



Your independent community newspaper

WALTHAM FOREST ECHO

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Three children and two adults, including the driver, were sent to hospital after a “packed” 212 bus crashed near Highams Park Station on 25th January – read the full story online

Local election meltdown

by Victoria Munro

With only three months to go until the local elections, both of the borough's main political parties are reportedly in meltdown as they struggle to finalise their list of candidates.

The borough's mosques are

calling for an investigation “into what appears to be clear discrimination” in the Labour party, following the de-selection of a Muslim cabinet member, as well as two of his relatives, and allegations of bias against Muslim applicants.

Meanwhile, the borough's Tories are “more divided than they've been in nearly two

decades”, according to a departing councillor, and have entirely restarted the process in two wards for the third time after complaints of inappropriate attempts to influence members.

Depending on the outcome of ongoing appeals, there could be as many as eleven new Labour councillors after the May elections, after four councillors were

de-selected and seven did not run again.

The controversy in Labour hinges around the de-selection of long-standing cabinet member Cllr Liaquat Ali MBE, who represents High Street and is said to have lost the leadership race to Grace Williams last summer by 23 votes to 21.

Cllr Hather Ali and Umar Ali –

both related to Liaquat – are still appealing their own de-selections.

A local Labour spokesperson refused to confirm how many votes there were between Cllr Williams and Cllr Ali, stating: “As with all internal Labour Group elections, the specifics of any vote remain confidential.”

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NEWS



FELLOWSHIP IS LIFE

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Waltham Forest Echo is the borough's free community newspaper. We publish monthly and distribute 17,500 free copies of each issue – and we will continue to do so during the ongoing public health crisis

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Bin staff protest over rubbish treatment

by Josh Mellor,
Local Democracy Reporter

Borough bin collectors claim a contractor hired by the council for £13million a year is treating newer hires like “second class citizens”.

Waste staff employed by Waltham Forest Council contractor Urbaser protested outside the town hall on 11th January, urging councillors to back their fight for fair treatment.

The company was awarded an eight-year contract to manage the borough's waste and recycling collection in 2019, taking over from previous provider Kier.

Workers recruited after it took over say their contracts have lower wages and no paid sick leave. While Urbaser insists these problems relate to contracts it “inherited” from Kier, it is meeting with the union this month to discuss a resolution.

Unite representative Tommy Anderson said there was a “six-tier system” of different staff contracts, which the union hopes to see equalised.

He said: “We all had to go and risk our lives clearing rubbish during the pandemic and we're all called heroes and everything else.

Staff protesting outside the town hall Credit LDRS



Let's respect these heroes with decent pay and decent contracts.”

One worker, who asked to remain anonymous to protect their job, said: “We're fed up of being treated like second class citizens. We want better working conditions and equal opportunities – half the staff don't get what the others get.”

Since taking over, Urbaser has introduced a new collection fleet of 85 low-emission vehicles and begun collecting new items such as electrical goods, textiles and batteries.

Responding to the protest, deputy leader Clyde Loakes said the contract had safeguarded “the regular, reliable collections that residents expect” and offered full-time staff sick pay and a London Living Wage.

He added: “Since the contract began, the usage of agency staff has reduced from around 50 per cent to 15 per cent. We have encouraged Urbaser to offer permanent, stable jobs for these essential workers, whose work is hugely valued by everyone in Waltham Forest.

“We want to work constructively with all parties involved. We will continue to talk with Urbaser and the unions to discuss outstanding issues and find a solution.”

Possible Hoe Street home for new university campus

A university set to open a campus in the borough next year is in “advanced discussion” about a possible home in Hoe Street.

Last September, it was revealed Waltham Forest Council had spent over a year in secret talks with the University of Portsmouth (UoP) about opening a second campus in 2023.

The council hopes this will “raise the ambition” of young people and boost the local economy and agreed to split the as-yet unknown costs with UoP to incentivise them to choose the borough.

While a final location has yet to be decided, it was revealed at a meeting of cabinet leaders on 13th January that officers have suggested recently council-acquired Central House in Hoe Street.

The report reads: “Officers are currently in advanced discussion

with University of Portsmouth and their partners to scope out the potential of the site being redeveloped as the main teaching campus for the University.

“Should that not materialise, officers are concurrently working up designs for a mixed-use redevelopment of the site, providing new affordable homes and a minimum of 2,000sqm of employment space.”

Central House was first built in 1991 as office space for property company Strettons, until it moved to a larger site in Leytonstone in 2019.

While a planning application to turn the site into a hotel was agreed in March 2019, this never materialised and the site was sold to the council last year.

A business case created by council officers at the time of the purchase suggested it could be used to create at least 60 new flats.

Warning after e-bike sets house on fire



Damage at the house in Grove Road Credit LFB

Firefighters have issued a safety warning to owners of electric bikes after a fire in Leytonstone.

A home in Grove Road caught fire on 18th January – it is believed after the battery of an e-bike charging in a bedroom malfunctioned.

No one was harmed and the fire was under control in just under an hour but the ground floor suffered “substantial” damage.

A London Fire Brigade spokesperson said those inside the house “heard bangs coming from a bedroom” where the e-bike was charging.

They explained that lithium-ion batteries can fail if an incorrect charger is used, advising owners to always “buy an official one from a reputable seller”.

They added: “Batteries can also pose a risk if they have been damaged, so try to ensure they are not getting knocked around. You should also not expose them to extremes of temperature.

“You should always make sure you unplug your charger once it's finished charging... we would advise not to leave it unattended or while people are asleep.

“This is also a timely reminder to keep internal doors closed to stop smoke spreading if a fire starts. The property sustained substantial smoke damage due to doors inside being left open.”

INTERVIEW



Tim Speers, a 36-year-old from Walthamstow and part of Insulate Britain
Credit Penny Dampier

From poker to protest to prison

by Victoria Munro

Tim Speers' first cellmate at Wandsworth Prison found his presence there hilarious. "I could hear him joking to people on the phone, saying you won't believe who I'm sharing a cell with," he said, "It's one of the guys who sellotaped himself to the M25."

The 36-year-old from Walthamstow was one of nine Insulate Britain protestors jailed last November for disobeying a court order banning them from protesting on the motorway. After refusing to apologise in court, Tim was sentenced to four months, of which he served two, and sent to a different prison than his fellow protestors due to having spent six days in jail previously, also for protesting.

Stuck on a transport bus alone, he said he worried about possible violence but that his fellow prisoners turned out to be "genuinely full of admiration" for what he had done. "Many prisoners are in a system that's failing them and they respect anyone who tries to challenge any part of that," he said. He even seemed to have convinced his cell-mate to try a vegan diet when the other man was taken to solitary for his own act of peaceful protest, climbing onto anti-suicide netting between two storeys of cells, and they didn't cross paths again.

It was through embracing veganism that Tim first got involved in environmental campaigning, leaving behind a surprising career as an online poker player, through which he earned enough to move to London from his home in Cornwall. In 2018, he came across the documentary *Cowspiracy* and was horrified to realise "how much destruction there was behind one burger", abandoning meat completely after seeing slaughterhouse footage for the first time.

"Before that I wasn't politically involved at all, I was really naive actually," he remembers, adding that he lost a few friends in his earlier, more militant days. "I think I was happier when I was playing poker and more ignorant to the reality and horrors of the world but, the more I know, the more I feel it's part of my duty of care to leave the world in the same state I found it, if not better."

Insulate Britain demands the government "fully fund and take responsibility for" insulating all social homes by 2025 and all other homes by 2030. It's a goal that would significantly cut household emissions, as well as potentially save some of the 8,500 people a year who die because they can't afford heating. As Tim told the judge in court, "a few hours of traffic is justified in the fight against extinction" and, though he "takes no joy whatsoever in disrupting the lives of the general

public, especially working class people", he is proud how far the group spread their message, making headlines "every single day for two months as a protest group no one had ever heard of before".

While Tim is clear he would risk jail again, it's not a decision he would want other campaigners to make lightly and, though not traumatising, his stay in Wandsworth was far from easy. Having already suffered from insomnia in his normal life, the background noise of jail saw him go without sleep for five straight days at one point, which was clearly an issue other prisoners shared. Tim explains there was a steady black market trade of sleeping tablets, which some prisoners paid for with vape cartridges they could purchase from touchscreen kiosks dotted around the wing.

Confinement in a post-Covid prison was also far more stifling than usual, with group activities cut down to the bare minimum. Tim said they were let out once a day for their hot meal, which they selected from a menu of five options on the same touchscreens, and again for 30–45 minutes of social time and showering, although sometimes this second outing wouldn't happen. On Mondays and Wednesdays, they were allowed into a concrete yard for fresh air, which had an empty flower bed in each corner and was filled with rubbish thrown down by prisoners from the cells above. It was in this yard that Tim saw his first and only prison fight, in which

three prisoners ganged up on another man to the outrage of the watching crowd, who chanted "one on one".

Tim spent most of his time watching snooker on the TV in his cell and reading books and, though he missed his close knit shared house near Lloyd Park, says he has found socialising "more draining" than normal after his time away. "I missed music a lot so it was really great to get to put my headphones on and go for a walk by myself," he said, "But lately I don't feel like I have the energy for anything. It's probably a mix of the prison experience and then just thinking about what's going on in the world. The fact it feels these sorts of protests are necessary to force change feels depressing."

Still, there's signs that the rest of the world may be coming around to Tim's view, however slowly. In November – a few weeks before he went to jail but two months after the first Insulate Britain protest – Waltham Forest Council unveiled an "eco-home" it created by retrofitting a Victorian-era property. While the show-home was intended to encourage property owners to pay for their own renovations, the council also announced it had secured £1.7million to retrofit 200 council flats, a small step towards its aim of achieving net-zero emissions by 2030.

Find out more about Insulate Britain on their website insulatebritain.com

NEWS

Continued from P1

Cllr Anna Mbachu, who has represented Grove Green ward since 2006, is also said to be appealing her de-selection from the council. Cllr Mbachu took a former NHS colleague to court for libel in October and was ordered to pay the defendant's court costs of £34,000 after her case was thrown out.

Seven councillors did not participate in the selection process this time around, including former leader Clare Coghill, who joined the board of affordable housing provider Square Roots a few months after announcing she would not stand this year.

Other councillors not running are Joe Lacey-Holland, siblings Asim Mahmood and Saima Mahmud, Ros Flowers, Jacob Edwards and Patrick Edwards – no relation. The council's website shows that Cllr Patrick Edwards, who represents Cann Hall, last attended a council meeting in February of 2020.

The process to fill empty spots, however, has created a scandal in the borough's Muslim community, after all but one of 14 Muslims who applied to become a new councillor were refused, according to the Waltham Forest Council of Mosques (WFCOM).

One candidate, who asked to remain anonymous, told the *Echo* they dropped out of the process after what they felt was an unnecessarily "hostile" interview, claiming their Muslim faith and politics on the left of the party spectrum biased the process against them.

A spokesperson for WFCOM, which represents eleven mosques and thousands of Muslims in the borough, told the *Echo*: "We are concerned about the reports of potentially blatant Islamophobia in the Labour party, seemingly aimed at keeping Muslims – who make up a quarter of the borough's population – out of the political process."

"This is particularly baffling given Labour prominently and rightly calling out the Islamophobia nationally in the Tory party. It would be a disgracefully hypocritical stance to call it out nationally whilst ignoring it in their own house."

"Many Muslims in our community continue to question their affiliation and are asking if Islamophobia is just a political football for Labour to exploit for their own means. Labour have not been reassuring so far, but we expect an investigation into what appears to be clear discrimination"

Councillor interviews in both Labour and the Conservatives are conducted by party members from outside the borough in an attempt to ensure neutrality, often councillors from neighbouring councils like Redbridge.

A Labour spokesperson said the selection process is run by the Local Campaign Forum (LCF), a committee within the party, and "follows a process

set down in the Labour Party rule book... to ensure councillor candidates meet the very highest quality requirements which our residents expect".

However, those within the party report that the Waltham Forest LCF is "overwhelmingly white", despite the borough being one of the most diverse in Britain.

Responding to accusations of bias in the selection process, a Labour spokesperson said: "Waltham Forest Labour has a strong record on diversity and there is a determination to ensure Labour candidates properly reflect the diversity of our borough."

"The Labour Group organised engagement and training

"In almost twenty years on the council, I have never known the group so divided"

sessions ahead of the selection process for members who identify as BAME. These were well attended and encouraged those from previously under-represented backgrounds to apply.

"While the selection process is still ongoing, we are confident the panel of Labour candidates that will be put before the electorate in May will be more diverse than at any previous borough-wide election."

Despite being a far smaller party – with only 14 seats on the council – preparations for the local election among Waltham

Forest Conservatives have reportedly been no less troubled.

Departing councillor Andy Hemsted told the *Echo*: "In almost twenty years on the council, I have never known the group so divided. It's not working for the residents of Chingford and it's so sad to see."

Though in April current Tory leader Tim James said his predecessor "felt it was time" to hand over the reins, Cllr Alan Siggers recently told the *Echo* he was forced out of the role.

Despite having made it clear he would not run in this year's race, he feels he was removed as leader before his term was up because he "was in the way" of plans for the election.

The selection process started under Cllr Siggers' leadership in the summer of 2020 and was almost

finished late last year when the decision was taken to restart the process in Hatch Lane, Valley, Larkwood and Chingford Green – four of the five wards currently under Tory control.

In Chingford Green, two of three current councillors, Nick Halebi and Andy Hemsted, were de-selected, although Cllr Hemsted successfully appealed before deciding to stand down anyway.

Cllr Halebi's wife and the third ward councillor Kay Isa was approved. The pair's son, Justin Halabi, became a councillor for Hatch Lane last May,

replacing the late Geoff Walker.

According to *Londra Gazete* – a weekly newspaper for London's Turkish community – the pair's other child is Turkish Cypriot popstar Eylem. As seen on her official Instagram, the singer met with Home Secretary Priti Patel and Chingford MP Iain Duncan Smith in June 2020.

However, Cllr Halabi's spot in the May elections could be under threat, as the Tories are having to redo the selection process in Hatch Lane and Larkwood wards after successful complaints.

The complaint in Hatch Lane reportedly centres around an email sent to Conservative members before they were due to pick which successful interview candidates would stand in the election, attempting to influence their decision. Similarly, in Larkwood, a leaflet backing three of six choices approved at interview was sent to members a few days before the vote, although this reportedly was not the grounds for redoing the selection.

The leaflet instructed members to vote for existing councillors John Moss and Catherine Saumarez, as well as new candidate Alicja Borkowska. Prior to the decision to restart the selection process the second time, the Larkwood candidates were Cllr Moss, Cllr Selina Seesunkur and 18-year-old Sam O'Connell, picked by members over Cllr Saumarez last November.

The local Conservative party has failed to respond to multiple requests for comment at the time of writing.



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NEWS

Ben Rees lives just off St James Street Credit LDRS



Man fined hundreds for putting rubbish out for collection

by Josh Mellor,
Local Democracy Reporter

A Walthamstow man says he feels “black-mailed” and has considered leaving the borough after receiving two fly-tipping fines for putting his bins out.

Ben Rees was fined £400 in July this year after 3GS, an enforcement company hired by Waltham Forest Council, found his bin bag in a pile on St James Street.

He reluctantly paid the fine after 3GS rejected his argument that he put his bin bags out at the right time for collection and threatened to take him to court.

But when he faced a second £400 fine in October, for what he believed was a similar collection issue, he and his wife said they began thinking about moving.

When contacted by the Local Democracy Reporting Service about Ben’s case, the council cancelled the second fine, saying there had been a “missed collection” after all.

Ben said his building is in an

alleyway with no room for wheelie bins, meaning rubbish has to be left out in bags at specific times, but criticised 3GS for their “predatory” approach.

He said: “It’s given us a lot of anxiety thinking about what to do about it. It feels like they’re actively trying to catch you out.

“The last fine looked like somebody may have picked up the bag and moved it as all the others were collected. The next thing you know someone’s rooted through it, found my name and is trying to fine me £400.

“I find it unreasonable that the council expects me to have a job and a life and to be looking out for trash bags that are not even in front of my house and I have no control over.

“On top of that, they charge the maximum amount of £400 and, if you don’t agree, they threaten to prosecute you in court. There were no questions about affordability or how you plan to pay it.”

3GS were awarded the £2.9million contract for enforcement services last April, taking over

from previous company Kingdom LA, who were accused of acting “like Wild West sheriffs” by some residents.

The company won the contract after offering the council a slightly better cut of fines paid. A council spokesperson said 3GS issued 1,322 fines between April and December last year but claim the amount paid to the council cannot be disclosed because it is “commercially sensitive”, although it is at least 30%.

When contacted for comment, Waltham Forest’s deputy leader Clyde Loakes, said the council “takes its obligation to maintain the local environment seriously”.

He added: “Street litter is cleared using council taxpayer money and we will issue fines if there is reason to believe someone is responsible for creating a mess.

“We operate a fair and robust appeal process for residents who believe they have been fined in error.

“Since April, 3GS UK has contributed significantly to helping keep the borough clean and tidy.”

Facelift for town centre ahead of new theatre



Walthamstow town centre is set for a £1.79million facelift, in a bid to cement its place as an “emerging cultural quarter” when the new EMD theatre opens this spring.

Waltham Forest Council leaders agreed on 13th January to invest in a “theatrical promenade” leading from Walthamstow Central Tube station to the 1,000-seat venue.

The money will be spent on street lighting to make the area feel safer and a side-entrance for the theatre, while a further £1.9m will be spent turning nearby council properties into commercial space and accommodation for performers.

Cabinet member for economic prosperity Simon Miller said the investment would “make the town centre an even more welcoming place” and ensure the economic benefits of the theatre are “felt as widely as possible.”

The theatre, previously the Granada Cinema, is undergoing a £31m revamp – meant to cost less than £20m when first agreed in 2019 – which it

is hoped will boost the local economy by up to £52m over the next decade.

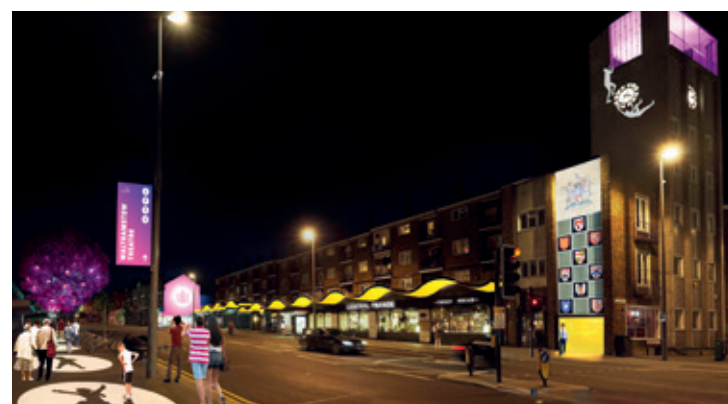
However, a 2019 council survey revealed two thirds of people found the town centre unappealing at night due to safety concerns, poor street lighting and insufficient signage.

The funding agreed last month will be used to create a “sequence of stages”, marked by theatrical lighting, banners and artwork, leading to the venue.

The cobbled Hatherley Mews will receive a festoon canopy, a heritage style lantern and a “red carpet” side entrance for performers.

Ten of the eleven flats in the 100-year-old Tramworks, most of which are not currently let, will be converted into commercial spaces, while a remaining unit will become accommodation for performers.

The report adds that water pipes beneath Hatherley Mews must be replaced as “supply has been known to run dry during peak demand”, which poses a “significant risk” of disruption due to a backlog of works at Thames Water.



FEATURES

Thousands raised to fund incinerator court battle

by Julia Gregory,
Local Democracy Reporter

Campaigners opposing the replacement and expansion of an incinerator near Chingford have raised more than £7,000 to fund a legal battle.

The Stop the Edmonton Incinerator Now coalition needs £7,500 to take North London Waste Authority (NLWA) to court and have almost reached their target in just over a week at the time of writing.

They hope to overturn the NLWA's decision last month to award the contract to rebuild the Edmonton Incinerator to Acciona [issue #82, p1], a company due to start work in the middle of this year.

Campaigners claim the decision to appoint Acciona, the only bidder, was "made on insufficient and misleading information".

Camden resident Dorothea Hackman, leading the fundraising, said: "The incinerator will be built in an area of deprivation, undermining health and well-being. There is overprovision of incinerators nationally and in London, meaning this is a useless debt put on our children and grandchildren."



Campaigners at an Islington protest against the incinerator Credit Vicky Pite

"We should be improving recycling towards a green economy to save humanity from global warming, not burning plastic to make energy and heat."

NLWA argues expanding the facility will prevent rubbish ending up in landfill and generate power to heat thousands of homes.

Chair Cllr Clyde Loakes said: "We are confident that a rigorous procurement process was followed, resulting in the best value and environmental solution for managing north London's waste."

"We followed proper due process and are confident that our decision to award a contract to Acciona was legally made."

"Our members have been listening, and continue to listen, to concerns about the project. Through our careful consideration we've come to a decision which will help to protect the planet and safeguard our communities from environmental, health and financial risks."

He pointed out that the order to go ahead was subject to a public inquiry and was also signed off by the government, with a judicial review rejected in 2019.

The crowdfunder can be found here: crowdjustice.com/case/stop-the-edmonton-incinerator

'We must stop this expansion'

In our second MP column, Sir Iain Duncan Smith speaks out against the new incinerator

Ibelieve expanding the incinerator at Edmonton Eco Park will be detrimental to the health and wellbeing of residents, have a huge environmental impact and fail to represent good value for the taxpayer. As I and many local councillors and MPs have stated time and time again: this expansion must be stopped.

After half a century of use, the incinerator was being decommissioned, giving the potential to make way for greener and cleaner waste disposal. [Ed note – A NLWA spokesperson states there were never plans to decommission] Instead, the North London Waste Authority (NLWA) has decided to not only replace it but also increase its capacity by at least 30 per cent. This new incinerator will have the capacity to burn a massive 700,000 tonnes of waste every year, releasing ultra-fine particulate matter, which has been linked to various health conditions.

It is clear that North London does not need this extra waste disposal when so much of our existing waste could be recycled or composted. The proposals for the expansion were drawn up despite waste falling year on year since 2015 and mean the new incinerator will be three times too large for North London's needs. [The

NLWA states this is "entirely incorrect" as "a proportion of north London's waste is being sent elsewhere including to landfill" due to current capacity] In order to provide the incinerator with enough waste to burn, rubbish will be driven from across London and beyond to make up the short fall, clogging up roads and filling the air with unnecessary exhaust fumes. [The NLWA states the proposed plant "can operate at lower volumes... so there is no need for us to take in external waste from other areas."]

The project also clearly does not represent good value for money and, in my view, the costs will likely only spiral. Last month, what should have been a competitive bid process ended with the one remaining bidder being waved through by a nominal vote, after all remaining bidders either dropped out or merged.

It is clear that local people do not want this incinerator. Its expansion will be detrimental to residents' health and to the environment in which they live, work and relax. The use of public funds for this project needs the scrutiny of a Value for Money Review, which I continue to demand from the government. Let's work together to 'Stop the Edmonton Incinerator'.



Sir Iain Duncan Smith, Chingford MP Credit parliament.uk

FEATURES

Leytonstone Thai named TimeOut's top restaurant

by Zoe Dowsett

"It was great to get recognition for what the restaurant does," says Sirichai Kularb-wong, head chef at Leytonstone Thai restaurant Singburi, recently named TimeOut's 2021 Restaurant of the Year. Along with this accolade, it was also named Eaters' best takeaway, something only discovered when the restaurant received a trophy in the post. While Sirichai is "chuffed" by both honours, he admits the sudden wave of attention, more than twenty years after Singburi first opened, is unexpected.

The restaurant opened its doors in 1999, when Sirichai's parents took a punt on a former fish and chip shop in the High Road. At least to start with, they hedged their bets - the business was a greasy spoon during the day and only served Thai food in the evening, eventually switching to an exclusively Thai menu as this side of the business proved popular. Sirichai has argu-

Gio Nahm Moo Dang (crab wonton and barbecue pork noodle soup) Credit Singburi



ably been training to take over his entire life, having spent his childhood helping out in the kitchen, and even sees the restaurant as an extension of his home.

"We live above the restaurant so I'm really used to the business," he explains, "I see the dining area as an additional living

room and I think this helps people to feel welcome when they come in."

This warm welcome is mentioned frequently in the business' glowing Tripadvisor reviews and can largely be credited to Thelma, Sirichai's mother, who still works front-of-house. Sirichai explains that the family's aim has always been to create a restaurant that feels relaxed and embracing, holding up the *Cheers* tagline of "where everyone knows your name" as a benchmark for the vibe they wanted to create.

Customers can't eat smiles, however, and it's clear that Sirichai's constant innovation and ever-changing menu is a big part of why people keep coming back. After learning classic Thai dishes growing up, he began to experiment with his own recipes. "When I'm creating new recipes they normally just pop into my head," he says, "I cook as I go along and when I put a spin on something that works, it's a happy discovery."

Asked about his favourite dish, he instantly picks Kuaytiew Nua, a beef

noodle soup that returns to the menu every so often. "It reminds me of home and when I go back to Thailand to visit family," he says, "It is one of the first meals I'll gravitate towards when I land in Bangkok." Other popular dishes that pop up again and again include Moo Krob (crispy pork belly with chilli and basil), Goong Bai Cha Plu (a spicy southern prawn and betel leaf curry), stir-fried clams and whole crab fried with garlic and ginger.

After years of glowing reviews in the London food press, Singburi is finally outgrowing its hidden gem status and, though Sirichai tends to avoid reviews, news of the restaurant's reputation with diners still reaches him through his friends. The recognition must be comforting, given the restaurant closed completely for months over winter, but Sirichai is hopeful they will be able to reopen in some capacity this month and already has ideas for his latest menu.

Visit Singburi at 593 High Rd Leytonstone or follow them on Twitter @SingburiThaiCaf or Insta @singburi_E11

Turn on the waterworks



What the finished park could look like Credit Kirsty Badenoch

Peter Mudge on plans for East London's own Hampstead Heath ponds

If you've ever taken the 55 or 56 bus or cycled past the Lee Valley Ice Centre, you may have wondered what's behind the imposing iron railings on the other side of Lea Bridge Road. This fenced-off area in the middle of a huge stretch of open land is a mystery to most people – myself included until recently – but it might not stay that way forever.

Up until the 1970s, the site served a very important function as part of the Essex

Filter Beds, purifying water from further up the Lea Valley to provide drinking water for much of East London. Since the waterworks closed down and the filter beds were concreted over, it has served as a depot, owned by Thames Water.

For a couple of years now, I and other locals have asked whether this land couldn't be better used if it was opened back up to the public. We gave our idea a name: the East London Waterworks

Park and the suggestion has proven popular, with a fundraiser last spring netting more than £60,000 in donations to help us towards our goal. However, we knew that if we wanted to move our plans forward, we had to find a way inside, which would require special permission from its current owners. Last November, thanks to a good word from our local MP Stella Creasy, Thames Water agreed to give five of us an escorted tour of the site – and this is what we found.

While the steam engines that once pumped water are long gone, there are a number of historic industrial buildings remaining, which have great potential for being repurposed. These include the Prince and Princess Boiler Sheds, most likely named for Queen Victoria's children, an octagonal sluice house and the engineers house, which had interesting details around its entrance and an attractive sky-light inside. More importantly, however, the site has an awful lot of open space, now home only to pipes and paraphernalia. If the concrete was dug up, this land could be rewilded, while the filter beds could be excavated to create a space for wild swimming.

We hope to see this land become a "brownfield rainforest", reconnecting the lower Lea Valley and opening up space for people to immerse themselves in nature. In

addition to the joy and health benefits it would bring to visitors, the East London Waterworks Park would act as an example of environment-first, community-led land ownership and could transform the way we think about our green spaces.

We're very grateful to Thames Water for allowing us to look around and are now much more confident that the park could become a reality. However, there's a lot that still needs to be done and we're keen to find volunteers who could help bring our plans to fruition. If you have experience in fields like architecture, ecology, civic engineering and urban design – or any other skills that could help with a community project like this – we'd love to hear from you.

For more information visit our website: elwp.org.uk



A skylight inside the engineer's house Credit ELWP

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Ovacome Gala in memory of..





Debbie Baldwin


Arona St James is proud to participate in the Ovacome Gala, in memory of much-loved Debbie Baldwin, a dear friend and brilliant mentor of the law firm's founder Arona Sarwar.


Debbie died of ovarian cancer last September. At present her family and friends have generously raised over £16,000 for the charity Ovacome, to help gain greater awareness of the main symptoms of the disease: Bloating that does not come and go, eating difficulty, abdominal and pelvic pain and changes in urination and bowel habits.

The gala - taking place on **Saturday 19 March in London on the Tereza Joanne boat at the King George V Dock** - was Debbie's vision, to raise more money and awareness, even though she knew that she would probably not be here to attend the event herself.

If you would like to buy a ticket, at £50 for adults, or make a donation to Ovacome contact **07766 867829** or visit www.ovacome.org.uk/1st-annual-ovacome-gala

Please note that 100% of ticket, raffle and auction sales are going directly to the charity.





Event supporters, Arona St James Solicitors

ARTS & CULTURE

Walthamstow's Wall Artist

Bella Saltiel interviews artist Jason Hawkrige for St James Big Local



Art by Jason Hawkrige

Based in a studio in St James Street, artist Jason Hawkrige produces large works for developers and interior designers and cutting-edge distressed walls that grace homes, restaurants and luxury developments across the UK.

Such projects, he says, are his “bread and butter” and enable him to explore his “true passions of painting, printmaking and creating murals”, which he has shown at galleries and events in London, Asia and South America. His art is bold, using bright colours and

interconnected shapes to draw on movements like Art Deco, Bauhaus and Futurism.

Jason’s journey to becoming an artist seemed destined. “Art found me really,” he said, “It was one of the only lessons at school that kept me out of trouble, focused and concentrated – I was extremely hyper in most.” Despite doing well at art school, even being named graduate of the year on his foundation course at Herts College, he has spent considerable time working outside of the art world, in odd bar jobs and construction.

He said: “I managed to save enough money to travel when I hit 30 and, through chance encounters and lots of drawing in my sketchbooks, I returned with a new verve to really push forward to establish myself as a serious artist.

“Working on building sites also really fed into my understanding of how to manipulate different materials and equipped me with unique skills I apply to my interior design work.”

To see more of Jason’s work or get in touch, visit www.jasonhawkrige.com



Joelle Taylor Credit Roman Manfredi

Walthamstow poet wins £25K national prize

A Walthamstow poet has won a national prize worth £25,000, previously held by Ted Hughes and Carol Ann Duffy.

Joelle Taylor was awarded the T.S. Eliot prize on 10th January for her collection *C+nto & Othered Poems*, inspired by 90s butch lesbian counterculture and published by Westbourne Press.

Joelle is a huge name in the borough’s poetry scene and was the judge of last year’s annual poetry competition [issue #82, p9].

Judge chair Glyn Maxwell described *C+nto* as a “blazing book of rage and light, a grand opera of liberation from the shadows of indifference and oppression”.

Speaking to the *Echo* after the collection was shortlisted last year, Joelle said it was a “warning as well as a celebration” amid rising homophobic violence in the UK and abroad.

She said: “Queer poetry is really necessary to own and tell our narratives, it’s a way of bringing us together and recognising what could happen. [The LGBT community is] weak at the moment because we are distracted and atomised, we need to come back to the nucleus.”

She is currently working on a stage adaptation and will perform it as a one-person show in Australia this year.

The Dig Street Festival by Chris Walsh

Sarah Fairbairn reviews a book set in the familiar-sounding neighbourhood of Leytonstow

The trio of characters at the centre of Chris Walsh’s debut *The Dig Street Festival* are among the unlikeliest I have ever met in a novel. Both marginal and marginalised, Gabby, John and Glyn are all residents of the rapidly deteriorating Clements Markham House, the kind of much-divided, overcrowded crumbling villa that will be familiar to any resident of Waltham Forest. The borough itself has a starring role in the story and readers can enjoy picking out the cameos from “Whitehorse Road”, “Leytonstow Village” and of course “Dig Street” itself (I may be a little slow, but it did take me a while to connect this to Hoe Street).

The novel has a sweetly funny tone arising both from its main characters’ warm naivety and the absolute chaos of the plot. At various points John and his friends find themselves accidentally robbing a bank, attending a pen-training seminar in order to fill out a council form, and re-exploring the south pole at “Leytonstow’s premier ice



skating venue”. Events and people collide into each other – sometimes not just figuratively – with a sort of frenzied fun that pulls the plot in unexpected directions but the absurdity of both the situations and characters is underpinned by a story which, at heart, is about how much we all have to offer each other.

Our hero, John, is a deeply-thinking, deeply-feeling man, always ready to approach the world with an open mind, and heartbreakingly in love with the local barmaid, Lois. He is a vulnerable character buffeted by waves of gentrification and at the mercy of a boss and a landlord who see him only as a dependent. Yet from all this, Chris Walsh constructs a world of touching honesty and some real laugh-out-loud moments. *The Dig Street Festival* is an unusual and riotous book that also succeeds in truly reflecting the world around us.

Buy the e-book online here <https://t.co/qa9E2uOvQJ> or follow Chris on Twitter @WalshWrites

PHOTOGRAPHY



by Mauro Arena

Mauro is a portrait and family photographer, who takes a photojournalistic approach to his subjects, capturing everyday details with flair and meaning. In particular he focuses on relationships – whether between parent and child or between siblings – in an attempt to convey a household's dynamic.

Over the past two years, his portraits captured the different ways children tried to overcome the isolation of lockdown. His work tells a story of changing moods and children's attempts to express themselves in order to cope with their thoughts and feelings.

His work has been selected by The Historic

England Archive as one of the 100 images of the 'Picturing Lockdown' collection and he recently won the prestigious 'Portrait of Britain' 2021 by the British Journal of Photography.

To find out more about Mauro's photography, visit mauroarena.com or his Instagram [@mauroarena](https://www.instagram.com/mauroarena).

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

Our next photography theme is 'New beginnings' – interpret this however you wish. The deadline for submitting images is 15th March.





CRIME

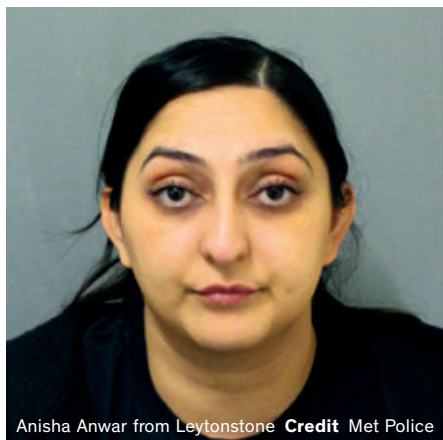
Fraudster tricked hotel staff into handing over guest's luggage

A Leytonstone woman will be sentenced next month after tricking hotel staff into handing over £80,000 worth of other people's belongings.

Anisha Anwar, a 35-year-old from Harrow Road, phoned staff at a Hackney hotel on 8th October, convincing them she was a guest who had to check out urgently due to a family crisis.

Sympathetic hotel staff packed up a guest's belongings, including luxury brand goods, and handed them over to a mini-cab Anwar booked, which transported the goods to an associate.

The following morning, the guests returned to their now-empty room and reported the theft to the police.



Anisha Anwar from Leytonstone Credit Met Police

Following a guilty plea on 15th December at Wood Green Crown Court, Anwar was due to be sentenced on 13th January but this was delayed until next month.

Detective Sergeant Ian Cleghorn said that, while she had a known "history of committing fraud", this latest scheme was "truly audacious".

He said: "However, her inflated confidence proved to be her downfall, as the mobile phone she used to commit her crime was found where she was living."

"I would like to praise the work of my team throughout this investigation. The efforts taken to trace the cab and track the mobile show that we will use every method and technology available to us."

The male accomplice who received the goods from the taxi driver has unfortunately not been found but the search continues.

Restaurant owner 'served mouldy chicken as crab'

A Leyton restaurant owner caught "serving mouldy chicken as boiled crab" was fined more than £10,000 for breaking hygiene laws.

Gaby Kolajo, owner of Lagos Island in Lea Bridge Road, was ordered to shut his business down in late August of 2018 after Waltham Forest Council officers discovered a mouse and cockroach infestation.

However, a few days later, he flouted this order by hosting a birthday party, attempting to hoodwink officers who caught him by claiming only one half of the premises had been closed.

Officers attending on that day also found what they believe was a container of mouldy chicken in the kitchen, which Gaby insisted was a traditional dish of boiled crab.

Last month, on 7th December, Gaby



A container of mouldy chicken the owner claimed was boiled crab Credit WF Council

finally appeared at Stratford Magistrates Court and was found guilty of food hygiene offences and given the highest possible fine of £10,170.

Lagos Island was last inspected in July 2020 and was given a food hygiene rating of zero, meaning that it requires urgent improvement.

Volunteer cop punched cuffed man

A volunteer cop who hit a handcuffed man in the face at Leyton's police custody suite was found guilty of assault.

Sayee Hasnain, a special constable, was sentenced to 150 hours of community service and ordered to pay more than £1,000 by City of London Magistrates' Court on 12th January.

CCTV footage showed that, on 28th

June 2020, Hasnain hit a suspect only seventeen seconds after entering the room as the man clenched his fists to prevent his fingerprints being taken.

Detective Chief Superintendent Pete Gardner said: "Hasnain's actions went way beyond reasonable force and this was immediately highlighted by the officers on the scene at the time."

"The public quite rightly expect

the highest standards of professionalism and restraint from police officers and staff and, when they fall below those standards, they are held to account and, in this case, subject to a criminal prosecution."

Hasnain will also be subject to a misconduct hearing, where he could be dismissed from the police and prevented from rejoining in future.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Thousands raised for abuse victims

The Leytonstone branch of the Women's Institute has raised almost £4,500 for domestic abuse survivors. The Stone Rangers spent the last two years raising funds for SOLACE Women's Aid.

During lockdown, this meant selling homemade facemasks and donating money they would have spent on snacks at meetings.

Member Jane Ramsell also delivered 3,000 free facemasks to survivors being housed by the charity.

In total, the then-38 members raised £4,498, which a SOLACE representative said would go towards "meeting the increased demand for their services" as abuse reports rose during Covid.

Stone Rangers president Christine Lee said: "We feel very proud to have supported SOLACE in the delivery of what are essential services to women and children in desperate need of their help."

Head forged documents to get off work

A Leytonstone ex-headteacher was sentenced for fraud after faking a doctor's note to hide her mental health struggles.

Grainne Smyth, 52, was sacked from Leytonstone School in April 2019 after an investigation led by governors and Waltham Forest Council.

She had taken sick leave four times the previous year, purportedly because of kidney inflammation, but admitted when questioned that she bought a fake doctor's note online.

On 11th January, Judge Caroline English allowed Smyth to avoid jail due to her "extreme intelligence and ability", a career spent seeking out "challenging placements in socially deprived areas" and the fact she was struggling with her "incredibly taxing and emotionally draining" work.

She told Smyth: "The sad irony is that I have no doubt, that had you revealed the true nature of your condition, you would have been entitled to sick pay in any event."

Smyth was sentenced by Snaresbrook Crown Court to 120 hours of community service and a 30-day rehabilitation and ordered to pay the council's court costs of £2,000.

Councillor Liaquat Ali MBE said: "Waltham Forest Council takes all allegations of fraud extremely seriously. We expect the highest standards from all staff and contractors and will always work hard to detect and thoroughly investigate fraud."

LETTERS

Sick tax

Dear Waltham Forest Echo
After the ULEZ expansion, drivers whose cars do not meet the recommendations now have to pay to visit either Whipps Cross or North Middlesex Hospital, as both are inside the A406. But not everyone can afford a taxi or get on public transport and this may well be very expensive if you are a regular visitor due to illness. As a pensioner who needs to visit the hospital regularly, I consider this a tax on the sick and presume a lot of other people feel the same.

Gwen Collinson
Chingford resident

Homeless hardship

Dear Waltham Forest Echo
Your story on Nana Yaa [issue #82, p12] details the kind of chaotic, harsh treatment our borough's homeless can expect from Waltham Forest Council. She was placed in Beckton, contrary to the council's policy of housing people "as close as possible to their workplace", and in a flat with no furniture. This was after losing most of her belongings during the eviction because she was only told last-minute where she would be staying, meaning there was no time to move things out of harm's way.
This harsh treatment is indefensible. Hers was not an unexpected eviction, as the council was warned months ago she was facing homelessness, and it is not only Nana Yaa. In reality,

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LICENSING ACT 2003
Application for the Grant of a Premises Licence

Notice is hereby given that **London Unity Café Ltd** has applied to the London Borough of Waltham Forest for the grant of a Premises Licence at **8 Richmond Road, London, E11 4BA**. The nature of the application is as follows:

- To permit the sale of alcohol / regulated entertainment Monday to Sunday, 8:00–23:00

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.

Representations must be received no later than **20th February 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.

the council's stated preference to house people locally is generally ignored. Official statistics [seen by the *Echo*] show our council places more homeless families in temporary accommodation outside of the borough than all but three other London councils, even though Waltham Forest has just slightly more homeless people than the London average.
While all London boroughs face housing shortages, it appears most generally treat their homeless more competently and sympathetically than ours.

Peter O'Kane
Leytonstone resident

Recycling responsibility

Dear Waltham Forest Echo
The North London Waste Authority seems determined to proceed with the incinerator rebuild near Chingford. I understand investing in an existing facility and incinerating rubbish for energy is an easy fix but, in the face of climate emergency, such short-term solutions are not good enough.
Greener alternatives such as recycling need to be prioritised. Cllr Loakes said the incinerator rebuild is the NLWA's response to 'residents still not doing the right thing [by recycling]', as if all the responsibility for the inefficiency of the recycling system lies with the residents. Cllr Loakes is a public servant, and if people are not using the recycling system correctly, it is his job as NLWA chair and Waltham Forest Council's deputy leader to improve it, raise

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LICENSING ACT 2003
Application for the Grant of a Premises Licence

Notice is hereby given that **Sabartnam Jeyakkumar** has applied to the London Borough of Waltham Forest for the grant of a Premises Licence at **Morley's 247 High Road Leytonstone, London, E11 4HH**. The nature of the application is as follows:

- To permit the sale of late night refreshments from Sunday to Thursday 11:00 to 03:00, and Friday to Saturday 11:00 to 04:00

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 **Thursday 17th February 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.

awareness and increase participation and engagement.
A new incinerator will have a lifespan of 25–30 years – it is worrying that the authorities do not seem to have a different vision for waste management in the area for the next couple of decades.
Zuzanna Ciesielska
Chingford resident

To ID or not to ID

Dear Waltham Forest Echo
The debate about the use of Covid passports and whether identification should be required to access venues and services has divided countries across Europe. Here at home, I can't help but see a link to the ongoing debate on the Elections Bill and voter ID.
As the Electoral Reform Society has said, forcing voters to show ID will create a dangerous barrier that could see millions unable to participate in democracy.
Seeing as Iain Duncan Smith MP took a stand and voted against requiring people to show a Covid pass to get into venues, I hope he'll apply those same principles in voting against showing ID to vote.

Adrian Allen
Walthamstow resident

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LICENSING ACT 2003
Application for a Premises Licence

Notice is given that **Leyton Natural Health** has applied to Waltham forest Council on 27th January 2022 for a special treatment licence to use premises at **543 Leytonstone High Road, E11 4PB** as a massage shop.

- The premises will be open between the following days and times: seven days a week, 10am–9pm.

Anyone wishing to oppose the application must give notice in writing to the Licensing Officer, Resident Services, Licensing Service, 3 The Square, Leyton, London E10 5NR or via email: Licensing@walthamforest.gov.uk. **WITHIN 28 DAYS OF PUBLICATION** specifying the grounds of opposition.

Representations must be received no later than **24/02/2022**.

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.
Dated: 27/01/2022

Goods Vehicle Operator's Licence

Muhammad Kashif T/A Kashif Minibus of 9 Cambrian Road London E10 7JE is applying to change an existing licence as follows: **to amend an operating centre to keep 1 goods vehicles and 0 trailers at Suite 11, 806 Leyton High Road, Leyton London E10 7HA.**

Owners or occupiers of land (including buildings) near the operating centre(s) who believe that their use or enjoyment of that land would be affected, should make written representations to the Traffic Commissioner at Hillcrest House, 386 Harehills Lane, Leeds LS9 6NF stating their reasons, within 21 days of this notice. Representors must at the same time send a copy of their representations to the applicant at the address given at the top of this notice. A Guide to Making Representations is available from the Traffic Commissioners Office.

One more thing

Dear Waltham Forest Echo
Sadly my letter [issue #81, p14] on Remembrance Sunday was trimmed so responder Mr Fawcett [issue #82, p14] could not address the issue further than something oddly familiar to the council-speak I received personally. History in this borough is too often being pushed to one side.
The Cenotaph was unveiled at a Service of Dedication as the town's war memorial in the 1920s by the Bishop of Barking. The fountain has not, and could not possibly, be afforded a similar event for fear of

undermining the whole process. It is therefore utterly inappropriate. Despite living close to the town hall and supporting the annual service for over 45 years, I learned nothing of this change in advance through any council consultation.
Nobody, not even Mr Fawcett, has reasoned why the wreaths have still not been relocated to the memorial, where after each annual service they would normally remain for at least another 10 months along with various small personalised wooden crosses in the lawn, which were missing this year. Did someone in the council remove them?
Keith Foster
Walthamstow resident



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HEALTH

Is this the end of our end-of-life unit?

Mary Burnett from Action4Whipps on the fight to save the Margaret Centre

“Who would have thought that the death of a partner could be a magic experience? But it was.”

These are the words of Helen McClennon, whose husband died at the Margaret Centre in Whipps Cross Hospital surrounded by his entire family, including grandchildren. Her appreciation for the work it does caring for patients at the very end of their life is not unique but the centre itself most certainly is, which is why the prospect of losing it is terrifying.

Where most hospices are run by charities, the NHS-run Margaret Centre – in the words of ward manager Knut Sanghajt – “can do things that are just a bit outside the normal NHS service”, while still offering hospital care. In a video put out by Barts Health NHS Trust in September 2019, he describes how only that day the son of a woman who died there two years prior returned to remember her. It’s a touching moment that’s unlikely to be repeated if the centre’s 12 beds are salami sliced and dotted around busy wards.

In August 2020, less than two years ago, Barts unveiled the centre’s new private garden, funded by donations from Barts Charity. In their announcement, they spoke glowingly about how “having a specialist unit



The centre's new garden, unveiled less than two years ago **Credit** Barts Health

means palliative needs can be prioritised in a more efficient and sensitive way”. At the same time, they were planning to sell the land it sits on.

There was no mention of the Margaret Centre in public engagement meetings about the new hospital in the autumn of 2020. Following huge public concern, Barts wrote reassuringly last September about plans to relocate it, promising more details in April, but otherwise their refrain continues to be that end-of-life care will be provided in beds across the new hospital and improved services in people’s homes.

Meanwhile, the multiple services once provided by the centre, allowing for continuity of care, are now seemingly being scattered across North

East London. St Joseph’s Hospice in Hackney, run by a charity, has already been handed the reins for respite care and discussions are being held about it taking over outreach as well. These have always been important parts of the work the Margaret Centre does, allowing staff and patients to get to know each other before admission becomes necessary.

The desperation I and other members of Action4Whipps have to save the centre is why it’s so gratifying to see some local councillors finally stepping up to scrutinise the hospital plans. Waltham Forest, Redbridge and Essex councillors have now had two meetings of the special joint committee created to debate the hospital project and, during their last, recommended that a “discrete inpatient facility” for end-of-life care be included in the new Whipps. Both Redbridge councillors in particular were vocal about the valued work of the centre, speaking powerfully about their concerns for its future.

It’s clear public concern, community campaigning, and letters to Barts from Redbridge Council and our three MPs have had an impact – but we need to do much much more.

To join our campaign or for more information contact whipps.cross.campaign@gmail.com.

Whipps staff announce two-week strike

Hundreds of Whipps Cross staff are striking for the first two weeks of this month in a “battle against low pay and exploitation”.

The workers, who include cleaners, porters, security, catering and reception staff, are employed by outsourcing company Serco and paid up to 15% less than NHS colleagues at other London hospitals.

Speaking to the *Echo* last month, one anonymous worker said many of his fellow employees were “really struggling with second and third jobs to try to live in London”.

After talks with Unite the Union, Serco offered to increase wages by 3%, which a union representative said was “too little too late”.

Unite regional officer Tabusam Ahmed said: “Ultimately [hospital trust] Barts must take responsibility for this mess. It allowed Serco to exploit and underpay the workforce by outsourcing this services contract.

“Barts and Serco must now deliver a pay increase that addresses the poverty pay and the gross inequality of treatment.”

Serco plans to end its contract with Barts Health NHS Trust, which runs Whipps and four other London hospitals, next year.

Barts deputy group chief executive Shane DeGaris said the trust is “considering future arrangements” beyond this point, which “could include bringing some services back in-house”.

He added: “We are hopeful that this

matter can be resolved but are working with Serco to put the appropriate measures in place and ensure hospital services are supported if strike action does go ahead.”

Taddy McAuley from Serco said the company was “extremely disappointed” strikes were going ahead despite the offered 3% pay rise, backdated to April last year.

He added: “Serco also recently announced a £100 ex-gratia payment for all of our 52,000 front line employees around the world including all our colleagues at Barts Health.

“We look forward to further discussions with Unite and hope to work together to find a resolution that avoids the need for this unnecessary strike action.”

NEWS IN BRIEF

Whipps bosses no longer sure when hospital will be finished

by Josh Mellor, Local Democracy Reporter

Whipps Cross bosses are no longer sure when they will finish the new hospital, originally expected to open in 2026.

Despite planning to start work by 2023, the hospital’s redevelopment manager Alastair Finney warned the “window of opportunity” may now be missed.

At a board meeting of Barts Health NHS Trust he blamed a lack of information from the government, who don’t plan to agree funding for the project until this spring.

At the meeting on 18th January, trust chair Jacqui Smith said: “Those things depending on us have made good process. It’s bizarre because you would have thought the government would want some good news around building hospitals.”

The Department for Health and Social Care (DHSC) previously said the government is committed to building 48 new hospitals by 2030 and is “working closely” with NHS trusts to “plan how and when”.

Family seeks answers after asbestos-linked death

The grieving children of a local man who died of cancer after suspected asbestos exposure are desperately seeking answers from his former colleagues.

Robert Beeson, 82, died last April after developing a form of cancer associated with asbestos, which he may have encountered working for British Rail in Stratford from 1961–74 or for Nico Construction from 1986–92.

Law firm Irwin Mitchell, hired by his daughters Lorraine and Michelle, are looking to speak to former colleagues of his who can help them find out more.

Lorraine said: “Seeing dad deteriorate was a devastating experience. We did what we could for dad, despite the lockdown, but he was in good health previously and didn’t deserve to lose his life this way.

“We feel we were robbed of spending more precious time together as a family and didn’t get to say goodbye properly to Dad.

“Dad felt sure he encountered asbestos. If any of his former workmates could come forward and help us, it would mean a lot to me and my sister.

“It won’t bring Dad back but at least it will help us honour his memory by finding out the answers he deserved.”

Robert was born in the borough in 1938. In addition to his two daughters, he is survived by his grandchildren, Evie and Ellie.

He was known as an expert in birds, who kept and bred them for most of his life and judged a number of bird shows around the country.

Contact Irwin Mitchell on 0203 040 3445 or email lacey.stjames@irwinmitchell.com

AROUND THE BOROUGH

LEYTONSTONE

Royally recognised food bank moves to Leytonstone



The team at PL84U Al-Suffa

The founder of a newly Leytonstone-based food bank has received a British Empire Medal for services to the borough.

Saira Begum Mir created PL84U Al-Suffa in 2013 to hand out food, clothes, haircuts, toiletries and more to the borough's needy.

She said the service was unique

for allowing people to "pick what food they want to take home, like they would at a shop".

Initially based in the Walthamstow Scouts hut, the charity moved to a new home in the Epicentre in Leytonstone last November.

Saira told the *Echo* the honour was a "credit to each and every" person involved in the charity,

adding: "None of [this] would have been possible without you."

She said: "On a personal level, I know both my parents would have been very proud. Although, like many, I have suffered personal loss [due to Covid], I also feel there is positivity in how it has brought so many diverse people together, striking up unexpected friendships."

The charity prides itself on serving "people of all faiths and of none" and provides food and gifts for "all religious and cultural celebrations" so that families can "celebrate without stress".

Saira added: "We use the #NotJustAFoodBank hashtag for good reason, but the food bank need is sadly still growing. We currently provide food for more than 1,000 people every week."

Find out more by visiting their website here: pl84ualsuffa.co.uk

LEYTON



Cow pond, before...



...and after its transformation Credit Froglife

Regeneration attracts slimy new neighbours

Adried-up pond in Leyton is teeming with new animal tenants after an ambitious regeneration.

Cow Pond is the smallest of four ponds on Leyton Flats – also home to Eagle, Dog and Hollow Pond – and in 2017 was barren and choked with vegetation.

Keen to make a new home for amphibians, wildlife charity Froglife secured funding from the

National Lottery Heritage Fund to return it to some of its former glory.

During lockdown they dug out a 50x75m pond, which was 2.5m at its deepest to ensure toads had space to breed and to stop it drying up again.

Emily Robinson from Froglife said: "Without the grass and plants encroaching, the pond can once more retain water; providing another pocket of peace for those (both human and non-

human) that enjoy the serenity Leyton Flats brings.

"We returned to Cow Pond to see how it was doing and what we saw was remarkable. Families were enjoying sandwiches by the water and a survey of the pond showed that the amphibians and wildlife had returned.

"The pond was teeming with newt tadpoles and a heron was seen busy snacking away at frogs or toads."

CHINGFORD

Chingford CoE Primary School headteacher Lindsey Lampard



Primary school begs council for traffic restrictions

by Josh Mellor,
Local Democracy Reporter

The headteacher of a Chingford school desperate to stop parents driving to the gates says the council is being "stubborn" over calls for traffic restrictions.

Waltham Forest Council has introduced 18 "School Streets" around other schools, which block traffic for 45 minutes at drop-off and pick-up times.

Chingford Church Of England Primary School, near Station Road, is keen to join this group but the council insists surrounding roads would first have to agree to a Controlled Parking Zone.

Introducing a CPZ would require residents with cars to buy parking permits that cost at least £40.

Headteacher Lindsey Lampard said: "I do think the council are being a little bit stubborn, I just wonder why it has to be a CPZ."

However, she added: "It would be worth the council surveying local residents... I suspect a lot would be in favour if it was tied to School Streets."

Deputy leader Clyde Loakes said a CPZ is necessary to avoid traffic being displaced to surrounding roads and help realise the scheme's "full impact and potential".

He said: "All of Waltham Forest Council's current School Streets schemes are in busier locations with Controlled Parking Zones (CPZs).

"We acknowledge that schools in the north of the borough have road safety, congestion and parking concerns and welcome them coming forward to work on resolving these challenges."

WALTHAMSTOW

Search for family of soldier who died fighting Nazis

A group of researchers are trying to track down the family of a Walthamstow soldier who died protecting the Netherlands from Nazis.

Henry Arthur Wisker died at the age of 36 on 17th November, 1944, in the Battle of Overloon, named for a village near the Dutch border with Germany.

He and more than 280 British soldiers are buried there and, in July last year, the Overloon War Chronicles Foundation was founded to honour their sacrifice.

So far, the foundation has discovered that Henry was born to John William Wisker and Alice

Wisker White and married Ivy May Wisker-Zinzen.

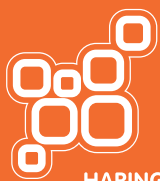
The widowed Ivy later married Edward J Holmes in 1958 and moved to Southend-on-Sea, where she died in 1982.

Publicising their search on Twitter, researchers from the foundation wrote that their goal is to collect photographs and stories "in gratitude to those who died in the fight for our liberation".

The battle ended in victory for the Allies but saw 2,500 soldiers die, making it one of the bloodiest to have taken place in the Netherlands in the entire war.

Contact the Overloon War Chronicles Foundation via their website overloonwarchronicles.nl

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HISTORY

Waltham Forest's cut-throat past



Highwayman Dick Turpin Credit: Wikimedia

By David Boote

While Waltham Forest as we know it today is home to both rich and poor, 300 years ago it was a far more homogeneously up-market area. North East London in the 18th century acted as a kind of stockbroker belt, where wealthy city businessmen bought large second homes to flaunt their status and regularly commuted into work in the City of London. However, this constant movement in and out of London created the perfect opportunity for a new industry, highway robbery, and eventually saw the birth of the still-famous legacy of Dick Turpin.

Conditions in the area were perfect for these muggers of yesteryear to operate. The boundary between Maryland and Leyton was unproductive land, sparsely populated

and therefore lonely, and there was no street lighting in this era. In fact, what we now know as Crownfield Road, leading away from Drapers Field, was in those days so plagued by crime that it was called Cut-Throat Lane.

Stagecoaches were a particularly attractive target, offering the opportunity to rob a large group at once, and highwaymen did not even need to wait for the cover of nightfall. On 19th January in 1745, two horse drawn coaches from Walthamstow and a gentleman's chariot were robbed near Ruckholt House in Leyton at between 4 and 5pm, with the thief making off with three gold watches, money and belongings worth an estimated £100. However, not every highwayman got away – in 1713 a John How of Essex was publicly hanged at what is now Marble Arch for his criminal activity in the area.

The Green Man Inn in Leytonstone (now



'The Post Boy c.1830' Credit: Royal Mail Group courtesy of The Postal Museum

O'Neills pub) was unfortunately located right in the middle of this criminal hotspot. In 1695, philosopher John Locke recounts a visit to the inn where his group were told of "several people robbed in Epping Forest the same morning we passed it" which he said made the hearts of the ladies in his company go "pitapat". Decades later, in 1737, then-landlord Richard Bayes would step in to help a victim of highwaymen, Joseph Major, recover his racehorse after

it was stolen nearby, along with a horse whip, a knife and the equivalent of at least £7 in gold and silver. Inspired by this incident, Bayes went on to write 'The Genuine History of the Life of Richard Turpin', who he blamed for the robbery, creating a legend which is still well-known today.

To find out more read 'Dick Turpin and the Knights of the Road' by David Ian Chapman, published by the Leyton & Leytonstone Historical Society.

Advertisement

Chingford's least curious maid

As reported in the 5th May 1883 edition of the Toronto Daily Mail

The character of maid-servants, who are often accused of impertinent curiosity, is fully vindicated by the conduct of Martha Trimmer, of Chingford, England.

That lady was accosted on the afternoon of the 6th [last month] by a wayfarer, who was looking over the fence of her master's house, and asked her the way. She gave the required information and then, being attracted by something in the appearance of the man, she called the attention of a fellow-servant

to him, and they both watched him for some distance.

Shortly after, a pistol shot was heard, and Miss Trimmer observed that the man in question had "surely shot himself". However, "it was no business of hers" so she dismissed the subject from her mind.

Next morning, a workman found the body of the man in the road. The absence of idle inquisitiveness on the part of the servant had prevented any interference for the whole night. The force of self-restraint could surely go no further than this.



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SPORT



Credit Stow FC

The rise and rise of Stow FC

David O'Driscoll

It's already a fantastic time to be a Stow FC fan – I'd argue the team is a sure fire bet for promotion and I'm told merch is doing brisk trade – but the father and son duo standing behind our squad have got their sights set even higher.

Chairman Andy Perkins took over in

2012, exactly sixty years after his father took him to watch the team for the first time, back when they were still known as Leyton. In accordance with this family tradition, Andy took his own son and communications manager Andrzej to a game when he was only a few months old. The pair seem to know the majority of their fan-base, reinforcing the club's family-friendly

feel, and are incredibly hands on – you may spot Andrzej behind the turnstiles on match days.

The club's history before Perkins took over was somewhat chequered – a section of its Wikipedia page is simply titled "Times of struggle" – but this hasn't humbled the pair's ambitions. The modern Stow FC has only had a home in the area since 2013, returning to Wadham Lodge after an Ilford exile that lasted five years, but they are already determined to see it get its own stadium, which would be an amazing asset, not only for the team, but for the whole community.

The Perkins tell me they have "identified land in the borough that has been earmarked just for sports use" where a purpose-built home could go and are "confident" they could raise the money required, thanks to links with local businesses and grant opportunities. I am sure I speak for many – even non-Stow fans – in wanting to see such an exciting development materialise, particularly at a time when so many local football pitches have been lost or are under threat. What this will rely on, however, is "wider support" from Waltham Forest Council, although father and son tell me they've been in touch with MP Stella Creasy, in the hopes she can put in a good word.

And this isn't the only possible expansion on the club's horizons. The pair tell me they are keen to see the club support a women's team at some point, in addition to the work they already do to build up the next generation of players through their ties to local academy Ryan FC. They share their current grounds with women's team London Seaward FC, an independent team that split ways unhappily with Leyton Orient last year [issue #80, p19], so perhaps we'll see a closer relationship in future.

My final piece of insider gossip? Look out for a stylish new look at the merchandise stand. I'm told they're currently "exploring" a possible design inspired by Walthamstow icon William Morris for a shirt next season.



Credit Stow FC



Father and son team Andy and Andrzej Credit Stow FC

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walthamforestecho.co.uk/membership

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