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WALTHAM FOREST ECHO

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Interview

The 'illustrated priest' on his unlikely journey to the church

► P. 3

News

Hundreds of Whipps staff set to strike over low pay

► P. 5

Arts & Culture

Leytonstone artist shows off embroidery on Channel 4

► P. 9

Housing

Another single mum pleads with council to stay in borough

► P. 12

News

Estate community centre revived in response to fatal shooting

► P. 16



Activists barricading the incinerator Credit Extinction Rebellion

Incinerator rebuild moves ahead

by Victoria Munro

The controversial expansion of North London's waste incinerator moved forward last month despite protests from campaigners.

On 16th December, the North London Waste Authority awarded the contract to rebuild the Edmonton Incinerator near Chingford to Spanish company Acciona.

The NLWA, chaired by Waltham Forest Council's deputy leader Clyde Loakes, heard multiple calls to "pause and review" the project from those worried about health,

environmental and financial risks.

However, the majority of board members insisted any delay, given the "fragile state" of the current facility, would risk waste being shipped elsewhere or sent to a landfill.

Work on the project, which will cost an estimated £960million, will begin next year, to the disappointment of those who spoke at the meeting.

Dr Edward Tranah, who works at North Middlesex Hospital, argued a larger incinerator "takes us further away from our goals to reduce waste and increase recycling".

He added: "I worry it justifies the status quo and commodifies the very waste we are trying to reduce.

"I'm terrified of the climate emergency and I promised myself I would do as much as I could to mitigate the impact it will have. I also have a responsibility to my patients to speak up when I see things that are going to damage public health.

"I know [the NLWA] takes the climate emergency seriously but to try to make us believe that... the only alternative is untreated landfill is misleading."

Dr Rembrandt Koppelaar claimed the contract would "waste

at least £150m of taxpayers' money" and called on the NLWA to instead invest in technology that could sort black bag waste and automatically extract recyclables, used elsewhere in Europe.

Meanwhile Professor Vyvyan Howard, a toxicology expert, described how burning waste releases particulate matter that can be damaging to health.

Responding to concerned speakers, Cllr Loakes said: "We have made this plant [built in 1969] last as long as it possibly can, there is no other in Europe that's as old as the one we have.

"Our residents still do not do the

right thing [by recycling] so we have a duty to ensure we provide facilities to deal with the residual waste in the best possible way."

NLWA vice-chair and Barnet councillor Peter Zinkin sought to reassure speakers their efforts were not in vain, arguing previous speakers had "accelerated" the inclusion of carbon capture at the new plant

He said: "We need to be clear, it would cause a monumental series of problems if we were to pause the project because of the state of our existing facility."

Continued on Page-4

NEWS



FELLOWSHIP IS LIFE

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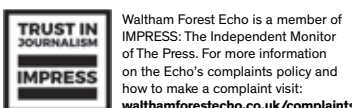
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Hundreds of Santas went "dashing through the Stow" last month as part of a festive 5K. Runners met in costume at Waltham Forest Town Hall on 11th December to start the race and were rewarded with a mince pie and free coffee from Fellowship Foods cafe at the end. The fastest Father Christmas was Andrew Bierer, who completed the race in a little under 19 minutes, while the speediest Ms Claus was Melanie McKay. **Credit** Richard Pedrycz

Council fees for parking, markets and more rising

by Josh Mellor,
Local Democracy Reporter

Fees for parking, market stalls, music lessons and sports facilities will go up in April as Waltham Forest Council works to close its budget gap.

The fee increases were agreed at a meeting of the full council on 9th December and represent an increase of at least 3% for those services seeing a rise.

The council expects to overspend by around £13m this financial year but is confident it

will be able to balance its budget thanks to its reserves.

Conservative councillor Emma Best expressed surprise one-to-one children's music lessons were becoming more expensive by an extra £5 per 20 minutes, given council leader Grace William's commitment to putting children "at the heart of leadership".

Council leader Williams responded that fees are only increasing where the "unit cost" is higher than the public currently pays.

She added: "Children's services are a statutory service funded by

grants set by central Government. We have to make sure that we can afford what we offer and we have an excellent record at that."

Businesses are set to see increases from 6% for parking permits or more for high emissions vehicles.

Although most cemetery fees are increasing by less than 5%, a £1750 half-grave plot for ashes will be almost 50% more expensive.

A Waltham Forest spokesperson said: "The fees for some services are increasing as the council reviews its charges for the

coming financial year to reflect inflation and increased costs.

"We have not increased all the budget income targets correspondingly, to help provide resilience for these services in the face of continuing uncertainty.

"We work hard to deliver a wide range of reliable high-quality services, to ensure our people are rewarded fairly for their work, and act as responsible guardians of the public purse.

"We continuously benchmark the services we are delivering to help us achieve these aims."

Government refuses to help pay for station entrance

by Josh Mellor,
Local Democracy Reporter

A request for £20million to help prevent Walthamstow Central Tube Station becoming dangerously overcrowded was rejected by the government.

Waltham Forest Council bid for money from the £4.8billion Levelling Up Fund to realise plans for a new step-free entrance to the station.

The new entrance was approved in January as part of the huge housing development being built on the shopping centre formerly known as the Mall.

Pre-pandemic passenger growth predictions warned Walthamstow Central will become unsafe by 2031 unless new escalators and a lift help spread passengers along the platforms.

At the last budget scrutiny committee meeting, committee chair Keith Rayner questioned why the

borough's bid had been rejected when neighbouring Newham was given £40m for two projects.

Council leader Grace Williams responded that decisions like this were why the council was pushing the government to give Waltham Forest a "fair deal".

She said: "I don't see any sunny uplands for London, or outer London in particular. We've come to the conclusion that, with Levelling Up... money is going to go from London to around the country."

Responding specifically to the money awarded to Newham, she noted that the borough "tends to get more because its deprivation levels are higher", whereas Waltham Forest tends to be "in the middle".

The cost of the new Tube station entrance is now likely to fall on cash-strapped TfL, who previously said it would spend £15million on the project, alongside a £1.5million contribution from the towers' developer Capital & Regional (C&R).

INTERVIEW



Alan Moss Credit Penny Dampier

Walthamstow's illustrated priest

by Victoria Munro

With tattoos all the way from his fingers to his neck, Walthamstow's "illustrated priest" Alan Moss doesn't strike many as a typical vicar. "The tattoos do throw people off," he admits, adding: "I'm pretty sure people always think I'm just a bloke who mugged a vicar for his shirt."

Alan's ink, which he estimates took 60 to 70 hours in total, tells the story of his circuitous road to faith – a journey that includes a suicide attempt in his teens and six months dealing drugs. Raised by a staunchly atheist father, who viewed Christianity as "all nonsense", he never even set foot in a church until the age of 13 and didn't consider himself Christian until a decade later.

Even today, at age 40, Alan is more comfortable doing youth work on the Attlee Terrace estate than he is in St Mary's Church Walthamstow, insisting he is not "an institution kind of guy". In addition to handing out hot chocolate to hundreds of young people every Monday, his job as the church's lead pioneer minister allows him to push for better resources on local estates, in the hopes of showing working-class young people like the boy he once was that "they are not forgotten about".

He said: "I don't consider myself to be religious, I'd say I have faith. I'm in the Church of England but that doesn't mean I sign up to everything they preach.

Being on the estate makes more sense for me, I want people to discover their faith where they are."

Alan first visited church after a chance encounter with a youth worker on the streets of Romford, who came across him and a friend "out causing trouble... nicking calendars and fountain pens".

Having struggled with bullying so severe he had to move schools, meeting friendly young people at the church's youth group made a big impression, which was compounded after he woke up from a suicide attempt not long after.

Terrified of starting his new school after being spat on and attacked at his last, Alan said: "I threw a load of tablets down my neck and all I remember is waking up about two to three weeks later. My mum had found me in a pool of blood, apparently I died twice. The thing I remember is the church, after I'd only known them for a week, had sent me a little card with prayers and thoughts they'd had about me."

He was never fully able to return to school, leaving with only three GCSEs, but kept visiting the church "on a fairly regular basis", although mostly because he "really fancied the girls".

Thanks to the trade skills and work ethic instilled in him from a young age, he was able to support himself as a welder and metal worker, moving into a shared house with friends at the age of 18. However, tragedy soon struck again when his grand-

mother, who he had lived with for many years, took her own life with an overdose.

"I had already started to ease away from the church but that knocked me off completely and I stopped going," he recalls, "I started to party a lot more and experiment with drugs, our house was essentially the party house for the best part of 18 months."

A few years later, Alan met his now-wife and then-landlord's girlfriend Sarah, a meeting he compares to "two car wrecks coming together" and which – unsurprisingly – saw him thrown out. A man he knew was willing to house him but expected payment in the form of helping him deal drugs, kicking off a six-month criminal career that Alan says "almost destroyed [his] life" and saw him narrowly escape jail after the house was raided while he was out.

By the time he escaped this dark period and moved in with Sarah, he hadn't visited the church for years. However, when she began struggling with nightmares, the first stories he reached for to calm her down were Bible stories that he "didn't even know [he] knew".

He said: "I had always told her I had a history with the local church and one day might pop back in and, after that, I got up one week and decided to go. I hadn't seen these people in five or six years and we hadn't parted on good terms so I was expecting the cold shoulder but instead they welcomed us."

After that, Alan only got more involved

with the church and youth work, although despite feeling a call to priesthood he "kept putting off" getting ordained until 2018, fearing both that he was not academic enough and that priesthood was a "middle class game". His tattoos, a metaphorical chronicle of this journey that starts with a depiction of the Big Bang on his chest, followed last year as soon as lockdown began to ease.

Alan describes a meticulous patchwork of scenes and quotes from the Bible spreading down both arms, onto his back and up his neck. While the inclusion of a reference to the prodigal son has obvious parallels to his life, he also sees himself in a depiction of Saint Michael slaying the dragon and a scene from Genesis, where Jacob wrestles an angel.

He explained: "I'm still wrestling with my faith and wondering if I'm wasting my life with the vicar thing. It helps to see that even people thousands of years ago were wrestling with these same things."

The about-to-be-slain dragon on his back, meanwhile, represents "that voice saying 'go off and do the drugs'", which never quite leaves him. Alan is keen to emphasise that Christianity, as he understands it, doesn't ask for perfection but loves people as they are, adding that St Mary's Church welcomes everyone, regardless of sexuality, gender, race or background.

As for his tattoos, he plans to get even more, covering his legs and the rest of his torso, as soon as he's able to save up the money.

NEWS

Continued from P1

Earlier in the meeting, the board heard from LondonEnergy – the NLWA-owned company that runs the incinerator – that wear and tear had taken part of it out of operation, forcing some waste to be sent to landfill.

Cllr Mete Coban, from Hackney Council, argued not going ahead would be “more costly, both for taxpayers and the environment” and noted energy from the new incinerator would provide electricity to 127,000 homes and heating to 50,000.

Earlier in the meeting, the board discussed efforts to “deal with more challenging items”, for example through a mattress recycling scheme. They were told the mattresses already recycled since the scheme started in June would stretch for 30 miles if placed end to end.

Addressing concerns over emissions, NLWA managing director Martin Capstick said the plant would be the first in the UK to use

“selective catalytic reduction” to control nitrous oxides and a “combined wet-dry scrubber system” to reduce particulates, acid gases and other emissions.

He added that, if the contract were not awarded, the NLWA would have to restart the process of looking for a contractor, which has taken “probably two years”. Due to rising market prices, he suggested retendering could cost the NLWA an extra £20m a year.

However, the vote to award the contract to Acciona, the sole bidder, was not unanimous. Haringey councillor Isidoros Diakides voted against, saying he was “not convinced” the contract “offers the best value for money”. Haringey’s deputy leader Mike Hakata abstained, after expressing similar concerns.

All other members voted to award the contract, although the second representative from Waltham Forest Council, Rosalind Doré, had recently resigned and was replaced by Cllr Paul Douglas.

Council tax strike against incinerator grows

Even more residents are refusing to pay their full council tax in protest at the incinerator rebuild.

Ten people have joined Waltham Forest resident Sarah Eastwood, who in September began withholding £10 each month to “force a proper public debate”.

Those taking a financial stand against the rebuild are mainly from Waltham Forest and Enfield, joined by five residents from elsewhere in north London.

Explaining her decision, Waltham Forest resident Janine Eagling said: “Enough is enough. A new waste strategy is called for, where rubbish is considered to be a resource, not some-

thing to be thrown on a toxic bonfire.

“I continue to pay council tax but I have deducted £10 a month to reg-

ister my protest that building a new incinerator in a climate emergency is highly irresponsible.”



Janine Eagling Credit Extinction Rebellion

Two arrested after incinerator blockade

Two activists protesting the incinerator rebuild were arrested after barricading the entrance to the facility last month.

Around 25 campaigners from Extinction Rebellion, Black Lives Matter and Stop the Edmonton Incinerator arrived at around 6am on 13th December to block entry to the facility.

The activists blocked trucks carrying waste from entering the facility

in Advent Way, just over the border from Chingford, and workers attempting to prepare the site for construction next year.

The Metropolitan Police confirmed they were called at 6am and arrested two people on suspicion of “aggravated trespass”.

Waltham Forest protestor Sarah Eastwood told the *Echo*: “We are here to tell our councils and the NLWA that we will not accept this

incinerator. It is bad for the planet and bad for our communities – local people deserve better.

“We won’t stop campaigning until our elected representatives pause to get an independent review of the plans, and conduct a genuine, inclusive and democratic local consultation.

“We also want to send a message to Acciona: we won’t sit back and let you make money at the expense of our community.”

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NEWS

Don't look forward in anger

Walthamstow MP Stella Creasy asks residents not to let recent scandals change how they deal with the new variant

It is traditional at this time of year to reflect on the past twelve months and plan for the next. A few weeks ago that would not have been difficult; restrictions had been lifted, we were able to go to pubs, clubs and theatres and many of us had plans for a longed-for family Christmas. Yet the arrival of Omicron threatened not only our celebrations, but our future.

Covid has overturned everything we took for granted. Being able to nip to the shops, hug a friend or just sit down in a free seat on the Tube without checking the people nearby have masks on became distant memories. Even with restrictions lifted, we have become accustomed to being segregated from neighbours, meeting new colleagues online or having birthdays and weddings at a distance. For many, unemployment, insecurity and uncertainty has dominated life, as their jobs and industries changed beyond all recognition.

Over the last two years NHS staff have worked tirelessly to treat those with the virus and address the extra pressure on healthcare services. Exhausted, they yet again face a winter where the virus threatens



Stella Creasy MP

us all. Whilst the last two years have shown the power of the vaccine to prevent transmission and new drugs offer fresh hope in treating those affected, the virus has also shown it can mutate, with new infections now doubling every two to three days.

Many locals have written to me furious at revelations about parties at Downing Street. They recognise these undermine willingness to follow restrictions designed to slow the spread of the virus. I understand this anger and urge residents not to let this define how you respond to Omicron. Whether catching up on first or second jabs or ensuring you have your booster, all of us can help with reducing infections and the impact of Covid on our NHS by getting vaccinated. I have been proud to work with local faith groups, volunteers, council staff and the NHS to encourage people to do this – it must be a positive decision each of us make rather than something anyone is forced to do. That's why I do not support mandatory vaccination, and why together we need to address the concerns some have about being vaccinated as part of challenging those who

spread myths and misinformation about coronavirus. I have also called for tough measures against those who picket schools or vaccine centres. It is not a question of free speech to harass young children or obstruct residents from making their own choices on this matter.

"Vaccination must be a positive decision each of us make rather than something anyone is forced to do"

I want to thank every member of NHS and council staff, as well as all the volunteers who have achieved something monumental this year in getting so many vaccinated in our community. Walthamstow has a proud tradition of community activism – as we look to 2022, yet again each of us can play our part in fighting this awful virus to help ourselves and each other.

Hundreds of Whipps staff to strike over low pay

by Victoria Munro

Hundreds of Whipps Cross staff plan to strike this month over being paid less than colleagues doing the same jobs.

"Facilities management" staff, such as porters and cleaners, employed by outsourcing company Serco to work at the hospital are paid up to 15% less than their NHS colleagues.

The Unite union called this an "insult" to frontline workers and will strike unless an agreement is reached with Serco and Barts Health NHS Trust, which runs the hospital.

Serco staff also claim they are subject to "draconian" treatment by the multinational company, which allegedly plans to end its contract with Barts in 2023.

A Whipps Cross worker, who asked to remain anonymous, told the *Echo* that Serco had previously sacked staff over the phone or while they were on annual leave.

They said: "We are essential links in the chain of care for patients because we provide all the support services like

cleaning, security, food and portering.

"The numbers of staff on shifts are not what they should be, so we are having to pick up extra work. We have got a situation where people struggle sometimes to take their breaks.

"This system has failed us and failed patients. The right thing for Barts to do now is to bring all the services back in-house.

"They also need to step in and intervene about the situation with our pay because staff are just getting poorer. I see colleagues really struggling with second and third jobs to try to live in London.

"People do not want to strike but they can't take this any longer. All we are asking for is fair treatment and for our wages to be brought up to the same level as colleagues doing the same jobs – I don't think it's a big ask."

Unite general secretary, Sharon Graham, added: "It's time to take note of the strength of feeling of these NHS workers, who are being left in limbo as Barts and Serco prevaricate and pass the buck on their demands for a decent wage.

"Unite will be unwavering in our support

"This system has failed us and failed patients"



Whipps Cross Hospital Credit James Cracknell

of these union members and unless Barts and Serco put an end to their low pay and exploitation there will be strike action in January."

Deputy group chief executive at Barts Health, Shane DeGaris, responded that the trust is "considering future arrangements", which "could include bringing some services back in-house".

He added: "We will be working with Serco to put the appropriate measures in place and ensure hospital services are supported during any strike action. We are working hard with Serco to see if strike action can be avoided."

Taddy McAuley, Serco's contract director for Barts Health, said the company was "disappointed" with the decision to strike.

He added: "The terms of our contract with the trust allow for the payment of the London Living Wage which was agreed with both the trust and the unions at the start of the contract.

"We value the important work of all our front line employees which is why Serco also recently announced a £100 ex-gratia payment to all of our 52,000 front line staff."

FEATURES

Council training video given red carpet premiere

by Victoria Munro

A short film intended as a council training video has premiered in a Walthamstow cinema and could spread outside the borough after exceeding all expectations.

Waltham Forest Council commissioned local director Neil Garrett and Voices in Partnership, a group for at-risk teenagers, to create a video encouraging empathy for young offenders.

The resulting film 5:59 follows a social worker who receives a call about a young man's arrest at the very end of her shift and the consequences of choosing either to pick up the phone or let it ring.

The film, Neil explains, was meant to help council staff, police and other professionals "re-evaluate" young people who have been groomed into dealing drugs but so impressed the council that they gave it a red carpet premiere at The Empire in Walthamstow.

Asaph Lomena, who plays an older gang member, said no one in ViP expected the film they wrote and starred in to be "as good as it was".

He told the Echo: "At first I was not at all on board with it. None of us are actors and we don't really like being on camera, it's not really our thing.

"But most of us know people that have



Stills from the finished film Credit OMGMedia/WF Council

been involved in drugs so we thought, if it comes from us, it would be more effective than if it came from people who haven't been through it."

After growing up as a young black man in the borough, he knows firsthand how important it is to change the way authorities like the police treat young people.

He said: "Police would use force, put us on the ground and bind our arms behind our backs when we were not even being

aggressive, it made our relationship with them very negative. Some police know how to deal with young people but the vast majority don't seem to."

According to Neil, the lived experiences of his team also made the process of writing the film far easier, as they improvised expressions he had "never heard in [his] life".

He said: "It was amazing and so authentic because it's where some of these kids came from, I couldn't wait to get it on camera.

"We didn't have the budget or resources to do scenes with dialogue off a script, which would have complicated the process, so the whole thing was improvised.

"But as I was watching them, I thought 'this deserves a much bigger budget, it could be a feature film'. For non-actors, they were doing remarkably well.

"None of us went into this thinking the film would have a cinema premiere, it all came about as a result of people higher up in the council seeing it and thinking it was incredible."

The project is one of many that ViP's members, aged 14–19, have been involved in and one that has netted Asaph further work doing voice overs for Waltham Forest and Islington Councils.

Fellow member Mohamed Ali, who worked on the film behind the camera, said that, in only three years, Voices in Partnership had entirely transformed his worldview.

He said: "I was a bit hesitant at first and didn't see it going anywhere but I thought let's just see. [Being involved] has changed my whole mentality: I want to be involved with other people's stuff and see what I can contribute."

Next year, the team hope to see their film spread even further and have so far had a "great response" from cinemas like the Barbican.

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FEATURES

Let's get together

Alexandra Kinmonth on her plan to have disabled and non-disabled children playing together

The first few times I took my eldest daughter to a playgroup were my most challenging experiences as a new mother.

I sat there watching other babies engage with the world around them while my little girl lay there like a newborn and felt totally alone, wondering what might be wrong and if I was somehow to blame.

It took a while to get health professionals to take me seriously, even though I knew deep down something wasn't right. My daughter was eventually diagnosed with Global Developmental Delay (GDD) - which I drove myself crazy looking up online at first - and as she got older I came to terms with the fact that we were on a different path to most families and felt more confident going back to playgroups.

Unfortunately, my old challenge of uncertainty had just been replaced with something new: awkwardness and pity from other parents because I had a different child. While it stung, I don't think these parents were to blame - there's simply

a lack of understanding and a sense of embarrassment around children who are different. While most of those early years are a blur, my lifeline at the time was someone who I felt saw my daughter for who she was, without focusing on whether what she was doing was "normal".

I now have an amazing friend group of parents whose children have special needs that I can rely on but I don't want other new parents or carers to have the experiences I did in the early years of my daughter's life. It's hard enough raising a child, let alone with additional challenges, and people need to know there's a space where they can meet others going through similar journeys.

That's why I have created The Together Space, a social enterprise that hopes to tear down the barriers separating children with and without learning disabilities. My goal was to create somewhere families of children with additional needs can feel safe and supported, while giving neuro-typical families a space to learn about



Children playing at a Together Space pop-up event **Credit** Together Space

those who are different. In addition to a soft play area, we offer art workshops, dance, yoga, music therapy, beatboxing and - ultimately, I hope - a space where families of all kinds can relax together without stigma or awkwardness.

I was also determined to have great coffee and food in the Together Space cafe, not only because I'm greedy but also because mainstream coffee shops and restaurants are something many families with special needs miss out on. It's mainly due to nervousness about how their children might behave and a fear of

being judged but I'd argue that's yet more evidence of how much we need spaces where disabled and non-disabled people can get used to being around each other.

While we search for a permanent home in Walthamstow, The Together Space has been running pop-up events around the borough and our first two - on 21st November and on 19th December - quickly sold out. My dream of seeing children grow up together, learning to communicate and celebrate differences, has already proved more popular than I could have hoped.

Find out more at: thetogetherspace.co.uk

Dance dance revolution

by Victoria Munro

A hip hop dance school created by a former homeless teenager is launching an online entertainment service for care homes and hospitals.

The Blair Academy, based in Blackhorse Lane, was created by Charlie Blair, a former dancer and carer who previously lived in the Walthamstow YMCA.

Having suffered isolation while homeless and frustrated by the impersonal nature of professional care, she created the academy to offer dance classes for vulnerable groups.

After seeing the elderly "left behind" during Covid, the social enterprise is launching a digital entertainment service, the BA Box, with the help of more than £8,000 in funding from UnLtd.

Speaking to the *Echo*, Charlie said: "We're really innovating entertainment for older adults. There's lots of stuff out there that makes dated assumptions about how they want to spend their time.

"Care homes are not just made up of older white people, their residents come from lots

of different backgrounds and cultures, who want to watch someone like them.

"In addition to dance workshops, it will offer performances from singers and musicians and a variety of other different things. A lot of them can't go out anymore so we want to bring high-quality entertainment to them."

The Blair Academy has grown from just Charlie to a team of ten in only a few years and is, she says, "the culmination of all the things" she has gone through.

She said: "As a carer, it always frustrated me that I couldn't spend quality time with people because I had experienced myself what being isolated does to you when I lived in the YMCA.

"Even though I was only 19 and they were in their 90s, loneliness does not discriminate and can affect anyone. I think lockdown showed people that.

"It's definitely the driving force behind my business and I'm really proud that I've been able to turn experiences in my life that were painful into something that helps other people."

Find out more about the Blair Academy on their website: theblairacademy.com



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ARTS & CULTURE

Borough's best poems announced



First place winners Cat and Luca with judge Joelle Taylor

The winners of the borough's annual poetry competition were announced last month, with poems about violence against women taking home the top prizes.

Walthamstow residents Cat Turhan, 30, and Luca Parry-Williams, 13, won the local adults and young poets categories, accepting their prizes at Ye Olde Rose & Crown pub on 8th December.

All winners and commended poets read their entries to the gathered crowd, with the youngest poet to read being 10-year-old Chingford student Frankie Goldhill.

The winning poems were picked from thousands of entries by award-winning Walthamstow poet Joelle Taylor, whose most recent collection is shortlisted to win the T.S. Eliot prize.

Cat, who moved to Walthamstow in 2018, said her poem 'Gorgon' came about thanks to a Zoom art club in lockdown, when she was randomly assigned the gorgon card from Magic: The Gathering to inspire her next piece. The challenge

coincided with the murder of Sarah Everard so the poem became a way of dealing with "feeling angry and unable to get vengeance for that death".

Cat credits her success to the "amazing poetry community in Waltham Forest", adding: "Walthamstow is an inherently arty community and the poetry aspect is absolutely alive and kicking.

"The poets network is really active and so many people regularly contribute, it's been a real source of inspiration. I'm relatively new to the area so it's been really great having that feeling of being part of something."

Young winner Luca, who attends Walthamstow School for Girls, also chose to focus on sexual assault in their poem *Glass Body*, inspired by the experiences of people they know.

They said: "I wasn't expecting to win because I know there are a lot of talented writers around Walthamstow so I was dancing around the kitchen for ages.

"I don't really have an outlet to vent my feelings so I like to do it through poetry to keep a healthy mindset. I sometimes

find myself writing it automatically because I'll have a thought and have to write it down in case I forget."

Both second and third place in the young poets prize went to 12-year-old Walthamstow Academy student Kerrisha Alexander-Thompson, whose poetry is inspired by her identity as a black girl in Britain and said winning two top spots "felt unreal".

Third place adult winner JP Seabright, from Leytonstone, said it felt great to share their work after decades of "writing in the dark".

They said competitions like this one, run by Forest Poets, are "incredibly important to encourage people to write", particularly children, adding: "If I had something like this growing up, I wouldn't have waited until 48 to start writing things."

The local prize awards £50, £30 and £20 prizes to the top three poets in both categories, sponsored by The Stow Brothers.

Follow Forest Poets on Twitter @ForestPoets and prize winners Cat and JP at @cattyfantastic and @errormessage

Anna on Handmade Christmas Credit Channel 4



Leytonstone artist competes on national TV

A Leytonstone illustrator and designer did the borough proud last month, competing on Channel 4's *Handmade Christmas*.

Anna Laviniere was picked to compete on the show, hosted by Kirstie Allsopp, after producers spotted her embroidery on Instagram.

A Leytonstone resident for three years, she gave up a career in museums to pursue her passion for art during lockdown after a "change of heart".

While she missed out on taking home the trophy for the best handmade Christmas decoration, Anna told the *Echo* it was a great experience.

She said: "I'm quite a fan of *Handmade Christmas* and would watch it normally so to be approached by them was really great.

"Filming the episode was really nerve-wracking because I don't normally go in front of the camera and usually embroider by myself so it was weird to have a lot of people in the room watching.

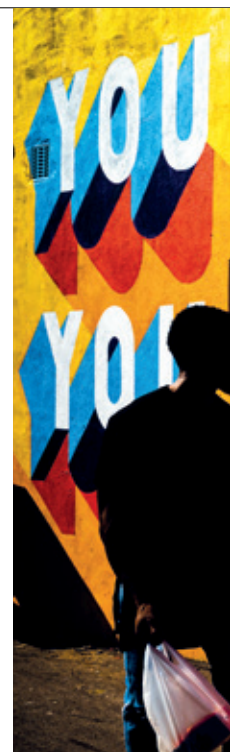
"But it was still really nice, even just to sit and talk to other people while crafting. Embroidery is a nice craft to do in the winter because it's quite cosy."

To see more of her work, visit her Instagram @lavystitch



One of Anna's custom designs Credit Anna Laviniere

ARTS & CULTURE



Round Our Way

by Angelo Zappone



A Walthamstow resident for almost two decades, Angelo has been taking photographs of some of the many interesting local people and beautiful landscapes in the area, managing to capture the diversity and character of this unique part of London.

He shoots almost exclusively with natural light and encourages his subjects to behave as unselfconsciously as possible. As he relates: "This, for me, is where beauty lies."

You can see Angelo's photos at Wynwood Art District, 2A Chingford Rd, London E17 4PJ until Jan 9th 2022.

Instagram @angelzphotos

We want your photos and illustrations! Please send in your images of people and places in Waltham Forest to penny@socialspider.com





HOUSING

Widow housed hours from work in empty room

Nana and her son Jason with a donated travel bed
Credit Sarah Sachs-Elridge



by Josh Mellor, Local Democracy Reporter,
& Victoria Munro

A “devoted” school assistant with an autistic son fears losing her job after she was housed in an empty room two hours from work by Waltham Forest Council. Widow Nana Yaa, 58, and 22-year-old son Jason were evicted on 7th December and eventually housed in Beckton, in a

room with no furniture at all until her employer donated a travel bed.

The distance from Walthamstow means Nana is unable to reach her job at Stoneydown Park Primary School in time for her usual 6am start.

Nana told the *Echo*: “It takes me two hours to get to the school so I can’t do my morning cleaning job, which pays me more than £300 a month.

“My son is autistic and finds it

difficult when there’s any change, he keeps saying he feels like a prisoner. If it was just me, it would be no problem but he is a poor, innocent man.”

On 15th December, Stoneydown parent Sonali Bhattacharyya told the council’s housing scrutiny committee that she and other parents are “appalled” at Nana’s situation.

She said: “Nana is an essential part of a staff team of key workers who’ve ensured Stoneydown has remained a safe, welcoming and supportive community.”

Socialist Party campaigner Nancy Taaffe added: “There is a growing constituency of people coming to us for help, after knocking on your door. We urge you to fight for rent controls, for council housing and against empty properties.”

Louise Mitchell, cabinet member for housing, responded that the “difficult times” faced by residents are the fault of the Conservative government’s benefit cap and “slashing budgets”.

She added: “I think we need to be clear that the difficulties faced in Waltham Forest are faced in every borough across London.

“As a council, we have invested almost £112million of capital funding into new housing over the last five years.”

Garage staff losing jobs to make way for unaffordable flats

by Josh Mellor, Local Democracy Reporter

Staff at a Walthamstow garage are losing their jobs to make way for seventeen unaffordable flats.

None of the flats replacing Wood Street Autos in Vallentin Road will be “affordable” because the developer argued this would cause it to lose money on the scheme.

Developer Regenta Ltd will pay the council £398,000 to make up for the lack of affordable housing, a figure agreed after “lengthy discussions” with council officers.

Despite expressing reservations, members of Waltham Forest Council’s planning committee unanimously approved the plans on 7th December.

Speaking at the meeting, Wood Street Autos employee Mark Brewer said: “I’m one of seven employed at Wood Street Autos, a few of us worked there for thirty years.

“If this planning application goes through it will mean seven local people will be without a job, seven



An artist’s impression of the development Credit Fourpoint Architects

people with families to feed.”

Planning officer Eshan Hussain told the committee Wood Street Autos could have chosen to move after the site was earmarked for development in 2013.

Committee member Alan Siggers, who later voted in favour of the scheme, said: “Look it’s supposed to have 35% affordable housing, the

amount [the developers are] offering does not even come close.

“£390,000 would do one property, and here we’ve got 17, I’m not sure what we’re doing with affordable housing in this borough.”

At a late stage in construction the costs will be evaluated again to see if the developer should pay more money.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Council ‘too risk-averse’ to be bankrupted by developer

Waltham Forest Council has invested £95million into its own property developer but insists it is too “risk averse” to be bankrupted if the company fails.

Council-owned developer Sixty Bricks was created in 2017 to “improve the supply of affordable new homes” and aims to build 800 homes by 2026.

Its directors are each paid £100,000-120,000 a year, plus a £10,000 bonus.

Despite the enormous investment, councillors were told on 1st December there is no risk of falling victim to the mistake that bankrupted Croydon Council.

Strategic finance advisor Rob Manning explained the council is too “risk averse” to rely on profits from council-owned companies to prop up its budget.

He added that every development Sixty Bricks undertakes has to be approved separately, unlike Croydon which lent its company money “en masse”.

Sixty Bricks recently completed its first ever development – a block of 34 flats in Highams Park called Centenary House.

Family slept in car after council eviction

A Walthamstow family were forced to sleep in a car after being evicted by Waltham Forest Council for refusing to move 140 miles away.

Izebela Kikosicka, 36, and her children were forced out of their temporary accommodation in Bexley less than an hour after she refused the council’s offer of a home in Derby.

She and her children slept in a friend’s car that night, on 16th November, before a mother at her children’s school invited them to stay.

She said: “The worst thing is the pain for my children. My daughter keeps crying, she’s only five years old, it’s hard to explain to a child how this has happened.

“Housing just do what they want - it’s humiliating the way we’re being treated. The temporary accommodation is empty and my stuff is there in Bexley.”

Councillor Louise Mitchell, cabinet member for homelessness prevention, said: “For families on lower incomes, the Government’s benefits cap policy, alongside the rising cost of housing in London, means they cannot afford private rented sector costs in the in the capital.

“We continue to work hard to deliver more decent, long-term housing options for residents that will provide settled, stable accommodation where families can thrive.”

CRIME

Walthamstow family behind fake holiday scam sentenced



Scam ringleader Mohun Bhajun
Credit Met Police

A Walthamstow mother and son who helped run a fake holiday scam that raked in hundreds of thousands of pounds have been sentenced for fraud.

Mohun Raj Bhajun, 52, of Priory Avenue, set up fake travel agent Stay and Key Travel with his 73-year-old mother Mariam, of Folkestone Road, and his West London-based brother Roshan.

The company went “bust” in June 2014, after which 23 people who had paid for holidays submitted claims to recoup their money through the Air Travel Organisers Licensing (ATOL) scheme.

However, these customers – who claimed £268,766 in total – were actually the family, friends and associates of the Bhajuns and had never paid for their

holidays in the first place.

Speaking after the last fake customer was finally found guilty today, Detective Inspector Richard Ward said: “The painstaking work that has gone into this investigation cannot be done justice in words.

“In addition to the sentences handed down by the court, confiscation proceedings have taken place to ensure that there is no benefit from this crime.”

Mohun Bhajun and his West London brother Roshan were both sentenced to five years in jail, while their elderly Walthamstow mother Mariam received a two-year suspended sentence.

Their “customers” – mostly from North and East London – all received suspended sentences, ranging in length from half a year to two years.

Teenager's killers found guilty of manslaughter



Hussain Chaudhry Credit Met Police

Two Ilford teenagers are guilty of manslaughter and robbery over the death of Walthamstow 18-year-old Hussain Chaudhry.

Marvin Ward and Alexis Morris, both also 18, were convicted on 17th December after a seven-week trial at Wood Green Crown Court.

The court heard Hussain was stabbed outside his own home in Lea Bridge Road on 17th March after arranging to sell his killers a designer jacket via social media.

Describing Hussain as a hardworking law student who “kept himself out

of trouble”, Detective Chief Inspector Mike Stubbins said his death could have happened to “anybody’s son”.

He added: “Hussain’s murder was a tragedy that shocked the community to its core. His life was tragically cut short due to the actions of two young men the same age as him.

“Ward and Morris went purposefully to Hussain’s family home to commit a robbery and steal the clothes. They had made clear arrangements to facilitate this by taking large machete style knives, fake money and stalling things to get into a booked taxi.

“Hussain’s family, who tried to defend him on the day, have not only

been left with physical scars but face the huge emotional and psychological burden of trying to come to terms with his death. A designer clothing sale should never have resulted in a life ending in such a brutal way.”

Hussain died from a stab wound to the neck, while both his mother and one of his two brothers suffered injuries to their hands.

Both killers fled the scene but were arrested within a week, with Morris having hidden himself in Luton with the help of 18-year-old Anthony Nguyen, now convicted of assisting an offender,

All three will be sentenced on 4th February next year.



Alexis Morris and Marvin Ward Credit Met Police

NEWS IN BRIEF

Leyton pensioner sent anti-Semitic abuse

A Leyton pensioner is in custody after sending Lord Alan Sugar anti-Semitic letters.

Patrick Gomes, 70, of Lyttelton Road, sent three abusive letters to one of *The Apprentice* star’s businesses in Loughton in late 2018.

Although he denied sending them when questioned, Gomes’ DNA and fingerprints were found on one of the letters and further letters were found in his home.

On 1st December, he was found guilty of religiously-aggravated harassment at Chelmsford Crown Court and placed in custody to wait for his sentence.

Following the guilty verdict, Lord Sugar expressed “sincere gratitude” to police, explaining he was initially “reluctant” to report the crime to an “already stretched” force.

Student nurse accused of raping patient

A Walthamstow student nurse is accused of raping a patient in an east London mental health hospital.

Ige Apata, 42, is charged with rape and sexual touching at Goodmayes Hospital in Redbridge earlier this year.

The alleged crimes are said to have taken place in a part of the hospital that treats highly vulnerable in-patients.

Hospital bosses have since increased the number of safeguarding staff on the ward and said they are “working closely” with the police.

Apata, of Higham Hill Road, will appear before a jury at Snaresbrook Crown Court on 21st March.

Five deny killing teen in Walthamstow

Five young men from across London have denied stabbing a teenager to death in Walthamstow years ago.

Kacem Mokrane, 18, died on Mount Pleasant Road in November 2017 after being stabbed in the stomach.

After a nearly four-year investigation, a total of seven men have been charged with murder after Kacem’s death, including three from Waltham Forest.

On 3rd December, five of those accused – including locals Kamil Kazmierski, 21, and Hamza Ul-Haq, 23 – pleaded not guilty at the Old Bailey and await trial in 2023.

A Waltham Forest teenager, 19-year-old Luca Griffiths, has yet to submit a plea and is due to appear in court at a later date.

LETTERS

Planning snooze

Dear Waltham Forest Echo

The recent planning meeting about Whipps Cross [issue 81, p1] was a total waste of time. The officer droned on, reiterating the plans that everyone had read and his report just agreed with everything Barts had proposed.

The public speakers knew what the decision would be and still took the time to engage and express their views but the councillors just carried on as if they weren't there. Cllr Siggers seemed to find it very tedious and Cllr Littlejohn tried to save some of the trees - but that was it.

This is a multimillion-pound development and councillors showed no interest, despite Barts having ten of their key people attending. The amount of time and money wasted on this process just shows the dire state local politics has sunk to. There must be a better way to deal with major planning applications than this.

Adrian Stannard
Walthamstow resident

Whipps woes

Dear Waltham Forest Echo

Waltham Forest Council leader Grace Williams says she is delighted a new Whipps Cross Hospital has planning approval but I'm not so delighted to discover the council has also approved "up to 1,500" dwellings – effectively turning the current hospital into a large housing estate with a hospital in the corner.

The site lies on a slope above the Fillebrook valley, where many local homes and roads flooded in July. Developers promise sustainable drainage systems to deal with rainfall but climate change is likely to add greatly to the amount of water that will need to be managed. In addition, 1,500 homes would produce half a million litres of waste water per day, meaning any future drainage problems could pose a dire hazard to thousands of families in the valley. Besides, no matter how you restrict parking, the thousands of new residents are bound to place a large burden

on local roads that are already jammed at busy periods.

The council promises 50 per cent affordable housing on the site. Why not design a far smaller scheme with 100 per cent affordable and social housing? That would really meet local needs, while placing less impact on the flood-risk zone and local transport mobility, and leave more space for the hospital and those services seemingly threatened by the current scheme.

Would that cause financial issues? Surely a National Health Service should be financed nationally. Or should we just dump the burden of risks onto the local population? Not a prospect to delight in my view, Cllr Williams.

Glyn Roberts
Leytonstone resident

Lest we be unfair

Dear Waltham Forest Echo

I was surprised to read Keith Foster's letter [issue 81, p14] signed "in disgust" about the town's war memorial.

On Remembrance Sunday, I popped over to the town hall and was delighted to join a couple of hundred people attending a full outdoor service on the new "piazza" in front of the town hall. Many more people than in previous years or who could be accommodated in the small area around the war memorial itself.

The Mayor of Waltham Forest and others addressed attendees and the whole thing was quite moving. After the service, in which many wreaths were laid, some of us spent a few moments in quiet prayer and reflection at the memorial itself.

If Mr Foster did attend, he would have seen that the fallen were properly remembered and honoured. Hopefully he will next year.

Francis Keegan
Walthamstow resident

London clearances

Dear Waltham Forest Echo

The council's harassment of mother of three Nadia Zamin,

who with her family has been evicted three times in the last six months, is an absolutely disgraceful dereliction of principles from a so-called Labour council. Ms. Zamin is one of the electorate they are supposed to represent, yet they would rather allocate their new housing to whoever is able to pay inflated prices, even if they have no connection with the borough whatsoever.

The message is: if you are poor we don't want you here. As the headline in your article [issue 79, p1] says, hundreds have been told "Out of London or onto the streets". We are in the grip of the London Clearances. Thank you Waltham Forest Echo for your attempts to restore some kind of moral compass.

David Gardiner
Walthamstow resident

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HEALTH

A raw deal for Waltham Forest

Regular Whipps commentator Mary Burnett on last month's "outline" planning permission

The first ever proposals for the new Whipps Cross Hospital, published by Barts Health NHS Trust in 2017, envisioned "the establishment of an integrated health, social care and health and wellbeing campus, bringing together a collection of connected services, teams and supporting infrastructure to provide holistic care and wellbeing to the local population designed around their needs." Four years of negotiation later and, on 24th November, this rosy vision resulted in the plans actually agreed by Waltham Forest Council's planning committee: a hospital squeezed into a corner of its current site and surrounded by up to 1,500 new homes.

So how did we get here? As with most crises facing Waltham Forest today, the pollution in our water supply started upstream, with gross underfunding from the national government. Nonetheless, this knowledge does not absolve the authorities working in our supposed best interest from an obligation to try to stem the tide.

Barts estimates it will cost £870million to rebuild Whipps, almost £100m less than the cost of the new Edmonton Incinerator for those keeping score at home and far, far more than the government seems willing to pay. The trust therefore has to scramble to maximise its own contribution, which has motivated the sale of more than half the hospital's land to a housing developer. Conveniently, it has paid consultants millions [issue 81, p15] to discover that the hospital's size is unnecessary because health services can be shunted over to "The Community", a previously undiscovered neighbourhood in Waltham Forest that does not suffer from the same lack of resources.

So what about the role of our councillors at the planning committee,



Protestors outside last month's planning committee meeting

scrutinising and questioning the plans? Their job is to represent our interests and make sure they really will meet the needs of residents but, to many watching, they seem to have been asleep at the wheel.

A series of residents and health campaigners poured their hearts, lived experiences and extensive research out to councillors at the meeting last month. They fear trimming the so-called fat from the hospital site will really mean losing services patients have come to rely on there, which Barts insists will be re-provided in The Community, postcode TBD. But councillors didn't seem that interested in talking about the land being lost, for which I suspect

a number of reasons. More than 1,000 homes will take a huge chunk out of the council's housing target, regardless of how expensive they end up being, while council tax from all those residents would generate income it needs in the face of eviscerating funding cuts.

It seems if the council can't get the "Fair Deal" they're clamouring for from the government, then an unfair one will have to make do, even if it's at the expense of our hospital. One of the public speakers told councillors that "in 30 years time, your successors will be cursing you" should such a massive sale of NHS land for housing be agreed. In the end, not only was it agreed, the vote was unanimously in favour.

Scheme for overweight kids launches

A free "weight management" service for overweight kids is launching in the borough this month.

Waltham Forest Council won government funding to hire BeeZee Bodies to provide online classes, mentoring and weekly meetings to help families make better fitness and diet choices.

Amy Monk, a BeeZee Bodies nutritionist,

said families in the 11-week programme would learn about topics like portion sizes and food prep and play team sports to "get moving for an hour".

She said: "It's really individual to each person what success looks like. We are very much trying to create sustainable long-term habits and improve the environment children are eating in.

"Although we do have a great rate of

weight loss, that's not the goal. We are focusing more on their happiness and wellbeing."

The in-person programme, which is also offered online, will take place at Friday Hall in Chingford, Leyton Sports Ground and The Meeting Point and Peterhouse in Walthamstow.

Anyone can refer their child to BeeZee Bodies by calling 03308 186308 or through their website.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Get tested for HIV, urges local charity

Residents are urged to get tested for HIV, following the 33rd annual World Aids Day last month.

Peter Brampton, from charity Positive East, said it's thought as many as 6,600 UK residents may have HIV without realising.

However, he reassured people that, thanks to medical advancements, HIV is now "a long-term, manageable condition" that can be treated with one tablet a day.

He said: "At Positive East, we are taking testing into the community, whether that's bars, clubs, libraries or the market.

"There's lots of myths, stigma and fear around HIV but, with current care, your health and life outcomes can be the same as someone without it.

"We have an ambition to end all new cases in the UK by 2030 but, in order to do that, we will have to do more testing.

"World AIDS Day [1st December] is a time to remember those we have lost along the way, while also celebrating the progress we have made."

Walthamstow GP in danger of closure

A Walthamstow GP is in danger of being shut down after failing to improve.

The Firs Medical Centre in Stephenson Road was placed in special measures by the CQC in May and re-inspected in October.

In her report published last month, chief inspector Dr Rosie Benneyworth said the surgery remained "inadequate".

Her report notes: "Patients' needs were not always assessed, and care and treatment not always delivered in line with current legislation, standards and evidence-based guidance.

"We identified several risks to patient safety which had not been recognised by leaders or management."

In November, a coroner said the practice "failed" a Walthamstow woman who suffered undiagnosed cancer for months by not referring her for tests despite clear warning signs.

Following the inspection in May, a senior partner told the *Echo* the practice would look at how to "address the points raised" and was "fully committed to providing the highest quality of care".

Requests for comment following the recent inspection received no response.

AROUND THE BOROUGH

WALTHAMSTOW

Car workshop destroyed by fire

Firefighters at the scene
Credit LFB



A car workshop was gutted by a fire that took around 100 firefighters to control.

The London Fire Brigade was called to Walthamstow Motors in Palmerston Road at 2pm on 5th December and sent fifteen fire engines.

The single-storey workshop was entirely destroyed and the flames spread to neighbouring

flats, although thankfully no one was harmed.

Borough Commander Richard Tapp, who was at the scene, said: "The whole of the workshop was alight, as well as equipment and car parts.

"The blaze spread to a house converted into flats next door and firefighters worked hard to bring it under control and pre-

vent further spread."

The fire was under control just under two hours later thanks to the hard work of crews from all over the borough and neighbouring Redbridge and Hackney.

The cause of the fire is currently under investigation, although those at the scene alleged it was triggered by a spark from someone welding.

LEYTON

Estate community centre revived after shooting

A community centre on the estate where a teenager was shot dead is being revived in an effort to prevent further bloodshed.

On 7th December, the Seddon Centre on Leyton's Beaumont Estate held the first of many planned events after young people called for somewhere safe to gather after the death of Alex Ajanaku.

In the early hours of 1st September, 18-year-old Alex was shot while hanging out with friends on a bench after leaving an illegal rave on the estate.

The drive to revive the centre was



Streetbase leader Katy outside the Seddon Centre Credit WF Council

led by Waltham Forest Council's youth engagement team Streetbase, who successfully applied for £5,000 in funding for the project from City Hall.

Streetbase leader Katy Thompson told the Echo: "The young people were saying there's nothing for them and that they would not be standing on the corner in the cold if this centre was available. They didn't just want youth clubs but also something constructive."

Katy said they plan to organise music and video workshops to help young people "solve their issues through creativity".

CHINGFORD



Students Ava and Finn on the new learning bus

Old London bus turned into Chingford school library

A former London bus has a new life as a library at a Chingford primary school.

Parkside Primary School in Wellington Avenue opened the new library bus this academic year after noticing "gaps" in students' reading.

The revamped bus had its wheels removed and shelves for the books fitted, while new non-slip flooring was donated free of charge by retailer Flooring Superstore.

Parkside Primary School Head of Reading Lara Batley said: "We had noticed some

gaps in our children's reading and so we set out to instil a new love of reading.

"The bus caught the children's attention as soon as it arrived, and they waited excitedly for us to do the work internally so they could start using it... they love it."

The school was last inspected by Ofsted in 2017 and given the second-highest "good" rating.

Inspectors noted students are "polite, well behaved and love learning" and that the Parkside motto 'Proud to Shine' "runs through every aspect of [the] school".

LEYTONSTONE

New home for young offenders' service

The borough's young offenders' service will have a new purpose-built home as early as 2023.

Waltham Forest Council's planning committee unanimously agreed plans for the new centre in North Birkbeck

Road last month, with one councillor calling the decision a "no-brainer".

The council's head of schools delivery Rob Miller explained the new building is "necessary" to improve the lives of "some of the most vulnerable children in the borough".

During an online consultation on the proposal in October, concerns were raised that the area would become a "super-hub" for crime as the road already has two homes for young homeless people.

However Rob reassured councillors that residents "will be able to contact senior staff" at the centre with any issues.



A 3D image of the planned new centre Credit WF Council

NEWS

Stop and search complaints service launched



Naaman and Ed-Michael from Spark2Life

by Victoria Munro

A new service to help young people complain about their treatment by police is up and running in Walthamstow. Spark2Life, based in the Outset Centre,

launched their attempt to improve the way stop and search is used by local police early last month. The team is going into schools to teach teens about their rights when stopped and is supporting those who feel they were unfairly stopped through

the Met’s complaints process. Metropolitan Police data shows the borough’s black community, particularly young black men, is disproportionately likely to be stopped by police compared to other racial groups. Naaman Telfer from Spark2Life told the *Echo*: “I don’t want to pigeonhole the police and say they’re bad all the time - I would still call them if my house was robbed - but some people do have personal or ulterior motives. “It’s very difficult to say to an officer if you think a search is racially motivated – they’ll often say they search everybody but, in your heart of hearts, you know that’s not true. “It’s not only happening to young people in hoodies, some will have a school uniform on and still be stopped. There’s kids as young as seven or eight who no longer want to be police officers because of experiences they have growing up.” Met Police procedure for stop and searches states officers should identify themselves and explain why the person is being stopped, as well as providing a receipt. However, Spark2Life’s Ed-Michael Kari-kari said that, even just in his own experience growing up in the borough, he could

recall times police had failed to follow the correct procedure. He said: “I’ve been approached and stopped by police who didn’t identify they were police. I remember feeling like ‘this is just how it goes’ because after a while you get used to it. “When you look at the number of complaints it’s a small percentage [of the total searches] and, from the police side, that can be interpreted as the system working fine because nobody is making complaints. What we are coming in to say is that maybe people just don’t know how. “Even if some complaints go through and they find everything was in alignment with the law, there’s feedback that can be given to police about different ways of engaging that could be more helpful.” Borough Inspector Marcus Walton told the *Echo* he hopes the project will “reassure the public” that the Met are “transparent and take stop and search very seriously”. He added: “The collaboration will not only improve stop and search, it will also improve confidence, by demonstrating that the police are accountable, have nothing to hide, and are willing to listen and learn.”

Advertisement

LICENSING ACT 2003
Application for the Variation of a Premises Licence

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

Notice is hereby given that **Mr Abrhar Khan** has applied to the London Borough of Waltham Forest for the variation of an existing Premises Licence at: **Fat Bites, 260 High Road Leyton, London E10 5PW**. The nature of the application is as follows:

- Extending Late night refreshment (indoors only): 12:00–04:00 daily
- Extending hours the premises is open to the public: 12:00–04:00 daily

The Licensing register listing full details of the application is kept by the Licensing Service, 3 The Square, London E10 5NR. 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, 3 The Square, London E10 5NR or via email: Licensing@walthamforest.gov.uk

Representations must be received no later than **12th January 2022**.

It is an offence under Section 158 of the Licensing Act 2003 to knowingly or recklessly make a false statement in connection with an application. A person is liable to an unlimited fine on conviction should such a false statement be made.

LICENSING ACT 2003
Application for the Grant of a Premises Licence

Notice is given that **Golden Triangle Enterprises Limited** has applied to The London Borough of Waltham Forest for a one-off time limited Premises Licence under the Licensing Act 2003 of part of **Chingford Plain (180m x 180m), near the Chingford Plain Car Park, London E4**. The proposed licensable activities on 10th and 11th September 2022 (only) are:

- Films, Live Music, Recorded Music, Performances of Dance, all indoors and outdoors, and supply of alcohol (on the Premises) at the following times and dates:
- Saturday 10th September 2022: 12:00–22:00
- Sunday 11th September 2022: 12:00–22:00

Anyone who wishes to make representations regarding this application must write to: Licensing Section, London Borough of Waltham Forest, 3 The Square, Leyton, London, E10 5NR or Email: licensing@walthamforest.gov.uk

Representations must be received no later than: **18 January 2022**

The Application Record and Register may be viewed during normal office hours at the above address, or at: www.walthamforest.gov.uk

Note: it is an offence to knowingly or recklessly make a false statement in connection with an application. A person guilty of such offence is liable on summary conviction to a fine not exceeding level 5 on the standard scale.

LICENSING ACT 2003
Application for the Grant of a Premises Licence

Notice is hereby given that **Fizzy Wine Ltd** has applied to the London Borough of Waltham Forest for the grant of a Premises Licence at: **The Arch Deli, Arch 211 Grove Green Road, Leytonstone E11 4AJ**. The nature of the application is as follows:

- Supply of alcohol for consumption on & off the premises: 10:00–21:00, Mon–Wed; 10:00–23:00 Thurs; 09:00–23:00, Fri–Sun
- Hours premises is open to the public: 16:00–21:00 Thurs; 09:00–21:00, Fri–Sat, 09:00–18:00 Sun

The Licensing register listing full details of the application is kept by the Licensing Service, 3 The Square, Leyton, London E10 5NR. 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, 3 The Square, Leyton, London E10 5NR or via email: Licensing@walthamforest.gov.uk

Representations must be received no later than **17th January 2022**.

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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NEWS

Jamie Lewis and Deniz Jaffer were jailed last month **Credit** Met Police



More disgrace for Waltham Forest police

by Josh Mellor, Local Democracy Reporter

The reputation of local police took another blow last month after an officer admitting using a racial slur for Pakistanis.

Harry Chandler, who was sacked without notice on 17th December, sent the slur via Whatsapp to fellow disgraced ex-cop Jamie Lewis in June last year.

Jamie Lewis and former colleague Deniz Jaffer were jailed for two years and nine months each on 6th December for “misconduct in public office”.

At the opening of his misconduct hearing on 16th December, Harry Chandler’s representation said he recognised “what he did was wrong” and that it was a “joke”.

The hearing was told: “Due to his stressful job, he was experiencing distressing deaths... and receiving negative responses from the public.

“It was in that moment that he resorted to

saying something controversial, the humour being a taboo thing... to a person he knew not to be racist.

“It was not in earnest, not with conviction or seriousness, it was a deliberate joke, he was looking for a response.”

Following news of his dismissal, Detective Chief Superintendent Richard Tucker said: “Using language of this nature is utterly unacceptable and will not be tolerated. PC Chandler has rightly been held to account for his actions.”

The incident was also discussed at Lewis’ own misconduct hearing the month prior, where he admitted misconduct for replying “exactly” to the message containing the slur.

Lewis and Jaffer were jailed for taking photos of murdered sisters Bibaa Henry and Nichole Smallman and sending messages describing them as “dead birds” to a group of 41 other Met officers.

Only fifth of borough triple-jabbed against Covid



An elderly man receives his jab **Credit** NHS England

Only about a fifth of Waltham Forest has received a “booster jab” to protect them against Covid, according to government figures from last month.

East London has the worst vaccine uptake in the entire country, despite concerns about the fast-spreading Omicron variant.

Only 53,260 Waltham Forest residents had received a third dose of the vaccine on 9th December, totalling just under a fifth of the borough’s population and compared to a UK average of just over 40%.

However, more than half of the borough has now received their second dose.

Highams Park East has the highest number of residents to have received all three doses, with more 3,000 having had their third jab. Rates of the booster vaccine are far lower in Leyton and Leytonstone areas.

Walthamstow college opens £21m building

An arts college which boasts singer Emeli Sandé as a patron has opened its new £21million building.

Big Creative Academy in Clifton Avenue is a free sixth form college specialising in the creative arts, ranging from music and theatre to fashion and fitness.

Its new building, almost entirely funded by the Department of Education, has a 200-seat theatre, outdoor performance areas and numerous technical studios.

Principal Sacha Corcoran MBE told the *Echo* one of the school’s founding goals is to help young people traditionally shut out of the arts world to succeed.

She said: “There is a lack of opportunity for people from disadvantaged backgrounds, who can’t access more elite institutions. We wanted to reach those young people, who may be at risk of dropping out of school, and keep them in education.

“We very much see this building as a legacy for the borough of culture, making sure the arts remain a priority.”

Emeli Sandé was recently confirmed as the school’s patron, with Sacha adding that it was a “natural fit” since she is passionate about “providing access for untapped talent”.

She added that the school received a



A performance at the grand opening **Credit** Big Creative Academy

£150,000 donation towards its theatre from William Morris Big Local and, with the help of Waltham Forest Council, will also offer a drop-in career advice service for anyone to attend.

Prospective students interested in enrolling can find out more here: bigcreative.education

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Fayaz Masammyar, coach at East London Boxing Club Credit Boris Vajda



East London's Real McCoy

Bella Saltiel interviews the owner of the East London Boxing Club for St James Big Local

One way or another, Fayaz Masammyar has been fighting for the majority of his life, whether in the ring or at protests against the regime in his former home.

He started boxing as a child, taught by his uncle, Muhammad Shafiq. Back in Afghanistan, which Fayaz left at just 16, Muhammad was a professional boxer, who competed in multiple Asian Championships.

"Definitely he always loved to have someone in the family to keep his legacy alive," Fayaz says, "His dream was to make me a boxer."

A catastrophic injury has since made that dream impossible but, when not studying to become a doctor, the 23-year-old has found a new way to follow his passion for the sport in Walthamstow.

The East London Boxing Club gym opened in St James Mews

in 2017. "I was a fighter," Fayaz explains, "And when I stopped boxing I thought: let me do something to help the community and help myself stay fit."

He says he will always recommend physical exercise to patients if it's needed and encourages everyone to try it out, particularly women. "Women should know boxing isn't just for competition," he adds, "It can be a great way to release energy after work. It's not just about the physical exercise but the mental exercise."

And Fayaz could use a project to occupy his mind, given his concerns about the family he still has back home. "I'm still shocked at what just happened to Afghanistan," he says, recalling the Taliban takeover earlier this year, "My family are not safe and every day the worries are getting more and more."

What keeps his spirits up is how

"happy and honoured" he is to protest against the regime and the small reminders of home he is able to find around Walthamstow. In particular, he says the best place to eat Afghan food is Afghan Kabila in High Street, Walthamstow, where he recommends the Kabili and kebab.

Lessons at the club opposite St James Street Station are less than a tenner and Fayaz hopes this will help encourage people of all levels of fitness to take up the sport that "truly transformed" his life.

He explains: "The lessons and discipline from this highly competitive sport has brought me such a long way. Boxing taught me skills which I have applied to all areas of my life."

Find out more about the East London Boxing Club on their website here: eastlondonboxing.co.uk

O's strong start stalls

Leyton Orient columnist Jim Nichols on the cracks beginning to show

Leyton Orient continue to challenge in the top half of League Two as the season reaches the halfway stage – but will be frustrated they are not higher.

The O's have impressed many observers in recent weeks with some big home wins, including a 5-0 defeat of Hartlepool United, a 4-1 victory over Sutton United and, most recently, a 4-1 win against Swindon Town. Once again, among the scorers in those games were summer signings Harry Smith, Aaron Drinan and Tom James, who have all made a significant contribution to the club's overall performance.

Smith and Drinan are each a fixture on the League Two top scorer chart, with both landing double figures already this season. Both had a mixed scoring record prior to joining the club so their exploits have come as a surprise. With the club having only had two players in the last 40 years to reach 20 league goals in one season, the prospect of two strikers potentially joining this exclusive club this year is an exciting one for supporters.

It remains a positive season overall but it's undeniable there are increasing areas of concern. The club was aware it would need to rely on a small squad but has struggled with recent injuries to key players. The aforementioned James is one

example, with the injury he sustained in the disappointing home defeat to Crawley Town in December potentially leaving the squad light in an area where it is short of cover. Central midfield is another position in need of strengthening and, when the transfer window reopens in January, the club may look into plugging a few of these gaps.

Another disappointment has been the form away from Brisbane Road. While the team remain difficult to beat and have a strong defensive record, at the time of writing the O's have gone three months since their last away victory. It could be argued that some of the away results have not reflected the play, where Orient have been in a strong position only to concede late goals. Hopefully these dropped points will not cost them at the end of the season, especially if injuries continue to grow and competitiveness fades.

One area of positivity has been the club's FA Cup run. Home victories over Ebbsfleet United and Tranmere Rovers have earned the O's a Third Round trip to Championship side Stoke City. It is Orient's first appearance at this stage of the FA Cup since 2014 and they will be hoping to take a large following to the former Premier League side's stadium when the game takes place this month.

Credit James Cracknell



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What we do

Here at *Waltham Forest Echo* we do things differently. We combine professional journalism with voluntary contributions from people who live and work in the borough and create content which is responsive to and reflective of the community.

These are challenging times for print media with many newspapers closing and advertising revenue in decline, but our not-for-profit model offers a new approach to creating local journalism which is inclusive and accountable.

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As a not-for-profit publication we rely on the generous support of our community. We look to our readers, who recognise the value of independent journalism, to help support us.

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walthamforestecho.co.uk/membership

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