



Battle lines drawn for change in 2026

Newham will be a major political battleground in 2026 as residents vote for a new Mayor and Councillors. After a turbulent year in which the Borough has been hit hard by cuts, increasing homelessness and growing poverty the May elections could prove a turning point.

Here the three major parties set out their visions for the future. Newham Voices will provide unrivalled local coverage of all the parties in the coming months to make sure our readers are fully informed of the crucial choices ahead of them.

Mehmood Mirza for Newham independents writes: "As we look ahead to 2026, Newham faces a year that will be defined less by headlines and more by the everyday realities residents are living with. The most important changes we need to see are practical ones. A renewed focus on truly affordable housing, the cost of living and rebuilding trust between the Council and the communities it serves.

Housing remains the single biggest issue. Too many families are stuck in temporary accommodation for far too long and too many residents feel locked out of secure, genuinely affordable homes. In the coming year, Newham must shift from short-term fixes to long-term solutions that prioritise stability, transparency and value for money.

Alongside this is the continuing pressure of the cost of living crisis. Even as inflation eases, household budgets remain stretched. Supporting local businesses, protecting essential services, and ensuring residents can access advice and support will be critical.

Finally, 2026 should be a year of democratic renewal in Newham. Residents want to

be listened to, not managed; involved, not informed after decisions are made. Whether it's neighbourhood planning, transport changes or community safety, meaningful engagement must become the norm.

If we get these priorities right, Newham can move forward with confidence, fairness and a stronger sense of shared purpose."

Councillor Nate Higgins, Leader of the Green Opposition on Newham Council, said: "As Newham enters 2026, we are facing the worst homelessness crisis in the country and deep cuts to vital local services from libraries and community centres to social care, while soaring council tax means we are paying more for less. Major developments, like Labour's expansion of London City Airport and the Silvertown Tunnel, will continue to shape the Borough and unfair parking policies hit those least able to pay. We share the anger at the Council's failure to stand up for human rights, including Labour's refusal to meaningfully oppose the genocide taking place in Palestine."

Green Opposition councillors have punched well above our weight this council term. We've secured stronger social housing requirements, made streets safer, reduced planned cuts to council tax support, and ensured residents have a bigger voice in Council decisions. We have called out their policy of shipping homeless residents well outside of the Borough and reducing eligibility for support.

In the year ahead, we will challenge Labour's attempts to prevent real divestment from genocide, continue to fight for fairer parking, defend libraries and other essential services from savage cuts, and push for a Borough that works for everyone rather than just the powerful. Next year brings hope – we have a once in a generation opportunity next year to genuinely unseat a

Labour Council that has taken this Borough for granted. Greens will stand clearly on residents' side, campaigning to ensure Newham is safer, fairer, and greener for all."

Forhad Hussein, Labour candidate to be next Mayor of Newham said:

"I welcome each new year with hope, but too many residents still struggle to make ends meet every day. That makes me angry, and it strengthens my resolve to deliver the changes Newham needs.

If I'm elected Mayor, my leadership will be honest and open, totally focussed on getting things done. We've spent months listening to local people, what they've told us is reasonable: get the basics right.

A Council I lead will start there. We'll introduce dedicated neighbourhood teams in every area to tackle street crime, anti-social behaviour, litter, noise and dumping.

We'll invest an extra £10 million to clean our streets and open spaces and keep them clean, crack down on fly-tipping, and introduce free bulky waste collections.

We'll fix parking so it's simple and fair, with free first permits and one hour of free parking for permit holders across Newham. We'll also hold area ballots on major local changes.

The Council I run will work openly with residents and local businesses; by working together we can deliver lasting change.

I'm ready to give Newham fresh impetus and improve daily life for the people who live here.



Hello Sunshine! School shares solar power

See page 5



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Council Notebook

By Peter Landman

Jobs and £750 million promised as historic markets move to Newham

Peter Landman reports from the December Council meeting

Mayor Rokhsana Fiaz told Newham Council's meeting on 8 December that London's historic Smithfield and Billingsgate markets could be coming to Newham with plans to develop a site at the end of the runway of the City Airport in the Royal Docks.

Under the plan, which will bring around an extra £750 million into the local economy and create about 2,200 new jobs, the markets will occupy a new site at Albert Island, near the airport on land earmarked for wider regeneration.

Most traders from both markets have agreed to move together to a new site, although the current markets will stay open until at least 2028, according to the City of London Corporation, the current owner, which says time is needed to get planning permission and an Act of Parliament that will allow the existing markets to close.

The Council also dealt with two major issues on the political agenda – migration policy and climate change.

Councillor Rita Chadha, Labour, Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care, submitted a motion: Newham a Borough of Sanctuary – advocating for a responsible immigration policy.

The proposal not only covered immigration policies but focused on the consideration of the issue in dealings with local communities and she warned that badly thought out immigration policy could damage community relations.

Her key recommendation is to urge Newham Council, in line with its status as an approved Borough of Sanctuary, to maintain the expectations for creating a culture of welcome, inclusion and empowerment for migrants coming to Newham.

She called for letters to be sent to Newham's three MPs urging them to support the creation of safe legal routes for migrants. She also called on the government to support legal routes and to back immigration policy that upholds the human rights of migrants.

The motion, which was carried unanimously, also sought to link community cohesion with migrant policy and for co-operation with Newham's voluntary sector to ensure that migrants can access advice and support on pathways to engage with the community. For more information contact Rita.Chadha @newham.gov.uk

On climate issues, Councillor John Whitworth, Labour, Cabinet Member for the Environment, Air Quality and Climate Emergency, introduced a two-year impact plan building on the 2023



Albert Island image via City of London Corporation/Facebook

Just Transition Action Plan, which had set out a statement of principles, six futures and key objectives.

The "six futures" included an energy system not dependent on fossil fuels, getting about without pollution from a car, and reuse of waste for a circular economy. The key objective was to reduce carbon emissions.

The report noted the progress over the past two years with community energy schemes, pocket forests, and

the warm council home programme which has seen 359 homes become fully energy efficient. The Council has received £10 million. But more funding is needed.

Councillor Danny Keeling, Green Party, said the 359 were only a small portion of Council homes; and that the report neglected to refer to flood defences for properties close to areas of flood-risk in the Borough. More information from john.whitworth@newham.gov.uk

Finally, questions from councillors included one from Femi Falola, Labour, asking about establishing a police station in High Street North, East Ham. Responding, Councillor Amar Virdee, Deputy Mayor, said the Council was already working in partnership with the police. Councillor James Beckles, Labour Custom House, asked about anti-social behaviour, fly-tipping and unclean space near housing association properties.

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Councillor condemns attacks on Muslim women

NICK CLARK, Local Democracy Reporting Service

Newham councillor Sabia Kamali (pictured) has spoken out against Islamophobic attacks on women in the Borough. She told the Council meeting on 8 December of recent incidents, including a woman who was punched in the ribs in Plaistow – and that a rock was even thrown at her eight-year-old daughter.

Cllr Kamali said that as someone who wears the hijab she had “walked the streets in fear”. She said she and her daughter were the victims of an unprovoked assault outside her home shortly after the Hamas attacks against Israel on 7 October 2023.



“After 7 October my daughter – who was eight – became a victim of hate crime, she said, “I had just picked her up from school. I parked outside our home. A man threw a stone, smashing the back window – just missing her. She sat surrounded by broken glass.”

Cllr Kamali says she has been told of other instances of Islamophobic attacks on women. “These incidents rarely make national headlines, yet their impact spreads silently among all Muslim women in this Borough.”

The Labour councillor made her speech to mark the United Nations’ “16 days of activism against gender-based violence” campaign and said she wanted “to ensure women like myself are finally seen, heard and protected”.

Huge 7,000 home plan agreed for Silvertown

Plans for a huge 7,000-home development in Silvertown have been approved by councillors in Newham. The development of the south-east corner of Royal Victoria Dock will also include a primary school, leisure facilities, shops and restaurants.

The proposal, which councillors agreed in December, will create four “neighbourhoods”, including “local centre” adjoining Mill Road with shops, restaurants, and offices and at its heart, at Pontoon Dock, there will be waterside bars and restaurants.

COMMUNITY NEWS ROUNDUP

Royal Docks Shipyard plan still a ‘priority’

Building a shipyard at the Royal Docks in Newham “remains a priority” despite new plans to move Smithfield meat market and Billingsgate fish market there (See Page Two), says the Greater London Authority.

Newham Council has already granted planning permission for a major regeneration project and although the existing plans include building “the first shipyard on the Thames for over a century” they didn’t at that time include any wholesale food markets. A GLA spokesperson told the Local Democracy Reporting Service (LDRS) the new shipyard “remains a priority” and that “discussions are ongoing about how the boathouse can be built alongside the markets”.

Hammers thank NHS

West Ham United supported the secret hampers campaign aimed at celebrating NHS

staff through their ‘Thank You NHS’ – 70 hampers to 70 hospitals’. The initiative is personally funded by Club Chair David Sullivan.

The festive West Ham United themed hampers were delivered to staff at The Royal London Hospital in Whitechapel, where former player, Michail Antonio, was treated after his road traffic accident in December 2024.

whufc.com

E6-Sisters award

E6-Sisters Community was awarded the Community Impact/CSR award at the Newham Chamber Business Awards 2025, at a ceremony on 5 December at The Old Town Hall, Stratford.

Funmi Adeojo, CEO and Founder, said: “Our mission is simple: take what you need, not what you’re given, because dignity, choice, and reducing waste truly matter. E6-Sisters was born on my kitchen table, and today we stand here as



Renewal Programme @SimonKing/Renewal Programme

winners because our community chose to walk with us. This recognition belongs to our volunteers, our young helpers, our hosts, and every family we support.”

e6sisters.co.uk

Renewal Boost

Renewal Programme has successfully secured funding from the National Lottery to expand their community hub over the next four years.

The funding will be used to reimagine and resource their RenewAll Hub and engage the local community to create opportunities where people can improve their health, build relationships and feel a sense of belonging.

Renewal Programme community sign up day 21 January, 12-2pm, Renewal Programme, 395 High Street North, E12 6PG renewalprogramme.org.uk

Spaces are limited to 15 people per workshop and will be allocated on a first-come, first-served basis. To take part, sign up by Friday 9th January at: <https://tinyurl.com/ykj4ch3n>

For further information, please contact: **Edward Barrett** Barrett@UCLPartners.com

Tribute to Ivaline

Ivaline White (pictured below) settled in Forest Gate in 1973. For many years Ivaline would use the vegetables that she grew on her allotment in Plaistow, to make soup for the night shelter project at Emmanuel Parish Church in Forest Gate. She would also bring cuttings of her plants for the bazaar.

Ivaline passed away aged 99. Her funeral service, conducted by Canon Ann Easter at Emmanuel Parish Church, was attended by more than 150 people.

Ivaline leaves five children, 19 grandchildren, 39 great grandchildren, and great-great grandchildren.



West Ham United Thank You NHS

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BETTER

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Canning Town school first to share solar power with local community

A community energy project that generates green energy from a primary school and shares it with nearby homes has begun delivering its first power.

The pilot project by E.ON Next saw more than 220 solar panels installed at St Luke's CEVA primary school in Canning Town. The school effectively benefits from discounted electricity, with a portion of the power also shared to neighbours at a reduced price.

The project was formally launched with a blessing by Reverend Amy Stott, the vicar of St Luke's.

The solar panels, alongside E.ON's technical expertise, allow us to use our large roof to help reduce electricity bills for the community we serve.

Matt Hipperson, Headteacher at St Luke's said: "This partners perfectly with the original trust deed for the school of over 150 years which relates to serving the community. The solar panels, alongside E.ON's technical expertise, allow us to use our large roof to help reduce electricity bills for the community we serve."

Amy Stott added: "We are so grateful to E.ON for working with us to



see our wonderful school and church become even more at the heart of serving Canning Town."

Speaking at the launch event, Ramona

Vlasiu, Chief Operating Officer at E.ON Next, said: "There are more than 20,000 primary schools across the country, not to mention the potential of other

schools, universities, public buildings and car parks, so the opportunity to turn these into clean energy hubs that support their communities is enormous."

Godwin Junior School gets an Olympics lesson

ParalympicsGB swimmer, William Ellard, pictured below, spent an afternoon with Godwin Junior School talking about setting goals and achieving dreams.

The visit was organised by NatWest Thrive, a programme designed to help young people build self-belief, confi-

dence and help reshape the way they think and learn about money.

Will won three medals at the Paris 2024 Paralympic Games including gold in the 200m freestyle S14 where he set a new world record.

NatWest is the banking partner of Team GB and ParalympicsGB.



William Ellard with students from Godwin Junior School

Maths department is number one

Plashet School's maths department has been declared winner of the 2025 Bernice McCabe Award, organised by the education charity PTI.

The maths department at Plashet was chosen due to its significant strides in improving the teaching and learning of maths as meaningful, engaging and accessible. This improvement has been driven by the department's vision that every student regardless of background or ability should experience mathematics as meaningful, enriching, and accessible.

A major focus has been on staff development.

Sadia Ali, maths teacher at Plashet School thanked PTI for its professional development support. She said: "Every time I go to one of The PTI events, I come back with more passion to be a teacher."

The £5,000 prize and trophy are awarded annually to an exceptional



Sadia Ali and Simon La from Plashet School accept the 2025 Bernice McCabe Award

department which demonstrates the ethos and values of The PTI through their work within and beyond the curriculum.

We love reporting on local news in Newham but the business of local news publishing is really hard

Between 2007 and 2022, the number of local journalists employed by major news publishers in the UK dropped by two thirds from 8,847 to 2,830. And 293 local newspapers have closed since 2005.

We make local news freely available to people in Newham but local newspapers are not free to produce. Last year, published over 400 news stories in Newham Voices. We distributed 150,000 free copies of the paper.

We ran important news stories such as our in depth reporting on

Newham's housing crisis and its impact on local communities.

We amplified the positive side of life in Newham with our detailed coverage of arts, cultural and sporting activities.

Our supporters and our advertisers make it possible to continue writing, editing, printing and distributing Newham Voices. It is never less than a struggle.

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Campaign to keep children's hospice open

Families of children previously supported by Richard House Children's Hospice, which closed just before Christmas, say promises of continuing care are not being delivered.

On 7 December the hospice trustees agreed to stop all hospice services. Now families report an abrupt loss of respite, crisis, palliative and end-of-life care. Parents say they are unclear about what to do in the event of an emergency involving a medically fragile child.

Although there have been public pledges of continuing support, the families claim these have not led to accessible or appropriate care.

The Save Richard House campaign, an independent, parent-led effort which is exploring every viable option to keep the hospice open, says other providers and sector bodies are in touch with the independent, parent-led group.

The Chief Executive of Together for Short Lives, Nick Carroll, has also offered to help broker urgent conversations between relevant bodies in the



interests of children and families. Families say they are now awaiting meaningful engagement from the North East London Integrated Care Board.

Parents say that on 15 December the campaign formally put forward a ready-to-go interim board, comprised of individuals willing and able to step in immediately to stabilise the charity. This proposal, they say, demonstrated how, under renewed governance, there are credible, solution-led financial arrangements capable of guiding Richard House

Hospice and Trust out of crisis and restoring services.

The interim board was prepared to act that day in order to protect safeguarding and preserve care for families over Christmas. As Newham Voices went to press, they said no response has been received from either the Trustees or the Integrated Care Board.

A spokesperson for the Save Richard House said: "What is being said publicly does not match what families are living through. We are not being supported or reassured in practice.

Services stopped suddenly, without transition planning, and parents are being left to manage safeguarding risks alone. That is not safe."

Richard House has supported families in Newham and across East London for over 25 years and has been a lifeline for children with life-limiting and complex conditions.

Three Newham MPs – Sir Stephen Timms, James Asser and Uma Kamaran – have called on all sides involved to work together urgently to find a solution and the campaign organised a protest outside Richard House on 20 December calling for transparency, open dialogue and urgent action to prevent further harm.

Calverton School closure confirmed

Newham Council has formally announced that because of falling pupil numbers and a £1.1million budget deficit it can't afford to keep Calverton Primary School in Custom House open. The school will close next year.

Sarah Ruiz, responsible for education, told councillors at the Cabinet meeting on 16 December she was "really sorry that it has come to this" as the closure was approved writes the Local Democracy

Reporting Service. She said the school – which her daughter once attended – was "really close to my heart".

But Cabinet members were told that some schools are having to reorganise classes and cut staff to cope with falling pupil numbers. But Calverton is in an even worse position than others because its pupil numbers have fallen faster than others. The closure takes place after consultations with parents and staff.

Advertisements

Green Street Glow Garden

Bringing Newham to life with light!

This February join Culture Within Newham for Green Street Glow Garden; **a free, magical five-day event** filled with illuminated glowing creatures and interactive installations for all ages.

SCAN TO LEARN MORE

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OUT AND ABOUT IN NEWHAM

Our Chief reporter Neandra Etienne on events that reflect culture, history and heritage in Newham

EXHIBITION

V&A East Museum, designed by architects O'Donnell + Tuomey, will open with its first exhibition, *The Music is Black: A British Story*.

V&A East Museum will bring together art, design, fashion, music, and performance, in a five-storey space right next to their East Bank partners London College of Fashion, UAL, BBC, Sadler's Wells East and UCL East. V&A East Museum is sister site to the V&A East Storehouse, which opened in May 2025.

V&A East Museum is free to all and opens on 18 April 2026.

Tickets for *The Music is Black: A British Story*, will be available to purchase in early 2026.

vam.ac.uk

Words Matter is a multi-disciplinary exhibition showcasing the work of twelve artists through spoken word, performance or writing, confronting the legacy of eugenics at UCL.

Free events in January take place at UCL East Marshgate, Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park, Stratford, with tickets available from Eventbrite.

Events include Black Super-heroes workshop: reclaiming portrait photography on 24 January, from 2pm - 5pm and PostHuman: Live performance and Q&A with CRIPtic Arts on 29 January, from 5.30-9pm.

ucl.ac.uk/ucl-east/public-art-and-art-campus/words-matter

Newham Voices was invited to the performance of the energetic and entertaining panto *Mama Goose*.

Composer, lyricist, musical director and performer Robert Hyman, from Newham, wrote the music for Stratford East's panto *Mama Goose* and co-wrote the lyrics alongside Vikki Stone.

Until 3 January 2026
stratfordeast.com



Robert Hyman ©Neandra Etienne

PRIDE

Apply for a **LGBT+ History Month 2026** Shocking Pink Pound market stall by 9am, 5 January.

The Shocking Pink Pound Market will take place in February at Woodgrange Market Forest Gate newhamlgbthistory.org



COSTUME

Founder of Sakafet London Jennifer Laurent-Smart, who was born to parents of Dominican heritage and grew up in Newham, was one of the costume makers for ZooNation's *Ebony Scrooge* by Danielle 'Rhimes' Lecointe, who also has Dominican heritage.

26 November - Sunday 4 January 2026

ZooNation: The Kate Prince Company, *Ebony Scrooge*, Sadler's Wells East, E20 sadlerswells.com



MUSIC

DJ G Smallz, who was born and raised in Newham, live streamed on East Ham High Street.

He told Newham Voices about his relationship with the Borough: "I've kept connected to Newham through Wentys in Forest Gate and Alkaline Roots in Plaistow, and family.

"I stream live daily in different locations across the globe however I love to come back to Newham whenever I can."

He has tracks under the name G Smallz and 2ton available on streaming platforms. [@djgsmallz](http://djgsmallz)

Breakin Convention ©Belinda-Lawley



UD Music are inviting producers, songwriters, musicians and vocalists, aged 18-25, to take part in their Writing Camp on 28 January at Talent House, 3 Sugar House Lane, Stratford E15

The Writing Camp will be supported by their in-house engineer Likkle Jay

The application deadline is 14 January.

udmusic.org

LIBRARIES

Digital Spaces VR Tour, supported by the BFI with funding from the National Lottery, takes place at Newham libraries on the following dates:

- Custom House: 6 January at 11am
- Canning Town: 6 January at 3pm
- East Ham: 7 January at 1pm and 9 January 1pm
- Plaistow: 8 January 1pm
- North Woolwich: 8 January at 4pm

libraries.newham.gov.uk

DANCE

Sadler's Wells' free in-person dance classes and online workshops starts from 12 January. Classes include flamenco with Lucia Caruso; on Wednesdays, Indian contemporary and Bollywood with Showmi Das;

and on Fridays, lindy hop with Korantema Anyimadu.

Academy Breakin' Convention open day for prospective students for ages 16-19 is on 16 January.

sadlerswells.com

MARKET

A Young Makers Market will take place on 31 January at the Market Place East Ham.

themarketplaceeastham.co.uk

All events are subject to change. Please email your event details and news to neandra.etienne@newhamvoices.co.uk

Free creative workshop

The Newham Poetry Prize is launching a new phase of its programme with a full day of creative workshops on Saturday 24 January, taking place at the University of East London's Docklands Campus.

The workshops will be facilitated by Prize founder Be Manzini and local music makers Eklipse and Shadé Joseph.

The day is designed to support residents preparing submissions for Barz And Stanzas Soundscaped (BASS), a new

archive that will set selected poems and lyrics to music.

To take part entrants must work, study or live in Newham and be 18 or over. BASS aims to celebrate the Borough's diverse voices, preserve its stories, and platform local creative talent. Entries close on 31 January.

Culture Within Newham, who are commissioning, welcomed the next steps for Newham Poetry Prize, after the project started this spring with a writing competition.

Stella Toonen, Director, said: "The last Prize project saw local people who were new and old to poetry taking part together. Some people performed their work for the first time. In future, Newham Poetry Prize will be creating more opportunities for local people."

To participate in the workshops and/or submit to BASS, visit @newhampoetryprize on Instagram or email newhampoetryprize@gmail.com for further information. Participation is free.

A YEAR IN REVIEW

2025: We're broke, but still

Turmoil and resignations at the town hall, the sad passing of treasured Newhamites, but still some reasons to be cheerful. 2025 had it all, as Jean Gray reports

January

There was not much to warm those cold January nights as *Newham Voices* reported that Applecart Arts had lost its funding and supporters rallied to argue their case, unsuccessfully, at the Council meeting. It was bad news too for Newham's only remaining dedicated bereavement counselling service, based in Grange Road, Plaistow. The charity drop in centre also had its plea for funding turned down, even though the closure of MIND's bereavement centre had massively increased its workload. Perhaps the Council had other priorities, not least investing £20 million in an action plan to improve fire safety after a lacerating report on its housing performance exposed by the social housing regulator.

February

Newham began to feel the effects of having opposition councillors after some years as a 'one party state'. The majority Labour group won the vote on a crisis budget that would stave off bankruptcy but at the cost of a 10 per cent rise in council tax, a 2.7 per cent rent increase, and the sale of Debden House, a much-loved facility offering holidays in the Essex countryside for Newham children. There was strident opposition as the leader of the Independent Group, Mehmood Mirza, launched a petition to stop the 10 per cent council tax hike. And Councillor Nate Higgins, Leader of the Green Group, told *Newham Voices*: "It takes a special kind of recklessness for Labour to increase council tax by a whopping 10 percent while gutting council tax discounts for our most vulnerable residents."

But the crisis failed to put a dampener on the Borough's celebrations for LGBT+ History Month with events taking place all over Newham.

March

As the clocks went forward, we reported on more reasons to be cheerful. The Council managed to squeeze some financial support from the government to avoid bankruptcy. International Women's Day and World Book Day were celebrated with gusto,



and Councillor Sabia Kamali, chief executive of Sisters Forum, met King Charles at Buckingham Palace in recognition of her exceptional humanitarian work supporting women affected by domestic violence. March also saw the start of a debate that would run throughout the year over a campaign calling for a low traffic neighbourhood scheme in the Woodgrange and Capel area of Forest Gate.

And some much needed good news for Hammers fans as West Ham beat Arsenal 1-0 at the Emirates stadium.

April

The controversial Silvertown tunnel opened with a complex list of charges and exclusions, countered by news that Newham Council had taken part in setting up a project enabling local people to invest £50 in the environment through the organisation Green Energy Newham.

May

In one of the saddest issues of the year, our correspondent Mickey Ambrose paid tribute to his friend Lorraine Tabone, a tireless, hands-on campaigner for the rights of homeless people



whose death prompted a massive outpouring of grief across the Borough. Lorraine set up the charity Lola's Homeless after experiencing some hard times herself. She was loved and respected by the hundreds who knew her and who benefited from her wisdom and courage. Newham lost a true champion who is still much missed.

But thoughts also turned to the East End's past when we celebrated the 80th anniversary of the end of World War II in Europe on 8 May.

June

Warmer days were definitely here as we reported on summer in the park, Forest Gayte pride and Hollywood filmmaker Alberto Corredor saying he would rather stay living in Newham than move to Los Angeles.

But there was increasing controversy surrounding the use of cars in the Borough as the Council announced a shake up of parking and charging policies, putting out proposals for consultation which would penalise owners of the most polluting cars.

In the same issue we reported on opposition to a low traffic neighbourhood scheme in the Woodgrange and Capel area of Forest Gate, highlighted in our March issue.

July

With the warmth of high summer came two heartwarming stories for *Newham Voices*. The Prime Minister Sir Keir Starmer may have since taken back his comments on 'Islands of Strangers' when talking about immigration, but not before one local school had the chance to come at this from a different angle. To mark Refugee Week,

Stratford Manor's pupils took the idea a step further with a moving dance performance entitled 'Lift the Ban: See Them, Hear Them, Enable Them' highlighting a ban on asylum seekers working. The children said they wanted coverage in *Newham Voices*, so we were delighted to send along our correspondent Simon Shaw..

In the same issue, we reported an award to Newham Library Service, given by City of Sanctuary UK, a nationally co-ordinated network of organisations that welcome refugees and asylum seekers. The winners of the first Newham Poetry Prize were also announced.

August

No traditional silly season for *Newham Voices*. We reported the sad death of popular Labour Councillor Neil Wilson, Cabinet Member for Health and Adult Social Care, and ward member for Plaistow South.

But the big news was the Labour Party's sudden announcement that Mayor Rokhsana Fiaz would not be standing for re-election in May 2026. Ms Fiaz outlined some of her key achievements: "I have loved the opportunity to make our Borough fairer, more tolerant, greener and healthier, more democratic and more prosperous for all."

But it had been a turbulent year for Ms Fiaz. Faced with an unprecedented crisis in homelessness and social care demands, the Council was grappling with the threat of bankruptcy. It was also scrambling to answer a scathing report by the Regulator of Social Housing for "very serious failings," with thousands of council home repairs still to be carried out. This led to the resignation of the Council Cabinet Member for housing services Shaban Mohammed but there were calls for Mayor Fiaz to go as well.

There was also the astonishing spectacle of the Mayor herself taking the Council to an employment tribunal. She said she had been a victim of race and sex discrimination in 2022. She withdrew the claim in a settlement that was unclear, but the Council, although denying the claims, agreed to pay more than £30,000 towards her legal costs.

September

A campaign was launched to save Newham's award-winning libraries from cuts.

There is also cause for great pride as nine-year-old Darcy Tosun made

ill cheerful



Darcy Tosun

his debut appearance on the West End stage in a play at the National Theatre.

The East End celebrated the life of its very own film star Terence Stamp who died aged 87.

And West Ham fans were out for blood, demanding action from the club's directors to halt the team's demise.

October

Protest and outrage over the Newham exhibition that nobody wants – The Arms Fair, once again held at the Excel Centre. Among the hundreds of protesters were trades unionists, religious and community leaders representing all sides of Newham's diverse population.

How refreshing then to be able to publish in the same issue winning entries in the We Love West Ham Park photo competition, reflections of nature, peace and tranquility, all still available on our website.

More trouble for Labour as they suffered a chastening defeat in the Plaistow South Council by-election when Newham Independent candidate Md Nazrul Islam won with 913 votes – almost double that of the Labour candidate Asheem Singh. Victory meant the Newham Independent group became the official opposition party with four seats.

November

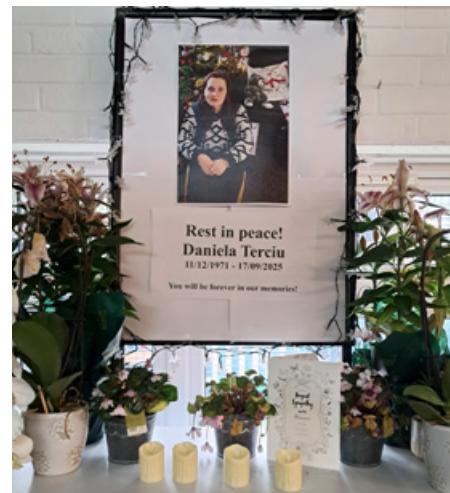
Another sad story: the tragic and somewhat mystifying death of a homeless woman, Daniela Terciu, who was found dead in the canal at Three Mills Lock Stratford on 18 September. Police arrested a man on suspicion of murder, but released him three days later without charge.

The incident has been extremely upsetting for vulnerable people in one of Stratford's poorest areas who are still mourning Daniela, a much-loved member of their community.

"People are very upset," said Samantha White, manager of the Carpenters and Docklands

Community Centre which provides support every day to hundreds of homeless people. "How do we say goodbye when we don't know what really happened?"

But our Editor in Chief, Aidan White, reporting on the story, was unable to find out very much from the police, such as whether there will be an inquest and where it might take place. Is there going to be a funeral so that people can pay their respects to Daniela?



December

We were able to report that as a result of our story about Daniela, local MP Uma Kumaran is asking questions of the police.

There was bad news for the hundreds who attend the popular Carpenters Estate foodbank which was facing eviction by the Council-owned Populo Living. Our correspondent Richard Stubbs reported that the foodbank had been given a reprieve until after their Christmas party in early December. However, it would then be expected to move into four portacabins as part of the estate's massive redevelopment. But, as Richard Stubbs noted, the work delivered at the centre cannot possibly be carried out within the new space.

But there was cause for joy also, thankfully, as the year ended. The December issue was full of stories of achievements by schools and others across the Borough, Plashet School and Newham College to name but two. A good end to the year and we look forward to bringing you all the news that matters to you in 2026. Happy new year to readers and all our many contributors. If you would like to write for us, get in touch at info@newhamvoices.co.uk

Fears for East Ham activist on hunger strike

Five Palestine Action prisoners, including Kamran Ahmed who comes from East Ham, have been taken to hospital as a result of hunger strikes.

Ahmed's case is being followed by East Ham MP Stephen Timms as concern mounts over his health and that of eight other prisoners taking part in the hunger strike.

Ahmed, aged 28, and other protesters, have spent a year on remand awaiting trial and according to Sky News, he has been taken to hospital

twice since collapsing in his cell on 21 November.

He was arrested in November 2024 and is one of 24 people accused of involvement in a Palestine Action intervention at the Bristol facility owned by Israel's biggest weapons maker Elbit Systems.

His sister Shahmima Amal organised a protest outside Pentonville prison in November over his detention and she told Sky News that his lengthy imprisonment is taking a toll on their parents.

Young Newham Voices speak out on the budget

SHOFA MIAH

Young people in the Borough, pictured below, have told Newham Voices that they are less than impressed with the November budget of Chancellor Rachel Reeves.

We asked a few local students what the budget means for them.

At last the two-child benefit cap has been lifted said Rosa Nowers, but she told us: "looking at the drastic effects the policy has already had on families with three or more children, it raises the question of why it wasn't removed sooner? Anyway, the removal of the cap feels like a distraction from the more negative impacts of the budget, such as fiscal drag, which affects working people far more than the wealthy."

Liliana Noor said: "The Budget froze income tax thresholds, creating a 'stealth tax' that quietly increases the amount people pay over time. As wages rise, young workers end up paying more tax, reducing take-home pay. This especially affects graduates and early-career earners, who already struggle with high rent and living costs. Freezing thresholds may unfairly burden younger generations."

The generational impact also worried Margot Dare who said: "The budget favours pensioners with increased income, while young peo-

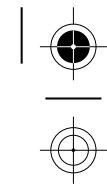
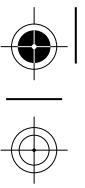
ple face rising challenges. The budget provides no specific aid for young first-time homebuyers and prioritises older people's financial security over the needs of young people."

Chiekeziem Amadi criticised the new plan for a 'tourism tax', which would let local councils charge a small fee for overnight stays in hotels: "For young people, this could impact upon school trips, and youth sports tournaments. Attracting young people to the UK could become harder for the average family. Supporters say the money could help sectors that tourists rely on, like parks and transport. However, this policy may make the UK less competitive and affect jobs in tourism."

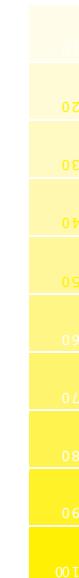
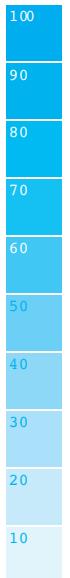
Finally, Vesper Anthun Pollock said: "As a young person with three siblings of my own, the most impactful policy to me is reducing poverty. Rachel Reeves optimistically brought her new policy to Parliament claiming it would lift 450,000 children out of poverty. Nonetheless, concerns about welfare spending remain. Government should take the lead in promoting financial literacy to help people better understand government finances."

These brief testimonies illustrate why young people should be consulted over policies and decisions that define their future.

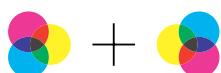
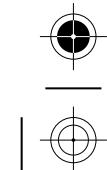
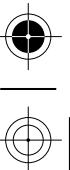




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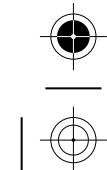
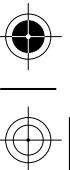
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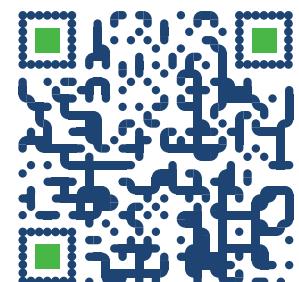
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Council drops traffic scheme for Forest Gate

A controversial plan to create a low-traffic neighbourhood system in the Woodgrange and Capel Road area of Forest Gate has been dropped after consultation with residents.

The Council had hoped to establish a Woodgrange and Capel people-friendly streets project, but the plan also failed to get vital funding support from Transport for London.

As a result, the Council is now planning to invest over the next two years in improving the junction of Woodgrange Road,



Image via Google

Romford Road and Upton Lane, which will see this busy interchange transformed to improve road safety.

The original low traffic neighbourhood plan sharply divided opinion among residents in Forest Gate and was reflected in the three well-attended public meetings organised by the Council in September and October.

A summary of those meetings has been made available by the Council and can be found here: tinyurl.com/mvrpj24

Science Fair set for 2026

The third annual Newham Citizen Science Fair takes place on 28 March at the University of East London's Royal Docks Centre for Sustainability (RDCS) and will have focus on young science leaders in the Borough.

The organisers are inviting local individuals, groups and organisations to take part. Several local schools are already involved as well as students and lecturers from University of East London and University College London.

To participate or get more information visit: <https://newham-citizen-science-fair.uk> and use the "Get Involved" link.

Uma takes aim at 'nefarious times'

Simon Shaw finds hard-working local MP Uma Kumaran full of surprises

The omens for this interview were not good – an old leftie reporter confronting a government MP. There were so many tricky questions – a government with a huge majority that had apparently achieved so little, and seems to be in a death spiral, bleeding support to both the right and left and which appears to be driven by fear of upsetting big business and losing support to Farage's Reform UK – rather than governing in the interests of people in areas like Newham.

But there is always room for surprises and I came away from the interview with Uma Kumaran, MP for Stratford and Bow, convinced she will do her best to champion our area: "A lovely constituency, the best," she said.

She is passionate about our history – name checking the likes of Keir Hardie and the East London Federation of Suffragettes on her website. She has also lived and studied in the area (at Queen Mary University) and professes to be "A Hammer till I die" – with legitimate concerns about relegation: "It doesn't look great does it?"

Uma is clearly a grafter. We spoke the day after the November budget when she sat in the Commons for six hours until she got her chance to speak about its impact on Newham. And she had just returned from the COP climate talks in Brazil (she has a background in climate advocacy). On the day we met she said she was exhausted as a result of already putting in a 90-hour shift.

Uma also clearly cares; at our meeting in Unit 6 in Stratford Centre her departure was delayed as the waiter wanted to talk to her about the exorbitant cost of his car insurance.



Uma Kumaran and Simon Shaw ponder political challenges

But there were some spiky exchanges. *Newham Voices* challenged her on the proscription of Palestine Action; would her hero Sylvia Pankhurst have approved? And what about the proposed legislation on immigration – what would have happened if this plan was in place when her parents fled pogroms in Sri Lanka?

She was patient. "Look Simon," she said, "these are nefarious times, there are forces trying to tear us apart. The social contract Britain has, has not been upheld in the last 14 years. Society has turned its back on our very poorest, our asylum seekers and refugees, we need to rebuild that trust to get the British public to a place where there is trust on both sides".

On the banning of Palestine Action, there are plenty of ways to protest, but

"this is not the way" she says. She tells me that the Home Secretary is privy to more information than either of us. She has spoken to members of the Knesset and the Palestine Authority and the priority is to get aid into Gaza. "My immediate concern is to get aid to the children," she says.

In Uma's constituency, the election turnout was the below the national average and her share of the vote was 44 percent – which according to the UK Parliament website represents a 26.4 percent drop. Like many Labour back-benchers, Uma might be concerned whether she will retain her seat.

She has a further challenge, in a constituency that straddles two boroughs, she works with two different elected mayors, two police commanders, and around 150 councillors. The area faces

major crime and housing problems. She had just got back from a 'drive through' with Forest Gate police. She relishes a challenge and there are plenty – Newham has the longest social house waiting list in the country at 42,000, high levels of child deprivation and a council that is broke. She talks about the moral shame of homelessness, but when pushed on the emptiness of the Carpenters Estate, she says that we cannot put people into unsafe housing.

I rewind to our mutual interest in local history and the fact that her parents fled pogroms in Sri Lanka and found sanctuary in East London. Uma's Labour colleague in the House of Lords, Alf Dubs (who arrived in the Kindertransport fleeing persecution in Germany) has said government proposals on immigration are "performatively cruel," arguing they will increase tensions, rather than showing compassion for vulnerable people fleeing danger.

Uma notes that we are meeting on Maaveerar Naal, an annual day of remembrance observed in the Tamil diaspora to honour those who died fighting in the Sri Lankan civil war. Given her family history she says she is well placed to advocate for refugees.

She bridles over the suggestion that the state will have the legal authority to take the jewellery from those seeking sanctuary in the UK to cover their costs: "It's not happening, jewellery is not going to be taken off of people – we will bring in legal safe routes", she insists.

"I am a Labour MP, but I have my own moral compass, having been stress tested these proposals will allow us to be a country that welcomes refugees. But they must buy into British values. We have massive waiting lists, but we need to know who is coming in and out of our country."

Fresh start for the Spotted Dog Inn

Newham's oldest secular building, the historic Old Spotted Dog, is set for a major renovation and relaunch.

Council planners last month gave the go-ahead for the transformation of the former hunting lodge in Forest Gate, which will include a complete restoration, including a new hotel and flats.

Real estate company Highpride Properties has been granted permission to renovate the Grade 2-listed building with plans for two blocks of 22 flats and an apartment hotel next to the pub in Upton Lane.

The plan will reveal and restore the original Tudor, Georgian/Early Victorian, and Late Victorian/Edwardian elements of the building and will involve the reinstatement of windows and brickwork using materials and detailing to match the historic fabric.

The pub's fascinating his-



Old Spotted Dog

tory includes it being featured in Daniel Defoe's fictionalised retelling of the pestilence in *London A Journal of the Plague Year*. In his account the pub was used as a refuge for people fleeing the disease running rife in the capital in 1665 and again the following year following the Great Fire.

The site is next to The Old Spotted Dog Ground, home to the oldest senior football ground in London, continuously in use since 1880 and since 2020 owned and operated by Clapton Community FC, which consistently attracts over 500 spectators per game.

The downside is that due to costs the developers say it is not viable to include social housing in the plans, although there is a commitment to give Newham residents at least 35 percent of the construction jobs, and half the jobs in the new pub and hotel.

It's raining cards for Gilbert at 100!

JULIA OMARI

On 3 December RAF veteran Gilbert Clarke reached his 100th birthday, sparking an outpouring of appreciation from across Newham, London and the wider Caribbean community.

One of the highlights of his special day was the 100th birthday card from King, but the royal message was only the beginning. A special birthday card drive, led by 14-year-old student Adanya, added a uniquely local and personal touch to the celebrations.

Inspired by Gilbert's wartime service and his commu-

nity, Adanya rallied support from students at the London Design and Engineering UTC, and young business owners at the Ultra Education Youth Market in Brixton. As a result she presented Gilbert with 101 birthday cards, with heartfelt messages and expressions of gratitude to one of the few surviving West Indian veterans of the Second World War.

Gilbert, the father of six, grandad of 11, great grandad of ten and great, great grandad of three more, spent his birthday at home surrounded by his family who said they were deeply moved by the many cards.



Gilbert Clarke (centre) with his family

'Selfless' mother of six, Lorna, is carer of the year

Lorna Still's husband Ali suffered a devastating brain injury in an electric bike accident in 2022.

Since then, Lorna has provided care for Ali and their six children at their home in Beckton.

Now Lorna has been honoured with a national award, for her unwavering dedication to caring for her husband, by the charity Headway.

She was presented with the Carer of the Year award at a ceremony in London in December.

Following the accident, Ali was airlifted to Royal London Hospital, where he spent three months before being discharged to Blackheath Brain Injury Rehabilitation Centre.

He now lives with complex medical problems, including a communication disorder, epilepsy, and is partially blind and deaf in the right ear.

Lorna was 16 weeks pregnant with their youngest child when Ali had his accident, giving birth while her husband was still in hospital.

She was recommended for the award by friends for her strength and continually giving to others.

She said: "I'm so grateful for



the support network I have - from friends and neighbours organising childcare and doing the school run for me to dropping food off so our family can eat - from the bottom of my heart, thank you."

"At the time doctors didn't think that Ali was going to survive, and they told me to prepare for the worst, because it was a lot of damage.

"But he's a fighter and he fought through."

2016 - 2026 | A decade of building a poetry movement

NEWHAM POETRY GROUP | 10 YEARS

Weekly poetry sessions - Creative writing workshops
Book launches - Open-mic events - Spoken-word workshops
Community festivals - Reading corner - Poetry performances
Guest poet events - Book swaps - Youth poetry projects
Anthology launches - Social drop-in sessions
& much more



SOMETHING'S BREWING



Phil Mellsows is saddened by the demise of a landmark pub that was so old it survived a fall out with the King of Prussia



In the final weeks of 2025 the King Edward VII, on Stratford Broadway, ceased trading. It's just another pub casualty, of course, but places like this hold a wealth of memories for those who used it, including myself.

I spent far too many hours there while working at the *Stratford Express*, which occupied an office a few doors down in the late 1970s, and again in the early 1980s when, in a failed effort to escape journalism, I did a degree at North East London Poly.

Thinking about those days, I can remember so many incidents and con-

versations, tangible and precious moments over pints of Charrington's IPA at the Eddie, as we called it, though my dad always referred to it as "the King of Prussia", a name which changed in 1913, when we fell out with the Prussians.

The building, in fact, goes back two centuries before that (the doorways are a surviving feature) and is Grade II listed, which gives it some protection, yet its future as a pub is now extremely uncertain.

From what I hear, Stonegate, the owner, will have to spend a lot of money to get it into trading shape. The last

time I called in, it was clearly tired and neglected. It's not an example of a good pub suddenly closing under extreme commercial pressures. It's a pub that's been run down over a long period.

Yet, as well as the challenges of investing in its fabric and finding the right person to run it, wider economic conditions in 2026 are not conducive to its reopening.

The Eddie won't be the last to close, I fear, unless it's recognised that pubs are not ordinary businesses ...but form a part of our social infrastructure, much like an essential utility, a vital space where future memories are made.

Hopes that there might be substance to the government's platitudes around support for the "great British pub", as Chancellor Rachel Reeves called it, were dashed by the latest Budget. Publicans will face soaring business rates this year on top of the rising employment costs that have already forced many to cut staffing and reduce opening hours.

The Eddie won't be the last to close, I fear, unless it's recognised that pubs are not ordinary businesses that must be left to navigate the economic winds by themselves, but form a part of our social infrastructure, much like an essential utility, a vital space where future memories are made.

Fruits of our labour

BY RON INELL

Friends of West Ham Park

The orchard as suggested by its name comprises apple, pear, walnut, almond, medlars, plum and ash totalling approximately 40 trees. A variety of fruit bushes, namely raspberry, black and red currents were planted as well as the blackberries which Mother Nature placed there.

The plans for the orchard were originally drawn up in 2010 with the planting taking place in 2011 and has always been maintained by the rangers and volunteers ever since.

Unfortunately in the early years, some of the trees were either broken or damaged and along with the pear trees did not survive.



If you venture into the orchard now you will notice that works are being lead by ranger Chris and assisted by volunteers Chris and Nicholas and

members of the Friends of West Ham Park, to weed and mulch the existing tree pits, create some new ones and remove the brambles from the wall.

A dead hedge is in the process of being constructed against the wall which will provide the birds and wildlife in the park with sanctuary. This is being done in readiness for new trees and shrubs along with strips of meadow flowers between the trees.

In the springtime, when the blossom bursts forth on the established trees and the meadow flowers and perhaps the shrubs come into bloom making the orchard a haven for bees, butterflies and other pollinating insects, that will all help to keep our park the beautiful gem that it is, and hopefully always will be.



Good reads in Newham

The Newham Bookshop in Barking Road tells us these are the top sellers this month:

- **Sound Waves: Music in Newham**
By Katherine Green and Lucy Harrison (editors)
- **Winter's Song**
By Angela Harding
- **The Once and Future Riot**
By Joe Sacco
- **Rock, Paper, Incisors**
(Illustrated by Jon Klassen)
By Amy Timberlake
- **Bunny vs Monkey: Intergalactic Monkey Business!**
By Jamie Smart
- **Tiger, It's Snowing!**
By Daishu Ma

– Compiled by David Ceen, Newham Bookshop



For full details or to request a copy, visit: newhambooks.co.uk

SPORTS SHORTS

Compiled by Neandra Etienne



Alexander Iwobi and Calvin Bassey
Image ©Rex Shutterstock

The **World Cup 2026** draw took place on 5 December 2025. England, who are in group L, will face Croatia, Ghana and Panama.

Ezri Konsa, from Newham, and West Ham United captain Jarrod Bowen play for the England national football team.

World Cup 2026 takes place in the USA, Mexico and Canada from 11 June – 19 July.

Fulham players **Calvin Bassey** and **Alexander Iwobi**, who grew up in Newham, play for the Nigeria national football team.

The Africa Cup of Nations (AFCON) is scheduled to take place in Morocco between 21 December 2025 and 18 January 2026

Black Girls Do Run (BGDR) is an England Athletics affiliated grassroots community running club founded by runner Tasha Thompson in 1999.

The January dates for the Stratford run are 5 and 19
blackgirlsdorun.co.uk/east-london

West Ham United are scheduled to play QPR in the third-round of the FA Cup on Sunday 11 January 2026

West Ham United will provide British Sign Language interpretation for match days at the London Stadium for the 2025/26.
whufc.com

Newham has been named as one of the boroughs that will benefit from a share of **Sport England's** £250 million investment, aimed at boosting physical activity in communities.
londonsport.org

James is a Forest Gate-based Health Coach, England Athletics qualified Run Leader and HOKA Racer, and he has just launched a new local running

project called Kindred Runners.

The sessions are free, except the couch to 5k which is a paid programme.

All sessions run around Forest Gate, Maryland, and Stratford on a mix of road and trail.

- 12 January – 9am – Social 5km – Meeting at Tamping Grounds
- 14 January – 7pm – Speed Session – Meeting at Jubilee Pond Car Park
- 16 January – 9am – Social 5km – Meeting at Back To Ours

Booking: bookwhen.com/kindredrunners
@kindredrunners



Kindred Runners
©Danny Easton

Stratford Juniors FC are scheduled to play CCFC Men's Development for the Hackney Marshes Super Cup on 11 January 2026 at 10.30am at Hackney Marshes E9

CCFC Women's first team are scheduled to play a home game at the Old Spotted Dog ground against Ashford United at 2pm on 25 January 2026
claptonfcfc.co.uk

Duffy Boxing, founded by three professional boxing champions, Ciaran Duffy, Johnny Nelson and Spencer Oliver, is located in the Olympic Park Stratford.

Ciaran Duffy told Newham Voices, "We pride ourselves in offering a welcoming and friendly atmosphere at Duffy's, and welcome anyone from the local area, who'd like to train in boxing."

duffyboxing.com

Bonny Downs Sport and Fitness activities for the over 65s include

Bowls on 14 January

Chair-based exercise 12 January

Zumba Gold 12 January
The Well Community Centre, 49 Vicarage Lane, E6
bonnydowns.org

Bonny Downs free youth Football sessions for ages 8–14 and 15–18 takes place on Thursdays at Bobby Moore Sports Pavilion E6 2SG

Youth activities re-opens 8 January.
Email youth@bonnydowns.org

Dates and times of all games and events are subject to change. Please email your sports news, games and fixtures to neandra.etienne@newhamvoices.co.uk

A young poet inspiring the Borough

KAYLA MARIE TROY

Temmy's journey at Newham-based youth organisation Fight for Peace showcases the powerful impact that creativity, confidence, and community support can have on a young person's development. Arriving as a quietly confident newcomer, she has grown into an emerging leader whose work now inspires her peers across Newham.

Temmy first connected with Fight for Peace through judo and fighting fit sessions, later becoming part of the personal development group Lutadoras and the youth leadership programmes Youth Power and Future Light. These opportunities strengthened her resilience, leadership abilities, and sense of purpose. As she grew within the community, her gift for creative expression became increasingly clear, and she soon began inspiring others through her work.

Temmy's creative path accelerated earlier this year when she took part in spoken word workshops delivered by local partner YouPress, and former Fight for Peace team member and rapper Richard Roach (Roachee). Motivated by this experience, Temmy wrote and performed an original poem at the Arts Council-funded Young Creatives exhibition I Love My Newham, 'Still'. Her piece, which celebrated the diversity and spirit of Newham, captivated the audience and marked a defining moment in her artistic journey.

Since then, Temmy has planned and delivered several spoken word workshops for young people at the



Academy in North Woolwich, offering safe and creative spaces for others to express their feelings, share their experiences, and build confidence through art.

Her leadership has now extended beyond Fight for Peace. Temmy recently ran a creative workshop for the Newham Youth Partnership's Future Light group at Stratford Youth Zone, marking her first step in taking her work Borough-wide. She also led at Beckton Globe in November as part of the Newham Festival of Stories.

Fight for Peace supports young people aged 7–25 to reach their full potential in life through programmes combining boxing and martial arts training, education, employment and mentoring support, and leadership opportunities. For more information visit fight-forpeace.net or email info@fight-forpeace.net

Points make prizes



There were things to cheer about in West Ham's match against Aston Villa but they need to hit the back of the net if they want to avoid relegation, says Mickey Ambrose



Since West Ham's 3-2 home win against Burnley, performances have been much improved, up until the crushing defeat against Manchester City.

With draws away to Bournemouth, Manchester United and Brighton Hammers came into the game against top four Aston Villa facing a stern test. They didn't disappoint and were out of the blocks straight away after an incredible 29 seconds, with Mateus Fernandes scoring the fastest goal in the Premier League this season.

But Aston Villa came to the Olympic Stadium with a plan quite simply a 'Do or Die' attitude. Even when they are not at their best, their hunger knows no bounds at the moment. They were stretched



by West Ham, who led twice before squandering a vital win in their relegation struggle.

Unai Emery's indefatigable side dug deep for a response and emerged victorious for the 15th time in 17 games thanks

to a virtuoso display from Morgan Rogers who inspired a second-half turnaround. What a performance. This was Villa in fighting mode. They trailed 2-1 at half-time and were second best for long spells, but

they refused to roll over. West Ham, still stuck in the bottom three despite producing one of their best performances under Nuno Espírito Santo, just could not put them away but the good news is that they are creating chances.

They were pegged back by Rogers early in the second half and then, just when it seemed that West Ham were gearing up for a late push, the England international made Nuno's side pay for granting him extra specs, and he made it 3-2 with a goal that owed everything to wondrous technique and appetite for risk. It was a rocket from Rogers, off his gifted right foot and flying into Alphonse Areola's top-right corner.

West Ham have not kept a clean sheet since 31 August. Nuno has not fixed their defensive ills since replacing Graham Potter and he bemoaned his side's failure to hold on to a winning position for the second consecutive week. "This is something we are not able to do – control and manage the game when we are

in front," West Ham's manager said. Why is it happening? "I wish I could give you a proper answer with a proper solution," Nuno replied.

The frustration for West Ham is that they did a lot well, with Sounghoutou Magassa, Fernandes and Potts competing in midfield. Yet Nuno despaired when Villa pounced after Paquetá lost possession in the 50th minute. Youri Tielemans was away down the right seconds later and his cross reached Rogers, who controlled before scoring from close range.

But at least West Ham kept going. Even if Bowen had a goal disallowed for the tightest of off-sides Nuno Espírito Santo must be very pleased with his team's performance, but points make prizes and West Ham must start winning games to avoid relegation to the Championship as the New Year begins.

Meanwhile, Happy New Year to Newham Voices readers.

Mickey Ambrose is a former Chelsea and Charlton player who lives in Stratford.

Billy Bonds: A legend among West Ham legends

MICKEY AMBROSE

Billy Bonds MBE was and always will be West Ham. Bonzo, as he was known by so many associated with the club, will never be forgotten. A fierce and passionate warrior on the pitch and a gentleman of supreme integrity off the pitch.

Billy Bonds was the West Ham Captain who lifted the FA Cup Twice in 1975 and 1980, he managed the club into the Premier League and was voted the club's greatest-ever player in 2018. The club named the East Stand at the London Stadium in his honour in 2019.

West Ham gave Bonds a show of appreciation before Sunday's Premier League home game against Liverpool, with fans all around the ground participating in a minute of applause.

Captain Jarrod Bowen, who held Bonds' number four shirt aloft throughout, spoke about the legacy of his predecessor before the opening whistle. "He's probably going to go down as West Ham's biggest legend and the best club captain they've had. He achieved

so much, and I'll never emulate that success, but to put on the captain's armband like he did is a big thing for me."

On its website, West Ham described Bonds as "an extremely private and loyal man" who was "completely devoted to his family".

The club said he was "never one to crave the limelight," and was "universally loved, respected and admired by his team-mates, players and supporters". West Ham also offered its condolences to Bonds' daughters, Claire and Katie, and granddaughters, Eloise and Elissa.

Born in Woolwich on 17 September 1946 to football fans Arthur and Barbara, both Charlton supporters, he had a variety of jobs as a young man, but his true calling was on the field. Billy joined Charlton as a teenager. At Eltham Green School, a teacher would tell him: "Your brains, Bonds, are all in your feet."

Ironically, in 1960, he and his Moatbridge teammates were presented with winners' trophies by non-other than



Bobby Moore. Bonds recalled: "Being a Charlton fan, I knew that the blond, well-built fella sitting up there was a West Ham player, but I didn't really know any more than that." Seven years later, they would become teammates.

Billy played 100 matches for Charlton Athletic, before his £50,000 transfer to West Ham United in May 1967, signed by

the future England Manager Ron Greenwood.

There have been many books and articles written about this enigmatic player, but the one I recommend reading above all others, is They Played with Billy Bonds – The West Ham Years by Tim Crane, published in 2020. The book features interviews with 102 players who shared the pitch with Billy.

Billy played exactly 799 matches for the Hammers, equivalent to playing 10 games for West Ham for every year of his life! ..., a quirky statistic like that would have made Bonzo smile for sure

If there was ever a footballer who wore his heart on his sleeve it was Billy Bonds, What a player, what a man.

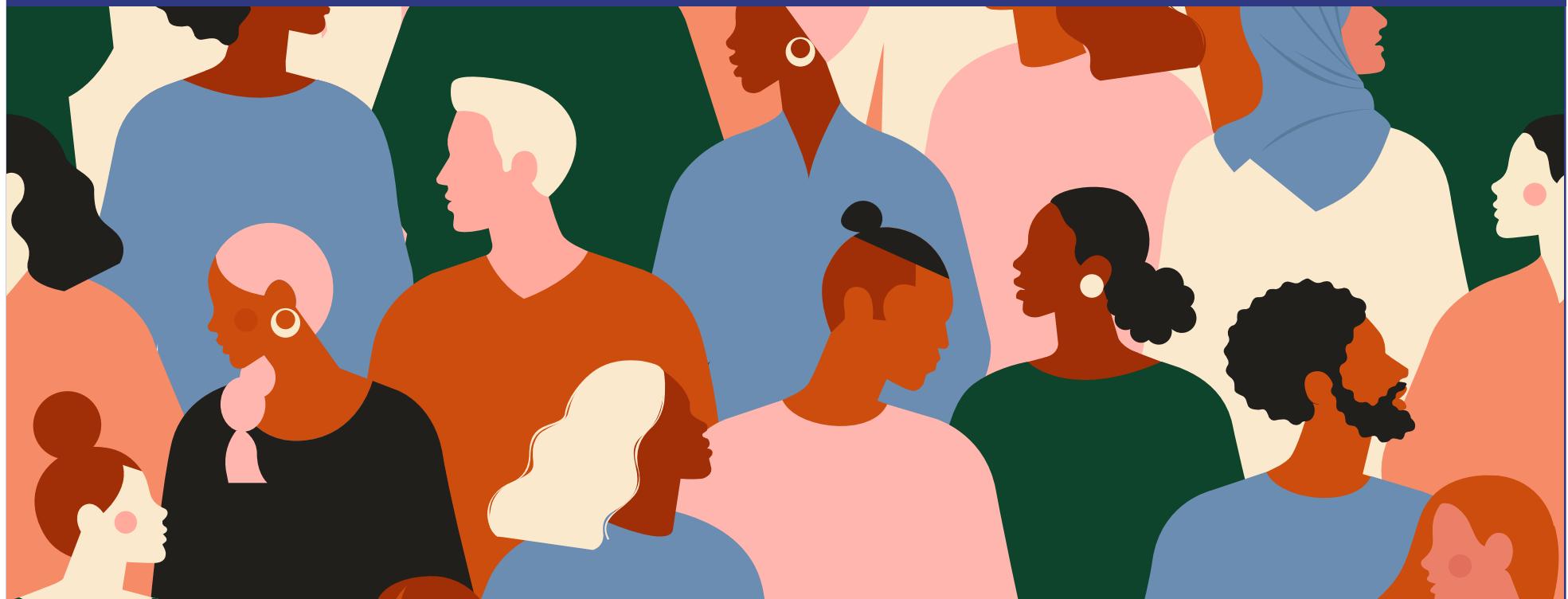
His long-standing teammate and friend, Sir Trevor Brooking, writing in his own autobiography, said of him:

"Bill is the most genuine person I've known in football. I've always considered him to be the best signing in the club's history. Bill's loyalty to West Ham inspired generations of players, including me."

How will we all remember the Legend that is Billy Bonds let me know.

Clyde Best said: "Billy was a person that never gave up; he ran for the whole 90 minutes non-stop. He was a fantastic figure on the field, a real trooper, it was a treat to play with him and be in his company all those years ago, a true friend."

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