



Your independent community newspaper

WALTHAM FOREST ECHO

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Waltham Forest Pride returns to the borough after a two-year hiatus 'bigger and better than ever' – turn to p8 for more Credit Pixie Le-May

Number of new homes not 'justified', council told

By Josh Mellor, Local Democracy Reporter

Government planning inspectors have expressed "significant concerns" about how many new homes Waltham Forest Council wants to see built over the next decade.

Inspectors tasked with examining the council's draft Local Plan questioned whether its goal to see 27,000 homes built by 2035 is "justified and deliverable".

It would mean an average of

1,800 new homes every year, exceeding the annual target of 1,264 new homes set by Mayor of London Sadiq Khan for the next decade.

In a letter to the council in May, planning inspectors Catherine Jack and Sarah Housden said there was "no explanation" of why this lower target "was not considered to be a reasonable alternative".

They wrote: "Overall, priority appears to have been given to the housing and employment objectives, leaving the other

sustainability objectives attracting significantly lesser weight without clear explanation."

When contacted for comment, Councillor Ahsan Khan, cabinet member for housing, said the only way to help the 11,000 households on the waiting list for a council home is to "build more".

He added: "We have already started work to fully address the inspectors' clarification points so that we can build the houses that residents need and help them access the decent, sustainable jobs

and training opportunities the construction industry provides."

However, Conservative group leader Emma Best claimed the planning inspectors had "confirmed what [they] have been telling the Labour group and talking with residents about for the past two years".

She added: "The housing targets in the local plan are unjustified and undeliverable, rely on inappropriate tall buildings and do not safeguard Epping Forest and its surrounding suburbs.

"Waltham Forest Labour are

risking our borough's future by irresponsibly pushing back on the inspectorate's and the community's legitimate concerns.

"They must now concede their plan must change and bring forward an appropriate, affordable and deliverable plan for new homes in our borough."

Waltham Forest Civic Society have vowed to campaign against the 27,000 home target, which it fears will "force high-rise developments" and "destroy the character" of Epping Forest and Lea Valley.

NEWS



FELLOWSHIP IS LIFE

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A parklet in Winchelsea Road Credit WF Council

From parking to parklet

Waltham Forest Council is "committed" to seeing more parking spaces around the borough repurposed into community space.

Following successful trials in Coppermill Lane and Winchelsea Road, three new "parklets" will be installed on road-side parking spaces next month.

The parklets, which will feature a playground and a miniature performance

space, will appear outside Stone Mini Market in Leytonstone, Froth and Rind in Walthamstow and Cove 17 in Wood Street.

Co-deputy leader Clyde Loakes said: "We're showing an alternative to the polluting motor vehicles that dominate too much of our urban landscape.

"We've been working closely with businesses and the local community to find the perfect locations for the

new parklets, which I'm sure will quickly become valued and vibrant hubs for the local community.

"We're committed to bringing more parklets to Waltham Forest as we want more and more people to reap the benefits of reclaiming small pieces of their local area from cars."

A series of new, even smaller, "micro" parklets are planned for the area around Leytonstone High Road.

Polio warning after virus found in sewage

North East Londoners should make sure they and their children are fully vaccinated against polio after signs it is spreading in the area.

Following a successful vaccination programme, the UK was declared "polio-free" in 2003, with the last "wild" case confirmed in 1984.

However, sewage samples collected in Newham earlier this year show signs of the virus, suggesting "there has been some spread between closely linked individuals in North-East London".

So far, there have been no reported cases of polio-

related paralysis and "the risk to the public overall is extremely low", according to the UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA).

Dr Vanessa Saliba, consultant epidemiologist at UKHSA, said: "Most of the UK population will be protected from vaccination in childhood but, in some communities with low vaccine coverage, individuals may remain at risk.

"We are urgently investigating to better understand the extent of this transmission and the NHS has been asked to swiftly report any suspected cases."

The virus strains found

are believed to have mutated from a weakened but living form of the poliovirus used to vaccinate people in some foreign countries, which has not been used in the UK since 2004.

These "vaccine viruses" can spread in under-vaccinated communities and mutate into a stronger "vaccine-derived poliovirus", which behaves more like the original strain.

Most people will have no symptoms but in a very small number of cases, between 1 in 100 to 1 in 1000 infections, the virus can attack the nervous system and become more serious.

Council pays off former contractor to end bin row

by Josh Mellor, Local Democracy Reporter

Waltham Forest Council has coughed up to settle a long-running dispute with a former contractor.

In 2011, Kier was awarded an eight-year £90million contract to collect the borough's rubbish and recycling.

However, a council decision approved last month shows that, since Kier and the council parted ways in 2019, there has been a long-running "disagreement" about the amount paid after a "growth in bin numbers".

According to the council's website, deputy leader Clyde Loakes decided in private to end the dispute by paying an undisclosed amount in order "to minimise costs to the [council]".

The council claims it is "unable to divulge" how much it will pay Kier due to commercial and legal confidentiality. A spokesperson even claimed the growth in the number of bins is commercially confidential.

The borough's waste and recycling is now collected by new contractor Urbaser.

Mum fleeing abuse told to go back home by council

by Victoria Munro

A mother fleeing domestic abuse with her children was told to go back home by the housing team at Waltham Forest Council.

The council was instructed to pay the woman, referred to as Miss X to protect her identity, £1,800 compensation for "injustice suffered" by the Local Government Ombudsman.

Miss X, who had made multiple attempts to escape and even spent time in a refuge, contacted the council in September 2020 after moving to the borough to stay with a relative.

After initially claiming she should return home, Waltham Forest Council allowed her to move into accommodation she could not afford, failed to pay the deposit and first month's rent as promised and did not help when her landlord began trying to evict her.

The ombudsman's report reads: "The council offered to pay Miss X £300... which she did not accept. I am not satisfied this was sufficient.

"Miss X has suffered distress and anxiety as a result of the lack of support and the council's poor communication."

The council initially refused to house Miss X because it felt she could return to the home she had fled in another area, where "her housing officer... would assist her to make the property safe".

However, she was able to appeal this decision two months later, when the council accepted it was "unreasonable for her to continue to live in her former home".

NEWS



Frances and her new housemate

Hundreds sign up to house refugees

by Nadoya Reid

Since the Russian invasion in February, almost 200 Waltham Forest residents have registered to take in a Ukrainian refugee.

The government's Homes for Ukrainians scheme launched on 14th March, allowing UK residents to sponsor a visa for an individual or family, provided they offer a suitable home.

The scheme offers a monthly "thank you" payment of £350 for hosts, along with a one-off £200 "welcome payment" for refugees.

However, local sponsors told the *Echo* they were surprised by the "frustrating process" of bringing the refugees they sponsored to the UK and receiving the promised support.

Frances Balaam, a Walthamstow 41-year-old, applied for the scheme as soon as it opened but said the Ukrainian mother and daughter she sponsored were only able to arrive in May.

She gets on well and "lives in quite a connected way" with her sponsee, adding: "It is quite nice to see her really embracing it here. She is very engaged with others in the area, she has even met people on my road that I have never met before!"

"Her daughter and my daughter get on very well and I feel them being around demonstrates good values for her, such

as caring for and helping others."

However, Frances found the sponsorship application so long and strenuous that she at one point wondered if the family "would ever be able to come through". The process was made easier by "almost daily" support from Walthamstow MP Stella Creasy's office, who were "extremely helpful" in pushing the government for documents and updates.

She said: "We had to apply for separate visas for them and her child's letter didn't come through until two weeks after hers. With all that was going on, you can imagine how stressful it was for her."

"The visa application form took about a day... and is only in English. It is worded in such a way that it could be difficult to a non-native English speaker."

Veronika Rasickaite, a 36-year-old from Chingford, also found the application process "unclear" and faced a "lengthy" wait before her sponsee was able to arrive on 28th April.

Coming from a Baltic state, she told the *Echo*: "I decided to be a sponsor because, if my parents back home were in a similar situation, I hope that someone would help them."

However, she was deeply concerned by the way the £200 welcome payment was issued, in the form of two £100 shopping vouchers for Tesco and Aldi.

Beyond the fact that issuing vouchers "feels as if the council is deciding what the individual needs", Veronika said there are no Tesco or Aldi stores in her neighbourhood.

After contacting the council department that issued the vouchers and her local councillors, she was told her guest would receive the £200 in cash via the Post Office instead.

It is understood that, from late March to April, the council issued welcome payments in the form of shopping vouchers before switching entirely to the Post Office pay-out scheme in May.

However, the Post Office voucher they were eventually sent to exchange for the cash was issued in the wrong name, creating yet another obstacle.

Veronika said: "There is a lack of logic behind the service provided. With this whole process, I think if someone didn't have an advocate like myself to figure things out for them, a lot of people would end up stuck."

At the time of speaking to the *Echo*, both hosts had also yet to receive their monthly "thank you" payments.

The council were contacted for comment but had yet to respond on record at the time of writing.

Find out more about how to help Ukrainians on the council's website here: walthamforest.gov.uk/families-young-people-and-children/help-and-support-during-ukraine-crisis

Students and staff feel 'physically at risk' at Leyton school

by Victoria Munro

Students and even a few staff report feeling "physically at risk" at a Leyton secondary school due to unchecked bullying and disorder.

Following an inspection in February, Ofsted gave Lammas School in Seymour Road, which has more than 750 pupils aged 11 to 18, its lowest-possible "inadequate" rating.

Inspectors found students were "generally not enthusiastic about their experience" and reported regular "homophobic and sexist name-calling".

Ofsted's report, published last month, also said "poor and distracting behaviour in lessons... hinders teaching" but "goes unchallenged by leaders and staff".

The report reads: "Behaviour in lessons and around the school, including in corridors, is often disorderly. A few pupils and a few staff said that this makes them feel physically at risk."

"Some staff, including leaders, do not challenge pupils' poor behaviour, or if they do, it sometimes does not make any difference."

"Other pupils said that they might not bother to talk to staff about concerns, including name-calling and bullying, because they were not confident that staff would take any action."

Inspectors also noted that many staff expressed concerns about their "workload, well-being and lack of support from leaders", especially when it came to managing students' behaviour.

They added: "The [academy] trust does not have an accurate understanding of what life in school is like on a day-to-day basis. Its views on this, as well as on the priorities for improvement, differ from the views held by pupils and staff."

Responding to the Ofsted report, a school spokesperson told the *Echo*: "An action plan addressing the issues highlighted in the report has been sent to Ofsted."

"We continue to work closely with Ofsted to improve our rating and to regain the 'good' judgement awarded to the school in 2018."

Lammas School was rated "good" by Ofsted prior to joining the Griffin Schools Trust (GST). The trust runs 10 primary and infant schools, including two in Leyton, and three secondary schools.

The two other Leyton schools run by GST are Riverley Primary School in Park Road and Willow Brook Primary School in Church Road. Both have an "outstanding" rating at the time of writing.

FEATURES

Angela Lyons
Credit @ayodeji_alaka



My week as a graphic designer

The diaries of local entrepreneurs, brought to you by the Waltham Forest Business Network

I'm Angela, a graphic designer in Walthamstow and the owner of Lyons Creative, a business I set up a decade ago after I left full-time employment.

My week begins on Sunday evening when I check my emails and plan the week ahead. On weekdays, I generally wake up at 6 am when it's still quiet, which means I can check my overnight mail. Shortly after that, the routine with my children kicks in. Both are at secondary school and I make sure they get up, ready and out.

Once they are on their way, I will exercise – sometimes for an hour or, if I'm busy that day, just for a quick 30 minutes. I either go to the gym, swim, run or cycle, anything to clear my mind. I try to do this at least four times a week because I can really feel it if I don't but I do sometimes struggle to fit it in!

I'm usually at my desk from around 9am. I have regular clients throughout the year and client work is scheduled in the diary, which means no day is the same. On any one day, I could be designing magazines, creating a new brand or working with a marketing department, the list goes on. I work with most industries from start-ups to corporates.

I mainly work from home but I'm trying to branch out for a change of scenery and in order to meet new people. Now that things are opening back up

again, there's been far more industry events and, in the last few months, I've attended The Marketing Meet-up, Black Business Week and the International Magazine Centre's away day.

Lunch, when it happens, is around 1pm but that actually often involves working at my desk – not great.

Last year was one of my best years in business because my dream project, *Freelancer Magazine*, was launched. My friend Sophie Cross had the idea and asked me to design it for her, which meant I got to create a whole new brand from start to finish. The fifth issue has just come out and the magazine does what it says on the tin: it's for freelancers in all walks of life, whether that's accountants, doulas, copywriters or drag artists. If you are a freelancer, you are in it.

I try to switch off at around 6.30pm to have time with my husband and children. As a business owner working from home, it's too easy to go over hours or work on the weekend and I really try not to but sometimes... Really it's a sign of how much I love art and design and I feel blessed to have made a living from my passion.

See more of Angela's work at www.angelalyons.com. If you would like to be featured in a future column, contact wfbn@to-market.co.uk

The price of a new public park

Peter Mudge on the next stage of the East London Waterworks Park

At a time when green space is at a premium, a volunteer-led organisation is raising money to create a new public park. The "East London Waterworks Park" is an ambitious plan to turn an under-used depot in Lea Bridge Road into a "brownfield rainforest".

We have lots of exciting plans for what we want to create – including a nature reserve, wild swimming and a Forest School – and have made it clear to the current owners that we are interested in acquiring the site. Now though, we have to demonstrate we can raise enough money to be taken seriously and quickly – before a developer tries to get in ahead of us!

You may not be familiar with the land, which can be glimpsed from the top deck of a 55 or 56 bus but is closed to the public. Just opposite the Lee Valley Ice Centre, it would have been a very busy place a hundred years ago, when it was owned by the East London Waterworks Company, with several large buildings and a miniature railway for transporting sand. In those days, it was known as the Essex No.1 Filter Beds, tasked with purifying water from the River Lea for the new

homes springing up all over North-East London. In the 1970s, when filtration moved to a new site in Coppermill Lane, the waterworks were closed down and, since then, the land has been used as a storage depot by Thames Water.

Nothing much happened until a few years ago, when it was sold by Thames Water to the Department of Education. The government had hoped to build two free schools but their planning application was turned down by Waltham Forest Council. At a loss, they are now looking to sell, which is where we come in.

This won't be our first experience fundraising to make our dream a reality. Last year, we launched an appeal for £30,000 to help us shape our plans and were astonished at how quickly we were able to raise the sum; clearly the East London Waterworks Park is an idea that appeals to many people. This time around, however, we need to raise a much bigger sum: £3million! Since we don't expect to raise all that in one go, we've set our initial target at a more modest £500,000.

Find out more and donate to the fundraiser here: crowdfunder.co.uk/pl/elwp

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COMMENT

Councillor comment: Sebastian Salek, St James ward

The first of our new column written by backbench councillors

I moved to Walthamstow during one of the more difficult periods in my life. Years of gruelling night shifts had taken their toll and my mental health had deteriorated sharply. For the first time ever, I was forced to find ways to manage these feelings of despair.

It quickly became clear that one of the best antidotes was visiting green spaces. Walthamstow Marshes became a sanctuary and I'd often spend my afternoons there. There's something about the vast stretches of wildflowers, geese commuting overhead and trains gliding rhythmically by that eases your worries and creates a profound sense of calm.

As a St James councillor, I'm proud to be a custodian of this space, helping to protect it for future generations. The marshes are one of our proudest assets, drawing visitors from across the borough and beyond to walk, picnic or otherwise enjoy one of the best areas London has to offer. It was made even better by the opening of Walthamstow Wetlands, which the council brought into public use a few years ago.

Many of us are lucky to enjoy this space without ever feeling



Walthamstow Labour councillor Sebastian Salek

unsafe but a number of recent events – including a violent bike mugging in Coppermill Lane and a string of sexual offences on Hackney Marshes – have left some people feeling understandably uneasy about visiting.

When I join my ward colleagues, Catherine and Katy, for our regular listening sessions

across St James, residents tell us how important it is to them that they feel safe in public, especially when it comes to sexual offences. The statistics speak for themselves: a survey last year found 89% of local women had experienced street-based sexual harassment in Waltham Forest and 69% changed their day-to-

day behaviour as a result.

There are two things we can all do to help make sure everyone feels safe using Walthamstow Marshes and other green spaces this summer.

The first is to report every incident, however minor. Government cuts mean our local police are often forced to choose where to focus their dwindling resources but every report helps them build a picture of patterns of offending, which they can use to prevent repeat incidents.

If the incident involves sexual harassment, it's easier than ever to report. You can use the Waltham Forest Safe Streets app (available on Android and in the App Store) to make a report and access specialist support. This app was one of the most popular suggestions from residents for improving street safety and I'm pleased it's now a reality.

The second way to help is to take part in the council's bystander intervention training. By learning how to intervene safely, we can be empowered to stop incidents happening in the first place.

Together, let's do what we can to make Walthamstow Marshes somewhere everyone can enjoy safely.

LETTERS

Dear WFE

Some people are unaware that pigeons are a serious threat to people with asthma and other breathing problems. They carry diseases, including bird flu, encourage a rat problem and are a nuisance with their droppings.

Can Waltham Forest have a policy of discouraging the feeding of pigeons, especially as bread is not good for birds? At major sites of pigeon feeding and fouling, signs could be placed to discourage this activity. Pigeons have no use to our community and have major setbacks.

Wendy Stokes,
Walthamstow resident

Dear WFE

A serious and dangerous practice is becoming prevalent across Waltham Forest of cyclists riding along signed routes in the wrong direction. I am at a loss as to why people think they can do this! The UK left the EU over 18 months ago and had not, in any case, adopted driving on the right.

Unless or until it is effectively brought to a halt by the council's civil enforcement officers, the issue will not be going away anytime soon.

Keith Foster,
Walthamstow resident

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LICENCES FOR SPECIAL TREATMENT Public Notice

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

- Manicure
- Pedicure
- Licence for the premises: THE BEAUTY BOX, UNIT 10, 49-51 STATION ROAD E4 7DA

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 WITHIN 28 DAYS OF PUBLICATION specifying the grounds of opposition.

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

‘Minarets in the Mountains’ by Tharik Hussain

Sarah Fairbairn reviews a unique travel book by a Walthamstow writer

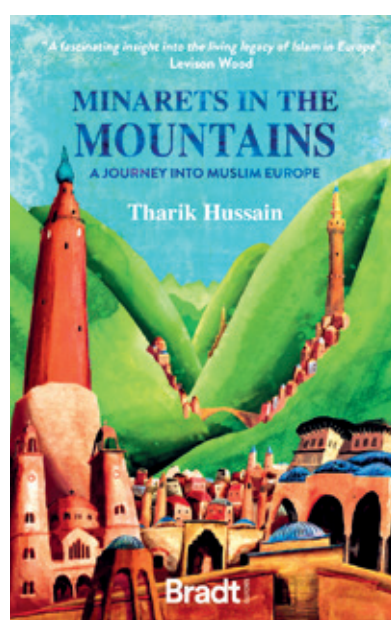
Part history lesson, part travelogue and – endearingly – part food journal, local writer Tharik Hussain's exploration of the Muslim heritage of Europe shines light on a history that has often been denied, suppressed or ignored.

The book is heavily inspired by the *Book of Travels*, written 400 years ago by Evliya Çelebi, whose journey forms the backbone of Tharik's own route through the Balkans. He compares the places he visits with Çelebi's descriptions of the thrumming heart of Ottoman-era Europe, whether in areas like Serbia's Novi Pazar – still a thriving hub of Islamic learning and identity – or what feel like more isolated remnants of almost-forgotten empire.

What might otherwise have been a fairly dry description of buildings, dates and historical facts is rescued by his warm interactions

with locals and the inclusion of his travelling companions: his wife and two daughters. The girls ensure that, alongside minarets, caravanserais and Tekkes, we're treated to explorations of swimming spots and art galleries, which the book is all the richer for. They have a particular preoccupation with street food – pides, pizzas, kofte and ice cream all play starring roles – meaning the reader is given a taste of local life as we explore the beauty of the region.

In the process, however, Tharik uncovers attitudes to Muslim culture that range from uncaring ignorance to outright hostility and in some regions – notably North Macedonia and Bosnia and Herzegovina – is confronted with shockingly recent attempts to erase this history entirely. As the book notes, such revisionism denies the heritage of all citizens, Muslim or



Credit Bradt Guides

otherwise. Speaking about the restoration of a historic Montenegrin mosque, one interviewee insists: “Everyone in the area, Muslim or not, wanted to fix it, because it is a

part of their city and their history.”

Troubled by the recent rise in popularity of a stricter, more conservative Islam, many of the older Muslim people Tharik speaks to in this book are determined to protect the legacy of their distinctly cross-cultural past. From the European-Muslim art of the Tulip mosques to the ‘Turkish Michaelangelo’ who designed the famous bridge of Mostar, in many parts of Europe “the mixing of cultures and heritage was so ancient... that the lines had been blurred centuries ago”. This travel book serves as a reminder that we all have an obligation, regardless of faith, to protect these monuments and memories. As the author himself notes, the Muslim history of the Balkans “is the heritage of every European”.

Minarets in the Mountains is available from Bradt Guides: bradtguides.com/product/minarets-in-the-mountains-1-pb/

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ARTS & CULTURE



The Taming of the Shrew in 2021 Credit Greek Theatre Players

All Greek to thee

Kate Gray on the award-winning drama group hidden in a local school

Nestled in the grounds of Walthamstow School for Girls is perhaps the borough's best kept secret: a theatre known fondly as "The Greek" and home to an award-winning drama group established in 1958. They are the Greek Theatre Players, who emerge every year for a short time to bring Shakespeare to life for local audiences at an affordable price.

Though built in 1924, the Greek is modelled on an ancient amphitheatre and there's truly nothing better than sitting outdoors on a warm summer evening, watching the cast appear in their finery to perform in the round. I still remember the magic of the first performance I saw there at perhaps nine years old, which had me rapt even though full comprehension of the play's language was beyond me. It became a firm tradition to attend each year, inviting others to come and experience Walthamstow as never before.

Of course, these days the

local area has gentrified to the point that open-air Shakespeare doesn't sound as incongruous as it did then but, nonetheless, it still has the power to surprise and delight. Us old-timers can always spot the newbies – they're the ones without a cushion to sit on, you only make that mistake once!

After three decades in the audience, I got brave enough to join the group and experience the magic from the other side with a small part in last year's play, *The Taming of the Shrew*. The National Operatic and Dramatic Association named the production its "Best drama" at regional level and awarded "Best female character" to Laura Wootten for her marvellously feisty Kate.

"It's Shakespeare as intended," returning director Mark Greenall told me, "The Greek Theatre lets us produce Shakespeare plays in the kind of space they were written for: outdoors, with fine costumes but little set, surrounded by the audience."

"For the actors, it feels surprisingly intimate and, when

the lights come up and the stone takes on a golden hue, it feels like stepping into a magical space quite unlike any other theatre."

I have to agree. Whether you're on stage in a fabulous period costume or watching the action while sipping a glass of wine in the audience, there really is something special about this place. I always come away feeling proud that we have this gem – and such talent – in Walthamstow.

Now you're in on the secret, you'll not want to miss this year's production of *Twelfth Night*, a play featuring mistaken identity, love and laughs. It's guaranteed to be a good night but you'll have to be quick to catch it as the play is only running from 27th to 30th July at 7.30pm, plus a 3pm matinee on the 30th. Tickets, ranging from £5–10, are sold on the door 30 minutes ahead of each performance and all profits will go to the DEC Ukraine Humanitarian Appeal.

Find out more about this year's production or how to get involved in future plays at: greektheatreplayers.co.uk

Sign of the times

Deborah Nash on a unique production coming to the Town Hall

This month a production unlike anything the borough has ever seen before will come to the centre of Walthamstow. Designed for both Deaf and hearing audiences, *Sumida River* in Sign Language is a re-imagining of a 600-year-old Japanese play, which tells the story of a mother travelling across the titular river to find her son after he was kidnapped by slave traders.

The production centres around two Deaf performers: Chisato Minamimura, who plays the mother, and Brian Duffy, who plays the ferryman she begs to take her across the river. The pair sign in Japanese and British Sign Language respectively to emphasise their different social standings, with a voice translation by Elizabeth Oliver, and dance to music by percussionist Beibei Wang. In order to allow the performers to respond to the music, some of the array of instruments are sewn into their costumes, allowing them to feel the vibrations.

The seeds of this idea were first planted a full decade ago, when I read *Sumida River* shortly after watching a Shakespeare production performed in British Sign

Language (BSL). This led me to wonder how it would benefit from a similar adaptation. While Sign Language conveys meaning through the hands, Noh plays like *Sumida River* are a form of dance-drama governed by movement of the feet and I thought it would be interesting to combine the two.

Though our production was lucky enough to get Arts Council funding, our path to the stage was delayed for two years by Covid, forcing us to replace our original director after he was unable to travel to us from Japan, with composer Verity Lane stepping in instead. However, we are now hugely delighted to have been picked by Waltham Forest Council for this summer's event series at Fellowship Square.

Sumida River in Sign Language will make the most of our setting outside the new Town Hall, incorporating fountains, a water pool and projected shadows, and with a number of Japanese food stalls available. It promises to be an event that is both mystical and memorable.

Sumida River in Sign Language will take place on 23rd July. Tickets available here: sumida_river_in_sign_language.eventbrite.co.uk



Chisato Minamimura as the Mother Credit After Hourz

NEWS

A previous Pride celebration Credit Pixie Le-May



Pride returns 'bigger and better than ever'

by Victoria Munro

After a two-year hiatus, the annual LGBT Pride celebration returns to the borough this month – bigger and better than ever.

In 2018, Paul Stone and Pixie Le-May, co-owners of the William Morris Bar, organised the first Walthamstow Pride, a relatively small event centred around the Town Square.

After two years of lockdown – and £5,000 from Waltham Forest Council – Pride returns on 30th July as an event for the entire borough “with a much bigger area and much bigger acts”.

The main celebration in Fellowship Square will last from noon until 8pm, while a number of venues around Walthamstow and the south of the borough will host their own Pride events.

Paul, who will be performing in drag as Victoria Sponge, told the *Echo* the team organising Pride are “hoping the event appeals to all sections of the community” as a “fun family day”.

He said: “When Pride first started it was very political and, while that’s still important to us, we really want to make it a celebration of the LGBT community

and how far we’ve come.

“We’re very keen this time around to reach out. Previously it’s been an event purely for our community but we want to engage with as many different groups as we can.”

To this end, Waltham Forest Pride have reached out to local faith groups and tried to book a diverse mix of acts, including Muslim drag queen Asifa Lahore.

Other performers include headline act and 90s pop star Sonia, who represented Britain and came second in the 1993 Eurovision, and popular Walthamstow singer Tina T.

More controversially, Paul confirmed the Met will be one of a number of organisations with an information stall at the event.

Many LGBT people argue police should not be represented at Pride because it began to commemorate the 1969 Stonewall Riots in New York, a series of protests against police harassment.

However, Paul said: “There’s an awful lot of LGBT police officers in the Met and they’re very keen to come and be visible and try to foster better relationships with the community.”

Find out more about Waltham Forest Pride on the council’s website here: walthamforest.gov.uk/events/pride-2022

Lesbian housing pitched in Leyton

by Victoria Munro

Arun-down former council block in Leyton could become the UK’s first cohousing scheme specifically for LGBT people.

Tyndall Gardens, in Tyndall Road, is a block of 30 flats, which Waltham Forest Council transferred to housing association London & Quadrant in 2002.

The block is now “mostly vacant and in a very poor state of repair”, according to a report prepared for council leaders, and would be too costly for L&Q to refurbish on its own.

Instead, L&Q hopes to hand over the block to London Older Lesbian Cohousing (LOLC), who would be able to redevelop it with help of funding from the Greater London Authority.

A report prepared for a meeting of council leaders on 9th June reads: “The scheme presents an opportunity for the borough to host the first UK LGBTQI+ cohousing scheme.

“This would, in addition, provide housing for a protected group at a later stage of their lives, meeting the council’s policies, as well as diversity and inclusion objectives.”

LOLC describe themselves on their website as “a group of lesbians aged fifty plus, who are trying to create a new way of living together as [they] grow older”.



Tyndall Gardens Credit Google Streetview

They hope to create a block of around 25 homes, each with its own flat and front door but with shared outside and inside space for meals, meetings and other activities.

Council leaders agreed in principle to allow L&Q to hand over the block to LOLC, noting that they could revisit the decision if the scheme is not finished in two years.

The report notes that six of the 30 flats are currently lived in, with five rented and one owned by a leaseholder, while property guardians occupy some of the remaining block.

L&Q will need to rehouse the renters and negotiate with the leaseholder to buy the flat before the block can be handed over.

Even if handed over successfully, the LOLC would still need to apply for planning permission before going ahead with any redevelopment.

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PHOTOGRAPHY



Skin to Skin

by Emily Graham



This portrait series is a visual record of each woman's unique and passionate breastfeeding story and aims to normalise and celebrate the natural beauty of the postpartum body.

Emily is a family and newborn photographer based in Highams Park. As a mum of two with

a background in paediatric nursing, she has lots of experience working with children and her passion is helping people document their family as it truly looks, with authenticity and meaning.

See more of Emily's photography on her

website www.emilygrahamphotography.co.uk or Instagram @emilygrahamphoto

We want your photos! Our next photography and illustration page will be on the theme of 'Togetherness'. Please send in your images to penny@socialspider.com by 18th July 2022.

CRIME

Leyton man who tortured stranger to death in 16 minutes jailed

A Leyton man was jailed for manslaughter after torturing a stranger to death, with the judge suggesting he may have been “re-enacting” his own past torture.

Abel Mery Berhany, 23, of Allanson Court in the Leyton Grange Estate, killed 56-year-old Abraham Haile on 28th July, 2020, after the pair argued at City Slots in Camden.

The court heard Berhany kicked, stamped or jumped on Haile’s head and upper body 99 times and attacked him with fire extinguishers and bleach.

After pausing to have a cigarette, Berhany then rammed a plastic broom handle into his victim’s mouth and used a fire extinguisher as a hammer to force it down his throat.

On 17th June, after pleading guilty to manslaughter two days earlier, Berhany was sentenced to life in prison and must serve a minimum of 18 years before he can be considered for release.

As reported in the *Ham & High*, Judge Picton told the court: “No one who has had to watch the CCTV footage [of the attack] will ever be able to forget what they witnessed.

Abel Berhany, 23, from Leyton
Credit Met Police



“No one who has had to watch the CCTV footage will ever be able to forget”

“The defendant has never given an account of what was in his mind as he attacked Abraham Haile. Psychiatric reports suggest he was re-enacting elements of the torture to which he himself was subject.”

Originally from Eritrea, Berhany was tortured in Libya as a child before being granted asylum in Britain.

The court heard he suffered from Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, psychosis and undiagnosed paranoid schizophrenia at the time of the attack, meaning he was charged with manslaughter rather than murder due to diminished responsibility.

Speaking after the verdict, Detective Inspector Okikiola Okunola said: “This was a highly violent incident, the harrowing details of which were recounted in court in the presence of the victim’s loved ones.

“The judge in this case praised Mr Haile’s family for their dignity throughout the proceedings and also praised officers for their contributions to the investigation. I wholeheartedly agree with his comments and my thoughts are with Mr Haile’s family today.”

Suspected acid attack leaves ‘life-changing’ injuries

An 18-year-old has “life-changing injuries” after a suspected acid attack in Leyton. Police are appealing for help from anyone who may have seen the assault take place just before 8.30pm on Saturday, 18th June.

Officers were called to reports of a fight in Walnut Road, just outside Leyton Jubilee Park, and found a young man with serious injuries.

A Met Police spokesperson said: “It is believed that a corrosive substance was thrown at him. His condition is not thought to be life threatening but is believed to be life-changing.”

Detectives want to speak to anyone who was in the area of Larch Road and Walnut Road that evening or who has dash cam or other CCTV footage from between 8 and 9pm.

Anyone with information should call 101 or tweet @MetCC and quote reference CAD 7403/18Jun. Alternatively, provide information anonymously via Crimestoppers on 0800 555 111.

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HOUSING

Extra floor agreed for flats despite resident outrage

by Josh Mellor, Local Democracy Reporter

Extra homes will be built on top of three blocks of flats in Chingford, despite 96 objections from residents and neighbours.

The additional floor at Woodedge Close, which will add six flats to the original 18, was granted “prior approval” by Waltham Forest Council’s planning committee on 14th June.

Several residents attended the meeting to speak in opposition, expressing concern about safety, overcrowded parking and how the 1960s building would cope with the added floor.

Speaking in opposition, resident Lisa Maxen asked how the extra floor could be deemed safe when the developer had not inspected the foundations.

She told councillors: “The proposal remains bulky, dominant, out of character

and a detriment to the highways.

“The additional floor puts us above anything in the surrounding areas and any surrounding property... but most importantly it will not keep us safe.

“I was charged £70,000 last year to extend the lease by 125 years and simply want to be left to enjoy my rights. These applications only seek to line the freeholder’s pockets even further.”

Fellow resident Laurence Swain pointed out that a version of the plans that proposed two extra storeys had already been rejected last year.

He added that the freeholder had rejected an offer from residents to buy the property.

Planning consultant Jerry Bell, for “air-space” developer Southern Territory Ltd, admitted residents had “real concerns” about their properties losing value, the building process and the impact on their lives.

But he told Waltham Forest’s planning

committee members that prior approval developments can only be decided based on whether the plans meet “technical requirements”.

Responding to residents, he said: “We’re keen to talk to residents about improvements... [and] we’re proposing a method of construction that will minimise noise.

“The government has seen fit to allow these developers to come forward through a prior approval process. We’ve gone through the assessments that the government asked us to provide.”

Councillors unanimously voted to approve the application after agreeing that “full details” of planned refuse and cycle storage facilities should be agreed before building work starts.

Due to “technical issues” with the recording of the meeting, no debate between planning committee members has been made public.



Gone to the dogs

by Josh Mellor,
Local Democracy Reporter

Hundreds of flats at the former Walthamstow Stadium were so faultily built that they need at least £10million of repairs five years after being finished.

The 294 homes at the former dog track, owned by housing association London & Quadrant (L&Q), were built with problems like “inadequate” cladding and “incorrectly installed” windows.

L&Q, which manages 95,000 homes, has apologised and pledged to cover the cost of all repairs but claimed the exact amount being spent is “commercially confidential”.

However, public accounts for Quadrant Construction, which managed the build, show that by April 2021 it had set aside £10m for “build defect costs on one development”.

Vicky Savage, L&Q’s group director of development and sales, apologised that residents have been “let down”, adding that the issues “date back to the construction of the development”.

She said: “We’ve addressed the highest priority cladding and fire-safety issues, and work on the other issues is ongoing.

“Due to the nature of the works required in the apartment blocks, we’re preparing a programme for temporarily rehoming these residents whilst working in their homes.”

Savage did not respond when asked what the cause of the issues is, saying only that they are “common themes being faced across the UK construction industry”.

L&Q has denied the problems stem from cost cutting.

Seven storeys planned for contested Chingford site

by Josh Mellor, Local Democracy Reporter

Developers hoping to build up to seven storeys high on a contested Chingford site insist the low-rise housing demanded by residents is “not financially viable”.

Developer Lindhill is consulting on plans to build 72 flats next to the Chingford Leisure Centre, in an area where Waltham Forest Council hopes to eventually see 280 new homes, according to its draft Local Plan.

The site was originally intended to accommodate 310 new homes until resident outcry moved council leaders to formally protect woodland behind the leisure centre, which borders the ancient Larks Wood.

The Lindhill scheme, which will offer only between a fifth or a quarter of its flats at “affordable” rates, is expected to be the tallest building on the overall site according to a council “masterplan”.

During an online presentation on the plans, a member of public asked why “family homes with gardens” are not being proposed for the site, in keeping with the surrounding low-rise buildings.

Lindhill managing director Lee Fitzpatrick responded: “As much as everyone would like to see two-storey houses with gardens, it’s not financially viable to deliver this.

“The height and massing is in line with the [council’s] masterplan... we can only go with how we’re guided by the planning department.”



He later said Lindhill was told by the council to “maximise” the number of flats on the site.

Local Conservative councillor Catherine Suarez raised concerns at the presentation about the planned scheme being “car-free”, with 150 cycle parking spaces offered for future residents instead.

Lee explained: “The council are looking

to promote a policy of car-free schemes moving forward and it will be advertised as car free.

“If people don’t want to live here because they can’t park here, that’s absolutely their choice. There are bus routes outside and it’s a little way to the station but it is walkable.”

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HEALTH

Whipps patient 'so lucky' to receive new procedure



Tara, from Walthamstow, was the first patient to receive the new surgery Credit Barts Health

The first Whipps Cross patient to receive a new procedure for breast cancer says she feels "so lucky" after it "worked wonders" for her.

Tara, a Walthamstow resident, was referred to Whipps Cross by her GP, after finding a lump in her breast last June.

She was eligible to be the first patient to receive a new form of surgery introduced this year and known as a "perforator flap", intended to reduce the need

for mastectomies.

The procedure uses skin and fat from beneath or the side of the breast to fill the gap left by the tumour and can leave the breast looking entirely unchanged, while also reducing the likelihood of post-surgery complications.

Dr Shweta Aggarwal, who performed Tara's surgery in February, told the *Echo*: "A big advantage is that, for the right patient, you can't make out the difference in the breast pre and post-surgery.

"The patient would still have a scar but they have exactly the same shape of the breast as they had before and the scar can be hidden under the breast in some procedures."

Dr Aggarwal explained that, previously, the cavity left by the removal of a tumour would fill with fluid, which creates scarring when it is reabsorbed by the body and can even move the nipple.

However, she notes that not all patients are

suitable for the procedure, depending on the size of their tumour compared to their breast.

Tara told the *Echo*: "The operation worked wonders for me, it was a bit painful, but I was happy to have this option.

"I feel so lucky because I didn't have to lose my breast. You can't really see the scar that was left after the procedure either."

So far, six Whipps patients have had the new procedure, which the hospital hopes to use more widely from now on.



Dr Shweta Aggarwal with colleagues Credit Barts Health

'Our new Whipps has ground to a halt'

Whipps commentator Mary Burnett on Boris' shaky promises

During the 2019 general election, Boris Johnson pledged to build 40 new hospitals in 10 years. Eight "pathfinder" hospitals, including our own Whipps Cross, were chosen as examples to lead the way, blazing a trail for the remaining 32. From the off, however, it's been clear that the funding available for these pioneers is woefully inadequate: £2.7billion, or just about £350million each. Even before construction costs began rising across the industry, that's not enough to build a decent hospital.

Over the last year, it has become clearer and clearer that the government is desperate to walk back its lofty promises.

Pathfinder hospitals like Whipps were told, Goldilocks-style, to submit three plans for their projects: a "preferred" plan, a plan costing no more than £400million and a plan to build their preferred option in stages. Last August, the Department of Health started suggesting anything from a new wing to a single block could be described as a "hospital". There was never going to be 40 new hospitals, it seems, just smoke and mirrors.

Last month, Whipps and the other Pathfinders were told they won't have any more funding for the time being to make their chosen sites ready, which has forced work here to grind to a halt, doubtless because of the cost. The government

appears to have de-prioritised the Pathfinders, spending their money instead on cheaper projects, including some that were started before the 2019 promise. So our much-needed new hospital is now on hold and for exactly how long remains unclear. I guess it depends on how keen our prime minister is to actually deliver on the promises he has made.

In the meantime, the "pause" should at least give Whipps Cross ample time to undertake a formal public consultation on their plans, something councillors from neighbouring Redbridge have been calling for, along with local health campaigners. Action4Whipps has written twice formally requesting this: to Barts

Health NHS Trust, which runs the hospital, and to the North East London Clinical Commissioning Group, who held the budget for most of our health services until July this year. So far, our requests have been denied.

I think the public has a right to see detailed plans for our new hospital and give our feedback while we wait for the Government to cough up the cash. The NHS Constitution, updated only last year, says the NHS "belongs to the people" and is "accountable to the public, communities and patients that it serves".

I couldn't agree more.

Join Action4Whipps by emailing whipps.cross.campaign@gmail.com

AROUND THE BOROUGH

WALTHAMSTOW

Local favourite named Britain's best-named small business

A borough favourite that started as a cart outside St James Street Station has been voted the best-named small business in Britain.

Perky Blenders was created in 2015 by husband and wife Adam and Victoria Cozens and now has three locations in the borough and supplies coffee to 60 stores.

The speciality coffee roasters - named for TV show *Peaky Blinders* - beat 1,500 other businesses for the top spot and will receive a £2,500 grant as their prize.

The competition, organised by insurance provider Simply Business, saw thousands of people vote for the funniest or most creative name.

Adam said: "We're over the moon to be crowned 'Britain's Best Small Business Name' and are always stoked when people get as much of a kick out of our name as we still do all these years later!"



Co-founder Adam Cozens

Credit Simply Business

"The Perky Blenders name was born from a need to get noticed... however it has grown into so much more. Our roasting team is a talented mob and our coffee is carefully sourced for quality and with good practice

always at the front of mind."

Perky Blenders secured 16% of the total votes, beating other popular contenders like Haverhill tiler Grout of This World and Longfield campervan hire company Wam Bam Campervan.

CHINGFORD

Volunteers turn unused building into community hub



Volunteers hard at work repainting **Credit** Love North Chingford

A new community venue opened at Chingford Station last month thanks to more than 600 hours of work from local volunteers.

Non-profit Love North Chingford originally planned to hire contractors to refurbish the three-storey Victorian building at Chingford Overground station, left unused for eight years.

However, when this proved too expensive, the community stepped up to do the work on a shoestring budget instead.

The North Chingford community hub held its first public event on 25th June, hosting the launch of the Chingford Historical Society's new heritage trail.

Love North Chingford chair Roger Brown, 72, told the *Echo*: "We knew it would be difficult

but had no idea of the amount of work that needed to be done.

"One of the floors was rotten, there were leaking water pipes and asbestos and part of the ceiling had to be replaced and rewired.

"We were just amazed at the number of people who came in to assist and raised funds. Finishing the buffet room was pretty emotional.

"At one point, we thought we would never be able to finish it so seeing it completed was overwhelming. I was looking at the labour of love."

The buffet room - originally an antique shop - is now a fully-equipped meeting room for up to 40 people. The hub also boasts a Local Heritage Room, run by the Chingford Historical Society, and a co-working space.

Love North Chingford still intends to turn the basement into a mini arts centre, which they hope to finish raising funds for before the end of this year.

LEYTON



The Spark House **Credit** Full Fat

Former Wetherspoons now 'cultural hub'

One of the first ever Wetherspoons pubs - The Drum in Lea Bridge Road - has reopened as a "cultural and eclectic hub" after a makeover by its new owner.

The building was put up for sale by Wetherspoons after more than 30 years last year and bought by Brighton-based Laine Pub Company, which owns 55 pubs across the South East of England.

Now trading as The Spark House, it promises "the best DJs and vivid digital art installations" to "provide an other-worldly atmosphere for guests".

The team boast that they have "created the perfect marriage between music and art" and offer "a comforting array of gastropub worthy small plates".

The Spark House is open from noon until 11pm on Sunday to Wednesday, until midnight on Thursday and until 2am on Friday and Saturday.

LEYTONSTONE

Stranded toddler saved by nursery manager

A toddler stranded at home after the sudden death of his mother was unharmed thanks to the diligence of a Leytonstone nursery manager.

When Tarin Edwards from Busy Bees Leytonstone noticed 20-month-old Alman had not showed up that day and was unable to reach his mother or uncle, she immediately raised the alarm.

Police visited the family home and found Alman's mother had died. However, thanks to Tarin's quick action, he was still safe and well.

Tarin, who has worked for Busy Bees since she was 17, received a Police Commendation Award for her great work at Leyton Great Hall last month.

She told the *Echo*: "I am delighted to have received this



Tarin Edwards with her Police Commendation Award **Credit** United National Photographers

award, it is a huge honour. I am also thankful that I followed my gut instinct and reacted quickly to ensure Alman was safe."

Busy Bees added Alman to its Community Support Scheme, which aims to help families going through difficult circumstances. Since April, he has received free childcare five days a week.

SPORT

What's next for Stow FC



by David O'Driscoll

As most football fans will testify, each new season brings with it a fresh burst of anticipation and hope. This is particularly true for the rabble supporting Walthamstow

FC following their extraordinary success last season, when they won the Essex Senior League at a canter by over ten points. Stow's success generated much interest and pride in the local community, causing an influx of new fans to the stands, and also means the

team are now playing in the Southern League for the first time in 16 years.

The league comprises twenty teams and is sponsored by Pitching, a "grassroots sports investment programme". This promotion means Stow FC are now eligible for the FA Trophy and will be in the FA Cup with a qualifying round in the early season. The team will be reconnecting with several opponents they have faced over the years - like Welwyn Garden City, Harlow, Ware and Hertford - and face some long trips to Dunstable and in particular, Cirencester Town, 200 miles away.

Andy Perkins, club chairman, is delighted to be back in the Southern League, "playing against new teams and old friends". He said the club plans to start announcing new signings in the next couple of weeks and hinted that there are "some very exciting prospects on the way". He was also particularly delighted to announce that co-managers John Mackie and Terry Spillane, having steered the team so well last season, "have agreed to stay on to spearhead the next promotion push".

I caught up with Terry, who was thrilled with the new deal for himself and his fellow manager and set out an impressive target for the team. "We aim to be one of

the fittest squads in the league," he told me, "To give ourselves the best chance of reaching our target of the playoffs."

He added: "We are really looking forward to the new season. We have already released some players that played a part and helped us win the ESL title, which is always a difficult job to do, but we've also agreed new deals with the spine of the team and a majority of the winning squad."

Other than the signings Andy hinted at, Terry said they had filled some of the gaps left by departing players by promoting younger footballers who had excelled in the reserve team. These new additions will be put to the test by a vigorous pre-season training schedule, including friendly fixtures with "good strong clubs" expected to give them "a stern test". This includes a fixture that the local football community should relish: a home derby against Leyton Orient on 26th July.

There is no doubt that football can, as TS Eliot once wrote, "pierce you with a sudden painful joy" and Walthamstow FC certainly provided many such moments last season. Let's hope that the local community will get behind the team as they endeavour to create a few more.

As easy as ABC

by Irena Souroup

Fourteen years ago, I was sitting on my sofa in Walthamstow, attempting to feed my baby and feeling exhausted. My body was far from recovered after the birth and I found it hard to contemplate a walk to the fridge, let alone anything else.

Glancing out of the window, I saw some fresh-faced people heading to the sports centre opposite my house, carrying hockey sticks. I was intrigued as it had been my favourite sport at school but thought to myself that my sporting days were probably over before sinking further into the sofa.

I couldn't have been more wrong. A full decade and two more children later, I found myself playing hockey again, laughing with my team, celebrating goals and feeling the wind in my hair. I owed my transformation to a tiny advert for the Waltham Forest Hockey Club Adult Beginners Course, which was the catalyst I needed to pick up a stick again. Since it was open to anyone, I thought it would be a gentle way to get back into playing and, in 2018, nervously joined a group of other newbies for the four-session course.

It didn't take long before I was hooked. Our coach, Philippa Leguen De Lacroix, nurtured our hidden talents and the mood boost from the exercise was incredible. In the first hockey season on the ladies' fourth team I was delighted to receive "Most Improved Player". Even though my son brought me down a peg by telling me that it was "an award for newbs", it still has pride of place on our mantelpiece.

I have been playing for Waltham Forest Hockey Club ever since and can firmly say it has transformed my life. I've never met a friendlier, more inclusive bunch of people and there are teams for all abilities, ages and both sexes, as well as for players with disabilities.

Coach Philippa told me: "We initially started [the ABC course] because we kept getting women saying they would like to come and play hockey but that they hadn't played in years. They would always say 'I'm not fit enough' or 'I won't be any good' - they felt overwhelmed."

"The idea was to give women the confidence to come and play. You can be a terrible player, you just have to be enjoying it and improving."

While inspiring women into sport was



the initial goal, the course has always been open to men too. Michael Wiseman, who took the course last year after moving from Canada, found it a great alternative to the ice hockey he played back home.

He said: "I decided to give it a try to stay in shape, meet some people from my local community and get some quiet time lost in sport."

"Everyone was very welcoming and

patient as I learned the rules. I would definitely recommend the sport, even if I still can't get used to using only one side of my stick!"

The Waltham Forest Hockey Club Adult Beginners Course takes place from 8-9.15pm on 30th June, 7th July, 14th July and 21st July. New players are also welcome at the club at any time.

For more information email join@WalthamForestHC.co.uk or visit: walthamforesthc.co.uk



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