



Your independent community newspaper

WALTHAM FOREST ECHO

Free
Oct 2022, No. 91

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Sean, Melissa and Michael (left to right) in the Forest Community Centre



The Forest Community Centre

Community centre of 80 years at risk

By Victoria Munro

The future of an 80-year-old community centre hangs in the balance as Waltham Forest Council decides whether to go ahead with an eviction.

In August, Michael Michael, chair of the Forest Community Centre in Guildford Road, Walthamstow, was shocked to receive a letter saying the council wanted them out by March.

The centre, running since 1962, is home to two drama groups, karate classes, table tennis and more and is used every day and by at least 150 people a week.

After spending months negotiating a rent increase, the council decided it needed to

use the building as its hub for food bank donations, currently based in Chingford's soon-to-be-redeveloped Assembly Hall.

However, only days before this paper's publication and weeks after it was first contacted for comment, the council stated it is considering changing its mind.

Speaking to the *Echo* before this last-minute development, Michael said the community centre had urged the council to consider other options or sharing the building to little success.

He said: "I'm worried about the wellbeing of the people that come here. We sent the council letters from our members and some were saying they would be lost without the centre and wouldn't be going out at all.

"There are some table tennis players who have been playing since the 1960s and we also have a lot of local kids that come here because there's no youth groups. If we're going to be moved away, what happens to them?"

Sean Wilkinson, who runs one of the centre's two drama groups, added: "We have to acknowledge there's a need for the depot but we don't believe this is the right place for it because of the lack of accessibility."

Forest Community Centre sits next to the North Circular, where it meets the Hale End Road flyover, and is only accessible via the residential street of Guildford Road.

Fellow member Melissa Quinn agreed, noting a depot "helps thousands, whereas our centre

helps hundreds", but said the council couldn't even confirm that the new hub would be permanent.

She said: "We think it's very short-sighted of the council to turf people who have been here for decades out for something that they don't seem to have really thought through."

Cabinet member Cllr Vicky Ashworth first responded to the *Echo's* request for comment on 12th September but, on the 27th, said a "potentially alternative site" for the hub had "recently become available".

She said: "As the cost-of-living crisis worsens, the council's Food Distribution Hub will continue to play an essential role in... ensuring the most vulnerable members of our community

have the support they need.

"[However] the council recognises the importance of the activities hosted at the Forest Community Centre to the community.

"If viable, the alternative site could host the bulk of our food distribution operation and allow the Forest Community Centre to continue to be used. We are prioritising work to review the potential new site and will be updating the Forest Community Association in early October."

According to the most recently discussed plans, the Assembly Hall and neighbouring Chingford Library will be knocked down and rebuilt with around 40 flats.

While the proposals have been debated for years, planning permission is not yet granted.

NEWS



FELLOWSHIP IS LIFE

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

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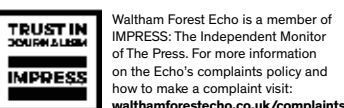
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Council no longer investing in fossil fuels

Waltham Forest is officially the first council in the UK to stop investing in fossil fuels.

In 2016, after a year of urging from environmental campaigners, the council's pension committee promised to "exclude fossil fuels from its strategy over the next five years".

At the time the council's pension fund was worth £735million, of which £23.9m was invested in the oil and gas industries.

While campaigners criticised it for not moving fast enough in 2019, the council announced last month that it has "completed the task" of divesting "directly managed" funds.

Deputy leader Clyde Loakes said: "Often when people talk about tackling the climate emergency, they are discussing the tangible actions that we can all see.



Campaigners outside the town hall in 2016

Of course [these] are incredibly important but so is the behind-the-scenes work that people may not see, such as this incredible achievement divesting our pension funds.

"Moving away from investments in oil, coal, and gas companies in favour of investing in those working on sustainable or renewable energy helps these new

technologies become better, more efficient and more readily available.

"We have a responsibility to our children and grandchildren to give them the chance to enjoy the opportunities from which we have benefitted and one of the ways we can achieve this is through leading the shift away from fossil fuels towards renewable energy."

Council budget gap £4million bigger

by Josh Mellor, Local Democracy Reporter

Waltham Forest Council's budget gap has grown by £4million since March, new reports reveal.

Speaking to the budget and performance scrutiny committee last month, council leader Grace Williams said that financial uncertainty this year seems "particularly marked".

Growing pressure on the budget comes from a combination of challenges, including "huge uncertainty" about government funding, rising inflation and the high cost of social care.

A review of spending currently suggests the council's budget gap will be as large as £14million by the start of the next financial year.

Cllr Williams said: "At the same time as we are facing difficult choices, our residents are facing the greatest cost of living crisis we've ever seen.

"For many years we've been waiting for funding reforms but the thing I want to stress is that, although it's a difficult picture, I have confidence we will prioritise careful financial stewardship."

According to the council's director of financial services, Ursula Gamble, no cuts to services were "appropriate" for this year's budget because of the "huge uncertainty" ahead.

The council instead spent its reserves, which currently total £70m, but leading officers and the finance team have identified "savings" of £6.5m to be made next year.

The majority of these would be in the council's 'people directorate', which includes social care, public health and education.

Council tax, which represents about half of the council's £247m annual general fund budget, is assumed to increase by 3% next year, bringing the annual charge for a band D property to £1,998.57.

New name for Blackhorse Lane

Waltham Forest Council is willing to pay an estimated £60,000 for a new "identity" for Blackhorse Lane, including a new name.

According to a tender published on 25th August, the council needs someone to create a "new name, visual identity, narrative and associated assets" for the industrial area in Walthamstow.

This comes only a few months after the "masterplan" for the area was finalised, which set out plans to build up to 3,700 new homes and create an "urban buzz" to attract new residents.



Blackhorse Lane
Credit James Cracknell

The council wants Blackhorse Lane to become known as "one of London's principle creative business locations" and a council spokesperson told *Design Week* the new branding should both "shine lights on existing talents" in the borough and cater to "the emerging generation of creatives".

The council also requested that "corporate and council ownership" be "less visible within the new identity", instead championing creative businesses, local schools and community groups.

AN INTRODUCTION FROM THE EDITOR

This month, I spoke to a couple forced out of the pub they spent a decade making profitable so the UK's largest pub company could take it over [p4]. The pub industry, I heard, is becoming a monopoly. As a local journalist, I could relate.

Three immense companies – Reach, Newsquest and National World – own almost every local paper in the UK and, having worked for two of them, I know firsthand the

damage they are doing to local journalism. These publishers have far larger teams than the *Echo* but refuse to let reporters spend much time on anything of value. The *East London Guardian* (Newsquest) was once a genuinely excellent paper, now based in an office in Watford. MyLondon's E17 newsletter (Reach) saw all its reporters banned from Walthamstow's largest resident Facebook group.

Unfortunately, the gap between the *Echo* and these companies is

getting ever wider, as our financial situation forces us to let go of three valued members of our team. I'd like to thank all of them for the incredible work they've done. They are: Penny Dampier, who spent four and a half years dealing with memberships and distribution so I and my predecessors could focus on irritating the council; advertising sales manager Salima Sair and junior reporter Nadoya Reid, who wrote our May issue's fantastic front page story. Very thankfully

Penny isn't going far and will join the team at our step-sister paper: the *EC1 Echo*.

However, it's not all bad news. In the last month, more people signed up to support our independent paper than in the entire preceding year, a response from the community we never predicted. While the paper is by no means out of danger, it's heartening to know the community doesn't want to see us go out of print.

Visit walthamforestecho.co.uk/membership to join them.

INTERVIEW



Fabian on his horse Apple
Credit Ben Rowe

‘The UK’s black cowboy’

by Victoria Munro

Fabian Williams – an 18-year-old who describes himself as “the UK’s black cowboy” – is willing to do anything it takes to keep his dream of becoming an Olympic equestrian alive.

Last month that meant filming a viral video riding his horse Apple through the drive-thru at Leytonstone McDonald’s and, before that, working “almost 24 hours a day” to save up the money to buy her.

While now he can be proud of his passion, as a child being teased at school convinced him to give it up for five years, instead becoming someone “no one could make fun of” by getting involved in crime.

However, two years ago, a charity programme funded by Redbridge Council providing free boxing lessons to troubled teenagers convinced him to take up the reins again.

Fabian told the *Echo*: “Ever since I could speak, I’ve wanted to get on a horse. No one in my family rides, not even my extended family, and the support is there but they don’t really understand it.

“This is a god-given ambition and a god-given talent. I can’t explain the feeling I get when I ride and go over my jumps and fences but it’s different to anything I’ve ever felt before.”

Fabian now lives in the south of the borough but grew up in Ilford and started volunteering at a stable near his home at the age of just ten years old.

However, after his classmates found a picture of him taking part in the stable’s Christmas Parade – dressed as an elf on a horse dressed as a reindeer – he spent the next five years determined to be “that guy no one can make fun of”.

He said: “I went through a lot in those five years, I was on the road, I was [dealing drugs] and there was

no purpose in my life.

“I got charged with my first crime at the age of 11 and spent about six or seven months in a young offenders’ prison; if you knew me then, you wouldn’t believe I could be where I’m standing now.

“I got out of that lifestyle through [charity] BoxUp Crime, they helped get me onto the right path and I found God. They gave me the confidence to be different and forget what people say.

“Now I’m bringing respect to horse riding and showing people still doing what I was doing that they can actually change their life. When the video came out, I had people replying saying they remembered me [from before] and they were proud of me.”

After reigniting his love of riding, Fabian spent about a year and a half retraining Apple, a 16-year-old ex-race horse who had “never jumped or done dressage in her life” and lived near

her then-owner in Kent.

That meant leaving the house with his mother at 6am so they could drive to her stables, where he mucked her out, trained and then headed back in time for his mother’s shift at 9am.

Since then, he and Apple have competed in three shows and placed in the top three each time but Fabian knows he will need a sponsorship to buy a younger horse to have a shot at his dreams.

It is in a bid to attract enough attention to secure this funding that he filmed his recent stunt in Leytonstone, after a period where he was “mentally broken down” and considered giving up.

He said: “I know my talent but I have to work with what I have and this whole time I’ve only been funded by myself, doing shift work almost 24 hours a day.

“Recently my coach Allison Crow found me a horse that was £7,000 and I raised £5,000 – do not

ask me how – but I couldn’t make enough and that left me mentally broken down for a while.

“I started to think I couldn’t do this and I was going to give up, there were three whole days where I was gone. I was still looking after Apple but I wasn’t riding her at all.

“But I prayed and prayer saved me, God gave me the idea to film the video. I knew in my head the response it would get but I didn’t know it would be this much and that was God showing me how many people’s lives I can touch.

“I want to do this for the next generation of horse riders because I want them to have an easier time than I’ve had. One day I want to open a stable where everyone can do this.

“I’m going to be a five-time Olympic medallist and that will mean going down a hard road but I’ve prepared myself for that. Right now, God is in control.”

Follow him [@theblessedequestrian](#)

NEWS

Andy and Louisa Potter bid goodbye to The Bell



No Stonegate pub unturned

by Victoria Munro

The takeover of a beloved Walthamstow boozery by the UK's largest pub company has raised concerns about its "monopoly" on local pubs.

Last month, the *Echo* reported that Stonegate Group had forced manager Andy Potter out of The Bell, opting instead to take the pub in-house.

At an unofficial goodbye party on 15th September, Andy's wife Louisa told the *Echo* the couple had known "for a long time" they would be pushed out once their lease came up for renewal but that there was "nothing that could be done".

Noting that the pub went from taking just £3,500 a week to £30,000 in the decade they ran it, she added: "The bigger issue now is saving the pubs that desperately do want to keep going. My worry is that the industry is becoming a monopoly.

"Legislation is supposed to protect leaseholders but, every time the government creates a new rule, the big pub companies come back with something to counter it."

Stonegate Group owns at least 12 other pubs in the borough, although the company refused to provide a full list when contacted by the *Echo*.

In Walthamstow, these include The Goose, The George and The Lord Palmerston – which it runs directly – and Ye Olde Rose & Crown, The Nags Head, The Flower Pot and The Dog & Duck, which it leases out.

Elsewhere in the borough, it owns The Kings Head, The Wishing Well and The Dovecote in Chingford and Nightingale on the Green and Plough & Harrow in Leytonstone.

The announcement that The Bell would become a directly-run pub has left other Stonegate leaseholders worried about their long-term future.

The manager of Ye Olde Rose & Crown, Bun Constantinou, told the *Echo* their lease is up for renewal in March 2024 and that he is "unsure" what will happen, adding: "Stonegate's business plan at the moment does not seem to involve having leaseholders."

Meanwhile, locals who love The Bell fear leaked plans to install 14 TV screens before it reopens later this year prove going in-house will mean becoming "yet another spit and sawdust sports bar".

A current Bell employee, who asked to remain anonymous, told the *Echo* "It's heartbreaking, I've been crying on and off all evening.

This was a proper local pub.

"They're bringing in new management and the business model is going to be different, more like the pubs they already have, but I don't think that makes much sense for this area."

However, while many locals are opposed to the takeover, some are agnostic or even excited about the coming changes.

Stuart Renshaw told the *Echo*: "I've got an open mind; it would be nice if it stayed the same but we will have to wait and see. I've been in Walthamstow for 30 years and I've seen a lot of changes over the years – some have been good and some have been bad."

Another customer, who asked to remain anonymous for fear of angering his friends, admitted he was "excited" for the new Bell.

He said: "This place is currently like a creche on the weekends and I'm hoping it'll become a bit more like The Chequers in the High Street. If you can watch the away game here, that might bring in a younger crowd.

"People are worried because it'll be run by the same people as The Goose and The Palmerston but I think, because of where it's situated, you're not going to get that station pub crowd."

Bin strike could come 'sooner rather than later', warns union

by Victoria Munro

Waltham Forest's waste workers could stop collecting rubbish "sooner rather than later" if their demands for a pay rise and paid sick leave are not met.

Michael Dooley, from GMB union, said 96% of the borough's unionised waste workers voted last month in support of a strike, adding he was "astounded by the level of anger".

All waste collection is run for Waltham Forest Council by contractor Urbaser, who are in negotiations with workers but have offered "nowhere near" what they expect.

Earlier this year, rubbish collectors protested outside the town hall to mark their anger at being treated "like second-class citizens" by the company, who took over the borough's waste contract two years ago.

Michael Dooley told the *Echo* he had "never seen" so many workers willing to strike before, adding that Urbaser's latest offer of a 7% wage increase this year followed by a 3% increase next year was so meagre he felt the company was "actively trying to provoke trouble".

He also said the "Dickensian" refusal to introduce a scheme for paid sick leave meant staff "cannot afford to take time off work to recover from ill health".

Staff shortages due to rising Covid cases was one of many reasons Waltham Forest Council

initially planned to suspend brown bin collections last month, before U-turning 24 hours later after resident uproar.

A local waste worker said: "We work in all weathers 365 days a year, with filth and grime, potentially hazardous viruses and bacteria. Therefore we run a high risk of being ill because of the type of work we do.

"I was off work for four months and did not get paid any money from the company where I have worked for 12 years. I feel like just a number to the company, so we must stand up for ourselves and stick together."

Urbaser has yet to respond to a request for comment.

Waltham Forest Council's deputy leader Clyde Loakes said the council and all its contractors, including Urbaser, pay the London Living Wage but recognise that "many people are concerned about the rising cost of living".

He said: "We are working hard to ensure that anyone employed by the council or its contractors receives a fair wage and at the same time safeguard taxpayers' money to fund essential services that the community increasingly relies upon.

"Talks are ongoing between Urbaser and the union representatives. The council has not received any additional government funding to cope with the cost-of-living crisis that our staff and our contractors are facing."



An astounding 96% of members are willing to go on strike Credit: GMB

NEWS

Disabled man hounded for £6,000 after council error

by Josh Mellor,
Local Democracy Reporter

A Leyton man with learning disabilities was hounded “in error” for more than £6,000 debt by Waltham Forest Council.

In August, social worker James O’Rourke found a letter to his 59-year-old disabled brother Tony from the council’s debt recovery team demanding £6,259 for his home care.

Tony’s care is funded by the council, who take part of his benefits to help pay for it, and only a few months previously James had also discovered the council deducted “around £500” too much between April and August.

On 14th September, a council staff member finally confirmed to James that the more than £6,000 charge was “generated in error”, apologising for any “frustration and anxiety” caused.

However, James feels the series of errors shows the council’s charging system is “a dire mess” and feels other vulnerable people could also be being overcharged.

He told the Local Democracy Reporting Service (LDRS): “One part of the council was telling me that Tony was owed money and the other was demanding £6,000!”

“If I’m exasperated with it, imagine if he was living with his 83-year-old mother with them saying he owes £6,000 – it is unreal.

“For me, their systems are bugged and, if they’re bugged for Tony O’Rourke, they must be for others. How many other people



Tony O’Rourke, 59, with the debt collection letter he received in August. Credit: James O’Rourke

are affected by these errors?”

In response to a formal complaint about the deductions, council leader Grace Williams emailed James last month saying a “comprehensive review” of Tony’s deductions had highlighted “discrepancies within our system”.

When previously contacted for comment by the LDRS, cabinet member for adults Louise Mitchell said the deductions and debt

letter were being urgently investigated and apologised for any concern caused.

She added: “We are in contact with the family, and will continue to work with them to resolve the problems and provide them the peace of mind they need.”

A council spokesperson declined to comment on James’ suggestion that other disabled people may have been overcharged, suggesting that Tony’s case is “unique”.

James, a former Lib Dem councillor, feels the problems with his brother’s finances have highlighted a wider issue of councils deducting from disabled people’s benefits. By his analysis, a quarter of his brother’s benefits are taken by the council for his care.

He said: “The government is giving him some money to live and the council is taking that away because the government is not giving the council enough to support him. It’s just madness... I’m so angry at the moment.

“Why don’t politicians come out and debate this? If there’s a campaign to fix this nationally I would get behind the council.”

Jon Abrams, campaigns and justice coordinator at Inclusion London, said the problem of deductions from benefits is “widespread” across London and England.

He added: “In the current situation there are tens of thousands of disabled people being charged on their welfare and state pensions. They have little capital or income and local authorities can charge them or take benefits.

“Over the last year I’ve heard stories that as the government increases benefits, local authorities will reassess people and say ‘oh, more income, we’ll take some of that’. But these are extra benefits that the government is giving for the cost of living.”

Jon also pointed out that in 2016 Labour-run Hammersmith and Fulham announced it would be the first London council to scrap all charges for social care at home.

EAST END INDEPENDENTS



WALTHAM FOREST EDITION

Be on the Map this Small Business Saturday for Guild’s 10th Anniversary



The East End Trades Guild is an alliance of 400 small, independent businesses and the self-employed that work together on common interests and for the good of the community.

This year, the Guild is celebrating its 10th anniversary by releasing unique edition maps designed by Sam Brewster and Matt Curtis. In collaboration with the Waltham Forest Echo, the Guild is displaying the breadth and diversity of its members across the borough via a 4-page spread in the Echo’s December edition. In addition, members will receive physical maps, provided by local printers Waltham Forest Print, to hand out to customers and raise awareness of the Guild.

While rooted in the local community, this celebration will also feed into the national Small Business Saturday campaign, which takes place on 3rd December 2022. Members can take advantage of and contribute to the Guild’s social media campaign on the day to help boost visibility and make their online presence more impactful, as well as support important, independent and local journalism through our new partnership with the Echo.

To be a part of this year’s limited edition

maps, you can sign up for membership before Monday 10th October via eastendtradesguild.org.uk/become-a-member/. Contributions start from as little as £5 a month, and we run on the ethos that those who can pay more support others that cannot.

Over the past decade, the Guild has achieved success in several projects, including the development of a “London Working Rent”, pushing for business rate relief in 2017’s national budget, and regularly holding the London Mayor and local council leaders accountable for commitments made to our members.

More recently, the Guild is developing its own Kickstarter scheme following the Covid pandemic, helping to employ young people across East London. The Guild is also pushing for a commercial community land trust to offer small businesses long-term affordable rent.

The guild is a grassroots, community-based organisation – our strength comes from the diversity of our membership, and our work is designed for members to empower each other and take charge on issues they believe in – together, we are stronger.

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FEATURES

A week in the life of a Ketogenic baker

A new diary column from the Waltham Forest Business Network

At age 25, I discovered I had a brain tumour, which turned out to be a life-changing diagnosis in more ways than one. Twelve years later, it has left me with epilepsy and a disabled arm and leg but also with a business that gives me purpose and joy every day.

In 2017, in an effort to control my seizures, I began eating a Ketogenic diet – low in carbs and free from sugar – which meant completely cutting out normal bread and cakes. These were two foods I had always loved and, unable to find any low-carb versions in shops, I simply began baking my own. A year later, The Keto Bakery was born.

A typical weekday starts around 7.30am, I work out of my own kitchen in Walthamstow so there's

no need to get going earlier as my commute is only downstairs. After cleaning the kitchen and making myself Bulletproof coffee (black coffee blended with MCT oil and butter, which I highly recommend), I get stuck in answering emails.

My inbox varies from the ridiculous to the sublime, from customers asking why they've yet to receive an order they placed the night before to a request from a celebrity for their husband's birthday cake. All my orders come via the eCommerce platform I use.

I love Mondays (and Tuesdays and Wednesdays, etc) because they're devoted to baking. Thursdays and Fridays I often receive a lot of commissions for celebration cakes and they're also the best days for meetings. Once I'm done with that day's goods, I handpick them and deliver them

across the borough by tricycle or transport them to the Post Office to be shipped nationwide.

With that sorted by late afternoon, I'll spend some time preparing packaging for future orders, folding boxes and printing labels, or deal with the business side of things – stock check, finance, marketing, etc – before finishing work around 6.30pm to cook dinner. I try to get to bed by 10.30pm and I'm often so tired that I fall asleep holding my Kindle.

A lot of businesses like mine will work seven-day weeks to hit the weekend food markets, which is one of the best ways to meet new customers, but I've found that's not really healthy in the long run and try to take some weekends off. I'm learning that to run a successful business you need rest at some point but it's a challenge!



Samantha Vine, The Keto Baker

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SCAN ME



HOUSING

Estate redeveloper requests more money from council

by Victoria Munro

The developer rebuilding a Leytonstone estate is requesting more money from Waltham Forest Council due to “unanticipated” economic change threatening its profits.

The regeneration of Avenue Road Estate, currently 258 mostly council flats in four blocks, was meant to begin this month but has been delayed until at least December.

While a planning application has not yet been submitted, a report prepared for council leaders suggests the current plan is to build 634 homes, rebuilding the existing council flats and adding hundreds of new homes for sale or rent.

Bellway signed an agreement with the council last September but, in June, warned it would “face a fundamental challenge” to delivery if it sticks to its original “financial model”.

In order to “reflect the increase in costs”, it is asking the council for a number of adjustments to the agreement, including paying more for each council flat it rebuilds.

The report prepared for the council’s cabinet reads: “The challenge has arisen due to the significant change in the economic environment... specifically relating to build cost inflation, which has reached



Avenue Road Estate in Leytonstone Credit Patrick Dowse

unanticipated levels.”

However, the report adds that the “revised total” the council would pay if it agrees to the changes is still within the scheme’s overall budget and “remains the most eco-

nomically advantageous”.

The changes would also give the council the option to buy an additional 54 flats for use as council homes.

Furthermore, if the scheme still doesn’t

materialise, the council would be able to charge Bellway half of the “planning costs incurred” between June and September.

The report adds: “Bellway have restated their commitment to the Avenue Road Regeneration and intend to work closely with the council to meet the shared objective of delivering new affordable homes for residents, a commercially viable scheme and best value to the council.”

The estate was built in the early 1960s using concrete panels and the council has previously stated the flats “don’t meet the modern standards [it] would expect to provide”.

The rebuild is almost overwhelmingly supported by residents who took part in a ballot last year, with only 15 people voting against.

However, this is now the third time the council has been forced to renegotiate a large scheme with a developer after it complained of rising costs.

In May last year, the council agreed to give developer Countryside a £6.9million discount on the price of buying the Score Centre site in Leyton for a project to build 750 new homes.

And, in July this year, Countryside won permission to squeeze another 150 new flats onto the Marlowe Road Estate in Walthamstow.

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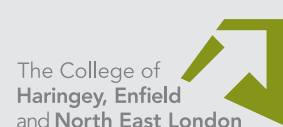
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HEALTH



Victoria and her daughter Angie (provided by family)

Leyton woman ended her life after being refused treatment

by Victoria Munro

The family of a Leyton woman who ended her life after mental health staff said she wasn't "a suitable candidate for treatment" spoke publicly for the first time last month about their loss.

Victoria Tsopurashvili, 52, died in April last year and is survived by her husband Rompert Aroutinov, her children David and Angie and her six-year-old grandson Ilyas.

Victoria, who worked as a chef, began struggling with anxiety, unhappiness and insomnia in late 2018 and was taking antidepressants.

During an appointment in November 2020, five months before her death, a nurse became seriously worried about her and made an urgent referral to the Waltham Forest Early Intervention in Psychosis Service (WFEIPS).

Victoria was seen by WFEIPS, which is run by the North East London NHS Foundation Trust, later that month but was refused treatment, which east London coroner Graeme Irvine described as a "poor decision" following an inquest into her

death earlier this year.

In his report to prevent future deaths, coroner Irvine questioned why "no consideration was given" to referring Victoria to another service run by the trust.

Speaking publicly last month to mark World Suicide Prevention Day, Victoria's daughter Angie said her mother was "always happy" before her mental health struggles began and that the family still wonders "whether more could have been done to help her".

"We wanted to get her help... it feels like that didn't happen"

She said: "What's happened has turned our family upside down. Things will never be the same and my dad is broken. Losing her in the way we did has only added to the grief and pain

we continue to feel.

"Mum was the most positive person I knew. She was always smiling, always saw the best in people and went out of her way to help others. All she wanted for our family was happiness and health – that's why we donated her organs so families can have what mum wanted for us.

"To us, it looked like she was getting worse and we wanted to get her help so she could become more like the mum we knew. It feels like that didn't happen.

"Anyone can be affected by mental illness and it's vital that people receive the care they need and they know that support is out there."

Dami Oloyede, the medical negligence expert at Irwin Mitchell representing the family, added: "Victoria was a much-loved wife, mum and grandma and, while more than a year has passed since her death, all her family remain devastated by what happened.

"They're still struggling to come to terms with the events that unfolded in the lead-up to Victoria's death and are determined for as many lessons as possible to be learned."

New Whipps is 'first or second' priority nationwide

by Josh Mellor,
Local Democracy Reporter

The rebuilt Whipps Cross is the government's "first or second" priority nationwide, councillors were assured last month.

In 2020, former prime minister Boris Johnson promised to build 40 new hospitals across England by 2030, with eight "pathfinder" hospitals including Whipps set to begin first.

Almost two years on, the government has yet to agree a timeline or even a budget for the rebuild and only handed over up to £28million for the first phase of the project – a new multi-storey car park and road works – after work ground to a halt.

However, at a meeting on 21st September, Whipps redevelopment manager Alastair Finney said the hospital team had received "confirmation" that their project is "first or second" priority in the country.

Speaking before the Whipps Cross joint health overview committee, he said: "[The hospital] has planning permission in outline terms, which is a positive for the programme.

"It has added significantly to [its priority] in conversations we continue to have with our national colleagues, who under the radar have been putting these schemes into an order in which they might go first."

Alastair said this is thanks to "general stakeholder support" for a new hospital and a recently-approved £28m plan to reduce future pressure on Whipps Cross by improving local health and wellbeing.

Councillors on the committee were not entirely reassured, expressing concern about the project becoming increasingly more expensive due to growing inflation.

Committee vice-chair Beverley Brewer, a Redbridge councillor, said: "I have to say that I am really concerned that we might end up with nice new roads and a new car

park and nothing else.

"When are we going to hear more about the timescale and when are we going to have a construction partner? I know we're looking at [a completion date of] 2028 at least now."

The Department of Health and Social Care is not expected to make any further funding announcements until December this year.

Alastair said the national hospital programme team is aware of the "inflationary costs of delay" but that, in his view, the country's political and economic environment is "getting more and more difficult".

The committee also heard ongoing concerns from local campaigners that Barts Health, the trust which runs Whipps Cross, is refusing to carry out a full public consultation.

The trust insists consultation is unnecessary because there will be no "substantial variation in service" but campaigners insist the public should know about important changes, such as a possible reduction in hospital beds.

Mary Burnett, from campaign group Action4Whipps, told the committee: "Whatever engagement Barts has done, it is striking that when we run stalls 50% of people have no idea Whipps Cross is being redeveloped."

Another huge concern is what will replace the Margaret Centre, a specialised end-of-life unit in Whipps Cross that will seemingly not be rebuilt in the new hospital.

Siobhan Harper, transition director for the north east London NHS, told the committee a new strategy for end-of-life care is being developed "looking at a more end-to-end model".

She said: "We are working on a needs analysis and on affordability, the kind of things that people tell us that they want. At this point we're not going to commit to [closing or changing the service] either way because we don't know the answer."

"We're looking at [a completion date of] 2028 at least now"

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COVID RECOVERY

Where next post-Covid?



Members of the borough's Streetbase team

Supported by Civic Futures, we asked what the borough needs to recover from the pandemic

Last month [#90, p11], we reported on how local organisations spent tens of thousands of pounds helping the borough bounce back after the pandemic.

The funding was provided by the Greater London Authority's (GLA) London Recovery Board, co-chaired by Mayor of London Sadiq Khan.

However, there is still work to do when it comes to two groups worst affected by the lockdown itself: the borough's youngest and oldest residents.

The *Echo* spoke to six members of Waltham Forest Council's Streetbase team, a youth-led engagement programme, who largely reported feeling disillusioned about their education after so long out of the classroom.

Tori Allison-Powell, 18, from Walthamstow, said: "As soon as the lockdown happened, my grades went downhill. I'm just the type of person who learns better in front of a teacher than online.

"I sort of gave up and eventually dropped out of college, I didn't think I had it in me to catch up on what I had missed.

"I feel like Covid changed people's mindset about university. Before, a lot of people I know wanted to go but, after hearing about the experience of people who went during Covid, they just want to go straight into work."

James Serieux, a 22-year-old also from Walthamstow, agreed, noting one of his

friends left university feeling it was "a rip-off" and "all just for the piece of paper".

Like half of more than 250 young people surveyed by the Streetbase team, he felt mental health was a major concern, noting one of his friends said he would "wake up and start crying for no reason" during lockdown.

For 20-year-old Gulcin Sariyildiz, one of the main ways the GLA could help is by funding free "or at least largely discounted" tutoring, particularly for primary school students. She added: "It would be a huge help to kids that have missed out, which is basically every kid."

After seeing their physical health deteriorate while stuck inside, many in the group wanted the GLA to make it less expensive to make healthy choices, lowering the price of healthy food and funding more activities in parks aimed at teenagers, like basketball and football courts.

Tori said: "I've tried to diet so many times but I just don't have the money to pay for the gym and make sure I've got healthy meals throughout the day.

"I also think student discounts shouldn't just be for people that go to university because not everyone will, it should just be for all young people up to 20 or 25."

A lack of places for young people to hang out inside was another major concern, particularly for those living in the more rural north of the borough, like Chingford 17-year-old Kristian Lee.

He said: "Years ago, the most popular thing for young people to do in Chingford was hang out in Poundland but then it burned down five years ago and hasn't been touched since.

"A lot of the time it seems like really good things get taken away from us and then nothing replaces them."

However, even those based in Walthamstow complained of a lack of places to congregate, particularly mourning the loss of Burger King and KFC in the Mall.

Gulcin said: "Young people just want safe places to chill so they're not outside. They'd still be doing exactly the same thing, just not on the street.

"There needs to be more shops in the High Street and youth clubs in more areas because a lot of young people don't feel comfortable travelling. If you want to reach them, do not expect them to come to you."

While local young people are eager for ways to fill their time, those supporting the borough's elderly population fear many of them "almost lost the will to socialise" during lockdown.

Terry Day from the Waltham Forest branch of Age UK, told the *Echo* their centre used to be "buzzing" but they are now having to "work really hard" to draw older people out of the house.

She said: "Before we could just stick leaflets through someone's door but now we have to phone them up or send a volunteer round to encourage them.

"Lockdown was horrible for many of us but we turned to things online to have some kind of substitute; many older people are not online so they had nothing like that.

"What we are now seeing is that it has been such a long period of being so isolated that many older people who potentially could go out have kind of lost the habit."

Asked if the GLA should focus more on encouraging old people out or getting them online, Terry said the two are "not mutually exclusive".

She said: "It's a problem that so many systems these days are only online because a significant group of old people never will be, you need an email address to apply for sheltered housing or an over-60s parking permit.

"However, there's a significant group of older people who desperately want to be online but need help. Quite a lot of people come to our IT classes holding a new tablet or smartphone a relative gave them for Christmas and they've been shown how to use it but forgot."

Age UK has had great success with their classes, which provide one-on-one or one-on-two support, but Terry stressed: "There's so much that can be done but it does take resources.

"We can go an awfully long way with just a little but it still takes funding and there are just not that many funds for charities. The GLA's powers are limited in a way but one thing they can do is give money out."

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COMMENT

COUNCILLOR COMMENT

Sazimet Palta-Imre, Chingford Green

I was not born in Waltham Forest, nor in England for that matter, but as soon as I moved with my family to Chingford I knew that I was home. The fantastic community spirit here means we experience all the resources of town living with a unique village feel, while sitting on the border of one of the world's most beautiful forests.

It was my experiences here that inspired me to stand for election so I could give back to the area that has given me so much. What quickly became clear to me as I began campaigning was that what enables many of the fantastic aspects of Chingford life is the way it was built and how important it is to preserve the integrity of that fabric.

We need new housing for many reasons: as many of our children grow up, our parents look to downsize and more people are drawn to our amazing area. However, that new housing must be constructed in a sensitive way which preserves the foundations of Chingford and provides the appropriate, affordable homes people really need.

That's why I and my fellow Conser-



CLlr Palta-Imre

vative councillors in North Chingford launched a campaign for a new conservation area in Chingford Green. There is currently one small conservation area covering the immediate surroundings of the green, by the Library and Assembly Hall, but we are surrounded by heritage buildings, greenery and historic architecture which needs further protection as we move into a new modern era of development.

For a year, we've been championing the argument for a new wider con-

servation area to protect our historic high street and the neighbourhoods surrounding Chingford Station. I'm pleased to say our council have finally listened and launched a public consultation on our idea. This is extremely welcome news and means our community must once again come together and respond strongly and clearly to articulate Chingford's needs.

With our Labour council pushing what I feel is an over-development agenda across the borough, this conservation area could protect the suburban character of our community and the unique 'city-meets-forest' living we enjoy.

There will be many battles over the next few years as we look to strike the right balance of building new homes while protecting local character. This will be one of the key pillars of my focus over this term as I look to make Chingford a better place to live, work and enjoy!

Respond to the consultation here: stationroadconservationareanorthchingford.commonplace.is

LETTERS

Dear WFE

THE DISASTROUS situation surrounding the B&M site development [online, 11th August] is only the cherry on top of the housing crisis in Waltham Forest. It's striking that the concern of the council and the GLA seems to be the size and 'overdevelopment' of the site, rather than the price of these homes

Despite previous claims that 35% of these flats would be 'affordable', the developer is now saying only around a fifth of the units will be. Furthermore, given the massive rents in Waltham Forest, it's ridiculous to suggest that 80% of market rate is in any way 'affordable'.

This, along with the Blackhorse Lane gentrification plan [#89, p11], is yet another case of developers and councils facilitating expensive housing which working-class people cannot access. Rents are rising along with bills, as developers and landlords are squeezing people for as much money as possible and this is chasing people out of Waltham Forest.

It has become clear that renters in Waltham Forest cannot rely on the council and GLA to tackle the housing crisis, we have to come together to fix this ourselves.

London Renters Union,
Newham and
Leytonstone Branch

Dear WFE

IT HAS COME TO OUR attention that Waltham Forest Council plans to change the name of Suntrap Forest Centre, a decision about which we the Friends of Suntrap have deep concerns.

Since opening in 1967, Suntrap has been nationally influential in educating children about the environment, as acknowledged in our 50th year by a handwritten letter of congratulations from Sir David Attenborough. The centre and the service it provides

were once described by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Schools as "the jewel in the crown of Waltham Forest".

Suntrap has always recognised that, if you live in a crowded house in Waltham Forest, being given the opportunity to have memorable, first-hand experiences of nature is of unquantifiable importance. The shared stories section of the Suntrap website bears witness to the many people who have been influenced by their experiences there.

The council should be proud of Suntrap – not just what it can become but what it is and what it was. Changing its name suggests that it is only proud of what is ahead and is disrespectful to the very many people who paved the way.

Michael McKinley
& Jill Brookman,
Friends of
Suntrap committee

Dear WFE

AS THE UK DESCENDS into poverty, nobody seems to be thinking about the likelihood of a complete breakdown of civil society. When ordinary working people in jobs can't pay their inflated rents, feed their families and heat their houses, the assumption seems to be that they will just meekly do nothing about it, allowing energy companies to go on making obscene profits and paying their fat controllers tens of millions a year in bonuses.

Does nobody remember the Poll Tax Riots of the early 1990s that brought down Thatcher or the 2011 riots that left businesses looted and burned and five people dead? [Ed note: The 2011 riots were triggered by police killing black British man Mark Duggan] A national strike is the least that we can expect and, if I was a business owner in Waltham Forest, I would be investing in the heaviest metal shutters and the best-monitored security alarms that my quickly disappearing money could buy.

David Gardiner,
Walthamstow resident

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LICENCES FOR SPECIAL TREATMENT Public Notice

Notice is given that **Mr. Serkan Samur** has applied to the London Borough of Waltham Forest for a Special Treatment Licence for:

- **Massage**
- **Licence for the premises: 22 High St E17 7LD**

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.

LICENSING ACT 2003 Application for the Grant of a Premises Licence

Notice is hereby given that **That's So Papo's Ltd.** has applied to the London Borough of Waltham Forest for the grant of a Premises Licence at: **Clandestino, Georgian Village, 100 Wood Street, Walthamstow E17 3HX.** The nature of the application is as follows:

- **Supply of alcohol for consumption on and off the premises. Hours premises is open to the public: Tuesday to Saturday, 12:00-22:00**

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 **28th October 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.

LICENSING ACT 2003 Application for to vary a Premises Licence

Notice is hereby given that **Amirthalingam Raveendran** has applied to the London Borough of Waltham Forest for to vary a Premises Licence at **Hainault Road Supermarket, 59-61 Hainault Road, London E11 1EA.** The nature of the variation application is as follows:

- **To extend the permitted hours for supply of alcohol off the premises Monday to Saturday 08:00 to 02:00 hrs, Sundays 10:00 to 02:00 hrs including public holidays and bank holidays.**
- **The opening hours of the premises will be Monday to Saturday 08:00 to 02:00, Sunday 10:00 to 02:00 hrs including public holidays and bank holidays.**

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 **24 October 2022.**

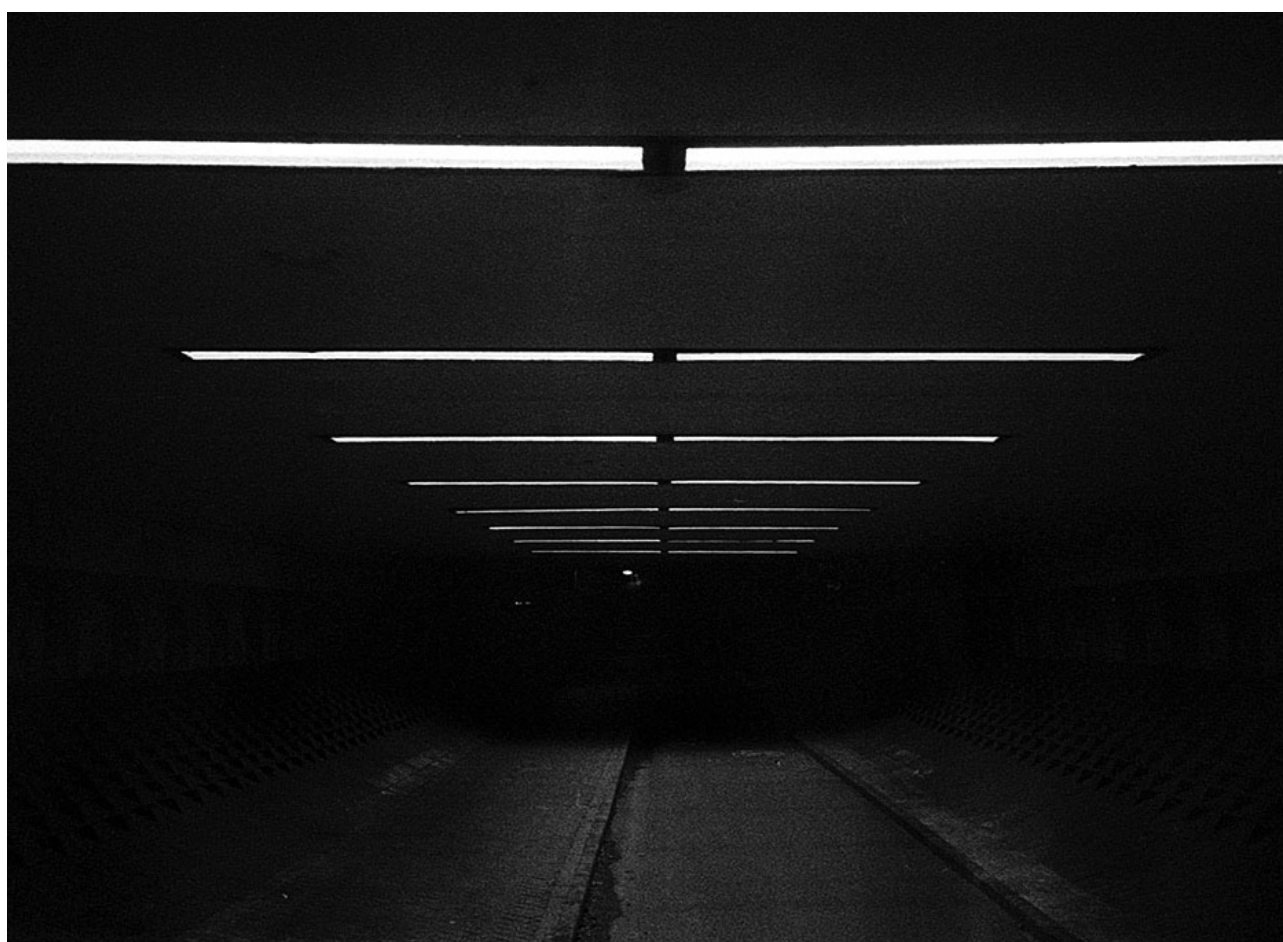
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PHOTOGRAPHY



Photos by Albert Carter Phillips

I only really take photos of Walthamstow. I've tried taking photos like these in other places that I visit but it just doesn't interest me, I don't have the same inspiration as when I walk around the streets and areas that I already know. Looking at buildings I've seen my whole life

intrigues me more because, if you look at them enough times, you start to see different things or see them in a different way. These photos are meant to show that: something you walk past every day and don't notice can be interesting, if you want to see it.

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

AROUND THE BOROUGH

CHINGFORD

Historic building to become community centre



The Brambles in the 1920s (courtesy of Bob Randall)



The Brambles in Chingford Credit Google Streetview

A historic Chingford home is set to become a community centre after it was bought by a local mosque.

The Brambles in Chingford Mount Road went up for sale in June, with an asking price of £1.3 million, and was purchased by the Lea Bridge Road Mosque in Leyton.

While a planning application has yet to be submitted, the mosque's general secretary, Raja

Ilyas, confirmed it will become a centre for the local community.

He added: "When I say it will be for the local community, I mean that across the board – Muslim, non-Muslim, black, white, whoever – they can all come and use the building.

"People have already been sending us emails appreciating how valuable this will be because there's no other centre around here they can use."

Responding to residents earlier this year, Valley ward councillor Afzal Akram reassured them the new owners did not plan to open a mosque on the site.

He wrote: "I did ask the specific question of are you planning to open a mosque here and they said no, as one was already nearby.

"They plan to have a multi-use hall which can be hired out by anyone and they're in talks with the existing mosque two blocks down the road to see if they would want to use their hall during their busy times (Friday lunchtimes, etc), so that the current issues faced there by local residents get resolved.

"Some onsite parking will be provided, plus they intend to negotiate an agreement with the gym and Morrisons across the road from them to allow parking there too."

LEYTON

GP practice urgently taken over to protect patients

A Leyton GP practice has been urgently taken over to protect patients after a damning inspection.

Crawley Road Medical Centre in the High Road was visited by CQC inspectors earlier this year and rated "inadequate" in every single area. It was last inspected in 2017 and deemed "good".

Chief inspector Dr Sean O'Kelly suggested the lead GP partners did not spend enough time overseeing the practice, leading to a backlog so severe that one patient was not informed of worrying blood test results for five years.

A CQC spokesperson told the *Echo* it was not taking action against any individual doctors, who continue to work at the practice under the interim provider WF Federated GP Network.

In his report, Dr O'Kelly noted that the CQC was unable even to establish how many patients the practice sees as they were given numbers ranging from 9,700 to 11,232.

He wrote: "In the past year, there were more than 200 outstanding documents that had not been filed. We

reviewed 71 patient records and found nearly all these patients had not been followed up following receipt of abnormal test results.

"We saw evidence where the inadequate management of test results by the practice led to patient harm. For example, one patient diagnosed with hypothyroidism last received appropriate blood tests in 2018 and their blood test levels were outside the recommended normal range."

Other areas of concern included the practice's inability to provide DBS certificates for all staff "despite repeated requests" or proof that asbestos discovered in the building last year had been cleared.

The CQC received 16 complaints about the practice in the last year and six more immediately after the inspection.

This included a complaint from a blind patient who reported being "treated in a rude manner by staff and turned away from the practice".

The provider – also named Crawley Road Medical Centre – had its registration suspended for three months in July.

WALTHAMSTOW

Free library must go, says council

Walthamstow residents were ordered to dismantle a free children's library by Waltham Forest Council.

The library in Northcote Road was built during the first lockdown and delighted local families for two years, with children using it regularly on the way to the nearby nursery.

However, following complaints it attracts "antisocial behaviour", council workers arrived on 8th September to dismantle the library, only to be rebuffed by local residents.

The council insisted it still had to be removed, while residents argued it helped bring the community together during a difficult time.

Nat Frogley, who lives around the corner, told the *Echo* his eldest son "stopped to borrow books lots and lots of times" on the way to nursery, adding he "would often see other families stopping there too".

He said: "It's really disappointing. We've not heard of any untoward goings-on as a result of it being here so it comes as a bit



The free library in Northcote Road Credit Sean Kelly

of a surprise that anybody would complain about it.

"It's hard to reconcile our experience with complaints of antisocial behaviour because, to us, it very visibly promoted social behaviour."

When contacted for comment, deputy leader Clyde Loakes said: "We are pleased that the community recognises the importance of reading and books. Unfortunately the library on Northcote Road has been set up without permission from the highways department

and is not part of the official Little Free Library scheme.

"We have also received reports of antisocial behaviour including drinking, drug-taking, and noise disturbances at night. We have advised residents that the current structure should be moved into a private garden.

"We are happy to work with residents to ensure any future library exchange in this location does not obstruct the pavement and is set up through the proper channels."

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