

# ENFIELD DISPATCH

N°88 THE BOROUGH'S FREE COMMUNITY NEWSPAPER

JAN 2026



SCOUTS HELPED RAISE thousands of pounds for a local homelessness charity – by sleeping outside in cardboard boxes. The sleep-out in Southgate last month saw 47 scouts using cardboard, tarpaulin and duct tape to construct their own makeshift homes for the night, putting their sleeping bags inside their boxes. For safety reasons the event took place within the grounds of a local Scouts headquarters, rather than on the streets, but there was rain overnight – compounding the “misery” of the experience for the children taking part. The event helped raise money for North London homelessness charity All People All Places – with a winter fundraising campaign surpassing its £22,000 target.

## Gambling firms accused of ‘preying’ on borough’s poorest

BY FINN LOGUE

**A** community group has warned “more needs to be done” to stop gambling companies “preying” on the poorest parts of the borough.

Adult gaming centres (AGCs) contain numerous slot machines and arcade-style games and typically open 24 hours – using legal loopholes to avoid gambling regulation and scrutiny.

While many traditional bookies are withdrawing from the high street amid shifts toward online gambling, AGCs are on the rise. In Angel Edmonton, along a half-mile stretch of Fore Street, there are eight gambling venues in total – half of which are now AGCs. It means the number of gambling premises in the area has doubled in a decade.

Parts of Angel Edmonton were recently ranked among the 2% of most deprived neighbourhoods in the country. The area is also ethnically diverse, with large

numbers of people from Eastern Europe. All four of Fore Street’s AGCs are open 24 hours, seven days a week, and appear to be targeting vulnerable communities. On a visit last month the *Dispatch* found one AGC, Little Vegas, listing a job for a Romanian-speaking supervisor, while the shop’s welcome signs use five different Eastern European languages.

The Residents of Edmonton Angel Community Together (React) group is calling for action to prevent AGCs – described as “high street sinkholes” – exploiting vulnerable people in the community.

Cellina Doswell, React’s vice-chair, told the *Dispatch*: “What we are seeing is the proliferation of gambling shops that offer no socioeconomic benefits to the community.

“The operators say they create jobs, but their impacts are detrimental. They prey on people with compulsive and addictive behaviours, who go in and out of the shops all day and night hoping for their luck to change.”

Cellina accused AGC operators of using “predatory” techniques to target impoverished communities and flood high streets with gambling venues, reaping cycles of addiction that breed further social issues – with addicts also having lower life expectancies.

According to the Social Market Foundation, AGCs use licensing loopholes under the Gambling Act 2005 to self-declare as bingo halls and duck regulation. The group’s research revealed one third of AGCs are situated in areas within the top 10% of poorest neighbourhoods, while more than half are concentrated in the top 20%.

Asked to respond to the rise of AGCs in deprived areas, Susan Erbil, Enfield Council’s cabinet member for planning and regulatory services, said: “We are working hard to prevent more gambling related shops from opening on our high streets but, as a local authority, our powers are very limited due to existing laws around licensing and gambling premises.

“We know many local people

are worried about these types of venues opening in the borough. We share those concerns and can assure residents we are doing everything in our power to prevent more gambling premises on our high streets.”

Cllr Erbil said the council’s new gambling policy identifies Angel Edmonton as a “gambling vulnerability area” where potential new operators “must demonstrate robust measures to protect vulnerable people”. She added: “We want our town centres to be lively, safe, and welcoming. We don’t believe gambling shops help achieve that. But under the current law, if this type of business meets all the legal requirements, the council cannot refuse the application.”

Cellina said React had spoken directly with the council but felt more needed to be done both locally and nationally – suggesting there should be a cap on the number of betting shops on each high street.

Little Vegas was approached for comment but did not respond.

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# Enfield set for £203m funding boost after government review

In percentage terms the increase for Enfield up to 2029 will be the second highest of any area in England

BY JAMES CRACKNELL

Enfield will enjoy the biggest percentage rise of local authority funding in London – and second highest in England – thanks to a government review that finally ends decades of “unfair” settlements for the borough.

Enfield Council leader Ergin Erbil confirmed the borough would benefit to the tune of £203million over three years – representing a 58% rise in ‘core spending power’.

The Labour government’s much-anticipated Fair Funding Review has sought to rebalance local government funding based on key factors, including deprivation levels and housing costs, with Enfield long being seen as one of the boroughs suffering most under the old, outdated funding formulas used to divvy up council cash from Whitehall.

Enfield’s £203m core spending power figure is used to show the scale of funding change in absolute terms compared to the previous trajectory under the old formulas and is understood to include assumed council tax rises.

While Newham in East London is set to gain slightly more from the government review, with an extra £217m in core spending power over three years, the percentage rise for Enfield is the highest out of any in the capital.

Cllr Erbil said: “We have always pushed for fair funding for Enfield. I am very pleased that our hard work has helped secure additional [money] from the Labour government.

“Enfield has received the second-largest increase in funding in England, and the highest increase in London. Core spending power will increase across this parliament by £203m, that’s nearly 60%.

“Under previous Conservative governments, Enfield was the second-worst funded borough in London. Under Labour, we will be



Enfield Civic Centre

the best-funded borough in London. That is the Labour Party difference. Fair funding for our neighbourhoods and communities.”

For 2026/27 specifically, Enfield will benefit from an extra £47.5m. A cabinet report published last month stated that under a “favourable scenario” the funding review would enable the council to deliver a balanced budget for 2026/27. And while the fresh settlement does not immediately tackle the council’s debt of almost £1.5billion – still among the highest in the country – the report also stated “any surplus” from the new central grant could be used to “reduce debt” as well as for “service investment” and “rebuilding reserves”.

The council has spent the last two years teetering on the edge of effective bankruptcy, with soaring homelessness costs in particular leading to successive overspends that were only paid off after the Treasury granted Enfield Civic Centre £30m of ‘exceptional financial support’ last January.

Recent years have also seen the council making significant cuts to spending, with the most controversial being the closure last year of seven libraries. The year previously, cuts made to Enfield’s council tax support scheme were slammed for hitting the borough’s poorest residents – some-

thing underscored recently with news that there had been a 10% rise in the council’s use of bailiffs to help collect unpaid tax debt.

It is not yet clear whether the additional resources now available to Enfield Council will mean any of these cuts can be reversed, but in his announcement on 17th December Secretary of State Steve Reed said: “This is a chance to turn the page on a decade of cuts, and for local leaders to invest in getting back what has been lost – to bring back libraries, youth services, clean streets, and community hubs.”

Responding to the news James Hockney, the opposition Conservative group’s finance spokesperson, said: “The provisional figures from government show an increase in funding – which is of course welcome – but we won’t have a clear picture until January on the final figures.

“However, the overall core spending announcement includes above-inflation council tax increases for the next three years. When residents are already struggling with record levels of taxation, this extra burden is not going to help.

“Nor will the extra funding address the issue of the council being one of the top ten indebted councils – £1.5bn in debt – [with] over £30m being spent on debt interest, money which could have been spent on residents’ services.”

## Therapist jailed

A psychotherapist who sexually assaulted two of his patients during treatment sessions at his Ponders End practice has been jailed for three years and nine months.

Tarkan Mustafa, aged 55 and of Woodlands Way in Southgate, had been found guilty of seven counts of sexual assault, including sexual touching, following a two-week trial at Wood Green Crown Court.

As well as his prison sentence, Mustafa has also been placed on the sex offenders register for life and has received a five-year sexual harm prevention order.

The offences were committed at Mustafa’s practice in Ponders End, called ‘Peace of Mind – Private Therapy’.

Detective Sergeant Myles Bossman, who led the investigation, said: “Mustafa is a calculated individual. He took advantage of women who were seeking his support for his own sexual gratification, under the guise of medical treatment.

“I want to thank each of the victims for their support and commend their immense courage and bravery in supporting the investigation and providing evidence in court.”

## Station closure

Southgate Station will be closed to entry for more than two months – with urgent work needed on one of its escalators.

Transport for London (TfL) confirmed the Piccadilly Line tube station would be “exit only” from Monday, 5th January until the middle of March, a period of around ten weeks.

Richard Jones, TfL’s director of asset performance delivery, said: “We apologise in advance to customers using Southgate tube station for any disruption to their journeys as a result of the station operating as exit-only.

“Essential maintenance work to one of the station’s escalators means that customers will not be able to access Piccadilly Line services at Southgate for this period. The work will ensure ongoing safety, provide better reliability and reduce the risk of longer unplanned closures.”

“The remaining escalator will operate upwards only for this period. Customers are advised to check the TfL journey planner or the TfL Go app for alternative routes.”

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# Feeding those in need – while fighting food waste

The Felix Project volunteer Camille McCarthy on the important work the charity does in Enfield and beyond

In a warehouse off the A10, six days a week, a team of dedicated volunteers and staff members are busy moving and packing sacks, trays, and punnets of every variety of fruit, vegetables and foodstuff you could imagine.

Almost every day, they send this food to schools, faith organisations and community centres.

In 2017, The Felix Project charity opened its depot at Great Cambridge Industrial Estate in Edmonton. Since then, the warehouse team has been delivering surplus food to people across North London who need it most.

The Felix Project rescues food from supermarkets, farms, and suppliers that would otherwise be thrown away, and redistributes it to community organisations. The charity thus seeks to combat two problems simultaneously; hunger, and the environmental harms caused by food waste. The warehouse in Enfield is one of four warehouses in the capital run by The



Felix Project to fight these issues.

The depot's work remains as important as ever. In London, foodbank charity Trussell Trust estimates that 17% of households face food insecurity. At the same time, in the UK, around 6.4 million tonnes of edible food is wasted each year – enough to feed the entire country's population three meals a day for eleven weeks straight.

I started volunteering with Felix after graduating from university. The depot has given me a way to get involved with my local community, while helping the environment. When I signed up for my first shift, I expected to find a small operation. But I was amazed when I arrived to see an industrial warehouse with forklifts, and to be donning a high-vis jacket and steel-capped boots.

Most of all, I was struck by the sheer volume of food that risks going to waste, which the charity is able to save. As of 2024 the Enfield depot served 260 community organisations and regularly redistributes tens of tonnes of food each month.

In a single shift, one volunteer can process hundreds of kilos of food, which makes regular depot visits a cheap alternative to a gym membership! There are multiple ways to get involved. As well as volunteer warehouse assistants, there are volunteer drivers and co-drivers who hit the road in Felix's green vans to deliver food.

Volunteers can also help out at 'Felix Fresh' events, pop-up markets where surplus produce is given out for free to local communities.

Team members and volunteers come to The Felix Project for a range of reasons, but it is the people that keep us coming back. Jack, one of the team leaders at the depot, described them fondly as "a big family" that provides "a warming sensation when you come here".

The depot is currently mid-way through a busy winter season and is keen to welcome new volunteers.

Find out more about getting involved as a volunteer at The Felix Project:  
Email [volunteer@thefelixproject.org](mailto:volunteer@thefelixproject.org)  
Visit [thefelixproject.org](http://thefelixproject.org)

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## LocalMotion Enfield

### Become a Trustee with LocalMotion Enfield

Help Shape a Fairer Future for our Community

LocalMotion Enfield is looking for passionate local people to join our Board of Trustees. If you care about social justice, community power and tackling inequality, we want to hear from you.

As a Trustee, you will:

- Support community-led change in Enfield
- Champion equity, fairness and local voice
- Gain leadership & governance experience
- Contribute just 4 meetings a year
- Receive training – no prior experience needed

*We welcome people of all ages and backgrounds, especially those underrepresented in charity leadership.*

#### APPLY NOW

Send a short statement + optional CV to [paul.everitt@localmotion.org.uk](mailto:paul.everitt@localmotion.org.uk)

Informal chats available – get in touch!

LocalMotion Enfield - Community-led change for a fairer Enfield

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## Young People Are Our Future – Let's Listen

# Enfield care leavers meet government minister

*Jim Wasswa reports on care leavers meeting minister Josh MacAlister – determined to turn lived experience into change*

I am exhilarated to share that the Cook and Chill project has launched with remarkable momentum. We were invited (with the help of Lloyds Bank Foundation) to step into rooms where decisions are made. Last month in December, we were in a room where our voices have been missing for far too long. Let me set the scene.

Around the table sat care leavers from Enfield, carrying not only their own stories, but representing the countless young people whose voices could not be present. And across from us sat Minister for Children Josh MacAlister, a system-shaper confronted by the very people shaped by that system.

Jayden, George and a third care leaver spoke with courage, honesty, and unfiltered truth. Their stories laid bare a system that repeatedly fails children at the most critical moments from being looked after, moving into semi-independent living and transitioning into adulthood. At each stage, young people are left to navigate life without clarity, guidance or genuine support. And the results, as we know too well, can



Minister for Children Josh MacAlister (centre) meets Enfield care leavers, including Jim Wasswa (third from left)  
Credit Facilitated by Lloyds Bank Foundation CEO, Matt Hyde (Second from Right)

be devastating.

After my colleagues spoke, I asked the minister a direct question: "How do you feel after listening to these experiences?"

His reply was blunt: "I am not surprised." For the first time, we heard honesty from the top and in that honesty was a hard truth: the institutions surrounding children in care behave less like parents and more like corporations – corporations that protect themselves before protecting the child. It is a truth that everyone in the room recognised.

If we want real reform, we must start with something simple yet profound, something every child deserves – love. Love is the foundation of any family. So why is it absent from the structures meant to act as a parent to the most vulnerable children?

The minister said he wants to see more lifelong relationships, stronger support to keep families together, and better provisions for kinship carers. These are important steps, but love cannot exist without accountability.

Accountability begins here. Care-

experienced people must become a protected characteristic nationally. This means legally safeguarding them from discrimination, similar to race and disability.

As child poverty rises, so will the discrimination, stigma, and barriers faced by care-experienced young people. Without legal protection, they remain vulnerable, not because of who they are, but because the system refuses to safeguard them.

The label 'care experienced' should not be a burden. But without protection, it continues to be. This is why we advocate; this is why we speak; this is why we take our seat at these tables, not for ourselves, but for every young person still unheard.

I also asked the minister what steps the government is taking to improve communication between the education and care sectors, particularly during key transition points. He told us he is progressing legislation to extend corporate parenting duties to public bodies, including schools and colleges.

This is a positive step, but it is not enough. Transformation requires that people with lived experience are not just consulted but embedded in the heart of decision-making.

So, we asked the minister directly: is there a national advisory board for care-experienced people and, if so, can we be part of it? We will see what happens. One meeting cannot change the system, but it can start a movement. And we will keep knocking on doors until those doors stay open.

In summary, this is what must change: care-experienced people must become a protected characteristic nationally; love must be the foundation of all care-giving families; and care-experienced people must be embedded at the heart of decision-making.



## Local Voice, Local Stories

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Attendees at LocalMotion Enfield's recent annual general meeting Credit Kai Images



# Could you be a trustee for LocalMotion Enfield?

LocalMotion Enfield co-ordinator Paul Everitt invites local residents to get involved with the charity's board of trustees

If you've ever felt that decision-making in Enfield doesn't always reflect the people who actually live here, this might be your moment to help change that.

LocalMotion Enfield – a dynamic, community-led charity tackling inequality and championing local voice – is inviting residents to join our board of trustees.

We're not just looking for the 'usual suspects' – in fact, we're hoping to find people who don't usually see themselves sitting around a boardroom table.

LocalMotion Enfield is part of a bold national movement working to shift power into the hands of communities. Our mission focuses on strengthening grassroots leadership, addressing deep-rooted inequalities, and creating fairer systems around housing, employment, poverty, race and mental health. But to do this effectively, we need people on our board who truly understand everyday life in Enfield.

Crucially, we're looking for people who are curious, open to learning, and excited about developing new ways of thinking. You don't need to arrive with all

the answers – just a willingness to grow, challenge old assumptions, and be part of a learning community that approaches problems creatively and collaboratively.

You also don't need to be a lawyer, accountant or chief executive to be a trustee. You don't need decades of experience. You don't even need a CV. What you do need is belief in fairness, a passion for your community, and the confidence to share your lived experience.

*"We're looking for people who are curious, open to learning, and excited about developing new ways of thinking"*

LocalMotion Enfield will provide training, support, and a welcoming environment where your voice genuinely matters and where your personal development is valued.

Trustees meet only four times a year, usually during the day, and the role is

strategic rather than operational. You won't be expected to run projects or handle day-to-day work. Instead, you'll help shape the charity's direction, ensure strong governance, and make sure resources are used responsibly to benefit local people.

It's an opportunity to make real, long-lasting change in Enfield without needing huge amounts of time.

LocalMotion Enfield is especially keen to hear from people who are often left out of leadership roles – young people, people from racialised communities, working-class residents, carers, disabled people, parents, community volunteers, people with lived experience of inequality, and anyone who has ever felt that 'people like me don't end up in positions like that'.

If you feel a spark reading this – even if you're not sure you're 'qualified' enough – take the first step by sending a short statement of up to two pages and an optional CV to [paul.everitt@localmotion.org.uk](mailto:paul.everitt@localmotion.org.uk).

Informal chats are warmly welcomed. This is your chance to help shape a more just, confident and vibrant Enfield – not by being an expert, but simply by being you.

## A new voice for disability inclusion in Enfield

Empowering Disability in Enfield is a new group formed by people with lived experience of disability

**N**ew local group Empowering Disability in Enfield (ED in Enfield) is inviting residents with lived experience of disability to its first coffee morning this month.

ED in Enfield is formed by ten passionate individuals who have a lived experience of disability, brought together through LocalMotion and united by a mission to ensure disabled people in Enfield are seen, valued and heard. We are determined to break down barriers and work with others to create positive change in the community.

The aims of the group are to raise awareness about the challenges disabled people face in Enfield; advocate for systemic change, making Enfield a fairer and more equitable place for disabled people; monitor, support, and advise on the services provided for disabled people in the borough.

The free coffee morning is taking place on Friday, 30th January, from 11am–1pm at Enfield Town Library's community room. It is designed as a relaxed space for people with lived experience of disability to meet others, feel understood, and share what matters to them.

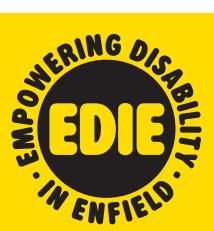
Themes for discussion include digital exclusion, hidden disabilities, care for disabled adults when parents are no longer around, and physical obstacles faced by physically disabled and visually impaired people. Attendees can also suggest topics for future sessions.

As a group we are committed to making our events accessible and we are founded on the Social Model of Disability, which recognises that people are disabled by society through inaccessible environments, unhelpful attitudes, or restrictive systems rather than by their impairments.

ED in Enfield's goal is to remove these barriers to achieve equality, independence, and choice for all, and we invite those affected by disability in Enfield to attend the coffee morning, share experiences, and help shape the future for disabled people in the borough.

Anyone with access requirements or needing support with transport is encouraged to get in touch with us.

For more information:  
Call 07765 714 384  
Email [edie@localmotionenfield.org.uk](mailto:edie@localmotionenfield.org.uk)



# Council leader refutes claims of a 'cover-up'

BY JAMES CRACKNELL

**E**nfield Council leader Ergin Erbil has refuted accusations of a "cover-up" over the misconduct of ex-mayor Mohammad Islam – after it emerged a false statement was issued to the press.

The day after a conduct committee ruled last year on 12th August that Cllr Islam had "brought his office into disrepute" by breaching the members' code on three counts, a council statement claimed that "the first time the leader became aware of the issue" was 9th June.

It has now been confirmed, however, that the council's director of law and governance had told Cllr Erbil via email on 6th March about an external investigation she had launched into Cllr Islam's behaviour. Cllr Islam's one-year term in the civic role ended on 14th May.

Asked to explain the delay in taking action, Cllr Erbil argues that he needed to wait for the external investigation report to be completed before taking action. The report, the council claims, was not finished until



Enfield Council leader Ergin Erbil

6th June and was sent to the council leader on 9th June.

But Cllr Erbil has not explained why a false statement was provided to the press about when he was told about the allegations. He claims the council has been "open and transparent" throughout.

While Cllr Islam was removed from the Labour group on 10th June, it was not until after the *Dispatch* published an exclusive story revealing he was being investigated by the

Home Office for suspected immigration offences, in the July print edition, that Cllr Erbil finally submitted an official conduct complaint, on 7th July.

The Home Office first contacted the council to ask questions about Cllr Islam's behaviour on 1st May 2024, before he became mayor.

Chris Dey, a Conservative member of the conduct committee, said: "It's disappointing the leader of the council clearly knew about

this earlier than he has claimed to have done.

"It beggars belief it has only come out after Cllr Islam's mayoral term, and it stinks of a cover-up."

Opposition group leader Alessandro Georgiou added: "Thanks to *Enfield Dispatch*

we found out about Mohammad Islam's attempt to use council resources to get friends and family from abroad into the UK, which is a clear breach of the rules and possibly the law.

"We have now discovered Ergin Erbil covered up all of this and knew back in March of this visa scandal. Cllr Erbil should resign for this disgraceful cover-up."

Cllr Islam finally apologised in November for his behaviour, which he admitted

"did not meet the standards expected of an elected member". As mayor the Ponders End councillor had used his position to support visa applications for friends and family in Bangladesh, against the advice of council officers. The Home Office continues to investigate, although no charges have been brought.

Cllr Erbil said: "Enfield Council strongly rejects any claim of wrongdoing in how it handled the investigation



Ex-mayor Mohammad Islam

was commissioned so that the circumstances were examined by an independent expert.

"The investigation report was completed on 6th June 2025 and shown to me on 9th June. It is important to be clear that it would not have been appropriate for me to have acted before the investigation was concluded and the findings reported to me.

"Once the external investigator's findings were confirmed, I took action. Cllr Islam was removed from the Labour group

on 10th June. I then submitted a formal complaint to the monitoring officer on 7th July, enabling a report to be prepared for the conduct committee to consider in August.

"Members of the committee were unanimous in their decision concerning Cllr Islam's conduct and he has now apologised.

"The council has been open and transparent throughout this case, and details about it are publicly available on

its website. Group leaders are always informed when investigations are taking place involving members of their groups.

"The council would never – and could never – pre-determine the outcome of any investigation or the issues it might uncover."

## New home for Age UK Enfield

BY JAMES CRACKNELL

**A** new day care centre run by Age UK Enfield has been hailed as a "dream come true" for the charity. The Mabel Churn Centre in The Sunny Road, Brimsdown, has become the new home of the older people's organisation after it was forced to relocate from two previous sites.

The specialist dementia day centre has been named after Mabel 'Mabs' Mardulyn (née Churn), who was active in the Enfield community for many decades and created the Mabs Mardulyn Charitable Foundation as a lasting legacy to benefit young people and older people, both in the UK and her native Hong Kong.

It now provides activities that support physical, emotional and cognitive wellbeing, including cookery sessions, arts and crafts, gardening, singing and music, reminiscence activities and exercise classes.

At a launch event last month Age UK Enfield's chair of trustees explained the difference The Mabel Churn Centre would make to the charity and the 16,000 people it supports every year.

Elaine Adkin said: "Age UK Enfield needs to grow to meet increasing demands, so we have been looking for new premises, also knowing the council was asking us to leave [former sites] The Parker Centre and John Jackson Library.

"It has been a long and challenging journey. This was a former day care centre but it had been empty for two years [...] I said if we could move in here it would be a dream come true."

In addition to a "significant gift" from The Mabs Mardulyn Charitable Foundation, grants were also secured from Garfield

Weston Foundation and Bernard Sunley Foundation, as well as local businesses including Thompsons of Crews Hill, Forsters and B&Q.

Formerly known as The Rose Taylor Centre, the building has been fully refurbished and upgraded to include a number of innovative features, including a self-service kiosk which delivers rapid, high-impact health checks.

Elaine continued: "A lot of hard work has gone into this building – new electrics, damp proofing, drainage. The layout and design has been selected based on the views



Marion Kelly cuts the ribbon on the day centre which now carries the name of her late aunt Mabel Churn

of our clients, staff and volunteers. I hope you agree it is a wonderful, bright space.

"The transformation was made possible by the Mabs Mardulyn Charitable Foundation. Mabel Churn was an active member of the Enfield community right up until her death – and thanks to this centre she is still involved in this community."

Elaine also explained that older people living in deprived areas have a life expectancy seven years lower than those in well-off areas, and that Enfield was recently named among the 13% most deprived local areas in the country. "We need to meet the challenge that gives us," she added.

Also speaking at the launch event was Marion Kelly, Mabel Churn's niece, who is a director of the charity which carries her aunt's name. She said: "It is an honour and a privilege to see and to witness the tremendous work that Age UK Enfield does for older people and carers.

"The foundation is delighted to support Age UK Enfield with its ongoing work – aunty Mabs would have been pleased."

Find out more about the services provided at The Mabel Churn Centre: Visit [ageuk.org.uk/enfield/our-services/dementia-the-mabel-churn-centre](http://ageuk.org.uk/enfield/our-services/dementia-the-mabel-churn-centre)

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# Bush Hill Park Golf Club celebrates special year

*General manager Stewart Judd on how the club has marked its 130th anniversary with a series of impressive award wins*

**B**ush Hill Park Golf Club has this year marked its 130th anniversary with a remarkable run of awards that place us among the most progressive and environmentally responsible golf clubs in the UK.

Throughout 2025 – 130 years on from its founding in 1895 – the club has received multiple accolades recognising our commitment to sustainability, innovation, and community engagement.

These achievements reflect a modern approach to golf at a time when the sport is increasingly under scrutiny.

Innovation has been the defining theme of the year. At the national Club Awards 2025, we were named 'Innovative Club of the Year', 'Marketing Club of the Year' and were joint winners for the prestigious 'Golf Club



of the Year' prize. Judges praised our forward-thinking approach, strong digital presence, and ability to evolve while respecting its heritage.

National recognition continued at the Golf Course of the Year Awards, where we were named 'Members Club of the Year', standing out for our welcoming, inclusive, and engaged club community; for proactively gathering and acting on feedback;

evolving club facilities; attracting and retaining a broad and diverse membership; demonstrating leadership and innovation within the industry through our pathway to sustainability; and for staff commitment to continually enhancing the member experience.

The award came after competition from some of the country's most well-known venues, including Close House, Sunningdale Heath,

Royal Ascot and Spey Bay – underscoring the scale of the achievement for a community-rooted club in North London.

Another significant honour this year came through the Green Mark Award, achieved as part of an Enfield Council sustainability initiative. The award recognises organisations that demonstrate tangible environmental responsibility, from resource management to

long-term planning, and highlights our alignment with borough-wide sustainability goals.

Further strengthening our environmental credentials, the club also secured the global standard for sustainability in golf by becoming GEO Certified. Fewer than 3% of UK golf courses currently hold this status, which independently assesses ecological stewardship, climate action, and community value. The certification places the club among a small and growing group of courses leading the way in responsible golf management.

From environmental initiatives and community engagement to wellness programmes delivered in partnership with Nuffield Health Enfield, alongside an increasingly inclusive membership with a growing cohort of women and junior golfers, the club's focus has been on remaining relevant, responsible and accessible as we enter our next chapter.

As golf continues to evolve, Bush Hill Park's 130th year serves as a timely reminder that tradition and progress need not be at odds. Instead, with the right vision, they can work together – benefiting both the sport and the community we serve.



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# Campaign for 'express' bus service in eastern Enfield

BY JAMES CRACKNELL

**L**ocal leaders are calling for a new bus service to serve eastern Enfield. Enfield North MP Feryal Clark last month launched a petition asking Transport for London (TfL) to boost bus connectivity through Enfield Lock and Ponders End – and link them directly to the tube network.

At present, bus users in these areas have to change at Edmonton to get to Tottenham Hale where they can board the Victoria Line. And although the West Anglia Main Line runs through eastern Enfield, trains are infrequent and cost far more.

Clark says a potential Superloop extension starting from Enfield Island Village could use Mollison Avenue and Meridian Way (the A1055) to provide a fast connection, stopping at Ponders End and Meridian Water on the route to Tottenham Hale. There could also be a stop at the Lee Valley Leisure Complex, where a new inland surfing lagoon is due to be built.

The Labour MP told the *Dispatch*: “It’s madness people have to go to

Edmonton to get a bus to Tottenham Hale. This [eastern] part of Enfield is very badly connected. People in low-paid work would rather take a bus but it takes so long – as much as an hour.”

Clark said the idea for a new bus came from speaking to residents, particularly in Enfield Island Village – one of the most isolated parts of the borough. The existing 121 bus service often gets delayed at the level crossing in Ordnance Road, as well as traffic-congested Hertford Road. TfL’s Superloop services provide faster bus journeys by skipping



Enfield North Feryal Clark MP wants TfL to provide better bus connections in eastern Enfield

most stops along their routes. The network was launched two years ago and mainly operates as an orbital route connecting outer London boroughs. A series of extensions are now being considered.

“Superloop has been a big success,” said Clark. “In Enfield Island Village people really want it – it will save them time and money [...] It is a no-brainer.”

Clark’s campaign has been backed by Enfield Council leader Ergin Erbil. He said: “We’ve seen the benefits of the Superloop in the south of the borough, making

it easier to get from Enfield to neighbouring boroughs like Barnet and Waltham Forest without having to travel further in towards central London.

“With this new bus [in eastern Enfield], it would make it easier for people to access further transport at places like Meridian Water and Tottenham Hale.”

Mayor of London Sir Sadiq Khan also has a target for 75% of journeys in outer London to be made by public transport or active travel by 2041, but the latest figures show average bus speeds have slowed considerably in recent years, with ridership also declining as a result.

Geoff Hobbs, TfL’s director of public transport service planning, said: “We’re determined to improve our services and we continually review the bus network according to customer demand.

“Feedback is important to us, so we regularly engage with boroughs and other stakeholders across London on their bus network, and would be happy to discuss any bus improvements with local boroughs.”

To sign the petition:  
visit [feryalclark.org.uk/ExpressBus](http://feryalclark.org.uk/ExpressBus)

Toothbrushing Credit Roman Marchenko via Unsplash



## Enfield nurseries help kids brush their teeth

BY LEAH RENZ

**M**ore than 60 nurseries in Enfield borough have now introduced tooth-brushing programmes to tackle poor oral hygiene in children.

The move follows a 2025 report by NHS England revealing tooth decay to be the leading cause of hospital admissions in children aged from five to nine years. In Enfield, a council report two years ago revealed the borough’s children had the worst teeth in London.

The oral hygiene scheme provides toothbrushes, toothpaste and healthy food and drinks to nurseries, while training staff. The nurseries chosen are in areas of “highest deprivation” – mostly in the east of the borough.

It is funded by North Central London Integrated Care Board (ICB), using a targeted grant from the government’s Department of Health and Social Care.

The programme has been “very well received” according to Enfield Council’s director of public health, Dudu Sher Arami, who spoke at an equalities board meeting at Enfield Civic Centre last month.

Conservative councillor Ruby Sampson, however, challenged the director on the capacity of nurseries to provide toothbrushing programmes, citing her own experience as a school teaching assistant and claiming that encouraging all her pupils to brush their teeth “would take half a day”.

Arami admitted that “some [settings] have been challenged because of capacity” and therefore declined taking part in the scheme.

Nonetheless, she hopes the programme enrolment will double to 120 nurseries by the start of April 2026.

Other initiatives tackling tooth decay in Enfield include training workshops in schools, run by the Whittington Health NHS Foundation Trust, and a ‘Good Food Retail’ scheme which aims to replace fatty and sugary snacks and drinks in convenience stores with healthier alternatives.

# Planning chair 'must resign'

BY JAMES CRACKNELL

**T**he chair of Enfield Council’s planning committee is facing calls to resign after failing to obtain prior planning permission for her house of multiple occupation (HMO).

Although Mahym Bedekova recently submitted a planning application for the property in Edmonton, she acknowledged the application is “retrospective” – meaning the HMO has been operating without permission.

In Enfield, anyone wanting to convert a property into a HMO must obtain both planning permission and a licence from the council. Cllr Bedekova did obtain a licence, in May 2023, but only submitted her planning application

in November. Since 2023, electoral register records suggest at least five adults have been living at the property, including the Labour planning chair herself.

Michael Rye, a Conservative planning committee member, said: “She has to resign as chair of the planning committee. You have to set an example when you are a councillor.

“HMOs can have an impact on neighbours, who are entitled to comment on it. It might be well run and cause no problems, but when you are a councillor you have to set a high standard.

“Her position is untenable.”

Cllr Bedekova was promoted from vice-chair to chair of the planning committee after previous chair Sinan Boztas was

removed from the position in late 2024. This followed the controversy surrounding a fellow Labour councillor’s dropped kerb being approved against officer advice – an approval that was later overturned.

Cllr Bedekova said: “I have always acted in good faith and in accordance with my legal and ethical obligations. I have held a valid HMO licence for my property since 2023 and have always declared this interest appropriately through the council’s governance processes. The property is also my personal residence, I live with my adult daughter and relatives.”

Later in her statement Cllr Bedekova suggested the need for planning permission for HMOs was a recent policy change – despite

the requirement being in place since 2013.

She said: “When Enfield introduced the requirement for planning permission for HMOs, I instructed a professional planning agent to manage the application process on my behalf, as many residents do.

“A planning application has now been submitted, and this process is ongoing. The council has a clear mechanism for dealing with retrospective applications, which are lawful and commonly used where clarification is required.

“At all times, I have been open with council officers and have relied on professional advice to ensure compliance [...] In relation to my role on the planning committee, I take my responsibilities extremely seriously.”

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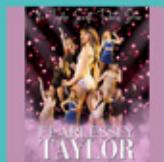
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# Our high streets need help to thrive

Angela Evangelou, a high streets ambassador for Green Lanes Business Association, on what needs to be done to boost the local economy

**P**almers Green has become a case study in the pressures facing London's neighbourhood high streets, with traders warning that rising crime, restrictive parking policies and deteriorating street conditions are now threatening the viability of small businesses.

These concerns were raised during a walkabout which I recently led in my role as high street ambassador for Green Lanes Business Association (GLBA). I was joined by Southgate and Wood Green MP Bambos Charalambous and senior representatives of the London Chamber of Commerce and Industry, including chief executive Karim Fatehi OBE.

Over recent months, local traders have repeatedly reported to me that theft, anti-social behaviour and ineffective enforcement have become daily obstacles to operating a business. Many believe the high street is being left to absorb pressures

it cannot withstand alone.

One of the starker accounts came from Phil Barnes, who runs Philanthropy London CIC. He described prolific theft being carried out with near-total impunity. "I've locked thieves inside until the police arrived, but nothing happened," he told me. "They just smile – they know there will be no penalty."

Despite installing a full tagging system and building a shared 'rogues gallery' of repeat offenders, thefts have only increased. Phil's shop is now adopting FaceWatch, a facial-recognition platform usually used by larger chains.

Several national retailers – including Greggs, Poundland and Amy's – have recently left Palmers Green. Phil warned that Morrisons and Sainsbury's Local are at risk of becoming the next casualties.

Across the walkabout route, businesses described a common pattern: predictable daily crime, open drug activity and an absence of visible policing. Many admitted they no longer report incidents, believing the effort "leads nowhere", which in turn reinforces the sense of impunity.

Parking policy emerged as a second major pressure point. Traders criticised high charges, the removal of cash-payment



Shops in Palmers Green town centre suffer from regular theft, according to Green Lanes Business Association

options and reliance on app-only systems, which they say deter older residents and those without smartphones. Strict enforcement has further created a climate in which customers are "too nervous to stop", undermining essential footfall.

The delegation also heard from Ash Sood of Scrivens Opticians, who described how one of his elderly customers was too anxious to visit the shop to collect her glasses because she feared she wouldn't be able to navigate the parking system. He personally delivered the glasses to her home.

A staff member added that she often has to help customers use the parking app – something that, she said, now happens "daily". Traders argue these moments reflect a deeper problem; customers who would happily shop locally are being put off before they even reach the door.

The physical condition of the high street was also a recurring concern. Shopkeepers pointed to persistent fly-tipping, commercial waste obstructing pavements and inconsistent street cleaning – conditions that undermine the area's appearance and send the wrong message to potential customers.

Despite these challenges, traders consistently said they want to invest and grow – but cannot do so without basic levels of safety, accessibility and public upkeep.

Palmers Green deserves a high street that is safe, clean and thriving. Our businesses are resilient, but they should not have to fight alone. GLBA will continue pushing – firmly and fearlessly – for the conditions this community needs.

The question now is whether policymakers will match that determination.

Get in touch with Green Lanes Business Association:  
Email [contact@lovepalmersgreen.com](mailto:contact@lovepalmersgreen.com)  
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**Dispatch Issue #89 February**

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# Trains, homes and free school meals

London Assembly member Joanne McCartney on the local progress made during 2025 through her work at City Hall

**A**s we start the new year it's a great time to reflect on the successes of the past year and the challenges ahead.

Firstly, I was proud to join Mayor of London Sir Sadiq Khan in delivering the 100-millionth free school meal in the capital, and I have been pleased to lead the work on this initiative as deputy mayor.

Four million meals have been delivered across Enfield and thousands of families are seeing the benefit – an important step in tackling child poverty and giving every child a fair start.

Another piece of good news is that the front counter at Edmonton Police Station will remain open, ensuring the community has a visible and accessible police presence.

Early signs show that concerted action is paying off. Initiatives such as the 'Clear, Hold, Build' programme in Edmonton are making a real difference, with local crime figures improving and the focus on expanding neighbourhood policing teams helping residents feel safer.

Together we succeeded in our campaign to install average speed cameras along the remaining stretch of the A10, helping to reduce collisions and injury.

Turning to a bigger challenge: housing. The government's recent announcement of a potential 'new town' in Enfield has rightly attracted attention. I have given this careful thought. Our Green Belt is precious, but the reality is clear: London needs far more homes than can be accommodated on existing brownfield sites.

Families are living in over-crowded or unsuitable conditions, young people struggle to find a first home, and London councils spend around £5 million per day on temporary accommodation – an unsus-

Joanne McCartney has represented Enfield at City Hall for more than two decades



tainable cost, both financially and socially.

This is not just a statistic – it is reflected in the casework I see daily. Children living in damp conditions, families being relocated far from support networks. Simply put, we have not built enough homes for too long, and this government is finally putting funding behind measures to address this. With the mayor and Enfield Council ready to help deliver new homes, there is a real opportunity to act.

***“London needs far more homes than can be accommodated on existing brownfield sites”***

But this must be done properly. As the mayor has restated, minimal green space should be taken, and brownfield sites prioritised for development. Infrastructure – schools, health services, shops, and community facilities – must be planned from day one.

Transport is crucial: the Great Northern line needs greater capacity. I have been campaigning for Transport for London to take over the line and recently met and wrote to Secretary of

State for Transport Heidi Alexander to lobby for this. Currently, just two off-peak trains per hour serve the line; but at least six are needed. Bus services also need to be improved.

My role is to ensure that any development meets local needs and I will continue to raise questions about social and affordable housing, family-sized homes, transport, schools, health services, and access to green space.

So, as we begin 2026, there is plenty more work to do and as ever I am happy to hear from residents about their plans and ideas for the area. I wish everyone a prosperous new year.

**Joanne McCartney (Labour) is the London Assembly member representing Enfield and Haringey. She also serves as Khan's statutory deputy mayor at City Hall. Get in touch:**

Call 020 7983 5524

Email joanne.mccartney@london.gov.uk



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# 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](mailto:EnfieldDispatch@socialspider.com) before the next deadline on **Monday 19th January**.

## Shameful behaviour

### Dear Enfield Dispatch

**L**abour councillor Mustafa Cetinkaya's application for a dropped kerb outside his property was approved in September 2024 by the planning committee chaired by Sinan Boztas – before being overturned in June 2025 on grounds of public safety and non-compliance with policy. Cllr Boztas was later removed from his position as chair.

Meanwhile, [former mayor] Mohammed Islam was suspended by the Labour Party and sanctioned last August for writing letters, while mayor, in support of visa applications for family members. Mayors must not use their position to lobby immigration authorities for private individuals, as this would impair public trust in their ability to act impartially.

In November, Cllr Islam finally apologised, recognising that his "actions did not meet the standards expected of an elected member".

No, indeed they didn't, nor did the lateness of his apology.

Finally, just when we thought it was safe to go back into the water, another dark shape emerges from the waves. Mahym Bedekova, the chair of Enfield Council's planning committee – let that rest for a moment – is facing calls to resign after failing to obtain prior planning permission for her house of multiple occupation (HMO) [as reported on Page 10].

She recently submitted a planning application for her property in Edmonton, but acknowledges the application is "retrospective", meaning the HMO has been operating without permission. Her explanations are a trawl of inconsistencies.

Sadly, certain people (and these three are not alone) demonstrate a deplorable lack of integrity, altruism and decency. Shame on them.

**Ingrid Cranfield**  
Former Enfield Labour councillor

## More boats

### Dear Enfield Dispatch

**E**nfield is in a housing crisis. Most of us are priced out of the property ladder while social housing is scarce.

The Meridian Water project is stalling while Enfield Council is in ever increasing debt.

The good news is that the River Lee Navigation – the navigable branch of the River Lea – runs the entire length of the borough. This beautiful river is already home to an itinerant boating community, as well as multiple, large thriving boatyards and long swathes of residential mooring spaces. None are in Enfield, however.

I have written to councillors in Upper Edmonton ward, without reply, arguing for the council to convert part of the Lee into residential mooring. Waltham Forest, Hackney and Haringey all have large numbers of mooring spaces, while Enfield has a couple of tiny commercial boatyards at Enfield Lock and Pickett's Lock.

Every boatyard on the Lee that offers residential mooring is full to capacity with long waiting lists, so the demand is clear. Enfield could score an easy win by creating cheap, desirable living on the river.

**Toby Osmond**  
Enfield Community Independents

## New bus lane

### Dear Enfield Dispatch

**I**wrote to Enfield Council to ask why the installation of a 24-hour bus lane in Church Street, Enfield Town – as part of the second phase of the 'Enfield Town Liveable Neighbourhood' project – was necessary. I was concerned by the fact that the high street has low levels of traffic outside the rush hour.

The answer I received is that "24-hour operation removes uncertainty for drivers, which supports compliance and reduces the need for additional signage". This suggests the council don't think drivers are capable of reading the times on signage.

I also asked whether the money would be better used to support local businesses, but was brushed aside with a statement that, while they acknowledge some people may feel this way, the allocated funds can only be used for improvements to roads and public realm.

**Neil Littman**  
Winchmore Hill

## Centre for tackling substance misuse

Local NHS and council bosses have celebrated the relocation of a substance misuse service to a newly-refurbished building in Enfield Town.

Enable Enfield, the borough's drug and alcohol addiction treatment provider, officially moved into its new home at The Old Court House building in Windmill Hill last month.

The long-closed former magistrates court site has been repurposed into a "modern, welcoming space" where residents can access specialist support to improve their health and wellbeing.

Enable is run by mental health specialists at North London NHS Foundation Trust, in partnership with Enfield Council, and provides specialist treatment and guidance by appointment to anyone aged over 18 living in Enfield who is worried about their alcohol or drug use.

The launch event, held alongside charitable organisation Waythrough, showcased how the once under-used building has been "sensitively redesigned to serve a new, positive purpose".

Enable was previously based

at Claverings Industrial Estate in Edmonton, but this site has been sold to property developers Danescroft and Fiera Real Estate, with a major redevelopment now set to take place there.

The two-storey court building in Enfield Town, which is locally listed, was used as a court house from 1900 until the 1960s, from when it was used as offices. It was vacated completely in 2023 after being used as a probation office. The full refurbishment and fit-out of the building was said to have cost £1.8million.

The new site offers a "bright, comfortable, and purpose-built environment" designed to support recovery and promote long-term wellbeing.

A ribbon-cutting event was led by Alev Cazimoglu, the council's cabinet member for health and social care. She was joined by chief executive Perry Scott, director of public health Dudu Sher-Arami and Andrew Wright, chief of staff at North London NHS Foundation Trust.

Cllr Cazimoglu said: "We are committed to improving the lives of our residents. The bright and spacious setting is welcoming to



The launch of the new Enable Enfield building

those who are in need of help and support with addiction.

"The health and wellbeing of Enfield's residents is a council priority, so I am delighted this essential service now has a fit-for-purpose building which is within easy reach of public transport."

The council and NHS work "closely together" to reduce the personal and social impact that substance misuse, addiction and associated behaviours can have on individuals, families and the

wider community.

Andrew praised the collaboration between the NHS trust, the council and Waythrough in transforming the building. He said: "We believe this new location will transform how the service is perceived and help tackle the stigma around substance misuse.

"Enable Enfield has built an excellent reputation for achieving some of the best outcomes in London, and we can all be proud of its achievements."

## Council to introduce lane rental scheme for roadworks

Enfield Council has been given the go-ahead to implement London's first lane rental scheme for utility companies – designed to cut traffic and keep the borough's roads moving.

Following approval from the Department for Transport (DfT) and Transport for London (TfL), the council can now begin implementing the scheme, which will see firms charged for carrying out roadworks on the busiest sections of the borough's road network at peak times.

The scheme is designed to encourage companies to schedule their work at less disruptive times and therefore reducing congestion.

The council submitted its application to DfT at the start of last year and, although other councils including Barnet are also considering similar schemes, Enfield Civic Centre says it is the first in London to have won approval.

The scheme will apply to key roads in Enfield that are most affected by congestion and are seen as essential to keeping the borough moving. Revenue collected from lane rental charges will be reinvested into initiatives that improve the local road network, including fixing potholes.

Similar schemes elsewhere have already delivered measurable reductions in road disruption and improved co-ordination.

Rick Jewell, cabinet member for transport and waste, said: "We are proud that Enfield is leading the way in London with this new approach to managing roadworks. The Lane Rental Scheme will help us keep traffic moving, reduce disruption for residents and businesses, and ensure that those carrying out works on our roads plan more efficiently and responsibly."

Implementation of the scheme in Enfield will begin soon, with further details due to be confirmed.

For more information:  
Visit [enfield.gov.uk/news-and-events/2025/02/lane-rental-scheme-proposal-to-reduce-traffic](http://enfield.gov.uk/news-and-events/2025/02/lane-rental-scheme-proposal-to-reduce-traffic)

## Future 'vision' for Southgate

A new masterplan setting out how Southgate town centre could be transformed over the coming years has drawn a mixed reaction locally.

Enfield Council recently published its 'Southgate Masterplan Vision' document – drawn up following a public consultation. It includes a series of significant proposed changes to the high street along Chase Side and other main shopping areas such as Ashfield Parade and Crown Lane.

Improvements have already been made in recent years, including the installation of a pocket park near Southgate Station, an art trail, and rain gardens along Chase Side. The masterplan would build on this by creating a new "civic space" in Ashfield Parade, using "carriageway reductions and parking restrictions" on one side of the street to create space for a "pedestrian focused area" and tree planting.

At Southgate Circus, a new "station interchange" area would



"create a more welcoming arrival point for residents and visitors" while "celebrating" the Grade 2\*-listed tube station buildings, with raised crossings and "measures to slow traffic" to make it safer for pedestrians.

In Chase Side "reductions to the width of the carriageway and parking restrictions can help support a safer environment for pedestrians as well as support local business", according to the masterplan.

No immediate changes are expected, however, as funding is not yet available. Instead the masterplan will act as a guide for future interventions.

Jane Maggs from Southgate Dis-

trict Civic Voice said the group "welcome the next stage of Southgate's regeneration" and continued: "The concept shown will be an ambitious redesign of the area, incorporating many of the elements we know have been highlighted by this community at the various consultations.

"At this stage, the vision outlined in the document lacks much detail, making it difficult to comment fully. We also realise that some parts of this vision may be less welcome to some of our community. Therefore, we look forward to seeing more details, to really understand the proposed vision."

Jane added: "Southgate District Civic Voice has always been clear, that people will come to Southgate if we give them good reasons.

"We hope that creating a more friendly environment will encourage a greater mix of shops and businesses in the future."

In a joint statement, Southgate's three Conservative councillors Stephanos Ioannou, Chris Joanides and Elisa Morreale said:

"Whilst we welcome the extra investment and attention to Southgate, there are some issues with the proposed plans. We are concerned by plans to reduce the size of carriageways and in particular issuing road closures in parts of Ashfield Parade and Crown Lane.

"The traffic and gridlock in the area is already at bursting point, therefore amendments of this kind may further increase congestion.

"Where we sympathise [with the council] is that Southgate requires more greening measures."

The masterplan does not include any mention of new cycle lanes but does include additional cycle parking spaces and references the "opportunity" to "improve town centre cycling infrastructure".

Campaigner Alex Atherton from Better Streets for Enfield said the group "supports the principles in the council's masterplan" but added: "We would like more detail on what the experience will be for cycling on Chase Side in particular, which is not an enjoyable experience at the moment."



## An exciting start to 2026 at Chickenshed

The Southgate theatre is hosting an evening with acclaimed actor Sir Derek Jacobi, plus a new spring production and a murder mystery event

Chickenshed's Christmas production *RED* continues until 10th January Credit Mark Field-Chickenshed



BY SUSAN JAMSON

**T**here's lots to look forward to at Chickenshed Theatre at the start of 2026 – with a hit show, major event, and a powerful new spring production.

We closed 2025 on a truly extraordinary high, having received amazing four and five-star reviews for our original winter production *RED*. Audiences have been captivated by the company's bold, inclusive approach to storytelling, and the excitement continues long after the final scene.

*RED* perfectly demonstrates Chickenshed's mission to create wonder out of chaos, challenge perceptions and celebrate the extraordinary potential in everyone. If you haven't seen it yet there's still time, as it continues with regular showings until Saturday, 10th January, with both matinee and evening performances available.

Soon afterwards, our spring season begins with a very special event on Saturday, 18th January, when we host *An Evening with Sir Derek Jacobi*. One of Britain's most distinguished actors, Sir Derek's career spans six decades, with iconic roles from *I, Claudius* to *Gladiator*, *The Crown*, and countless Shakespearean performances.

He will be joined in conversation by actor

and director Richard Clifford, his partner since the 1970s, whose career includes theatre, film, opera, and two decades as director at the Folger Shakespeare Library. This intimate fundraising evening celebrates their long-standing support of Chickenshed's life-changing work.

Looking ahead, Chickenshed's spring production, *The Wrong They Knew*, opens on Thursday, 5th March and runs until Saturday, 28th March. This production tells a powerful story of courage, community, and the fight to be heard. Set in London in 1958, against rising racial tension, families

Sir Derek Jacobi Credit Raph\_PH via Wikimedia Commons



dream of creating a community carnival to bring hope and unity. Through the eyes of children and teenagers navigating a divided world, the play explores justice, identity, and resilience. Echoing classics such as *To Kill a Mockingbird* and *Small Island*, it's a moving, defiant celebration of standing together and the extraordinary power of community.

For something completely different, why not join us for our exciting, creative, and completely unique *Who Dunnit Murder Mystery Evening* on Saturday, 28th February. Set in a glitzy 1920s 'speakeasy', guests will take their seats as part of a detective team and help uncover the truth behind a shocking murder that unfolds live around them. With live performances, jazz numbers, clues to solve, and plenty of surprises, it promises to be an evening of theatre, intrigue, and Chickenshed fun.

Through our hugely successful Christmas show, a legendary evening with Sir Derek Jacobi, a spring production packed with heart and courage, and a glamorous murder mystery fundraiser, Chickenshed proves once again why it is one of London's most inspiring, creative, inclusive, and life-changing theatres. We can't wait to welcome you to Chickenshed in the coming weeks.

Find out more and book tickets: Visit [chickenshed.org.uk](http://chickenshed.org.uk)

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# Pub dining at its best

Neil Littman visits The Cock Inn on the Enfield/Barnet borough border to sample its eclectic menu



Linguine with scallops

**H**eadng north from Trent Park into the area that straddles Enfield and Barnet boroughs – and far enough from Cockfosters to make you feel like you're in the countryside – a pub called The Cock Inn stands at the end of Chalk Lane.

Its impressive frontage looks more hotel than pub, and inside the interior is chic and smart. There are several dining and drinking areas, the best of which is the dining area at the back in terms of acoustics and ambience. There is also a large patio garden area with tables.

The present building dates to the 1930s with its distinctive green pantile roof. A pub or coaching inn originally stood on the site in 1798 and it was also briefly a boys' prep school. Later, it became the Cock & Dragon, and is listed as a notable landmark for thirsty hikers using the London Loop path.

Having first visited The Cock Inn about ten years ago, I was interested to see if it had changed. Nowadays the pub is part of the Premium County Pub group, so there is a uniformity between the menus and the presentation of the food.

I rarely Google the names of dishes, but if named ingredients add something and make the food taste more interesting, then I don't have a problem. The menu includes gochujang

(a savoury, sweet and spicy fermented Korean paste), Violife (a vegan cheese brand, in this case feta-style) and yakiniku (a Japanese method of grilling meat).

On my first visit, I ordered Padrón peppers (£5.50), which were served with a sweet miso sauce and topped with pumpkin seeds, but arrived without the togarashi, a common Japanese spice blend that was mentioned on the menu. Despite this, it was still a good dish with some crunch from the seeds.

For my main course, I ordered chicken, leek and Davidstow cheddar pie with chive mashed potato (£19.50). It was served with tenderstem broccoli and a rich gravy. As pies go it was very good and surprisingly filling. All this was accompanied with



Chicken pie

a pint of Sam Smiths – they also have a good wine list.

On a second visit with a friend, we ordered the breads with Netherend Farm butter, accompanied by balsamic tomato tapenade and house pesto dips – but there wasn't enough bread to mop them up!

For mains my friend ordered chicken pie while I ordered the linguine with crab, chorizo and scallops (£22.75), although I requested they leave out the chorizo, which they did.

For afters we ordered two 'mini' desserts with coffees, including rhubarb and strawberry crumble (£7.25), which were generous portion sizes.

The service was good on both visits, however the first time there were only half-a-dozen customers, on a quiet Monday evening. For the second visit on a Thursday evening it was much busier – there must have been nearly a hundred customers. The staff managed to cope well despite this, although some dishes had sold out.

Our bill without drinks and service came to £63, with any service charge at the discretion of customers.

The Cock Inn offers a mid-week special of two courses from £22.95, Monday to Thursday from 5pm. Booking is advisable at weekends, and it also makes a good place for a special occasion.

For more information about The Cock Inn including opening times:  
Visit [thcockinncockfosters.co.uk](http://thcockinncockfosters.co.uk)

Do you have any suggestions for restaurants in Enfield to review or feedback on the places Neil has already reviewed? He would love to hear from Dispatch readers:  
Email [eatingoutinenfield@gmail.com](mailto:eatingoutinenfield@gmail.com)

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# 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](mailto:enfielddispatch@socialspider.com) by **Monday 19th January**.

## THERAPY

### Enfield Grief Cafe

Tues 13th January, 9.30am-11am  
Enfield Town Library, 66 Church Street, Enfield EN2 6AX

The death of someone can affect people in unexpected ways. Grief is a natural reaction but can affect people emotionally and physically. How you respond to bereavement may vary according to your situation, background, beliefs, or a previous experience of loss. North London Hospice's grief cafés, offer a safe space to connect and share.

#### Free entry

Visit [northlondonhospice.org](http://northlondonhospice.org)

## CINEMA

### Talkies presents Lee

Saturday 24th January, 7.30pm  
Waterhouse Hall Theatre, Compton Road N21 3JR

Coinciding with a new Tate Gallery exhibition, Talkies Community Cinema presents Lee, which portrays a pivotal decade in the life of American war correspondent and photographer, Lee Miller (played by Kate Winslet). Miller's singular talent and unbridled tenacity resulted in some of the 20th Century's most indelible images of war, including an iconic photo of Miller posing defiantly in Hitler's private bathtub.

#### Tickets £6.50

Visit [talkies.org.uk/events/lee](http://talkies.org.uk/events/lee)

## DANCE

### Country dancing classes

Tuesday 13th January, from 7.30pm  
The Southgate Club, Crown Lane, 17 Chase Side, Southgate N14 5B

Learn to jive, waltz, quick step and line dance! Hosted by J&M Country Dance Classes, always well attended and popular.

#### Tickets £8 on the door

Visit [jandmcountrydancing@gmail.com](mailto:jandmcountrydancing@gmail.com)

## SOCIAL

### LGBT+ Tuesday Social Group

Tuesdays, 8.30pm  
Various pubs around Enfield

Enfield LGBT Network hosts a weekly social gathering at various pubs and bars around Enfield every Tuesday evening. It is an informal meet-up where lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans people can meet and socialise within the borough over a quiet drink. The members also arrange other activities during the year. Contact organiser Mark Riley for more details.

#### Free to join

Call 07706 453845

Email [info@lgbtenfield.org](mailto:info@lgbtenfield.org)

## JAZZ

### Googlies Jazz Club

Thursdays, 7pm  
Botany Bay Cricket Club, East Lodge Lane EN2 8AS

Googlies Jazz Club features a house quartet plus a different guest artist each week – always one of Britain's leading soloists or vocalists. A two-course meal for £15 is also available – please book in advance.

**Tickets £10 members, £12 non-members**

Call 020 8350 3541

Email [googliesjazz@btinternet.com](mailto:googliesjazz@btinternet.com)

Visit [googliesjazz.co.uk](http://googliesjazz.co.uk)

## SCRABBLE

### Thursdays, 2pm-5pm

Dugdale Arts Centre, 39 London Road, Enfield Town EN2 6DS

Come in, buy a drink and put your spelling skills to the test in a fun game of Scrabble every Thursday!

#### Free entry

Visit [dugdaleartscentre.co.uk](http://dugdaleartscentre.co.uk)

Read more about upcoming events in Enfield on the Dispatch website:

Visit [enfielddispatch.co.uk](http://enfielddispatch.co.uk)

## AROUND THE BOROUGH

### SOUTHGATE

#### Call for crossings at 'dangerous' junction

RESIDENTS ARE CALLING FOR signalised crossings to be installed at a "dangerous" junction for pedestrians.

Stephen Wilson has spent nearly a decade campaigning for crossings at the junction of Chase Side, Avenue Road and Osidge Lane, where he says two people have been knocked over in recent years, including a woman whose leg was broken.

Despite writing regularly to local MPs and Enfield Council, however, Stephen says no progress has been made. He has now launched a petition, which has gained nearly 100 signatures in two weeks.

Stephen, a resident of nearby Exeter Road, told the *Dispatch*: "I have been living here for 22 years and I cross the junction every day and I can see it is dangerous because there is not enough time to get across.

"As one light goes red, the other goes green, so it is a constant battle with traffic. I have seen school-

children and mothers with prams scrambling to get across. I think it is ridiculous."

Traffic signals are managed by Transport for London (TfL), which would need to assess the feasibility of any new crossings. But Stephen warned: "We shouldn't have to wait for someone to be killed."

A council spokesperson said: "We recognise the concerns raised regarding the junction of Chase Side, Avenue Road and Osidge Lane, and we welcome community engagement on issues that affect local streets and neighbourhoods.

"Traffic signal infrastructure across London, including signalled crossings, is owned and managed by TfL. This means any changes or new installations to these would require careful exploration with TfL, including feasibility, design and cost considerations.

"While there are currently no specific plans for a pedestrian

Stephen Wilson at the junction, holding his petition to the council



crossing at this location, we are delivering a wide range of initiatives across the borough focused on improving pedestrian safety."

Sign Stephen's petition:  
[Visit enfield.moderngov.co.uk/mgEPetitionDisplay.aspx?id=304](http://enfield.moderngov.co.uk/mgEPetitionDisplay.aspx?id=304)

### ENFIELD ISLAND VILLAGE

#### New community hub set to launch

BY JAMES CRACKNELL

A NEW COMMUNITY CENTRE IS being launched as a place for residents to "come together, learn and connect".

The 'EIV Hub' will provide a range of community services, as well as acting as a 'click and collect' base for residents to continue accessing library resources.

Enfield Island Village Library was one of seven to be permanently closed by Enfield Council earlier this year, amid drastic cutbacks to the borough's libraries service.

EIV Hub will open next month at Benedict House at The RSA Island Centre, just around the corner from the former library building. It has been set up by a governing board of five local founder trustees to provide a welcoming, accessible and vibrant community space.

The new space has been provided free of charge by Christian Action Housing Association (CAHA), which has long been



'EIV Hub' will soon be opening at The RSA Island Centre

based at Benedict House.

The RSA Trust has supported the project with a £20,000 grant to fund renovations and assist with set up, resulting in a "welcoming" self-contained facility ready to host the community.

CAHA chief executive Aniekan Umoren said: "CAHA aspires to be a meaningful contributor to the wellbeing of our community, and we have been inspired to work with such wonderful, caring volunteers who care so much about

our people."

CAHA's maintenance contractor, KBH Haus, has helped to transform the building in time for EIV Hub's launch, which will take place on Saturday, 14th February.

Enfield Council has also collaborated closely on the project and will be introducing a 'click and collect' service, ensuring residents can continue to access library resources and digital services.

Local resident Sugar Ahmed will support the new charity with volunteer trustees to manage the hub. He said: "I am delighted to work with all our partners, funders and local residents to set up, offer library and other community services locally."

Dr Hani Armstrong, chief executive of The RSA Trust, added: "We are proud to contribute to this wonderful project. The EIV Hub demonstrates our commitment to local residents. The project has been a true collaboration that will create a lasting impact in the community."

### ENFIELD TOWN

#### Palace Gardens consultation

A NEW PARTNERSHIP HAS BEGUN work on fresh redevelopment plans for Palace Gardens Shopping Centre.

Site owners DWS Group, formerly known as Deutsche Asset Management, has teamed up with development management firm RivingtonHark to draw up fresh plans for the ageing shopping arcade. Previous high-rise plans were ditched four years ago following a public backlash.

Although no designs have been published at this stage, the scheme will see most of the existing shopping centre demolished with new shops and homes built in their place – although the multi-storey car park will be kept. Adjoining precinct Palace Exchange, as well as Pearson's, will also remain as they are.

An early public consultation,

seeking people's views on what new features they'd like to see, was held last month. Another will be held this spring, when the first details of the plans are expected to be revealed.

The project team state: "While Palace Gardens continues to serve as the heart of the town, it is now showing signs of age. The current layout and unit sizes no longer meet the needs of many modern retailers, limiting its ability to adapt to changing shopping habits.

"As a result, it no longer fully realises its potential as a focal point for Enfield's residents and visitors."

They add: "This redevelopment represents the next stage of long-term investment in Enfield Town, strengthening its role as a key shopping and leisure destination."

For more information:  
[Visit palacegardensconsultation.co.uk](http://palacegardensconsultation.co.uk)

### EDMONTON GREEN

#### Training pool reopens

EDMONTON LEISURE CENTRE'S full refurbishment has finally been completed with the reopening of a training pool – marking the end of a two-year wait.

While the centre's non-swimming facilities were reopened last April, further work was needed on the main 25-metre swimming pool and the smaller training pool. The former reopened in August and the latter followed at the end of November.

The centre had initially been closed in December 2023 upon the transfer of all Enfield Council leisure centres from previous managers Fusion Lifestyle to new operators Greenwich Leisure Limited (GLL), to allow for an inspection, but after a series of major maintenance issues were discovered it was realised that significant repairs would be needed before reopening.

A multimillion-pound repairs programme had been underway since autumn 2024 when the council struck a £7.5m deal to fix and upgrade the whole facility,

although it meant the civic centre giving up the lease to the building.

As part of the refurbishment, the training pool, splash pool and surrounding areas have been re-tiled throughout and new LED lighting installed. The pool – which has been designed with learners in mind – offers a "warm, shallow environment for building water confidence, helping babies, children and adults to take their first steps in swimming". It is now available for public and private swimming lessons, including parent and baby classes.



Olympic gold medal winner Kieran Bird (centre) helps reopen Edmonton Leisure Centre's training pool

Cockfosters FC have reached the fourth round of the FA Vase Credit @els\_photo\_graphy



## A season to remember at Cockfosters FC

Club committee member Tommy Rose on how the Spartan South Midlands League Premier Division club brings people together

For more than a century Cockfosters Football Club, based in Chalk Lane, has been woven into the fabric of our Enfield community, standing as a testament to what local sport can mean when people come together with passion and pride.

Over the years, the club has reminded us that football isn't only about bright lights and big stadiums – it's also about connection, belonging, and the volunteers who make everything possible.

I've been involved with Cockfosters FC for around five years now, and for the last two I've had the privilege of serving on the committee. That time has given me a front-row seat to see the immense effort it takes to keep a local club running.

What many don't see on match days is the invisible army of volunteers behind the scenes, led by local chairman Vas Chiotis – marking pitches, repairing fences, washing kits, organising fixtures, managing youth teams, serving food and drink, and doing a hundred other little jobs that ensure the gates can open every Saturday. Without them, the club simply wouldn't exist.

And that's why supporting clubs like ours matters. Local football isn't just sport – it's a social hub, a safe space for young people, an inexpensive day out when times are hard and, for many, a second home.

When local residents turn up to games,

buy a programme, have a cup of tea, a glass of wine, or bring their kids along to watch, they're not just enjoying a match – they're helping to secure the future of a community institution that has already survived more than 100 years.

This season has been one of the most exciting in Cockfosters' long history. On the pitch, the first team is pushing hard for promotion, playing with a confidence and togetherness that reflects the spirit of the club as a whole. Even more thrilling is that we're on a record-breaking run in the FA Vase, a national competition for clubs at steps five and six of non-league football, with a final that is played at Wembley Stadium.

On Saturday, 17th January, a fourth round tie at home against Crawley Down Gatwick will be the next chapter in the best cup run the club has ever enjoyed. The buzz around Chalk Lane is electric and there's a genuine belief that this team can keep progressing and maybe, just maybe, make history – and get to Wembley.

Beyond the senior side, Cockfosters also run a thriving youth setup with teams across a large range of ages. For many local children, pulling on a Cockfosters shirt is their first experience of organised sport. The values they learn – teamwork, respect, perseverance – stay with them long after they've moved on.

As we celebrate a remarkable season and look ahead with optimism, one thing remains true: Cockfosters FC belongs to the community. Its success is our success. And with continued local support, there's no limit to what this club can achieve in its next hundred years.

For more information about Cockfosters FC: Visit [pitchero.com/clubs/cockfosters](http://pitchero.com/clubs/cockfosters)

## Halfway to safety

Andrew Warshaw speaks to the boss of Enfield Town FC as the season reaches its midway point

Enfield Town manager Gavin Macpherson doesn't believe in 'second season syndrome'. But at the halfway stage of the club's second campaign in National League South, he admits they probably should have more points on the board.

"In truth we're slightly disappointed to be where we are, but there are well-chronicled reasons for that," Gavin told the Dispatch ahead of the busy festive period when, at time of writing, Town were in the bottom four.

Top of that list of reasons was a crippling injury list which reached ludicrous levels in November when, coupled with suspensions and international call-ups, Town were at one stage without 13 players.

Seven consecutive defeats in all competitions told their own story. "The huge injury list hit us hard and was horrendous to manage, you can't keep bringing players in," said Gavin. "But that wasn't the only issue. Sometimes we've fallen the wrong side of results due to our own mistakes when our performances probably warranted more.

"On the plus side, we've been in most games against teams in and around the top of the table and have proved we can to go toe-to-toe with whoever we play."

It's a good point. Only twice this season (again at the time of writing) have Town been blown away by league opposition – the 4–1 defeats at Chesham and Dover. It's a far cry from last term when they suffered a fair few sobering losses yet still managed to survive.

"Last season we probably couldn't have had this discussion," Gav continued. "We're ahead of the points tally we had last time and we'd hoped to have added another three but for a decision by the referee to call off the Hampton and Richmond game [on 13th December], which

left everybody astonished."

Rarely, if ever, has a postponement (the fixture has been re-arranged for Tuesday, 6th January) caused such resentment. Both teams and managers were keen to play, only for the match to be called off because a minuscule part of the pitch was contentiously deemed unplayable, resulting in a heavy financial hit for the hosts.

It's no coincidence that the aforementioned run of defeats was followed by three games unbeaten as players returned from injury, the highlight undoubtedly being the 5–1 thrashing of Farnborough.

"We recognise what we are, a club battling against the elements on-and-off the field more than ever," said Gavin. "We had some massive players missing but we have a points tally in our minds and now we would expect to push on."

Meanwhile, Sky Sports presenter Michael Bridge, born and educated in Enfield, has just been appointed the first patron of the club's charity arm. Michael recently spent a morning integrating with the various Saturday football school teams – youth, disability, walking football – and presenting them with end-of-term medals. His role will be to support and help raise funds for the club's registered charity work in the community.

"When the club approached me, it took me less than a second to say yes," said Michael. "It's an incredible honour to be patron of the club's charity projects. I'm very privileged to be able to travel to many places but Enfield is my home and where my heart is. This means an awful lot.

"We are blessed to have an amazing pyramid system and non-league football is the heart of the game so to be part of this community is a no-brainer. I'll do what ever I can to give something back to this wonderful cause and this wonderful club."

"I used to follow the old Enfield and to come back as Enfield Town has, after being ripped apart, and now to be playing in National League South is pretty unbelievable. I really hope they stay up in what is an incredible tough league with so many full-time teams."



Michael Bridge has joined as a patron of the club's charity arm

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# How AI is polluting the internet

*Dispatch editor James Cracknell on the disturbing new trend in artificial intelligence that threatens to undermine real local journalism*

BY JAMES CRACKNELL

**T**he rise of artificial intelligence (AI) is the latest big threat to the local media landscape – as if there weren't enough already.

AI companies develop their large language models using existing, human-created content on the internet, essentially profiting from the hard work of others without seeking their permission or sharing any of the revenues they make.

But this is only part of the problem.

Late last year a local 'news' website emerged in our area that at first appears to be a genuine publisher. But it only takes a quick read of any of their stories to notice something strange about them.

North London News features stories about Enfield and Barnet and other boroughs that are put together by AI bots using existing stories published on other websites, including our own. This is bad enough – but what's worse is that they are also adding fake quotes, fake people (including fake councillors), fake organisations and fake facts into these stories as well. Whatever AI system



Credit Christin Hume via Unsplash

they are using, it is massively flawed.

After a particularly egregious example lifted parts of a story from *Barnet Post* – one of the sister papers owned by our publisher Social Spider CIC – *Press Gazette* ran a story on North London News.

Managing director David Floyd told them: "Our instinctive worry as local news publishers is that AI driven sites will just regurgitate our original material in pursuit of

profit and help to make genuine local journalism even more difficult to sustain than it is already.

"But it now seems that there are sites that are combining that with something even worse: publishing AI-generated material that is literally made up.

"The worry is that, in these examples, AI-generated fiction is mixed with key points that are broadly correct, so a member

of the public coming across this could easily not realise it's mostly rubbish."

*Press Gazette* attempted to contact North London News but both of their listed email addresses bounced back, while the claimed publisher "Times Intelligence Media Group" offered "no traces" of its existence.

AI is allowing bad actors to use technology for nefarious motives, attempting to hijack internet algorithms to generate income while polluting the public information space. These fake news websites rack up millions of views – and because of their slick presentation it's likely that many people won't realise what they're reading is total bullshit.

I wish there was an easy solution to all of this, or something we could ask you as a reader to do to help us combat it. But it feels like we're fighting a losing battle against disinformation.

At least we can reassure you that every story you read in *Enfield Dispatch* is written by real, local people, who care about where they live, and have no other motive than informing readers of what is happening in our borough. If you can, support us!

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