous pressure” on both residents and council services.

During her address to councillors, Cllr Tabassam said it was important to acknowledge Waltham Forest's progress alongside the “significant challenges that remain”.

She pointed to the decreasing number of households in TA, which fell from a peak of 1,710 in September 2025 to 1,527 in April.



Cabinet member for finance Em Dean Credit Waltham Forest Council

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NEWS



A water-starved Hollow Pond in Leytonstone pictured in mid-September. It is so dry that the pond's rowing boat hire shop has temporarily had to close for business

Credit Keith Barber

TfL faces prosecution for safety failures at Walthamstow Bus Station

The health and safety charges, brought by the HSE, come nearly three years after Grace Mecaley, 74, was fatally struck by a bus

by Marco Marcelline

Transport for London (TfL) will be prosecuted over alleged safety failures at Walthamstow Bus Station spanning a period of two decades.

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) alleges that between 1st January 2004 and 15th December 2023, TfL failed to ensure traffic routes at the northern crossing of the bus station were suitable for pedestrians and the vehicles using them.

The health and safety charges come nearly three years after a retired nurse was fatally struck by a route 212 bus at the station in December 2023.

74-year-old Grace Mecley's death prompted the installation of new permanent pedestrian crossings on its northern and western sides in December 2024.

The crossings came after new "temporary signals" were added



Walthamstow Bus Station

to the station in May that year in response to a HSE contravention notice that was filed in March 2024.

A fresh contravention notice was issued in March 2025 after unannounced HSE inspectors found bus drivers were failing to give pedestrians priority to cross to and from the bus station's "central island", where passengers board and alight from buses.

A sentencing hearing regarding the health and safety charges

brought against TfL were due to take place at Westminster Magistrates' Court on Friday, 25th September.

Grace had held several positions in local civil society groups including the Waltham Forest Race Equality Council (WFREC), where she was an executive member from the 1980s until her death.

Tributes paid to Grace by WFREC described her as "very warm and charitable" and praised her "dedication to helping others".

Through her WFREC role, Grace became a trustee at the Walthamstow and Chingford Almshouse, a social housing charity providing self-contained accommodation for elderly people.

She held the trustee role from 2014 until she stepped down at the end of a four-year term in 2018.

Lorna Murphy, TfL's director of

buses, said: "Our thoughts remain with the family and friends of Grace Mecaley. Every death on the transport network is devastating, and we're determined to end the trauma caused by loss of life and injury."

"We treat bus station safety as part of our wider Vision Zero and Bus Safety Programme, combining operational controls, infrastructure measures and operator assurance to reduce risk to customers, pedestrians and staff in bus station environments. In December 2024, we completed works to permanently improve pedestrian safety at Walthamstow Bus Station."

"Every death on the network is devastating"

"We care deeply about the safety and security of everyone who uses or works on our transport network and continue to work closely with all bus operators to improve driver monitoring, driver communication and enforcement."

Publicly-owned buses may arrive soon

TfL officials engaged with bus operators in September to discuss the feasibility of bringing franchised services in house

by Kumail Jaffer, Local Democracy Reporter

Transport for London (TfL) is moving a step closer to setting up its own publicly-owned bus company for the capital, the Local Democracy Reporting Service (LDRS) has learned.

Officials started engaging bus operators in September to discuss the feasibility of bringing franchised services in house, according to sources familiar with the talks.

The proposals were first laid out earlier this year in TfL's business plan, where officials said that as part of a move to "reimagine London's bus network, we will develop detailed proposals for a new publicly-owned bus company for London".

The study will "assess how this could further support innovation, efficiencies and accountability, and support the needs of customers and the workforce".

Under the current model, private firms submit bids to TfL to run franchised services, with contracts generally running for seven years and setting performance targets for bus operators with a set income. TfL is also able to set routes and control fare levels.

There are 16 privately-owned operators on the capital's 675 bus routes, including Arriva, Go-Ahead London, First Bus London, and Stage Coach London.

Should a publicly-owned company be launched, when franchise contracts come to an end, TfL could bring them under the new public bus operator.

Such a move would fulfil a promise made by Mayor of London Sir Sadiq Khan in his 2024 election manifesto. In August that year, Khan told the London Assembly that there were "lots of upsides in us having a publicly owned bus company", including being able to reinvest any profit back into public transport infrastructure.

TfL are now able to do so thanks to the Bus Services Act passed by the Labour government last year, which lifted the ban on local authorities setting up their own bus companies.

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NEWS

Council green-lights plans to convert disused buildings into flats

A scheme to turn offices at Rowan House, in Leytonstone, and a care home in Forest Gate into flats has been approved

by **Sebastian Mann**,
Local Democracy Reporter

Thirty new units of temporary accommodation spread across the borough have been approved by Waltham Forest Council.

Turning a care home in Trumpington Road, in Forest Gate, into 14 flats was the first scheme given the green light at a planning committee meeting last month.

Councillors also approved a scheme to turn offices at Rowan House, in Leytonstone, into 16 flats.

Planning committee chair and Green councillor Liz Briggs said “people having homes where they can wash their clothes and cook, and their kids can play in a safe garden, is absolutely what we want”.

Both sets of plans were developed by Waltham Forest Council, and will see each building fitted with heat pumps, bin and bicycle facilities, and play areas for children.

Trumpington Road will be composed of



Rowan House
Credit Waltham
Forest Council



Former council-run care home in
Trumpington Road Credit WFC

three studio flats, a single one-bedroom flat, and ten two-bedroom flats. Rowan House will be turned into two studio flats, two one-bedroom flats, eleven two-bedroom flats, and one three-bedroom flat.

Around 1,527 households were living in temporary accommodation (TA) – which can include expensive hotels as well as private rent homes – in April.

The previous Labour administration was forced to ask for a £19million loan from central government to help cover a £17m budget gap as a result of these pressures, alongside the impact of rising social care costs.

During the meeting, former leader Councillor Grace Williams said it would “meet a real need in the borough”.

No one – including both residents and planning bodies – formally objected to the Trumpington Road scheme, while the Rowan House plans received one objection from a neighbour.

They had raised concerns about potential antisocial behaviour stemming from the property, as well noise and the risk of increased crime.

A planning officer addressed these points in a report published last week, writing that

anti-social behaviour was “not an inevitable consequence of this form of accommodation”.

“A management plan has been provided that sets out contact details for residents to be able to raise concerns and the site will also have a 24/7 CCTV feed that would be able to report live on incidents,” he wrote.

“It should also be noted that it is expected that households living in the accommodation will be families with children.”

No objectors or supporters attended the meeting.

Both schemes were unanimously approved by the committee.

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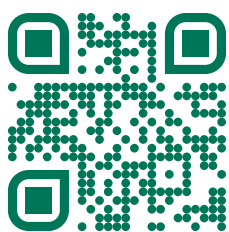
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NEWS

No disciplinary action for Met officer who shot Walthamstow man

Exclusive: The Independent Office for Police Conduct (IOPC) will take no action against a Met officer who shot an armed man in Higham Hill last October

by Marco Marcelline

A Metropolitan Police officer who shot an armed man following a four-hour stand-off in a Walthamstow cul-de-sac last October will face no disciplinary proceedings, the *Echo* can reveal.

Specialist Met officers were called to a Stow Crescent home just before 10am on 10th October 2025 to reports of a man with a firearm making threats to harm himself.

As the incident developed the man threatened to seriously harm anyone coming into the address, resulting in a lengthy stand-off.

It ended at roughly 2pm, when officers forced entry after hearing a loud bang from inside the property.

An officer then fired three shots towards Gregory Lazarus Hutchinson, 30, who was later found to be in possession of a sawn-off shotgun.

Hutchinson, who was hospitalised for five weeks, was subsequently charged with possession of a firearm with intent to endanger life.

A nearly year-long investigation into the incident has seen the Independent Office for Police Conduct (IOPC) ultimately conclude no disciplinary proceedings were warranted.

In a statement to the *Echo*, the IOPC said: “During the investigation we reviewed police body worn footage, obtained statements from officers and examined relevant police records and force policies.

“The officers involved were treated as witnesses and at the end of our investigation, we found no indication that any officer may have behaved in a manner that would justify bringing disciplinary proceedings or may have committed a criminal offence.”



Police cars blocked off Stow Crescent while officers responded to the incident last October

The Metropolitan Police welcomed the watchdog’s findings, stating: “We continued to support the IOPC during their investigation into this shooting, which has since concluded resulting in no disciplinary action against the officers involved.

“Our firearms officers respond to more than 4,000 incidents each year and play a key role in keeping London safe.

“Incidents where firearms are

discharged remain extremely rare – there are only one or two incidents every year where shots are fired by police.”

On the day of the incident, neighbours told the *Echo* the events were “terrifying and unusual”.

One said: “It was scary. This was the first time I’ve encountered something like this. As a resident, I’m a bit nervous staying here now because you never know if it could happen again.”

London Assembly slams Greens for immigration raids stance

London Assembly members have passed a motion condemning Green-led councils, including Waltham Forest, for refusing to co-operate with the Home Office on immigration raids

by Sebastian Mann, Local Democracy Reporter

Green-led Waltham Forest Council has been sharply criticised by London Assembly members for saying it will refuse to co-operate with immigration raids.

In July, Lewisham Council said it would no longer help Home Office immigration enforcement teams conduct searches in the borough.

Immigration officers, alongside local authorities and the Metropolitan Police, investigate businesses and restaurants if they believe people working there are in the UK illegally or working in breach of their visa.

Following Lewisham’s lead, Hackney, Haringey, Lambeth, Southwark and Waltham Forest councils have all since adopted the same position.

All six are controlled by the Green Party.

At a London Assembly meeting in September, Reform’s Keith Prince – who also serves as the leader of Havering Council – tabled a motion “condemning” their stances and urging all councils to work co-operatively with the Home Office “to enhance our national border security, tackle trafficking, and protect people from exploitation”.

He said immigration enforcement was a “national responsibility” and effective co-operation



Credit Wikimedia Commons

was “required to ensure the law is applied consistently and vulnerable people are protected”.

The Havering Council leader described the anti-raid policies as “ridiculous” and “activist-driven”.

Councillor Paul Perkins, the leader of Waltham Forest Council, said the authority was proud to be a “borough of sanctuary,” a commitment to “value and celebrate the migrants, refugees and people seeking sanctuary who settled [here]” first taken by the previous Labour administration.

“We are committed to doing everything we can to protect all vulnerable people and ensure that we are not complicit in creating a hostile environment for migrants and refugees,” he added.

Cllr Perkins said the administration was “already in the process of reviewing our council’s co-operation with the Home Office and what our statutory duties are”.

The leader added he was “disappointed” that only Green and Lib Dem assembly members voted against the motion.

Waltham Forest Conservatives leader Emma Best, who also sits

on the London Assembly, spoke against the policy.

She told the assembly that illegal immigration was a “problem for every single person in our community, whether you’ve been here for five minutes, five years or five generations”.

“[The Greens] have just created corridors to exploit those that are here illegally,” she said.

Waltham Forest Migrant Action however said they supported the council’s opposition to Home Office co-operation on immigration raids.

A spokesperson for the organisation told the *Echo*: “We work to build a community where everyone – regardless of their immigration status – is safe, welcome, and treated with dignity and respect.

“We campaigned, alongside others, for a borough of sanctuary, where the council would no longer be complicit in multi-agency immigration enforcement raids. We welcome the new Green Party led council’s commitment to working together to make Waltham Forest a true borough of sanctuary.”

Man, 21, charged after Muslim venues targeted

Illia Bilyk has been charged with five counts of racially and religiously aggravated criminal damage after various Muslim venues in East London were targeted in January 2025

A 21-year-old man has been charged with racially and religiously aggravated criminal damage following a series of graffiti attacks targeting Muslim organisations and venues in Leyton and Stratford last January.

Illia Bilyk has been charged with five counts of racially and religiously aggravated criminal damage following an investigation by detectives from the Metropolitan Police’s north east command unit.

The charges relate to incidents at five locations. Offensive graffiti was sprayed on Stratford Islamic Association in Brydges Road, Stratford, and Al-Birr Mosque in Church Road, Leyton, on 23rd January 2025. Leyton Jamia Masjid, in High Road, was also targeted that day.

Two further incidents took place on 25th January, when Noor Ul Islam Primary School in Dawlish Road and the Islamic Shariah Council in Francis Road were targeted.

The incidents caused concern among Muslim communities across East London, with politicians condemning the vandalism.

At the time, Leyton and Wanstead MP Calvin Bailey described the attacks as “appalling racist vandalism”, saying they did not reflect the local community.

In a comment piece for the *Echo* last year the MP noted that the Met was investigating links between these acts of vandalism and a Russia-linked Telegram channel that was offering cryptocurrency payments to encourage violent attacks on Muslim communities.

Chief Superintendent Rhona Hunt, who leads policing in Waltham Forest, said the incidents had caused “significant distress” and continued to cause concern.

She said police were committed to tackling hate crime and urged anyone who had experienced or witnessed anti-Muslim hate crime to report it.



Leyton Jamia Masjid on High Road

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NEWS

Councillors call for strict regulation of dockless e-bikes

Tory leader Emma Best said her party did not oppose the introduction of dockless e-bikes in the borough but urged the council to enforce eleven “firm red lines” around their use



Waltham Forest Council leader Paul Perkins
Credit: Waltham Forest Council

by Sebastian Mann, Local Democracy Reporter

Waltham Forest opposition councillors have warned that dockless e-bikes will require tough regulation ahead of their potential introduction to the borough.

The Green-led administration launched a consultation last month, in response to public demand for the council to allow Lime, Forest and other rental companies to operate in the borough.

Dockless e-bikes are a popular way for Londoners to travel, with around 150,000 trips made across the capital every day.

Council leader Paul Perkins said the town hall “will not rush into any decision”.

He previously said that “clear rules” would be in place, as he laid out early proposals to give residents “even more green and easy options”.

Councillor Emma Best, leader of the local Conservatives, said her group did not oppose their introduction but stressed “such schemes can also create significant problems if they are introduced without sufficiently robust rules, infrastructure and enforcement from day one”.

In a letter to Cllr Perkins, she wrote: “A properly managed scheme may provide benefits, but

those benefits cannot come at the expense of pedestrian safety, accessibility or existing residents.

“Other London boroughs have already learned some difficult lessons about what happens when the number of bikes, parking capacity and enforcement arrangements are not properly aligned.

“Waltham Forest has the opportunity to learn from that experience rather than repeat it.”

Cllr Best’s letter lays out eleven “firm red lines” she recommends the council implements to keep the borough accessible and operational.

She said bikes “must only be parked in properly marked designated bays” and these spots “must not obstruct pedestrians or disabled people” nor come at the expense of



Waltham Forest Tory leader Emma Best
Credit: London Assembly

existing car parking.

It is “particularly important that disabled residents are involved at the design stage rather than simply being consulted after a scheme has been developed,” the Tory councillor said.

The recommendations also included imposing “meaningful penalties” on “irresponsible” cyclists and fitting e-bikes with registration plates to catch “rogue” riders.

“The operator, not the taxpayer, should meet the costs created by the scheme,” Cllr Best added.

Cllr Perkins told the Local Democracy Reporting Service that the town hall “will thoroughly consider the feedback we receive from residents and businesses and ensure we take on board lessons and best practice from those other boroughs who have successfully introduced similar schemes”.

He said: “In line with our manifesto commitments, we are carefully examining proposals to introduce

a dockless bike hire scheme in Waltham Forest.

“We are listening to what residents have to say to get a clear picture of their views and needs, so that any scheme can be introduced appropriately and is effectively managed.

“We will not rush into any decision. We will thoroughly consider the feedback we receive from residents and businesses and ensure we take on board lessons and best practice from those other boroughs who have successfully introduced similar schemes.”

There are almost 60 kilometres (37 miles) of cycle lanes in Waltham Forest and more than 1,000 bike hangars, according to council figures.

The public survey will close on Sunday, 8th November.

No decisions have yet been made on operators, the number of e-bikes, or when the scheme would begin.

Take part in the consultation here: talk.walthamforest.gov.uk/dockless-e-bikes-engagement

“E-bike providers need to follow robust rules and enforcement from day one”



A Leytonstone street
Credit: Martin Sepion
via Unsplash

Almost half of homeless placed out of borough

47% of households were placed in temporary accommodation outside the borough in April, though this is down from a peak of 65% in October 2024

by Sebastian Mann, Local Democracy Reporter

Almost half of homeless Waltham Forest residents are being housed outside the borough, a new report reveals.

Around 47% of households were living in temporary accommodation beyond the borough in April, which the council says is due to the “limited supply of homes and high cost of housing locally”.

Residents facing homelessness are commonly owed housing duty by their local council, which means the town hall will find them settled accommodation to keep them off the streets.

While 47% is a considerable figure, it is down from a peak of 65% in October 2024.

The number of households living in such housing has fallen from a peak of 1,710 in September 2025 to 1,527 in April.

However, the council says it “remains a significant financial challenge” and “we are forecast to spend £19.9m on [temporary accommodation] in this financial year alone”.

“Most importantly this means far too many of our residents continue to be living in [temporary accommodation] which we know impacts significantly on their health, wellbeing and life chances,” the report states.

The council says it aims to minimise the number of households being placed out of the borough, and “understands the serious challenges often caused by living further away from local networks, schools and employment”.

However, this “must be balanced against the council’s statutory duties and the significant financial pressures it faces”.

The council says it has made progress in the housing sector over the last year “amid significant and persistent financial pressures”.

“We need to do more across the board to improve the experience of our residents, particularly when it comes to the services we provide as a landlord, and to do everything within our power as a local authority to reduce the number of households living in temporary accommodation,” the report concluded.

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8 - 10 Oct 26

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15 - 17 Oct 26

21 - 24 Oct 26



TELLUS

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FEATURE



The Nags Head in Walthamstow Village (below) and William The Fourth (pictured) in Leyton both have rules barring children after 7pm

Pints and prams

From toddlers running between tables to adults seeking a child-free pint, Madison Convey tackles the great debate about kids in pubs

Waltham Forest pubs: some are very welcoming to families, while others limit how long children can stay in drinking spaces or have strict rules such as “must be seated at all times”. Some, rather infamously, ban children altogether.

As more London pubs introduce similar policies, local social media groups have been a hotbed for debating who pub environments are really for.

Picture the scene: a buggy wedged next to a table, someone balancing two pints through the mass, and a toddler who’s spotted an opening between two chairs. A disaster many have witnessed.

There seems little room for compromise, yet the middle ground already exists. *Time Out* counted 45 pubs in the borough in 2021. There are fewer now, but there’s still enough variety, with different rules on children that most people can find somewhere that suits them. Perhaps the argument runs deeper than where kids should and shouldn’t be allowed.

“I personally much prefer pubs with no children and actively avoid the ones that are popular with families, or go after the no-kids curfew,” one pub-goer told me.

They also recalled leaving a local pub because it was “over-run with children” and they saw rules in another tightened after a

child fell down the cellar.

Some were less concerned about the presence of children than about supervision, with talk of parents “getting drunk and expecting staff to babysit”.

Tess, a parent herself, fondly recalled being taken to restaurants as a child and expected to sit at the table and entertain herself quietly. Some pubs now “look like a crèche inside and out,” she said, with children running wild.

The Castle exemplifies Walthamstow’s family-friendly pub culture. Its local nickname? “The Crèche.” A few streets over, expectations can be utterly different.

Mark looks for a family-friendly venue when he goes out, which is once or twice a week. He described being challenged one Friday after nursery pickup, with his babies crying, despite doing his best to pacify them.



He didn’t mind some places being adults-only, but parents still needed somewhere to socialise. “Kids can’t be kept on a tight leash in a pub environment. They will want to run around and play.”

Many opinions were simple: there are already plenty of pubs for families so that others could keep things adults-only. Others suggested cut-off times. Consider designated areas or stricter supervision rules.

The bottom line is that this choice already exists. Nobody should expect every pub to accommodate everyone; support the places that suit you.

If you’re a parent who would be put off by football fans swearing at the television on a Saturday evening, The Goose probably isn’t for you. Equally, if you’re a young person who would rather not zig-zag around prams on the way to the bar, you’ll probably give The Castle a miss.

What irks people is being caught out. A parent doesn’t want to arrive with a buggy to find that children are unwelcome. Someone who goes to a pub specifically for an adult venue doesn’t want rules to change around them, too. The policies need not be the same, or so the consensus goes. They do need to be clear, however.

At least then everyone knows what they are walking into before the first pint is poured.

COMMENT

‘Labour is investing in our youth’

Labour councillor and group leader Kizzy Gardiner says she is ‘proud’ of her party’s record of investing in youth clubs and initiatives

Few groups have had it harder in recent years than our young people.

From Covid-19 interrupting key years at school to families facing the pressures of the cost-of-living crisis, young people have often been left hearing negative messages about what their future holds.

Opportunities can feel harder to access, social lives have increasingly moved online, and mental health concerns have become widespread.

I saw much of this during my three years as cabinet member for children and young people. It was a role I loved because it gave me the opportunity to meet inspiring young people from across Waltham Forest.

I saw immense talent, creativity and determination, but I also saw how difficult it can be for young people to find affordable activities, safe places to spend time and trusted adults outside of home and school.

That is why investing in youth services matters so much.

Under Labour’s leadership, Waltham Forest Council created Space4All, funding 26 spaces across the borough where young people can meet friends, take part in activities, play sport and access support when they need it.

We worked alongside brilliant local organisations including Project Zero, YMCA, Leyton Orient Trust, ELOP and Leaders Community to make these opportunities available across the borough.

I am incredibly proud of what Space4All has achieved. It has shown that when we create welcoming spaces and trust local organisations to deliver them, young people take part. They build confidence, make new friends and become more connected to their communities.

But we also know that the scale of the challenge means more needs to be done.

Earlier this year, Mayor of London Sir Sadiq Khan announced funding to establish a late-night youth club in Waltham Forest. This means another place to go after school, during holidays and at weekends. It means more opportunities to participate in positive activities and spend time in safe and fun environments.

And now the Labour government has announced we’re getting a Young Futures Hub in Waltham Forest.

One of the first in the country, it will provide access to sport, creative activities and youth work, whilst also offering support with mental health, employment, skills

and training. Covid-19 and smartphones have ushered in an era of online activities for our young people, and young people should have safe spaces to be online. But I know that nothing compares to safe, fun and welcoming in-person activities.

Investing in youth spaces is about investing in the relationships that support our young people. The youth workers, volunteers and staff who get

to know the young people walking through the door make a lasting difference. Having one trusted adult, one welcoming place or one opportunity to discover a new interest can change the direction of a young person’s life.

Youth services have been decimated since 2010, and our young people have suffered as a result. For our national and London government to be investing in safe, supportive youth spaces is truly game-changing for our young people’s futures. I’m so proud that Labour governments are investing in Waltham Forest’s young people.



Councillor Kizzy Gardiner
Credit Waltham Forest Labour

Cllr Gardiner represents William Morris ward.
To get in touch:
Email cldr.kizzy.gardiner@walthamforest.gov.uk

Advertisement

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Email: busybeeschingford@hotmail.co.uk



ARTS & CULTURE

William Morris Gallery's new exhibition spotlights domestic life

Earthly Paradise: Radical Living in the UK traces the homes, collectives and social movements that "challenged mainstream ideas of class, gender, politics and belonging"



Khadambi Asalache by Gered Mankowitz
Credit Gered Mankowitz via William Morris Gallery

by Marco Marcelline

William Morris Gallery will open a major new exhibition on Saturday, 3rd October exploring how artists, activists and communities have reimagined domestic life in Britain over the past 200 years.

Earthly Paradise: Radical Living in the UK traces the homes, collectives and social movements that challenged mainstream ideas of class, gender, politics and belonging – and the spaces they created to live differently.

Bringing together painting, photography, sound, archival material and domestic objects, the exhibition highlights individuals and groups who defied convention and used their homes as sites of experimentation. It considers how money and class shaped access to these environments, and how those excluded from traditional routes to power forged alternative ways of living.

Developed with Tŷ Pawb in Wrexham, The Arts & Crafts house in Bowness-on-Windermere and Dovecot Studios in Edinburgh, *Earthly Paradise* is part of Art Fund's £5.36million Going Places programme, which supports touring exhibitions across the UK.

Spanning two centuries, the show features spaces linked to William Morris's Red House, Charleston, Benton End, Derek Jarman's Prospect Cottage and Dial House – the anarcho-pacifist open home founded by Penny Rimbaud and Gee Vaucher of Crass.

Early sections explore figures such as the Ladies of Llangollen, C R Ashbee, Oscar Wilde, Ethel Mairer and Lee Miller, examining how domestic life became a site for questioning marriage, class, gender and spirituality.

A second section moves from the post-war period to the present, highlighting feminist and anti-racist housing activism through work by Matrix, Leeds Animation Workshop, Castlemilk

Womanhouse, Nubia Way and Danièle Lamarche.

Photography by Martin Parr, Sunil Gupta and Smiler reflects shifting attitudes to home ownership after the 1980 'Right to Buy' scheme, while new work by Abel Holsborough and David Spero considers the growing precarity of housing today.

Hadrian Garrard, William Morris Gallery's director said: "William Morris was in an open marriage and wanted to completely blur the lines between domestic life and making and experiencing art.

"He was friends with gay men and women, anarchists and revolutionaries – and he lived radically in the ways that we see many other artists live through history. This show looks at how the home has acted as a site for challenging societal norms – what that has meant through history and what the possibilities are for this in today's world."

Jenny Waldman, Art Fund's director, said: "This inspiring exhibition, bringing to life powerful stories of how artists shaped the world around them, will be seen across the country thanks to Going Places. This new programme sees museums working together to share their collections and connect with communities in new ways.

"We're hugely grateful to The National Lottery Heritage Fund and The Julia Rausing Trust for supporting this ambitious programme and we hope people will enjoy this exhibition at the William Morris Gallery and then as it travels to Wrexham, Windermere and Edinburgh."

'Earthly Paradise: Radical Living in the UK' will run from 3rd October 2026 until 28th March 2027

Animal SOS volunteers at a recent dog show fundraiser in Queen Elizabeth pub Credit Antonia Vlad



The Chingford charity saving Sri Lanka's stray dogs

What began with one rescued dog has seen Animal SOS Sri Lanka grow into a charity caring for thousands of stray animals, writes Antonia Vlad

You might walk past the humble Animal SOS Sri Lanka charity shop in Station Road, Chingford, without realising just how many lives its work touches.

Behind the modest frontage is a charity helping thousands of stray dogs in Sri Lanka, providing care and a lifeline to animals in need.

Animal SOS Sri Lanka was established in 2007 as a homage to Rama, a dog whom the charity's founder Kim Cooling and her husband, Gary, rescued while on holiday in Phuket, Thailand, in 1998.

After discovering that Rama was at risk of becoming seriously ill, the couple were determined to bring her back to the UK at any cost.

The situation caused Kim to "find her true calling", and she began working towards helping stray animals in Sri Lanka, where the conditions for animals and veterinary services were poor.

Animal SOS Sri Lanka has been, and continues to be, a "huge" part of Kim's life.

Currently, over 2,220 rescued dogs and cats are at the charity's sanctuary in Ahangama, Sri Lanka, with many of those arriving at the sanctuary suffering from serious injuries, disabilities or abuse.

She said: "Every animal deserves compassion and the chance to live without suffering,

and events like the dog show enable people here in the UK to become part of that work.

"We continue to fight for every life and give animals the chance they would otherwise never have."

The charity relies on donations from the public and events, such as a recent dog show fundraiser hosted at the Queen Elizabeth Pub in North Chingford, in order to keep going.

Organised by Kim, the event welcomed actor Peter Egan and TV presenter Jan Leeming as judges. Both are also official patrons of the charity.

The show brought the local community together to celebrate dogs while raising awareness of the charity's work helping vulnerable street animals abroad.

Speaking at the dog show, Kim said: "One of the nicest things is seeing how willing



Rescued dog Riley won the 'Most Handsome' category at the dog show Credit Antonia Vlad

people are to get involved and support the animals, seeing people enjoying themselves with their dogs while championing such an important cause makes all the preparation worthwhile.

She added: "Caring for so many animals is an enormous undertaking, so community fundraising events in the UK play an important part in helping us continue that work."

At the event, participating dogs belonged to local residents, with volunteers putting in a lot of work to get the show running.

Addie, one of Kim's dogs, won the 'Best Rescue' category. She arrived at the sanctuary as a puppy in a coma and was later adopted.

Meanwhile, Riley was entered into the 'Most Handsome' category; he'd arrived at the sanctuary with a fly-strike tumour and survived. Now an old boy, he has lived with Kim for many years.

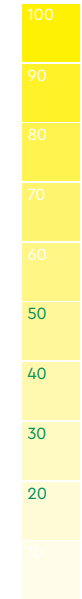
Overall, the dogs were very well behaved, and the organisers say they were delighted to have been joined on the day by so many locals.

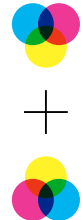
There was also a raffle, and because the event was such a success, Kim has confirmed that the dog show will "definitely" be taking place again next year.

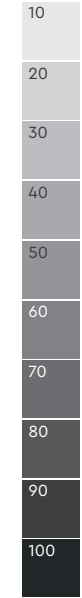
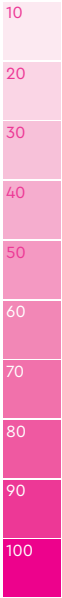
To donate to Animal SOS Sri Lanka, please check out the website: Visit animalsos-sri.com













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AROUND THE BOROUGH

CHINGFORD

Care home staff shed locks for charity



Business manager Gina Kitchenham (centre), chef Luciano Rizzo, kitchen assistant Joshua Hand and senior carers Scott Jay and Awatef Eloubadi Credit The Spinney

by Danielle Booker

Five brave care home team members have said goodbye to their hair in a successful bid to raise £2,000 for Great Ormond Street Hospital Children's Charity, inspired by the personal experiences of colleagues whose families have received care there.

The Spinney's business manager Gina Kitchenham joined chef Luciano Rizzo, kitchen assistant Joshua Hand and senior carers Scott Jay and Awatef Eloubadi to face the clippers, while residents Ann and Gerald volunteered to help with the shaving.

For Gina, the fundraiser was particularly personal. Her niece Phoebe was born with a hole in her heart and has 22q syndrome, a rare genetic condition. She underwent open heart surgery as a baby and has received care and undergone numerous operations at Great Ormond Street throughout her childhood.

Gina, whose partner was also treated at the hospital for bowel disease as a child, said: "Great Ormond Street Hospital has played an important part in caring and supporting Phoebe her entire life.

"For us, this head shave is about much more than just losing our hair, it's about saying thank you to this amazing hospital for the incredible work they do that is life changing for so many children and their families.

"I felt excited rather than nervous about having my head shaved. Phoebe has said she is incredibly proud of me, and that she loves my new look! When I first saw myself in the mirror, I was pleasantly surprised – and several people have since told me it really suits me."

For senior carer Awatef Eloubadi this was her second time to 'brave the shave' to support a good cause.

She explained: "I had the privilege of participating in this event 25 years ago, following the loss of my nephew

to leukaemia when he was 13. It was then that I came to understand the profound impact of undertaking acts of kindness for a worthy cause.

"My family are extremely proud of me, and I had not anticipated the outpouring of deeply personal comments from our residents and their families, all of which has provided a source of strength, encouraging me to walk tall with my bald head!"

The charity also holds a special place in the heart of The Spinney's home manager, Lisa Wright, whose younger brother Michael was diagnosed with acute myeloid leukaemia when he was just 17 months old.

Lisa was eleven at the time and remembers how Michael and their mum spent two years at Great Ormond Street Hospital while her grandfather helped to look after the rest of the family.

She said: "I think it's just marvelous that so many of our team were willing to change their appearance to raise money for the charity. It takes a lot of guts! The whole home were thrilled to get behind them and cheer them on."

The head shave formed part of The Spinney's summer party, with residents, relatives and team members gathering to cheer on the five volunteers and support the fundraising effort.

Elizabeth Kirby, supporter relations executive at Great Ormond Street Hospital Children's Charity, said: "We would like to say a huge thank you to all at The Spinney Care Home for their kind support of GOSH Charity and well done for already raising an amazing amount. Great Ormond Street Hospital wouldn't be the extraordinary place it is without the generosity of people like them!"

LEYTON

Huge blaze at metal recycling centre

by Marco Marcelline

Eight fire engines and around 60 firefighters responded to a fire at a metal recycling centre in the Argall Avenue Industrial Estate in Leyton last month.

London Fire Brigade (LFB) was called to the fire at 6.44am on Tuesday, 8th September, with crews from Leyton, Homerton, Walthamstow,

and surrounding fire stations racing to the scene. The fire was declared under control by 9.57am, and firefighters left the scene by 1pm.

The LFB has said around 20 tonnes of scrap metal was alight at the fire's height on that morning, with one of the brigade's 32-metre ladders and a drone team deployed to help with putting it out.

Residents in the surrounding area

were advised to keep doors and windows closed due to the large amount of smoke being produced by the fire. The blaze's cause is not yet known.

Waltham Forest Council later issued a statement on social media stating that the fire had been put out and all London Fire Brigade appliances had left the scene by 1pm.

Argall Metal Recycling did not respond to a request for comment.

WALTHAMSTOW VILLAGE

St Mary's secures alcohol licence for events

by Sebastian Mann, Local Democracy Reporter

St Mary's Walthamstow has been granted permission to host more private events to sustain its outreach and community programmes.

Waltham Forest Council granted the church a licence to serve alcohol and show films from midday until 10.30pm, and to push its closing time back from 4pm until 11pm.

While this licence applies to all seven days of the week, the church told the licensing committee events would not be daily occurrences.

In its application, St Mary's described its schedule as "irregular".

Venues are allowed to apply for 15 temporary events notices (TENs) a year, which allow them to operate beyond their hours for special events – such as film screenings or functions where they will serve alcohol.

A full licence will give the church flexibility to host fundraising and outreach events, having regularly reached the TEN limit each year, representatives said.

It costs the church – Walthamstow's oldest building – around £250,000 a year to operate, and the organisation functions as an independent charity under the Church of England.

The licence would open it up to hosting more events and covering its "very high" overheads and raise much-needed funds, it says.

St Mary's representatives told the committee it has never received a "substantial complaint" about noise or litter, but three objectors, who live in the neighbouring Monoux Almshouse, attended the meeting to present their views against the scheme.

In a bid to ease concerns from locals, the council imposed a condition prohibiting attendees from drinking alcohol outside at 9pm.

Councillors also made a non-binding recommendation the church limits smokers to eight at a time and ensures the smoking area is at least 20 metres from any homes.

Additionally, they recommended the church share its schedule with residents of the almshouse once a month.

WHIPPS CROSS

Five wards receive award for 'outstanding' end-of-life care

ICU, Syringa Ward, Sage Ward, Sycamore Ward and the Margaret Centre were singled out

Five wards at Whipps Cross Hospital have received a national award recognising the end-of-life care they provide to patients and families.

The Gold Standards Framework (GSF) is a registered charity that aims to ensure every person in the UK can live well before they die and die well in the place and manner of their choosing.

Its Hallmark Award has been awarded to ICU, Syringa Ward, Sage Ward, Sycamore Ward and the Margaret Centre following an assessment of how they support people approaching the end of life with dignity, compassion

and respect.

A standout success was the ICU, which Barts says has spent the past two years making improvements "to ensure patients and their loved ones receive personalised, compassionate care during some of life's most difficult moments".

Paloma Carretero Corchado, matron for the ICU, said: "We have made several small changes that have had a big impact on making the environment feel more welcoming and creating a space where people and their families feel more settled and supported during difficult conversations."

LOCAL NOTICES

Published: Published 25th September 2026

London Borough Of Waltham Forest Special Treatment Licence: Notice Of Application

Notice is given that **Charanpreet Gill** has applied to the London Borough of Waltham Forest for a Special Treatment Licence for:

- **Waxing**
- **Facials**
- **Licence for the premises: Amrita's Hair And Beauty, Rear Shop Unit, 734 High Road, Leytonstone E11 3AW**

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.

Licensing Act 2003: Application for the Grant of a Premises Licence

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

Notice is hereby given that **Food Crave Limited** has applied to the London Borough of Waltham Forest for the grant of a Premises License at **Wraps & Wings, 23 Shernhall Street, Walthamstow E17 3EY**. The nature of the application is as follows:

- **To permit the sale of late night refreshments Monday to Sunday, 06:00 - 23:00; 23:00 - 03:00**

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.

Representations **must** be received no later than **8th October 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.

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Shern Hall Methodist Church
Shernhall Street, Walthamstow E17 9HX

HALL FOR HIRE

Our light, airy and spacious Caulkwell Hall has become available for hire on Mondays and Wednesdays from 8.00am to 10.00pm

The hall is suitable for classes, exercise groups, mother and baby sessions, meetings, and more.*

The church has a large entrance hall and a private car park, (free to hirers). Facilities include baby changing and disabled access and the use of our kitchen to make light refreshments.

The dimensions of the hall are 11.7m x 5.8m. We can provide tables and chairs and limited storage space if required. There is separate access to the side of the hall for loading/unloading.

***Please note that we only accept regular bookings. We do not accept party bookings, or any other one-off events.**

For enquiries please call our Office Manager on 07746 540193 or email: office.shernhall@forestcircuit.org.uk

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LISTINGS

EXHIBITION

Landscapes Set Free
Every day in October: 9.30am to 3pm
Walthamstow Wetlands Engine House
Mezzanine, 2 Forest Road N17 9NH

Walthamstow Wetlands is pleased to present 'Landscapes Set Free', a joint exhibition by North London artists Didi Baldwin RCA and Will Handysides, responding to the unique setting of Walthamstow Wetlands which they have been studying through visits to the reserve this year.

The exhibition will be Didi Baldwin's first exhibition at Walthamstow Wetlands, while Will Handysides returns after his solo exhibition, 'WETLANDS', here in autumn 2024.

Free

JAZZ

Oscar Jerome
Friday 2nd October, 7pm to 11pm
Signature Brew Blackhorse Road, Unit 15,
Blackhorse Lane E17 5QJ

Oscar Jerome has been honing his craft as a musician and writer since a young age. He has worked as vocalist, guitarist and producer with countless acts and grown through the thriving London music scene.

In his solo project Oscar brings all of his influences together from a broad range of genres. His creative vision is to always make music with sincerity and emotional depth.

He has collaborated with artists Lianne La Havas, Ego Ella May, Joe Armon Jones, Jordan Rakei, and Kokoroko just to name a few. With an acclaimed and vibrant live show that has taken Glastonbury, Electric Brixton, in the UK and around the world in Asia, USA and across Europe.

Tickets (£12.75) via DICE app

WALK

Secrets of Wood Street Walking Tour
Saturday 3rd October, 2pm
Wood Street Station E17 3LX

On this circular walk which traverses some of the area known at one time as 'On the Forest' we will seek out evidence of lost pubs, the lost film studios and several lost mansions – one former mansion still stands.

We will walk down a path which dates back several centuries, visit a churchyard with some fascinating stories to tell and find a hidden mural and a hidden garden.

Some of this walk covers uneven ground and forest paths so please wear appropriate shoes.

All walks can be offered as private tours and both as virtual and real life tours.

Tickets (£12.50) available on Eventbrite, search: 'Secrets of Wood Street Walking Tour'
Email joanna@westminsterwalks.london

FESTIVAL

Harvestfest
Saturday 10th October, 12pm–11pm
Venues across the Blackhorse Beer Mile

Ten venues across Blackhorse Beer Mile will come alive for a free festival-style celebration of the coming harvest and changing of the seasons. Each venue has their own programme for a country-style knees up, from bucking broncos to queer country rodeo, morris dancers to live music and hook-a-duck to Neil Young & friends.

There will of course be incredible artisan beers, ciders, wines, brandies and cocktails a plenty. Spend the day walking between venues to experience each one, cowboy boots on.

At Signature Brew, our good friends Queer Cxtry will take over all day for a free all day party, before their ticketed evening event in our brewhall.

Free

JAZZ

Cover to Cover Present Miles Davis 'Birth of the Cool'
Tuesday 13th October, 7pm
Leytonstone Social Club, 2 Harvey Road,
Leytonstone E11 3DB

This rarely performed album comes to East Side Jazz after two sold out shows at the Mildmay Club. Gil Evans arrangements as recorded in 1948 with fresh improvised solos from the best of London Jazz.

Tickets from £17
Visit wegottickets.com/f/26377

BINGO

Bongo's Bingo
Friday 16th October, 7pm
Big Penny Social, 1 Priestley Way,
Walthamstow E17 6AL

Things are getting freaky at Bongo's Bingo this Halloween. Get ready for a spine-chilling night packed with bingo, dance-offs, rave rounds, ridiculous prizes and plenty of Halloween surprises.

Tickets from £20
Visit bongosbingo.co.uk

MUSICAL

Alice in Wonderland
Wednesday, 21st–Saturday, 24th October, 8pm
Mornington Hall, The Green Walk, North Chingford E4 7EN

Come and descend down the rabbit hole with us for this new musical version of the classic tale by Lewis Carroll with music and lyrics by Janet Yates Vogt and Mark Friedman. Our production promises an escape into a world of colourful characters, creativity and imagination.

Tickets from £14
Call 07445 650 935

CLUBBING

Studio 17
Friday 23rd October, 7pm–12am
Mothers Ruin, Ravenswood Industrial Estate E17 9HQ

Studio 17 is a feelgood DJ collective founded by Michelle Goodall (DJ AllGood) and Kuljeet Sangha (DJ Kuljeet), created to fill a party-shaped hole in E17's nightlife.

Expect inclusive, high-energy evenings built around house, disco, funky and soulful anthems, plus 90s dance classics.

AllGood and guests serve up an eclectic mix of stone-cold dancefloor favourites and fresh new tunes... the kind that make you think you've heard them before. Designed to get you moving. Inclusive. It's a good life.

Think: a Studio 54-for-the-2020s vibe, a friendly dancefloor, classic tunes you'll know, new ones you'll love, and plenty of sparkles.

Free, 21+ only

ART

Keramik Haus
Saturday, 24th–Sunday, 25th October,
10am–6pm
Host of Leyton, 658 High Road E10 6JP

Keramik Haus is a new series of design-led ceramic events presenting a small, selected and changing group of independent makers.

Each edition brings together ceramic artists with different backgrounds, experiences and perspectives, with a focus on contemporary functional and sculptural ceramics.

The vision is to take Keramik Haus to different pop-up venues across London, creating opportunities for makers and audiences to connect in new places, with plans to expand further afield over time.

Free

POETRY

Poems Not Bombs
Thursday 29th October, 7pm
Walthamstow Trades Hall, 61-63 Tower Hamlets Road E17 4RQ

Poems Not Bombs poetry open mic upstairs at the Trades Hall, Walthamstow is a free monthly event – taking place on the last Thursday of every month at 7pm. It is for people of all experiences and levels to come and share their poems.

Sign up between 6.30pm and 7pm to read. Time permitting, everyone gets five minutes. Hosted by Paul McGrane from local poetry collective Forest Poets.

Although this event is free it's advised you reserve a free spot in advance to avoid disappointment.

Book a spot on Eventbrite, search: 'Poems Not Bombs'

Submit your listings

For next month's listings, email the details of your event to wfecho@socialspider.com by **Monday 19th October.**

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SPORT



Fitness for ‘misfits’

Sam George once felt shut out of gym culture. Now the Walthamstow space he built for people who feel the same has been shortlisted for the National Fitness Awards

by Marco Marcelline

For much of his childhood, gym founder Sam George wanted nothing to do with gyms. Bullied at school and dreading PE lessons, he grew up believing gyms were places for other people and not him.

That began to change in 2010. Instead of signing up to a gym, Sam started training alone in his back garden with a homemade medicine ball and a sandbag.

Over time, he lost more than seven stone. What started as a quiet attempt to reclaim his health became the foundation of a new career. He trained as a personal trainer and, in 2019, was named PT of the Year.

But the feeling of being an outsider never left him. It became the question that shaped everything that followed: what would a gym look like if it was designed for people who had never felt comfortable in one?

In 2022, Sam opened Misfit Gym on an industrial estate in Walthamstow. The name was deliberate. Misfit was built for people who had spent years thinking gyms weren’t meant for them.

“I opened Misfit as the gym I wish had existed for me,” he says.

Three years on, that idea has grown into a community. Misfit offers group personal training alongside specialist coaching in women’s health, pregnancy, postnatal recovery and menopause.

Its coaches are trauma-informed and have worked with The Movement Charity, reflecting Sam’s belief that getting fit “shouldn’t require conforming to a particular type of person or gym culture”.

People don’t necessarily find it because they’re looking for a gym; they find it because someone they trust already trains there. That word-of-mouth approach has turned a small industrial unit into something that feels less like a traditional gym and more like a

“supportive network”, he says.

Misfit’s community extends beyond its members. The gym has donated its space for private exercise and yoga sessions for women supported by Solace Women’s Aid, and each Christmas it contributes to Waltham Forest Secret Santa, which collects presents for survivors of domestic abuse and their children.

It has raised £3,500 for ELOP, East London’s LGBT+ charity, including by completing 24 workouts in 24 hours, and has supported Waltham Forest Pride, Trans Pride Walthamstow and Walthamstow Women’s FC.

That ethos has now attracted national attention. Misfit has been shortlisted for Regional Gym of the Year (South) in the National Fitness Awards 2026 — often described as the Oscars of the UK fitness industry.

For Sam, the nomination belongs to the people who train there. “Almost everyone who trains here came because someone they know told them about us, and they’re the reason we’re a finalist.”

You can find Misfit Gym at Unit 14, Ravenswood Industrial Estate E17 9HQ
Visit beamisfit.com



Misfit Gym founder Sam George
Credit: Misfit Gym

New women-only gym opens in Leyton

The new gym – which opened in September – is designed to offer women “more choice, privacy and the confidence to get active”

A new women-only gym has opened at Leyton Leisure Centre.

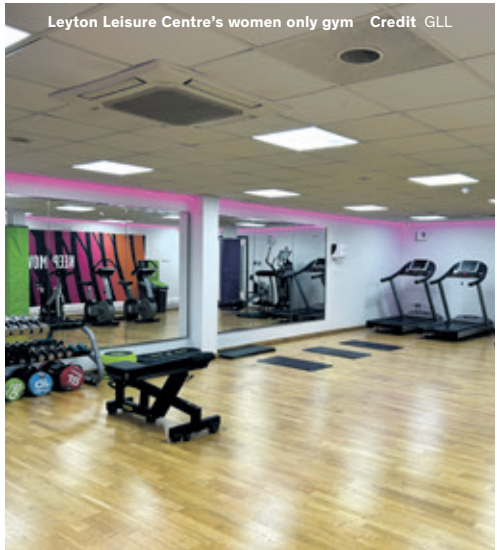
The new gym – which opened on 1st September – is designed to offer women “more choice, privacy and the confidence to get active”, operators GLL said.

They added: “The new facility – which has been created within the main leisure centre – provides a welcoming, comfortable and private environment where women can work out in a setting designed specifically with them in mind.”

A range of cardio and strength equipment, including treadmills, bikes, cross trainers, spin bikes, free weights, leg press, leg extension, leg curl, shoulder press and chest press are available on top of personal training sessions.

The gym will develop in response to customer feedback, with further developments planned for November and December, GLL has said.

Daniel O’Connor, partnership manager for Waltham Forest, said: “We want women to feel comfortable and confident using Better’s

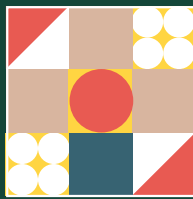


leisure facilities, so we’re really excited to open our first women-only gym.

“We already offer a range of activities for women at Leyton Leisure Centre, including fitness classes and women-only swimming sessions, and this new gym gives women another option to get active.

“We’re deliberately starting with a focused offering so we can listen to the women using the space, understand what they want and make sure we invest in the right equipment and facilities. We want the women using the space to help shape its future, so their feedback will be vital as we look at the next stage of the development.”

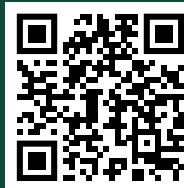
The gym is open Monday to Friday from 6.30am to 10pm and Saturday and Sunday from 8am to 6pm



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