

ENFIELD DISPATCH

No.50 THE BOROUGH'S FREE COMMUNITY NEWSPAPER

NOV 2022

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ENFIELD HAS BEEN named as the second-best borough in London for autumn walks, thanks to its high number of deciduous trees, according to London Tree Map. Pictured above is Enfield Playing Fields (read the full story at enfielddispatch.co.uk).

Help available for struggling Enfield residents this winter

BY JAMES CRACKNELL

Help is at hand for Enfield residents this winter – including a network of 'warm spaces' for anyone unable to heat their homes and a 'community kitchen' for those struggling to buy and cook food.

The country is gearing up for a difficult few months as the highest inflation in 40 years makes food shopping significantly more expensive, while average energy bills are twice as high as they were two years ago even after accounting for the government's new price guarantee and £400 rebate.

The leader of Enfield Council has pledged to offer as much support as possible to those who are struggling, vowing "we are on your

side" in an interview with the Local Democracy Reporting Service. Nesil Caliskan also revealed there'd been a 150% rise in people enquiring about poverty support at the council, as she said the local authority would be setting up a network of local buildings where people could go to stay warm if they needed to (see full story on Page 5).

The council is expected to use some of the £2.8million grant received from the government's Household Support Fund to establish the network. However, the council is also facing its own financial difficulties following rising inflation and interest rates, with a report revealing last month that the local authority's five-year budget gap had ballooned to £100m (see full story on Page 2).

Community groups in Enfield are again stepping up to offer support. Cooking Champions has launched the borough's first community kitchen where people can go not just to receive donated food but also to cook it – with trained chefs available to offer help and advice for making nutritious meals. The social enterprise's founder explained that the service was needed after some people began returning donated food "because they can't afford to use the oven" (see full story on Page 4).

Meanwhile, a "heartbreaking" new London Assembly report has revealed that as many as 250,000 children in the capital are living in food poverty. It follows research which found that food insecurity had doubled nationally in 2022 and that 91% of foodbanks have seen

demand increase since July.

Mayor of London Sadiq Khan has called for universal free school meals to be introduced for all primary school children. At present, to qualify for free school meals, a household on Universal Credit in England must earn less than £7,400 a year after tax. Khan said the move would "save families hundreds of pounds a year, ensuring all primary pupils are eating a healthy, nutritious meal at school and also eliminating the stigma associated with being eligible for free school meals".

A dedicated cost-of-living web page is now available on Enfield Council's website and includes a map of foodbanks in the borough where residents can obtain free food. For more information go to enfield.gov.uk/services/your-council/cost-of-living-support.



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The view from Vicarage Farm, one of the large Green Belt sites earmarked for housing development by Enfield Council in the first version of its draft Local Plan



Cross-party group will review Green Belt development sites

BY SIMON ALLIN,
LOCAL DEMOCRACY REPORTER

Labour and Conservative councillors in Enfield have agreed to hold a cross-party review of the borough's draft Local Plan and examine the merit of proposals to allow development on the Green Belt.

A petition signed by more than 4,000 residents calling for a renewed discussion on the document, which will shape development in Enfield up to 2039, also won the backing of councillors from both parties during a full council meeting last month.

The cross-party review was proposed by the Tories in light of opposition to Green Belt development from City Hall and national government, but was backed by councillors from both sides.

When it was first published last year, the draft Local Plan sparked controversy over proposals to allow more than 6,000 homes to be built on what is currently Green Belt land to help meet housing targets. Feedback from a twelve-week public consultation will now inform a revised version of the document that will be examined by a government planning inspector.

In this year's local election, the Green Belt became a key dividing line, with the Conservatives making their opposition to development a focus of their campaign. Labour ultimately lost eight seats

to the Tories but retained control of the council.

Action for Enfield's Future, a coalition made up of a range of local organisations, called for a further debate to allow councillors, including the 29 who were newly elected in May, to have their say on the plan's proposals.

Carol Fisk, a representative of the coalition, presented the petition to a council meeting on 12th October. She said residents "understood that the Local Plan would influence Enfield for decades to come" and that a "public and open debate about a plan of such significance" was "vital".

The petition, which was signed by 4,231 people, called for another twelve-week consultation to allow councillors to discuss the plan with residents before holding a debate on the next version of the Local Plan at a full council meeting. It asked for the debate to be followed by a roll-call vote in which each councillor's vote is recorded.

Council leader Nesil Caliskan told the meeting she welcomed the petition and was happy for the administration to accept the actions it detailed, adding that she had previously made commitments to hold another debate on the plan.

The petition's demands were agreed by Labour and the Conservatives. The Conservative group then called for a cross-party group to be set up to review the Local

Plan, to look again at proposals to allow building on the Green Belt, and to give "careful consideration" to where taller buildings may be acceptable.

Opposition leader Alessandro Georgiou said the proposals tabled by his group were a "serious attempt to find a way forward on the Local Plan deadlock", although he insisted that the Conservatives would "never vote to build on our beautiful Green Belt" and that the group's policies on tower blocks had not changed.

Cllr Georgiou said the Conservatives were willing to work with the administration to find sites that were "ripe for development that both this council and the residents of the borough would be happy to see development on".

Cllr Caliskan pledged to establish a cross-party group "quickly" and agreed to review the Green Belt and tall buildings proposals, although she insisted she did not recognise that there was a deadlock over the Local Plan.

The leader claimed, however, that there were not enough brownfield sites to accommodate the 25,000 homes the council needed to deliver over the Local Plan period. Reiterating her previous comments that residents did not want skyscrapers across the borough, she suggested some Green Belt sites, such as car parks and garden centres, were suitable for development.

Council facing £100m budget gap

Local authority's financial position described as 'very challenging'

BY SIMON ALLIN, LOCAL DEMOCRACY REPORTER

Enfield Council's five-year budget gap is forecast to balloon to almost £100million thanks to spiralling inflation.

The local authority faces a "very challenging financial position" and will bring forward a raft of savings proposals to help plug the £96.9m hole in its finances, according to a cabinet report published last month.

The report revealed that inflation, which has now hit 10%, accounts for the majority of the budget gap and is due to cost the council an estimated £63.8m up to 2027/28. During the 2023/24 year alone it is forecast to cost the authority nearly £20m – more than double the estimate for a normal year.

By law, councils must set a balanced budget. Most of their income comes from government grants, council tax and business rates. But local authorities are unable to raise council tax beyond 2.99% without holding a referendum, and the report states that ministerial changes in government mean there is "greater uncertainty around the potential timing of major funding reforms".

The report states that the council is being affected by levels of inflation not seen for 40 years, alongside a residual impact from the Covid-19 pandemic. It also faces increased demand on adults' and children's social services, partly as a result of the lingering effects of the pandemic.

Around £20m of savings have so far been identified over the five-year period, on top of £200m-worth of already-achieved savings following the introduction of austerity measures by the government in 2010. The council will look to find further savings to ensure it is able to balance the books next year before the official budget is set in February.

Cabinet member for finance Tim Leaver said the government had done "very little" to support councils either by providing financial support or giving "any indication of what they are going to do to fund us fairly". He blamed inflation, the cost-of-living crisis, increased demand and the "staggering" increase in interest rates for the budget pressures.

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Borough's first 'community kitchen' opens

BY JAMES CRACKNELL

Enfield's first dedicated community kitchen has opened in Ponders End after a successful fundraising appeal. Cooking Champions, a social enterprise that cooks and distributes hot meals and food parcels for vulnerable people, raised £15,000 to help launch its new community kitchen – where people can go not just to collect food but also cook it, with help from trained chefs.

The need for a community kitchen in Enfield became apparent amid the worsening cost-of-living crisis, with some of those struggling financially facing a choice between eating or heating their homes.

At an open day for the new community kitchen in St Matthew's Church, where Cooking Champions is now based, founder Clare Donovan told the *Dispatch* that people had told her they can't afford to turn on their oven.

Clare said: "This is the first community kitchen in the borough. It is a much-needed resource, based on our experience over the last two years.

"When we give out food packages, some of it is returned to us because they can't afford to use the oven. But here it is safe and warm and they can choose what to cook. We put all the food out and they can cook what they want, and if they need help we are here to give advice. Everything is completely free.

"We are still doing our food deliveries which

we have been doing every week since April 2020. But this seemed like a solution to some of the problems we have found with people returning food to us. They are not ungrateful, they just can't use it. Some people are in hostels and they just have access to a kettle or a toaster."

Unlike most foodbanks, there is no need for anyone to obtain a written referral from a welfare or health professional to be able to sign up with Cooking Champions; if someone needs food, they can simply get in touch. And while demand is rising – Clare says they have never been busier and are now feeding 50 families per week – the community kitchen will have capacity to expand if needed.

Some of the food Cooking Champions uses is donated, but they also receive ingredients from The Felix Project, an Enfield-based charity which saves surplus food from supermarkets.

The new base at St Matthew's Church, where Cooking Champions now has access not just to the hall and kitchen but the church nave and alter, allows other events to take place alongside the community kitchen. Clare wants to run cooking lessons, workshops, child and parent sessions and even launch a training academy next year.

"I wanted to open this five years ago, but it has taken a long time. We want to share our assets to benefit more people in the community.

"We are starting off small, making sure we have the provision, before we expand it. We want to adapt our services based on

At the new community kitchen run by Cooking Champions in Ponders End are (from left) Heather Bredee, Ela Teague and Clare Donovan



what people want."

Clare has a small team helping her run Cooking Champions, including Heather Bredee and Ela Teague, who also runs an Indian cooking school in Enfield. Ela said: "With the start of the community kitchen, it is something I wanted to achieve, and I am happy it has all come together. If people come and they have an idea of what they want to cook, then that is fine, but if not I will get out my cookbook!"

Heather said the cost-of-living crisis is now

surpassing the pandemic in terms of the financial impact it is having on people. She said: "Often people who are juggling lots of jobs still don't have enough money. There are parents skipping meals so the children can eat. We have recently had our busiest week ever – the phone didn't stop ringing."

The Cooking Champions community kitchen is open every Friday at St Matthew's Church, South Street, Ponders End EN3 4LA. To get in touch and enquire about signing up for support:

Email clare@cookingchampions.uk
Visit cookingchampions.uk

Labour councillors refuse to reject 'unsafe' tower

BY JAMES CRACKNELL

Labour councillors have voted not to reject a proposed 21-storey tower that a planning report said "fails to incorporate features which reduce risk to life".

Enfield Council's planning committee was repeatedly warned last month that plans for 100 homes plus retail and office space on the site of a derelict pub in Green Street, next to Brimsdown Station, would be unsafe – and were given twelve reasons to reject the application by planning officers.

However, seven Labour councillors voted against refusing permission and later agreed to give the developer more time to address the concerns raised, voting to defer the scheme. Of the Labour members, only Doug Taylor voted to reject, alongside all four Tory members. Conservative Jim Steven, visibly angry, said he was "not happy with the vote" and suggested the outcome had been "twisted".

It means the application has been deferred for a second time, following a deferral in July. At that meeting, planning committee chair Sinan Boztas insisted the application be brought back to the committee within three months. Last month, however, Labour councillors argued the developer should be given another six months to fix the twelve major issues – despite the council's director



The 21-storey tower block features a rooftop children's play space and a non-compliant fire safety strategy

of planning warning them it needed a "substantial redesign" to become policy compliant.

At one moment during the debate, there were audible gasps in the room when Labour committee member Mohammad Islam appeared to suggest he had been contacted by the applicant. He said: "We received communication from the applicant that his communications weren't responded to on time."

This comment prompted Elizabeth Paraskeva, the council's principle lawyer for place, to ask Cllr Islam to slowly repeat what he had just said. Cllr Islam said he was referring to the

communication between Enfield planning officer Gideon Whittingham and the developer's planning agent, which "was not clear".

Gideon had said that although the developer had made changes to the application since July, these "compounded" the problems rather than solved them. One addressed the lack of children's play space by allocating such space on the roof. When a committee member asked whether children would be safe to play at the top of the 21-storey tower block, Gideon said the council "would require details to show the space could be used safely" but that these details had not yet been provided.

On fire safety, the council's building control manager Andrew Marsden said the scheme "raised a number of concerns and deficiencies in terms of fire safety," adding: "The staircases discharge into a single lobby. The exit routes are not protected from the lobby. It could lead to a situation where a single fire disables both staircases."

"There is going to be a Costa Coffee which would be amazing"

A financial viability statement setting out how the affordable housing would be paid for showed the development would lose £13.7m and, even if all 100 homes were sold at market rate, would still lose £9.3m. This made Gideon question "whether the affordable housing could be provided".

As councillors debated the Green Street scheme, however, it became clear several Labour members didn't want to reject it. Elif Erbil said the derelict pub "has been unoccupied for years" and the development "would be beneficial" for Brimsdown. She added: "There is going to be a Costa Coffee which would be amazing."

Salvio Daniele from Intelliarch Ltd, acting on behalf of developer Yen of London Ltd, earlier outlined the benefits of the scheme and claimed the twelve reasons for refusal had been "addressed". He said the scheme was "within the upper Lea Valley opportunity area" where new homes and jobs are prioritised and said there was "no equivalent site that can be used in Enfield" for the amount of office space it would provide.

The four Conservative committee members, plus Labour's Doug Taylor, were unconvinced. "I am frightened a child could go over the edge," said Tory Michael Rye. "It's a dreadful application and this committee couldn't be able to look itself in the face if it doesn't reject it."

Council leader vows to help residents amid cost-of-living crisis

Nesil Caliskan reveals the number of people seeking poverty support from Enfield Council has more than doubled

BY SIMON ALLIN,
LOCAL DEMOCRACY REPORTER

Enfield Council leader Nesil Caliskan has vowed “we are on your side” as she pledged to support families facing a winter of rising costs. Working with charities and community groups, the Labour council leader pledged to put in place a series of measures to ensure people stay warm, receive hot meals and know where to turn for financial support.

It comes on top of a freeze in core council tax bills during the current financial year to help residents hit by a cost-of-living squeeze caused by soaring inflation and borrowing costs.

Speaking to the Local Democracy Reporting Service, Cllr Caliskan said years of austerity had been “really tough” but this was the hardest she had ever seen it as people experienced the impact of an economic crisis she said had been made worse by the Conservative government.

The council leader said: “The cost-of-living crisis is affecting individuals and families, but also institutions as well. School budgets are really under a huge amount of pressure, and we’re hearing from teachers that kids are going to school not having had a decent meal at home.

“We know from our own hubs at the council that there has been a huge increase in the number of people turning up to us for help.”

Cllr Caliskan said there had been a 44% increase in the number of people turning to the council for financial assistance, a 150% rise in people enquiring about poverty support, and a 90% jump in the number of homelessness enquiries.

The council leader said the local authority would help by identifying buildings that could be used to provide warm spaces for people struggling to heat their homes. “We are putting together a map of where that might be,” she explained. “People might want to spend longer hours in libraries, for example, or more local community spaces.”

Recognising that food poverty is a “real issue”, Cllr Caliskan said the council was creating a programme to make additional food available for pupils in low-income households “to get them through the winter”. She added: “We are working with local schools, and there is a programme we are going to roll out, working with local partners. We have in the past used vouchers, which we will do again.”

The leader said the council was also “really worried” about older people who may not have access to hot food. She said there would be a “call for action”, adding: “We want to work with local community groups to make sure that every person over the age of 70 gets hot



food at least once a day. We did quite a lot of work during Covid, but that was a baseline. We want to ensure that everyone is getting a hot meal delivered to them.”

Enfield Council has a “long-standing” hardship fund, she added, and the council will do more to promote it. The authority plans to “spruce up” its communications to provide details of the help that people can receive from the council and other sources, including the Mayor of London, on a dedicated cost-of-living support page. Further support would be provided to council staff – around 70% of whom are Enfield residents.

Mounting inflation, which last month rose to 10.1%, has blown a hole in the council’s finances, and the authority is now looking to close a £40million budget gap during the next financial year. The council leader said it was “really difficult” to find money to provide extra support after having to make savings of more than £190m during a decade of government austerity measures.

The local authority froze core council tax this year, but Cllr Caliskan gave no indication that there were plans to refund the 1% rise in the adult social care levy, as neighbouring Barnet Council has pledged to do under its new Labour administration. However, she added that a “very generous” support scheme was already in place to help people on low incomes pay council tax.

Cllr Caliskan also claimed the council had “delivered a really robust budget” and made “smart decisions” by borrowing to fund capital projects at low interest rates.

“We are on your side,” the council leader said. “When the government has turned its back on ordinary people in this country, we want residents to know this is a local authority that will stand up and do its best.”

Last month it was revealed the council had submitted a bid for parts of Edmonton to become an ‘investment zone’ – a scheme promoted by the former prime minister Liz Truss as a way to boost growth (read more on Page 6). Labour’s shadow levelling up secretary Lisa Nandy has criticised the plans, however, for “slashing standards” and “destroying the environment”. Cllr Calsikan said in response the council had

not had any details from the government yet and needed to “wait and see” what would be on offer for investment zones, adding the council had to take “every opportunity” it was given.

Cllr Caliskan said: “As a local authority, it has always been a priority for us to support our communities and deliver services that most matter to them. We must look after our most vulnerable [...] and deliver investment in our borough.”

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Council submits 'investment zone' bid for Edmonton

Meridian Water could be fast-tracked but local MP warns of 'wild west' for developers



The council hopes the investment zone could spur on development at Meridian Water

BY JAMES CRACKNELL

The leader of Enfield Council has said a bid to make parts of Edmonton an 'investment zone' will help "unlock funding for vital infrastructure".

After the *Dispatch* revealed last month that the council was submitting the bid to the government for both Meridian Water and the Joyce Avenue and Snells Park estates to

become an investment zone, Nesil Caliskan issued a statement saying there would be "no compromise on quality" at the development sites should the bid be successful.

Investment zones were introduced by the Conservative government led by former prime minister Liz Truss. Although the full details of what they will offer have not yet been set out, an FAQ page on the government's website describes them as

"designated sites where businesses will benefit from time-limited tax incentives and streamlined planning rules to deliver investment, create jobs and build the homes that communities need".

Edmonton MP Kate Osamor has been critical of the policy but said she would not "stand in the way" of the council's bid. The Labour MP said: "Any investment zone in Edmonton must preserve building safety regulations, environmental protections and increase access to social housing.

"There is the potential for investment zones to turn into a wild west in which residents are cut out of decision-making and property developers are given free rein to maximise profit at the expense of community need. That must not be allowed to happen in Edmonton.

"There should be no 'investment zone' in Edmonton without first securing the backing of local residents. Any 'investment zone' must improve local services, increase affordable housing stock

and ease the cost-of-living crisis for my constituents."

In a statement Cllr Caliskan later moved to reassure critics of the Conservative policy on investment zones. The council leader said: "We will always pursue opportunities to unlock government funds that could enable us to address the pressures faced by the economy and deliver more affordable housing and jobs for local people.

"The government has indicated that successful bids will not only unlock funding for vital infrastructure but will make it more financially viable to build faster – meaning we would be able to speed up the delivery of the quality housing and jobs our residents so desperately need.

"Throughout this process we will ensure that there will be no compromise on quality if our bid is successful. The government has not been forthcoming with the specific arrangements around planning yet – but we will be in constant dialogue with the government as they confirm details to ensure that

regulations are in place to protect the interests and ongoing involvement of local people.

"If 'investment zone' status is achieved this will not alter the high level of engagement and consultation that takes place with local residents."

The move by the council is being seen as an attempt to hasten construction at Meridian Water, its £6billion flagship housing development. The council has been leading on the project since 2018 but rising inflation has recently led to the council pausing work on some development to try to contain spiralling costs. Work on the first 300 new homes is continuing and is due to finish next year.

The council wants its investment zone to also cover the Joyce and Snells estates in Angel Edmonton, which have been earmarked for a £770m redevelopment where nearly 2,000 homes could be built in place of the 795 existing homes – with plans submitted last month.

Patients forced to wait in ambulances

BY JAMES CRACKNELL

An inspection of North Middlesex University Hospital's emergency department has found that some patients are "waiting too long" for treatment – but has not downgraded its overall rating.

The unannounced inspection of the accident and emergency (A&E) department by the health watchdog Care Quality Commission (CQC) took place in July and found that a lack of supply of beds at the Edmonton hospital was leading to backlogs, with some patients even being left waiting in ambulances.

However, CQC also found there was adequate staffing, premises were well equipped and clean, and that escalation processes were good. Because the inspection focused on areas where issues had been identified previously, it was not wide-ranging enough to update CQC's rating for the department, hospital or NHS trust. Consequently, the department remains rated 'good' and the hospital and trust continue to

hold a 'requires improvement' rating.

Nicola Wise, CQC's head of hospital inspection, said: "We found some patients accessing the emergency department at North Middlesex University Hospital waited too long for assessment and treatment, while others couldn't always access the service when they needed it.

"One of the reasons for this was a lack of available beds elsewhere in the hospital where people could be referred for further care.

"We also found there were delays discharging patients from ambulances into the hospital, however there were good processes for identifying people who needed escalating through the queue.

"There were enough staff to meet people's needs and keep them safe, and there was a very open culture where people could raise issues and make suggestions for improvement.

"We have shared our feedback with the trust about what it needs to address but are pleased to see good standards of care being provided to



Ambulances waiting outside North Mid

people overall."

CQC has told North Middlesex University Hospital NHS Trust to work more closely with NHS ambulance services to review how crews can transfer patients into the hospital more quickly. In response, the NHS trust has reiterated that it is facing "major challenges" in emergency care, with this summer being its busiest ever amid "continued unparalleled demand for urgent and unplanned care and treatment".

Dr Nnenna Osuji, the trust's chief executive, said: "Every member of

North Mid's urgent and emergency care service should be proud of the work they do every day, for everyone in our community, and I am grateful to the CQC for their report which highlights the immense commitment our staff show to our local patients, day in, day out.

"I am proud of our incredibly busy and hard-working team, from junior doctors, to phlebotomists, staff nurses and cleaners, and everyone who supports them to continue to go above and beyond every day.

"I am even more pleased for our

local community that the CQC's findings show North Mid continues to provide safe, well-equipped, highly skilled care and treatment for so many people, despite ongoing challenges of high demand and pressure.

"Like our hospital, which draws much strength from our brilliant north London community, our emergency department is embedded in a system which not everyone sees all the parts of. I do, and I want to extend my thanks to partners across the urgent and emergency care system, for their ongoing work to help us continue to improve.

"I urge our local community and its leaders to work with us to use our emergency department wisely so that we can continue to look after people who need us most.

"This means making time to protect yourself from illnesses where possible, like flu and Covid, taking the chance to have vaccinations when you are offered them, and looking after family, friends and neighbours as we approach the winter period."



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Construction at Meridian Water started late – now we're paying the price

Construction at Meridian Water officially began in May 2021, when council leader Nesil Caliskan (front, right) symbolically dug a spade into the ground. Credit: Enfield Council



Former cabinet member for economic regeneration and business Alan Sitkin decries the delays and cost overruns at Enfield Council's flagship development

We demand from our representatives that they report truthfully on their actions or inaction – especially when large sums are at stake.

Politicians failing in this duty tend, quite deservedly, to not last very long – as exemplified by the plunging fortunes of Liz Truss, decried for the economic damage her government caused but also for her subsequent efforts to stifle analysis. Horrifyingly, in Enfield we are living with the same combination of abject incompetence and post-truth politics.

The *Dispatch* has published several recent stories detailing how Enfield Council regeneration projects are facing the same cost inflation as construction is everywhere. In these articles, councillors communicate

a message that the huge overruns at Meridian Water are being caused by external circumstances over which the council has no control. But as someone who had cabinet responsibilities for parts of this mega-project between 2014 and 2018, I know that this explanation for our impending financial catastrophe is total baloney.

It is true that construction cost inflation will harm future Meridian Water phases. And it would be wrong to blame the council's current administration for tomorrow's challenges. But Meridian One, the first development phase [originally earmarked for 725 homes, now increased to 977] was originally primed to be entirely finished by early 2020 – well before Covid-19 and Putin-related inflation kicked in.

Now that higher inflation has arrived, the first phase costs have gone up enormously – a huge surcharge undermining Meridian Water's overall viability. But the real failure here is that it took the council until 2021 to start work on a fully-planned segment scheduled to begin three years earlier. The question is why.

The starting point is Meridian Water's shift from a development where the council was required to proceed via master developers (the condition for an early £20m grant from former chancellor George Osborne) to a project run in-house. The previous Labour administration that I was part of always tried hard to get the right deals

for Enfield, but realised that if we were unable to agree terms, contingency plans were needed so the council could pivot as quickly as possible to outsourcing the work.

The problem is that Nesil Caliskan, when she became council leader in 2018, seem-

ingly failed to grasp the imperative for the council to accelerate the first phase of Meridian Water. Mega-projects are time bombs; the council may have been sitting on hefty capital gains when I left office (thanks to our timely land purchases) but, as anyone with a financial background knows, in the absence of sufficient 'meanwhile' receipts, interest charges on developments like this will eat away at unrealised capital gains (i.e. funding and expenditure operations must be chronologically coordinated). That didn't happen in the pre-Covid period of 2018–2020. Why not?

There seem to be two answers. The first is that Cllr Caliskan was already leader when she decided to also appoint herself as head of regeneration, thereby downgrading this difficult function into a part-time job, even as a £6billion project was at stake. The second is that prior to becoming leader Cllr Caliskan seemed to lack relevant financial, business or cabinet experience. The same could be said for Mary Maguire, who was put in charge of finance at the civic centre [she stood down as a councillor before the 2022 local election].

The end result is that during these crucial years, the political leaders running the mega-project of Meridian Water failed to channel and galvanise council performance – and construction of the first phase was started three years late. It is a failure that will cost local taxpayers dearly.

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edmontongreencentre.co.uk

"The real failure here is that it took the council until 2021 to start work on the first phase"

Aiming Highfield

In our latest councillor's column, Labour's Nia Stevens discusses what she's been doing to help residents since the election

Nia Stevens was elected to represent Highfield at the election in May



I'd like to introduce myself to Palmers Green and Winchmore Hill residents living east of the New River and south of Highfield Road. Along with Tim Leaver, I am your newly-elected Labour councillor.

I am really proud to represent Highfield ward and be able to help local residents with issues they face, such as flagging a long-standing fly-tipping issue to the council, which took swift action. Traffic and speeding is another persistent issue raised by residents, for example in

Hedge Lane, but also on residential streets from The Larches to Hazelwood Lane, so I am lobbying both the police and the council to see what can be done there.

Firs Farm Wetlands is really something for Highfield residents to be proud of. I am staggered by what the highly-skilled and knowledgeable volunteers at Friends of Firs Farm and professionals at Enfield Council have together achieved.

I was pleased to speak in favour of the friends group's community café proposal at its

successful local planning bid. I'm sure many residents are as excited as I am to see this project develop. They are fundraising to make up a shortfall in financing because of inflation and energy price rises, so do please visit their Crowdfunder page if you are able to donate.

I've also been delighted to see the quick recovery of Firs Farm from a summer fire. This fire was small and well-contained, to which we owe thanks to the quick action of Jake Summerfield from Firs Farm Primary School, who spotted it and alerted his teachers!

I know many residents are anxious about the cost-of-living increases. Too many households are already facing the choice of heating or eating as a result of Covid-19 and the war in Ukraine – a situation that poses a clear health risk for those individuals. Now, sharp increases in mortgage repayments and rent are set to add an even bigger cost.

It was a deeply shameful moment when the pound plummeted in response to the Conservative government's mini-budget. Their failure to get different viewpoints, such as from the Office for Budget Responsibility or investors, before going public, was a moment of pure incompetence.

Regardless of the recent U-turns, they clearly can't be trusted to make the right decisions going forwards.

In response, the Labour council in Enfield is working to provide local 'warm banks' and drawing up plans to provide additional food to schoolchildren and residents over 70 who are in need. The council's own hardship fund will also be promoted. The Labour Party understands that day-to-day government spending has to be balanced and that the economy has to be managed competently and fairly – the Conservatives evidently can't be trusted on either.

Nia Stevens represents Highfield ward alongside Tim Leaver (both Labour). If you are a ward resident you can get in touch:
Call 020 8132 0465
Email cllr.nia.stevens@enfield.gov.uk

"Firs Farm Wetlands is really something for Highfield residents to be proud of"

LETTERS

Send us your letters

Got an opinion on something in Enfield? We accept letters of up to 150 words from people and organisations in the borough. Email EnfieldDispatch@socialspider.com before the next deadline on **Monday 14th November**.

Sticking up for hockey

Dear Enfield Dispatch

Local hockey clubs were pleased to see that Spurs and Harry Kane were backing the bid to bring the Men's 2026 Hockey World Cup to North London, with the final proposed to be held at Tottenham Hotspur Stadium. While 2026 is a bit of a wait, there are opportunities now within your local hockey clubs to #PickUpASTick and have a go, for all ages. While there are costs involved in being a member of a club – and clubs do have to cover their costs to continue – clubs may be able to reduce fees in cases of financial hardship and may have a pre-loved stick library. It's better to have a full team than ten unhappy players!

So, if you, friends or family have been inspired by the women's gold and men's bronze hockey medals at the recent Commonwealth Games, you can find your nearest hockey club via englandhockey.co.uk/play/find-a-club. To back the bid, please visit englandhockey.co.uk/backthebid.

Stephen Biggins

North London Hockey co-ordinator

Green failures

Dear Enfield Dispatch

I was disappointed to learn that plans for phase one of Meridian Water were approved with only around half of the quality green open space previously promised. As a former councillor and member of council scrutiny panels, I can recall being told that 30% of Meridian Water would be green open space. This was confirmed in the council's environmental sustainability strategy for Meridian Water and in its draft Local Plan, which says that each phase of Meridian Water must meet the 30% target as a minimum. However, Meridian One was approved with less than half of the minimum required.

Access to good quality green space is very important for people living in built up areas and has a number of environmental, health, economic and social benefits. Meridian Water must deliver on its green promises.

Charith Gunawardena

Former Green Party councillor

North Mid traffic chaos

Dear Enfield Dispatch

A few months ago the *Dispatch* published a story about the implementation of a cycle route around North Middlesex Hospital. I wrote at the time about my concerns of having such a scheme around a hospital, which included preventing through traffic on Bull Lane, aside from buses and emergency vehicles. The cost of the 'active travel' scheme was estimated at £1.25m. The consequent construction work has resulted in traffic jams which are affecting ambulances and the ability of people to transport patients to the hospital, as evidenced by videos on social media.

I wrote to [Enfield Council deputy leader] Ergin Erbil about these issues in June. Last month I finally received a reply from Cllr Erbil stating that a new trial was taking place, involving five hospital employees who live between two and nine miles from the hospital. Given that there are over 3,600 North Mid staff this seems a small sample and I wonder what the uptake actually was when staff were asked? So far I have not had an answer on this point but it makes me question if the scheme is value for money and worth the overall investment.

Neil Littman

Winchmore Hill

Fish at The Goat

Dear Enfield Dispatch

We are not a 'chippy' as such [On the hunt for the best fish and chips in Enfield, Issue 49, Page 13], but we are the only pub in Ponders End, The Goat, and we sell haddock and chips with a choice of peas, mushy peas, salad or beans for £11.95. We sell a wide range of non-alcoholic drinks as well as ale, lager, wines and spirits to accompany the fish and chips, at competitive prices. Our haddock is from Billingsgate Market, sourced by a professional fish buyer, so good quality is assured!

Ian Kerridge

Assistant manager, The Goat

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Taste of the Far East

Neil Littman enjoys a visit to a Chinese restaurant in Palmers Green

Appearances can be deceptive. I must have passed Khin Lee in Green Lanes hundreds of times but what compelled me to visit recently was the apparent lack of Far East restaurants in Enfield where you could eat in.

One of my local spots, Red Bamboo in Winchmore Hill, also specialises in Malaysian and Thai cuisine and is very good, but a few others have closed down in recent few years leaving a gap in the borough.

Many Palmers Green restaurants are in Aldermans Hill, which is always busy, but Khin Lee is along a stretch of Green Lanes occupied by coffee shops or charity shops (very good ones too as my fellow diner reminded me) and to be honest has a façade that needs a complete makeover. Inside it looks a bit Nineties disco, but the welcome and cooking made up for the lack of visual appeal!

We arrived at 6.45pm and were the first customers to dine in. We were

offered a choice of a buffet menu (£24) which is very extensive – and overlaps with the a la carte menu – but both cover favourite or traditional dishes in the Cantonese or Schezuan style. I think there is a comfort factor in Chinese food which lends itself to sharing so makes for a more sociable experience.

We split the order into two. My friend ordered a set meal for one which included a starter of crispy seaweed (fried greens) with mini vegetable spring rolls, followed by sweet and sour chicken with vegetables and egg fried rice. All for £12.50.

I ordered items off the main menu including crispy fried squid with chilli and salt followed by chicken Szechuan style with egg fried rice and a side order of fried tofu, which came with a generous helping of pak choi.

Including a soft drink and Chinese tea the bill came to £47 for two people, which these days is becoming a bit of a bargain. I ended up with enough leftovers for another meal at home.

The crispy fried squid was comparable to the best I had eaten in Chinatown and contained a generous serving of green and red chillies.

Our one complaint was that all the food arrived at the same time. Next time I visit I will order starters and then leave a gap before ordering more, or simply ask them to hold back.

I was also slightly surprised by the comment from our server that “you can take your photographs now” – my friend said maybe I had a sticker on my forehead saying “the Dispatch is here”. Who knows?

By the time we left the place was busy with family groups and regular customers being warmly greeted by the staff. This was something that really endeared me to Khin Lee and is proof of a good reputation.

Khin Lee is at 387 Green Lanes, Palmers Green N13 4JG and is open Tuesday to Saturday 6pm–11.30pm and Sundays 1pm–11pm. For more information and to book a table: Call 020 8882 8678 Visit khinleonline.com

Dishes at Khin Lee include fried tofu with pak choi



Advertisement

EDMONTON GREEN

ENFIELD COMMUNITY HEROES
Sponsored by Edmonton Green Shopping Centre

Improving children's life chances

Trevor Blackman helps local schools broaden the horizons of their pupils

According to Trevor Blackman, schools are about more than simply teaching, textbooks and exams.

For the past three years Trevor has been a driving force in Edmonton, building connections between local schools and the community and helping schoolchildren to feel empowered.

Joining Edmonton Community Partnership (ECP) initially as a partnership manager, Trevor is now the charity's chief executive. “My main motivation is improving the life chances of children,” he says. “We work with an alliance of 18 schools, helping families who need additional support. I want to open the school gates and get back to schools being at the heart of the community and having an obligation to support people.”



Trevor Blackman is chief executive of Edmonton Community Partnership

Trevor champions what he calls “the four pillars” for schools, focusing on enrichment of education itself, such as by introducing a greater variety and depth of role models for students to look up to; extra-curricular activities to divert children

away from negative influences outside school; early intervention and prevention initiatives; plus building partnerships with the local community.

“We need to broaden the experiences and opportunities for young people, particularly in places like Edmonton,” says Trevor.

Beyond his work with local schools, Trevor has helped support vulnerable communities in Edmonton and improve their access to local services. This includes the area's large Bulgarian population which in recent years has needed to navigate the complexities of Brexit, while also finding themselves on the wrong end of unfair treatment from the government regarding benefit sanctions.

Another project Trevor has been involved with in recent months is

Pymmes Park Visitor Centre, where there are plans to develop it as a space for young people. “We want to give kids something to do,” he says. “We are working with the partners that are already there and working with young people to create a youth zone.”

Outside of his work with ECP, Trevor is also a podcaster, radio presenter and social activist, saying he is driven by a philosophy of “supporting, encouraging and providing all individuals and communities with the opportunity to be all they can be”.

Nominate your heroes

Dispatch readers are welcome to nominate their own ‘Enfield Community Hero’ – someone who you think has gone above and beyond to help support the local community. Simply email your nomination to EnfieldDispatch@socialspider.com



Steve Taylor performs at Ziggy's with his eponymous drummer-led 16-piece jazz group, Steve Taylor Big Band Explosion

Getting Ziggy with it

Ziggy's co-founder Steve Taylor on what makes the Enfield jazz club special

Ziggy's World Jazz Club is now proudly in its tenth year and is continuing to present the finest national and international jazz artists to the live-music-loving residents of Enfield and beyond – indeed, the catchment of Ziggy's catchment is now the whole of North London.

We present major British artists in monthly shows, including BBC award-winning Ian Shaw, soul legends Mica Paris and Omar, my own drummer-led 16-piece Steve Taylor Big Band Explosion, and the National Youth Jazz Orchestra. It all takes place in atmospheric, candlelit jazz cabaret surroundings.

Our mission is to create the high-end feel of legendary Soho venue Ronnie Scott's Jazz Club without the West End price tag, giving local audiences a genuine opportunity to experience world class jazz artists up close and personal in Enfield.

Ziggy's concerts originally created a major live jazz buzz after opening in 2012 at Dugdale Theatre in Enfield Town, which was our home for seven successful years. The shows continued to go from strength-to-strength with our brief move to Chickenshed Theatre in 2019, before those came to a sudden halt with the Covid-19 lockdown. We all know what happened to the arts at this point in time.

"Our mission is to create the high-end feel of Ronnie Scott's without the West End price tag"

During this forced hiatus, vocalist Josie Frater, my co-founder and I regularly found ourselves in the cafe culture oasis that is the delightfully leafy Winchmore Hill. After much deliberation and what seemed like endless coffees in the open air, Josie suggested approaching the management at The King's Head on The Green, since back in

2021 our usual theatre venues simply couldn't commit to reopening for live performances.

It was then that Ziggy's 'Upstairs at The Kings Head N21' was born. It is a wonderfully intimate space. We realised the force is strong with The Ziggy's World Jazz Club 'brand' and have found a tremendous appetite among our local audiences for the club's return since September 2021. Live music

from Ziggy's has been broadcast on Jazz FM and BBC Radio 2 and Radio 3.

Ziggy's has also been a featured venue in London Jazz Festival. As Mica Paris commented: "Ziggy's gets it right – North London

has never sounded so good."

You can catch our next show on Friday, 11th November, featuring Ronnie Scott's regular and former James Taylor Quartet guitarist Nigel Price with Steve Taylor Trio. On Sunday, 4th December we will have our Ziggy's Christmas Special.

For more information and to book tickets: Visit ziggyclub.com

Splash of colour helps transform dingy Edmonton subway

An "unsafe" underpass near North Middlesex Hospital has been brightened up thanks to a team of local artists.

Built in 1975, the pedestrian subway links Tanners End Lane, on the north side of the North Circular Road in Edmonton, to the south side where it connects with the hospital – but has long been decried as an "unpleasant place" where people often did not feel safe.

Now a new mural has helped to provide a splash of colour and brightness to the walkway. Artists from The 34 Bus Collective, who have also been responsible for a series of murals in nearby Pymmes Park, were commissioned to paint the mural after drawing inspiration from local school pupils.

A Brighter Passage comprises a series of coloured paper origami shapes which then transform into butterflies. Artist Amaechi Anolue said: "In recent years this heavily-used walkway had become an unpleasant space to be in, it felt unsafe and uncared for, and was plagued by peeling paint, cobwebs, dirt and blocked drains, causing the tunnel to flood under heavy rain.

"With funding from the the Meridian Water Community Chest and sup-

port from TfL [Transport for London], Brewers Enfield, Tanners End Lane Priory and Enfield Council, The 34Bus Collective were able to take on the challenge of making this walkway somewhere which brings a moment of joy to a regular commute to work, a trip to the hospital or a walk to school."

The design for the mural was developed over a series of three workshops with art students from Aylward Academy, headed up by Matt Steven.

Amaechi said: "These workshops inspired an idea for how to break up the space, which evolved into a world of origami. The artwork takes the viewer on a journey of transformation as coloured paper folds and unfolds, playing with scale and light, finally forming into paper butterflies which fly off into an unfolding sky.

"We are so glad we did this project as it has brought a smile to the members of the public that use it on a daily basis."

A Brighter Passage was painted in September with help from local volunteers. To complete the transformation of the passageway TfL has also now unblocked the drains, repainted the handrails and is making other improvements in and around the underpass.



The murals inside the Tanners End Lane subway comprises a series of coloured paper origami shapes which then transform into butterflies



The artwork now in place at The Triangle in Palmers Green celebrates the life of poet Stevie Smith



New artwork celebrates Palmers Green poet

A new permanent artwork celebrating poet Stevie Smith has been unveiled in Palmers Green, where she lived for 65 years.

Through Enfield Council's 'Stories of Enfield' programme supported by the National Lottery Heritage Fund, Palmers Green Action Team successfully applied for funding for its 'Poetry in Palmers Green' project, which "celebrates Stevie's unique poetic point of view".

Stevie Smith, who died in 1971 aged 68, lived in Palmers Green from the age of three. She published three novels, ten poetry collections and several

other works and is remembered as a sophisticated poet who often focused on suffering and death. Her dark humour could sometimes shock, as seen in her most famous poem *Not Waving But Drowning*.

Despite her fame, Smith was previously only commemorated in Palmers Green with a blue plaque on the house where she lived. Now, a commissioned piece of text-based artwork by artist Ruth Hallgarten has been revealed at The Triangle in the centre of Palmers Green, incorporating Smith's poem *The Pleasures of Friendship*.

Ruth explained: "I have loved creating this piece for Palmers

Green. I imagined Stevie Smith typing her poetry and used the typewriter font within the Corten steel, with the negative space to allow the plants to grow through the letters. I hope her words continue to give pleasure to passers by."

The Poetry in Palmers Green project also aims to trigger local interest and pride in this nationally recognised poet. To support the installation of the artwork there have been poetry workshops for children and adults at Palmers Green Library, led by local writer Martin Jenkins and the local poetry circle People with Voices, led by Poppy Medenis.



Poet Stevie Smith
Credit Wikicommons

LISTINGS

Submit your listing

We can include low-cost community events taking place in Enfield. For next month's listings, email the details of your event to enfielddispatch@socialspider.com by **Monday 14th November**.

BRUNCH

Free Sunday Brunch

Sunday 6th Nov, 10am-12pm
CRM Agape House, Raynham Primary School (early years building), Raynham Terrace, Edmonton N18 2JQ

A free Sunday brunch, open to everyone with no restrictions. We provide a hot meal, drinks and sandwiches.

Free entry

Call 07951 881 991

Visit crmagapehouse.org.uk

CONCERT

Autumn Classical Concert

Saturday 12th Nov, 7.30pm-9.30pm
St Luke's Church, Phipps Hatch Lane, Clay Hill EN2 0HL

A joint concert between Enfield Chamber Orchestra and Enfield Choral Society to celebrate the orchestra's 80th anniversary. Performing Beethoven's '9th Symphony' and Vaughan Williams's 'Serenade to Music'.

Tickets £18 for adults, £16 concessions, £5.50 students, children under 16 free

Call 020 8360 4980

Email info@enfieldchamberorch.org.uk

Visit enfieldchamberorch.co.uk

TALK

The History of Enfield Fire Brigade

Wednesday 16th Nov, 2.30pm
Jubilee Hall, 2 Parsonage Lane, Enfield EN2 0AJ

Chris Whippe from Edmonton Hundred Historical Society and the Enfield District Veteran Vehicle Society will give this talk, illustrated from his collection of old slides.

Free entry

Email edmontonhundredevents@gmail.com

POETRY

Enfield Poets

Sunday 20th Nov, 3.30pm
The Culture Palace, Palace Gardens Shopping Centre, Enfield Town EN2 6SN

Local poets Valerie Darville and Anthony Fisher launch their new poetry collections.

Free entry

Email vmed@acufisher.com

ART

Welcome to Our World

Throughout November, Mon-Thu 5pm-11pm, Fri 3pm-11.30pm, Sat 12pm-11.30pm and Sun 12pm-8pm
The Southgate Club, 17 Chase Side, Southgate N14 5BP

The art gallery at The Southgate Club has launched a stunning new exhibition reflecting the vibrant local drag scene through drag artist Tony Fram's creation 'Fantasy'. Drag styles cover a wide spectrum but always seek to express the personality of the drag queens and the stories they are trying to tell, and are now becoming more mainstream thanks to shows like 'Ru Paul's Drag Race'.

Free entry, just ring the bell!

Call 020 8886 1617

Visit southgateclub.com

CHOIR

Gospel Choir workshops

Wednesdays, 7.30pm-9pm
Enfield Baptist Church, Cecil Road, EN2 6TG

Gospel choir workshops run by Vocally Sound.

£5 per session

Visit vocallysound.co.uk

FITNESS

Fit For a Fiver

Monday-Thursday every week
Highlands Village Hall, Florey Square, Winchmore Hill N21 1UJ

Fit For a Fiver is a 45-minute outdoor training class designed to be inclusive for everyone. In addition to our classes at Edmonton Sports and Social Club we're now expanding to a second location at Highlands Village Hall. Visit the website for information and to book.

£5 per class

Visit getfitforafiver.com

BRIDGE

Duplicate Bridge

Every Friday 1pm-4.30pm
St Stephen's Church (small hall), Park Avenue, Enfield EN1 2BA

Join our friendly club and play duplicate bridge. Partners not essential.

£3 entry

Call 07810 130884

AROUND THE BOROUGH

MERIDIAN WATER

High-rise tower blocks given go-ahead

BY SIMON ALLIN, LOCAL DEMOCRACY REPORTER & JAMES CRACKNELL

DETAILED PLANS TO BUILD hundreds of homes at Meridian Water have been approved by councillors.

Separate planning applications for two different sites were debated by Enfield Council's planning committee, between them amounting to nearly 1,000 homes – but both attracted controversy over the use of single staircases in tall buildings.

The first scheme approved was the second part of the 'Meridian One' development. It marked a significant departure from previously-approved outline plans for the site, with the total number of homes increased from 425 to 676. The tallest building, a 30-storey tower, is more than double the size of the largest block previously approved in 2017 and increases the total of Meridian One homes from 725 up to 977 – also boosting affordable housing from 25% to 50%.

While the increased affordable housing was welcomed, concerns were raised during the committee meeting over the risk of flooding,



Detailed plans for phase 1b of Meridian One, the first part of the wider Meridian Water redevelopment in Edmonton. Credit: Hawkins/Brown

fire safety and open space provision. On fire safety, housing campaigner Matt Burn highlighted that the two tower blocks would only have single staircases – an aspect of high-rise buildings that has received criticism from industry experts following the Grenfell Tower disaster in 2017, although they remain permitted under current regulations.

Three weeks later, Matt raised similar concerns in relation to plans for four tower blocks up to 16 storeys tall adjacent to Pymmes Brook and Orbital Business Park, as part of Meridian Water's second phase. The planned 274 homes

would provide 100% affordable housing, of which 30% would be family-sized. While this was again welcomed by the committee, Matt warned them: "It will be difficult to fully evacuate the buildings in the event of a fire. 'Stay put' policies don't always work, especially since the Grenfell Tower fire.

"The London mayor and the National Fire Chiefs Council have requested a review of single staircases."

Conservative committee member Lee Chamberlain was among those unhappy with the inclusion of single staircases. He said: "The Titanic was compliant with regulations at the time but it didn't make much difference to the passengers."

In response to the issue Sarah Parkinson, from developer Vistry Partnerships, said the firm took fire safety "extremely seriously" and had worked "extremely hard with officers and with building regulations to make sure we are fire safety compliant".

Both Meridian Water planning applications were approved with the backing of Labour councillors on the committee.

PALMERS GREEN

Thousands back cinema campaign

BY JAMES CRACKNELL

MORE THAN 3,000 PEOPLE HAVE signed a petition in support of opening an independent cinema in Palmers Green.

Led by Palmers Green Action Team, the campaign highlights the demand for an entertainment venue to open in the area and act as a focal point along Green Lanes, where there are a number of empty retail premises.

The owner of Arthouse, an award-winning cinema in Crouch End, is supporting the campaign and revealed that he has been attempting to negotiate a lease for a premises in Palmers Green for the last two years, without success.

At least two potential Green Lanes sites have been identified;

the former Store 21 shop which closed in 2018 and the former Iceland supermarket which closed in 2019. A third possibility has only come to light very recently, after JD Wetherspoon announced in September it would be selling the lease to The Alfred Herring public house.

But with progress on securing a site having seemingly stalled, Palmers Green Action Team, together with Arthouse, decided to launch its public campaign.

Arthouse owner Sam Neophytou told the *Dispatch*: "There are two glorious sites on Green Lanes that have been empty for four years. The point is that someone has to take some sort of action over these sites – whether it be the council or the owners – to get them rented out. We can't have

such huge empty sites on the high street, which for whatever reason are just being left vacant.

"I was involved about three or four years ago when we first went to one of the empty sites. We are opening cinemas in Barking and Harrow and it has always been an interest to try and get a cinema in Green Lanes – purely and simply, there is nothing like it around and we think it's an important thing for the high street.

"Cinema is not just entertainment, our cinema in Crouch End is a meeting place and we use it for live music and other things. It helps the community integrate. We want to bring some harmony and culture to the street."

The owners of the former Store 21 and Iceland premises could not be reached for comment.

PONDERS END

New library building opens

THE NEW BUILDING FOR PONDERS End Library has opened – four years after its previous home closed.

After closing the doors to its previous site at College Court in October 2018, the library began operating from a temporary site within the West Lea School campus in May 2019. But it has now moved to a new permanent space in Ponders End High Street.

The bright, modern library is based within Enfield Council's new 'Electric Quarter' redevelopment, where 167 new homes have been built on the site of the former police station which closed in 2011.

Ponders End Library is now open six days a week, closing on Sundays.

The new library is sited within the council's 'Electric Quarter' redevelopment



ENFIELD TOWN

Dugdale reopening date confirmed

DUGDALE ARTS CENTRE IS SET to reopen this December – just in time for the festive season.

The council-owned building in Enfield Town has been undergoing a major £1.5million refurbishment since the spring, after previously closing during the Covid-19 pandemic lockdowns and being used as an NHS vaccination centre.

Enfield Council has now revealed the Dugdale will reopen on Friday, 16th December, when the art centre's theatre will show a special produc-

tion of *Little Women: The Musical*, the "heart-warming story following four sisters dealing with poverty, sisterhood and coming-of-age".

While the 150-seat studio theatre space at the Dugdale remains unchanged and will continue to be used for larger performances, other areas of the building are being reconfigured to make "better use of the space" and ensure it is "fully inclusive, adaptable and accessible for all".

For more information and to book tickets: Visit dugdaleartscentre.co.uk

BOWES

Pupils transform playground

PUPILS AT OAKTHORPE PRIMARY School in Bowes have helped reduce flood risk and boost wildlife through the creation of a unique sustainable drainage system (Suds) in their playground.

The Suds installation has been led by Enfield Council to create much-needed flood protection for the

school, while also providing attractive, green features that will help with learning about the environment, biodiversity and climate change. Funding for the project came from City Hall's Grow Back Greener Fund.

Rick Jewell, the council's cabinet member for environment, said: "The new Suds at Oakthorpe School has had an amazing impact. The playground has totally changed from a large, grey paved area to a thing of beauty. By the spring, the plants will be thriving and hopefully, there will be lots of visiting insects and pollinators. Importantly, during downpours, these rain gardens will absorb lots of water, so the children will still be able to play outside."



Oakthorpe Primary School pupils helping to plant rain garden. Credit: Enfield Council

New indoor track launched at Lee Valley Athletics Centre

Tracked refurbished by Lee Valley Regional Park Authority at cost of £480,000

Lee Valley Athletics Centre has completed refurbishment works on its indoor track following a £480,000 investment.

Lee Valley Regional Park Authority (LVRPA), which owns the sports facility in Pickett's Lock, has installed a new "lightning fast" Mondotrack synthetic track system for the venue's indoor six-lane 200-metre oval track, the upstairs 130m straight, as well as the centre's throws, pole vault, long and triple jump areas.

Designed to host the highest level of competition, Mondotrack is said to be "the most technologically advanced track surface in the world", meaning that athletes in the area will benefit from "elite level facilities".

The eight-week long project took place after a survey by sports surface consultants highlighted that some areas of the previous track were heavily worn and upgrades would be needed in order for the venue to continue to meet the international standards required to host competitions and remain one of the best athletics centres in the UK.

The £480,000 investment for the new track surface came from LVRPA, which owns a number of sports sites in the Lea Valley, including several Olympic venues used for London 2012.

Shaun Dawson, chief executive at LVRPA, said: "Like many of our venues, Lee Valley



The new indoor track at Lee Valley Athletics Centre Credit @discigabi

Athletics Centre was designed with both Olympic standard and community use in mind. We are committed to ensuring that the centre remains a hub for sport and activities for athletes of all levels – from future Olympians to schools and community groups.

"The new track upgrade means that, not only will professional athletes have the very best facilities to train on in preparation for competitions, but everyone in the area will also have the chance to try athletics in a world-class training venue."

Lee Valley Athletics Centre is the largest indoor and outdoor athletics centre in the south of England. It first opened to the public back in 2007 and attracts a wide following, from elite athletes and gym users to local clubs and schools.

The venue has also played a pivotal role in growing new talent and helping to nurture

the next generation of Olympic athletes. It has been the training base for athletes such as Paralympic gold medallist sprinter Jonnie Peacock, long jump gold medallist Greg Ruthford and two-time Olympian Natasha Danvers. In addition, the venue often welcomes other top athletes such as Dina Asher-Smith and Asher Phillips for training sessions.

Gavin Pearce, the centre's general manager, said: "It is incredible to see the new track being used by both elite athletes and community clubs. Lee Valley Athletics Centre has always catered for all abilities and the new indoor track surface will ensure the whole community can continue to run, jump and throw at a world class venue."

To find out more about Lee Valley Athletics Centre and upcoming athletics competitions: Visit better.org.uk/lee-valley

On the run

Austen Slattery from Edmonton Running Club on its recent annual fun run along the River Lea

The annual 'Run the River' 10km race organised by Edmonton Running Club along the River Lea has built a long-standing reputation as a first try-out for local Parkrun participants – runners completing weekly 5km races in Pymmes Park, Grovelands Park and Oak Hill – who want to test themselves for the first time over a longer distance.

This year's race, held last month, saw 275 mostly local runners take part. In addition we had almost 70 Edmonton Running Club members who were volunteering on the day to help to make it a memorable event for all – helped by some glorious weather! The mayor of Enfield even came and presented all the medals for the 10km race and then the trophies for the category winners. It really could not have gone better and we have had some amazing feedback.

The run has encouraged a lot of people over the years to join our club and attracts runners to return year-on-year. It has even had a runner fly in from Spain to attend the event! Families join in as well with a fun run for children.

At Edmonton Running Club we welcome new members with a try-out run and pacing to suit runners of different levels. It is a friendly, local club with social events (curry nights, pub crawls, Christmas parties!) and plenty of volunteering opportunities, including baggage at the London Marathon.

So if you took part in Run the River and are now itching to join a club, or even if you missed it, we are based at Hazelwood Sports Club in Ridge Avenue, Winchmore Hill, and meet twice weekly. We'd love to see you there!

For more information and to get in touch: Visit edmontonrc.co.uk



The 'Run the River' event held in October was supported by 70 Edmonton Running Club volunteers

Knowing the numbers

Andrew Warshaw speaks to Enfield Town's resident statistician

It may not be the most glamorous role in football and not every club has one. But if you want to know about a team's history – past and present – the go-to person is invariably their statistician.

Jim Cunneen has been doing the job at Enfield Town ever since the club was formed – following a long association with the original Enfield FC. Now aged 71, Jim can tell you almost everything you need to know about the borough's biggest non-league club, down to the last detail.

"I'm one of the rare breed of people who get a lot of pleasure out of facts and figures," says Jim, who lived in Enfield for much of his life before retiring to Gloucestershire where he helps run his local non-league team.

"It keeps my mind active. Football and cricket have always been my relaxation."

If there is anything about the Towners Jim doesn't know, it's frankly not worth knowing. Behind the scenes, he commands huge respect from everyone involved at the club. Jim told the *Dispatch*: "I first started supporting the old Enfield in 1957 when my father took me. I just got hooked and at one point I was chairman of the supporters' club."

"When the two clubs split and the board and supporters went over to Town, I did as well because that was where my loyalties lay and I've been doing it effectively ever since. I've made so many friends."

To do the job to the best of his ability, Jim gets a lot of support from long-time Town supporter and lifelong friend Martin Bentley and the current assistant kit man, Michael Bunyan. "I couldn't do it without them because they supply me with so much match-day information. I've got everything going right back to the first day of Enfield Town's inception."

Anything anyone needs to do with the club, Jim can provide, whether it's appearances, goalscorers (including oldest and youngest), disciplinary records, fastest-ever goal scored, fastest scored against, even down to who hit the post when and where.

"It's an incredibly important role in terms of a club's historical background. I even had one guy from California ring me up for loads of information. I've probably got about 15 to 20 spreadsheets which I constantly update. Each game takes me about two hours."

Unlike players who come and go, statisticians tend to stay on, and Jim is no different. "It's not a job for everyone, but I love it. Without statisticians, football historians would know far less."

"There are far too many clubs right now living beyond their means. When the money men pull out, 100 years of history can disappear overnight. That's why you need statisticians, to bring home to people the significance of their local community club."

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