

Anger as divided Council chooses new leadership

DAISY MILES AND AIDAN WHITE

Newham moves into uncharted political territory this month with historic changes in the Council leadership after decades of “one party state” rule by Labour.

The first Council meeting on 20 May saw fiery exchanges as the new Council entered into an era of nervous co-operation among warring political factions (See Page Two).

With no overall control for any party, Newham Independents were furious when Labour and the Green Party appeared to reach a deal on election of the Council’s Chair and Deputy Chair.

The political drama began when the tranquil atmosphere of the vote count at the ExCel Exhibition Centre the day after the 7 May election was disturbed around lunchtime by a roar from the Green candidates over a mayoral victory – not in Newham, but in Hackney.

In Newham, the Green candidate Areeq Chowdhury came third as the Labour Party’s Forhad Hussain swept to victory.



He defeated the Greens and Newham Independents in Newham’s mayoral contest, winning 30.4 per cent of the vote – six points ahead of Mehmood Mirza for the Independents and almost eight points ahead of Chowdhury.

Labour supporters were jubilant, but this was all they had to cheer about. Despite an overall increase in turnout from 2022, the voters wanted change.

Labour lost more than 10,000 votes, with the Newham Independents only six points behind them. The latter had effectively tripled their vote share, while Labour’s had almost halved.

Despite coming third, Green candidates and supporters were overall optimistic about the outcome of the local elections. And they were further cheered at the first Council meeting when Nate Higgins, a re-elected Green councillor was chosen as the new first citizen of Newham and Council chair.

The Labour former Chair, Councillor Rohit Dasgupta was elected Vice-Chair after an apparent agreement between Labour and the Greens. A furious Newham Independents leader Mehmood Mirza condemned the arrangement saying control of the Council chamber had been “sold” in “last-minute dodgy deals”. But power-sharing is likely to be the key theme of the working programme for the coming administration. (See full report on *Newham Voices* website.)

After he took the Chair, Nate Higgins thanked the meeting for its support and pledged to work with all councillors and parties on behalf of all Newham residents.

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MP joins local protest over casino plan for Denmark Arms

AIDAN WHITE

Residents and former regulars at the Denmark Arms in East Ham have launched a campaign against plans to convert the former pub into a casino.

The grade II listed building opposite East Ham Town Hall, is more than 130 years old and closed its doors in January last year.

Local MP Sir Stephen Timms has joined the fight to oppose plans for the old pub to be redeveloped as “an adult gaming centre”.

In a letter to Paul Martin, the Interim Chief Executive at Newham Council, Sir Stephen says he supports the protests by his local constituents in East Ham and

says that “its use for gambling is a bleak prospect for East Ham”.

East Ham High Street is already well-stocked with gambling sites and betting shops and the MP has echoed concerns of residents over the prospect of more anti-social behaviour which gambling sites attract.

“They make the High Street feel unsafe and unwelcoming to families, and weakens East Ham’s High Street shopping offer” he said.

He has echoed the strong feelings of local residents who have also launched a campaign to have the plans overturned, warning that a large gambling enterprise on the site will be a blow to East Ham.

Sir Stephen Timms, who is a government minister, says that the government

wants to make it easier for councils to block developments like this, but he recognised that the Council is constrained and overturning the application will not be easy.

But Newham Council in the past has registered concerns over the spread of gambling business across the Borough and the plans for the Denmark Arms site will be an early challenge for the new Council which took over in May.

Speaking about the plans Sir Stephen added: “I am utterly appalled by the plans. East Ham needs investment that strengthens the High Street and supports local families, not proposals that tip the balance further towards gambling. I will be opposing these plans and am sure hundreds of local residents will too.”

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Council Notebook

By Peter Landman

Unpredictable politics reigns as Greens take Chair of Newham Council

PETER LANDMAN

The newly-elected members of Newham Council met on 20 May facing an historic challenge – to build a multi-party leadership after the collapse of the Labour Party majority control.

The new Council has to create fresh arrangements for committees and political administration with no single party in overall control for the first time in Newham's history. The new Council has 26 Labour Councillors, 24 Independents and 16 Greens.

The only certainty in the Council chamber for the foreseeable future is that the political process will be less predictable than in the past.

The first vote – to select a Council chair and deputy set the tone for a new era of interparty co-operation, with the election of Councillor Nate Higgins of the Green Party, the third largest of the Council groups, to lead as the Borough's first citizen.

Accepting his new role, Councillor Higgins said he would do what he could to encourage working together. That may not be easy to achieve when a councillor from the Newham Independents group took the floor to attack both Labour, and the Green Party, and asserting that the independents were the real opposition.

But that did not stop a second election which reflected the new order of power

in the Borough. The Labour outgoing Chair of the Council, Councillor Dr Rohit Dasgupta was elected as Deputy Chair.

This was the prelude to an introduction from the new Mayor, Councillor Forhad Hussain for Labour, who spoke of Newham roots, and his pledge to listen more intensively to local people and to encourage community activism: the key words for his administration will be Listen, Respect and Dignity.

He was gracious in victory thanking all the candidates for devoting personal time to campaigning, as an essential part of democracy.

He also congratulated all new councillors. "Everything I am, I owe to the Borough of Newham," he said. "Now I have the opportunity to give something back."

The New Leadership

The Mayor introduced his first Cabinet, a four-strong team of Labour members with extensive experience:

- Councillor **John Gray**, Labour, who will be Deputy Mayor and responsible for Housing;
- Councillor **Zulfiqar Ali**, Labour, who will continue in his role as responsible for Finance and Resources;

- Councillor **Lakmini Shah**, Labour, who takes on the role of Cabinet member responsible for Children's Services, Education and Communities; and

- Councillor **Susan Masters** who with extensive experience in the field of health takes on Cabinet responsibility for Adult Health and the Environment.

More Cabinet members will be announced in the coming weeks he said.

As a sign of the challenging work programme the Borough faces, the new Council agreed unanimously to increase the number of times they will meeting in the coming year to 12 sittings.

The meeting then went into private session as the parties set about the arduous task of allocating membership of the Council committee between the three main parties.

Despite some wrangling between Labour and the Newham Independents, that difficult work went ahead with the new chair, one of the youngest and most recent councillors to hold the post, showing maturity and composure as the meeting progressed.

For more information contact **John Gray@newham.gov**

UEL major role in the future of education

The University of East London (UEL) will play a leading role in a major new Department for Educational Neuroscience Policy Research Centre designed to strengthen the role of evidence and brain science in shaping education policy across England.

The new centre, led by University College London and supported by a consortium of nine universities, has been awarded a contract worth up to £3 million by the department to deliver a two-year programme of research and rapid evidence analysis focused on how children

learn – from early years through to higher education.

The centre will bring together experts in neuroscience, psychology, genetics, classroom practice and artificial intelligence to provide policymakers with rapid, evidence-led insight on some of the biggest challenges facing education today, including special educational needs, children's mental health, learning environments and the impact of AI technologies on childhood development.

Meanwhile, UEL has launched a strategic relationship with Merit University in Egypt. The collaboration was formally unveiled at Merit University's 5th International Medical Conference in New Sohag City, Egypt, which brought together leading academics, healthcare professionals, policymakers and students under the theme "Good Health – Better Life."

Also at UEL, a report carried out by the university has found that the growing number of female fire fighters are not being given the training and protection appropriate for their gender. While the number of women in the service is increasing, there are still gaps in training and protective equipment that are based on male physiology.



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Affordable homes boost from Pudding Mill Lane development

The first phase of the Pudding Mill Lane development which will deliver 355 homes at Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park, of which 79 per cent will be affordable has been agreed by Newham Council.

This is a major milestone for the joint venture partnership between London Legacy Development Corporation and Vistry. The first phase will deliver 191 intermediate homes and 91 social rent homes, with 10 per cent of homes designed to be accessible by wheelchair.

Building is expected to start in the autumn. This is part of a wider masterplan which received outline planning permission in 2023. Across the full site, the masterplan will deliver over 1,000 new homes, around 45 per cent of which will be affordable, and includes 30,000 square metres of commercial space, new green



Pudding Mill Lane Square. Image ©Gort-Scott

spaces and community infrastructure.

This will lay the foundations for a new local centre for Newham, with plans including a nursery, a proposed health centre, and community and retail uses to support residents and the wider neighbourhood. A network of pedestrian-friendly routes will connect homes to community facilities, green spaces, Pudding Mill Lane DLR station and the Olympic Park.

New parks and open spaces, including City Mills Riverside Park and a riverfront pocket park, open to residents and the wider public will also feature.

The plan is designed to be fossil fuel free, through an on-site air source heat pump solution. The scheme will incorporate extensive green infrastructure, climate-resilient planting and sustainable drainage systems

Newham celebrates housing awards

Newham Council is celebrating a major success at the architects organisation's RIBA London Awards 2026, with two of its housing developments in Upton Park and East Ham recognised for outstanding design, sustainability and community impact.

Mayor of Newham, Forhad Hussain, said: "These awards are a proud moment for Newham, and I want to thank everyone who played a part in delivering these exceptional homes.

"What makes this recognition even more significant is what it means for residents - lower energy bills, warmer homes, and a better quality of life. In Newham, we're committed to building homes local families are proud to live in."

Two schemes, Plashet Road in Upton Park and Noele Gordon House in East Ham, have both received prestigious RIBA London Awards, with Plashet Road also winning the RIBA London Sustainability Award.

Plashet Road provides 65 affordable homes and a nursery, designed to be highly energy efficient and low-cost to run. Residents benefit from warmer homes, lower energy bills, and a healthier living environment.

The development has been carefully designed to create a strong sense of community, with shared outdoor space, natural light, and retained mature trees helping to shape a greener neighbourhood.

Noele Gordon House has 75 affordable

homes for residents aged over 55, alongside a new community health centre. The scheme supports independence, wellbeing and social connection.

The Council has already delivered around 855 affordable homes and is on track to reach 1,000 new council homes by early 2027. Developments are being built on council-owned land, funded through its Housing Revenue Account and supported by a grant from the Greater London Authority.



Noele Gordon House. Image: Populo

Windrush Festival blow as Council opposes drinks licence

NEANDRA ETIENNE

The Windrush Festival, organised by Radiate Festival and scheduled for 21 June in Beckton Park, has been called off and will be held in another London location.

It will not be taking place in the Borough after Newham Council refused to grant a premises licence to the organisers on 11 May.

The Council Licensing Sub-Committee blocked the request after Council officers opposed it. No residents made representations against the application.

In their report on the application the sub-committee said that councillors did not oppose the vision of the application, but the application did not fully address officers' concerns.

Festival organiser Wendy Cummins had previously been part of the team that delivered Newham Unlocked in 2023 in Beckton Park, Plashet Park and Canning Town. Wendy told *Newham Voices*: "The only objections to the festival came from within the Council itself, not from the general public, friends of the group or the local residential community.

"The immediate focus for Windrush Festival now is to scale back to a boutique size festival in order to successfully deliver an event for 2026 in an alternative London location.

"The team will then prepare to move to a more visionary and welcoming Borough as a larger scale festival for 2027 and beyond."

Other information from: newhamwindrushday.org/

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Anger as divided Council chooses new leadership

– continued from page 1

Newly-elected Mayor Forhad Hussain used his victory speech at the count to outline his agenda as Mayor which included a pledge to work with “energy, humility and determination”, and with councillors, “old and new”.

Following the mayoral count was the tally for Council members. And it was bad news for Labour. Close calls in some wards meant the count went late into the night. And when the counting ended Labour fell short of a majority. They won 26 seats, eight short of the 34 they needed to win a majority, with 24 seats for Newham Independents and 16 seats for the Greens.

Uma Kumaran, Labour MP for Stratford and Bow, saw most wards in her Newham constituency go Green, but in a statement she wrote: “Despite our political differences, as those elected to represent our boroughs, I will work with you to deliver the change that our community needs.”

For his part, James Asser, Labour MP for West Ham and Beckton, like many other disappointed Labour MPs feeling the pressure of new voices clamouring for change in politics, called for Prime Minister Sir Keir Starmer to “step aside”.

“If we are to regain the trust of people in communities like mine... we need to provide leadership and a vision for the future,” he said in a statement. “I do not believe the Prime Minister can offer that.”



Mehmood Mirza

Can we rely on Bob Dylan's dream for changing times?

Simon Shaw reflects on the local election and the prospects for life in the fast lane

There is something wrong with me. Nothing serious – just a niggle. My GP sent me for a scan at Newham General and then referred me for physiotherapy. What followed was the all-too-familiar NHS doom loop: long stretches on the phone listening to tinny classical music while inching up a queue, letters that never arrived, login codes hidden on second pages that didn't exist. You all know the feeling.

This, in a nutshell, is why Labour did so badly on 7 May – as the *Observer* put it rather less eruditely on 10 May: “These elections confirmed what we knew: the public is pissed off”.

That mood was reflected in our Borough. It used to be said that after the Stalinist regimes fell in the late 1980s, the Labour Party in Newham was the last one-party state left in Europe.

That hegemony took its first dent when Respect won three Council seats in 2006. Since then there have been a smattering of Independent and Christian People's Alliance wins, and more recently the Greens have made an incursion into E20.

But, to quote Bob Dylan, 7 May marked the moment when:

*“The order is rapidly fadin'
And the first one now will later be last
For the times they are a-changin'.”*

This reversal for Labour was seismic. Newham – the borough where the first Labour Council sat, and where Keir Hardie became the party's first MP –



Simon Shaw

has been comprehensively shaken after 50 years of uninterrupted control. In 2022 Labour held 64 of the Council's 66 seats. That has now fallen to just 26.

We still have a Labour mayor, but Forhad Hussain was elected with only 30.4% of the vote on a turnout of 34.9%. A victory, yes – but not a convincing one. What one Keir created another has destroyed.

That is the ‘what’. The ‘why’ is a more complicated question, and one that far better-paid psephologists than me have been picking over since 7 May.

Although this was a local election, it also functioned as a referendum on the Starmer disaster since July 2024. There was clearly a pull towards the Newham Independents as a result. They campaigned openly on a pro-Palestine platform – an issue on which Labour has alienated a significant chunk of its core support. Mehmood Mirza's party performed particularly strongly in East

Ham, Green Street, Little Ilford, Boleyn and Plaistow.

The Greens now dominate Stratford and Stratford Olympic Park, Forest Gate South and Royal Victoria. This perhaps reflects a younger, more professional demographic moving into these areas. Low Traffic Neighbourhoods were a live local issue, and the Greens played it well.

Flicking through the Election of Mayor booklet that landed on all our doorsteps before polling day, and opening it at random, I was struck by how interchangeable many of the pitches were. “Get a grip on fly-tipping. Partner with the police to improve response times.” Which party said that? It could have been almost any of the eight candidates.

My point is this: the election was not about choosing something radically different. It was about exhaustion with one-party rule in Newham, and part of a wider national – even global – tendency to give incumbents a kicking. Fortunately for us, given Newham's diversity and working-class history, that desire for change did not translate into support for the latest iteration of Nigel Farage's far right political project.

Whether this new political landscape will mean fewer hours spent listening to recorded phone messages remains to be seen. But perhaps No Overall Control will at least mean – as Bob also sang

*“The slow one now
Will later be fast.”*

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Tribute to Councillor who built trust

I wanted to write to express my gratitude for a councillor we no longer have in Stratford – Councillor Sabia Kamali.

For many residents, she helped build trust at a time when confidence in local politics can often feel fragile. She gave people hope and, more importantly, she made residents feel heard.

While she now finds herself outside the Council chamber, many of us feel the loss deeply. To residents, it feels as though she became collateral damage of wider national political issues, despite the commitment and dedication she consistently showed locally.

She was never interested in politics for appearances or photo opportunities. She worked for residents, never turned people away, and always tried to find a

way to help, regardless of the personal pressures involved. For that, many of us will always remain grateful.

For residents, this represents the loss of a councillor we viewed as outspoken, kind, accessible and genuinely committed to the community, whatever the personal cost.

At the same time, the situation reflects the increasingly fractured nature of local politics and the difficult environment public servants now operate within. I do not envy the challenges ahead for the Council leadership.

As a Stratford resident, I can honestly say this is a huge loss for the area. It also raises wider questions about why good people often struggle to survive in politics when the environment becomes so divisive and difficult.



Sabia Kamali

Whatever happens next, I simply wanted it recognised that many residents will always appreciate the service and dedication Councillor Sabia Kamali gave to Stratford.

– Sarah Berry, Stratford

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Who steers the ship? Why Newham's highly paid officers must stop hiding

Ann-Marie Ashton calls for more scrutiny of Council management

The arrival of a new mayor and 66 councillors has put an intense focus on the new political leadership of Newham. But this spotlight ignores a critical half of the civic equation: the permanent officers who actually run Newham Council.

While politicians face regular public scrutiny, the Council's unelected executives enjoy almost complete anonymity. This imbalance must change to open up the Council, better inform residents, and improve accountability.

Our elected councillors need very few official qualifications. They require no prior experience of working for a local authority or, indeed, any formal workplace experience at all. Despite this, they are scrutinised to the nth degree by the public and the media.

Conversely, their permanent, non-elected counterparts get to live out their professional lives with seemingly zero accountability to residents. This is despite the fact that many of these officers are on wages substantially higher than their

equivalents in other local authorities.

According to data compiled by the TaxPayers' Alliance Town Hall Rich List, Newham Council has 46 senior staff members paid over £100,000 a year. This ranks Newham as the 7th highest in the entire UK for six-figure council executive salaries, an increase of 20 high-earning officials over the past five years. At the absolute top, Newham's highest-paid executive took home £197,500 – significantly more than the Prime Minister.

Those of us who make an effort to attend Council meetings and public events will occasionally catch a glimpse of someone in middle management. However, you seemingly need high-level security clearance just to get close to anyone in Newham's 46-strong "£100k club".

The devastating housing crisis, which led to Newham being judged the worst in Britain for housing services, perfectly illustrates the danger of this shielded culture. The political fallout was instant, leading to the high profile resignation of a lead cabinet councillor, Shaban Mohammed.

Yet, not a single officer was publicly criticised. Instead, as the regulatory storm broke over the Borough, the head

of housing, Darren Levy, quietly left for a lucrative new job in Brighton.

True council transparency is impossible if the people holding the real levers of administrative power remain invisible. We

need a new approach where chief officers are forced into the light, required to explain their actions at public scrutiny panels, and held directly accountable to the residents who are funding their substantial salaries.

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Thousands of Newham College London students raise donations for a local Food Bank

Students and staff from Newham College London came together in a fantastic show of community spirit to collect nearly 300 food items for a food bank in Custom House.

Over a 10-week period, around 4,000 students across the college's campuses in East Ham, Stratford, Institute of Technology in Canning Town and NewVic Sixth Form Centre in Plaistow took part in a coordinated donation drive in support of Ascension Community Trust, a charity which runs Newham District Food Bank.

On 19 May, student and staff representatives from the college proudly delivered 298 donated items to the charity - exceeding their initial expectations.

Maxine-Rose, Student Union President at NewVic Sixth Form Centre, who played a key role in promoting the campaign among students commented, "I believe that the student body should give back to the local community. Young people can have a positive impact when they come together - and the response demonstrates the generosity and commitment of students."

Fizha, Head of Student Tutorials and a Citizenship Teacher said, "I'm amazed by the response from students and staff. We aimed to collect one crate of items - but the result was five full crates!"

"Prior to the project, we researched the causes of poverty in Newham,



so we knew food poverty is a huge issue in the borough. A high percentage of our students also use food banks, so we wanted to support our local community."

"It's the first time this initiative has been rolled out across all of

our college campuses. Students took part in a six-week social action tutorial project. The college is passionate about encouraging students to become active citizens.

Vicky Torrance, CEO of Ascension Community Trust said, "These donations will make a real difference to us. Every year we feed about 5,000 people and we can't do this on our own - feeding the community is everyone's business."

"If there's one action, everyone can take to help address food poverty, it is to download the Bank the Food App. It's a fantastic app which enables you to track in real-time items desperately needed by your local food bank and where to drop them off."

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Residents' homes panel in disillusion protest

AIDAN WHITE

Promises of more local democracy and more resident engagement from Newham's new mayor Councillor Forhad Hussain will be tested in the coming weeks.

Members of a Borough-wide housing repairs panel of council tenants set up under the Borough's resident engagement strategy tell *Newham Voices* that they have been side-lined and their recommendations on improving the repairs service have been largely ignored.

The panel members say they have complained about the lack of action and used the Council's official complaints system.

"They repeatedly offer a list of hypocritical excuses, and it doesn't get anywhere. What they'd ideally like of course, is to have a bunch of patsies on a panel,



John Gray

so it would look like accountability, yet the officers would be able to manipulate it, and its members wouldn't have the confidence to challenge them effectively," said one of the panel members, who asked not to be named.

'You cannot run an effective housing management service if you don't have meaningful and accountable contact with tenants and residents'.

The problems have not been made easier they say by the high turnover of staff in the housing service, and recently, with many people hired on an 'interim' basis, as they have tried to deal with the crisis that overwhelmed the service when the government regulator's report on housing services in the

Borough gave Newham the lowest grade.

In response to the regulator's report a series of internal actions were taken including the setting up of another forum – the Resident Challenge Board – but this is specifically to monitor the adherence of the Council to a council-regulator agreed programme of reforms and does not address the specific recommendations in the earlier panel report.

"We are very disillusioned with the way they have treated us, and this is not an especially new thing," says the panel.

Now the Council's new Cabinet lead on housing, Councillor John Gray, who is also Deputy Mayor, says that he will set up a fresh meeting to get the work back on track.

"I have always had the belief that you cannot run an effective housing management service if you don't have meaningful and accountable contact with tenants and residents," he said, promising to look into the matter and set up a further meeting with Council officers.

Chandos Community Centre 'lock-out'

AIDAN WHITE

A catastrophic breakdown in communications has led to a community group being locked out of their Council-owned community centre.

Anita Foreman, the secretary of the Chandos Community Association, says the group's access to the Chandos Community Centre in Stratford and their provision of services to local residents has been blocked by the Council.

"Since Newham Council took over management of Chandos Community Centre, the situation has deteriorated significantly," she says.

"What was initially presented as a supportive, temporary arrangement has turned into an ongoing dispute marked by a lack of transparency, inconsistent communication, and what we feel is heavy-handed and unreasonable treatment."

The association was relocated to Chandos temporarily after their original community centre was scheduled to be knocked down and rebuilt.

"We were told this move would allow us to continue delivering activities while also giving us the opportunity to save funds in preparation for returning to our original site," said Anita, "however, we have received little to no meaningful update about its progress despite repeated requests."

She says the association is being asked to agree to high usage charges, including a proposed £1,500 monthly fee for the lounge area.

"As a volunteer-led, non-profit organisation that delivers largely free events for the community, these costs are simply not sustainable," she said.

She says the Council is seeking to charge £4,411.88 in alleged arrears for hall bookings but the association claims these charges are unfair and have not been properly justified.

Matters escalated further when the Council decided to change the locks at the centre without informing the Association of the date.

"We are now being denied access to the building entirely, including our own belongings, unless we meet a list of conditions such as signing a formal agreement, making payments, and providing documentation," said Anita who complains of little evidence of genuine engagement or willingness to find a workable solution.

The Council has told the Association that other community centres operate under the same pricing model, but Anita says their Association is in a different situation. "We are a displaced organisation operating under what was supposed to be a temporary arrangement due to Council-led redevelopment."

Workshop celebrating creativity and wellbeing

BE MANZINI

We gathered in a room at Forest Gate Library, yoga mats fanned across the floor, ambient sound threaded with poetry moving softly through the space.

More than a workshop, it became a moment to rest, reconnect to the body, and commune through words, hearts, light touch and hugs where needed during what feels like a particularly heavy time for many people and for the world. There were tears, laughter and a deep connection with the body, mind and each other.

I have always been fascinated by the relationship between music, poetry and communal healing and the many forms that mix can take. As part of Creativity and Wellbeing Week, the Embodied Listening workshop explored how creativity can become both a form of communion and a tool for healing.

We witnessed people arrive carrying fatigue and tension, then leave a little lighter — with brighter smiles, softer faces, and more of a bounce in their step. Those transformations matter deeply.

My critical hope, which is the theme for this year, is that we continue creat-

ing and sharing spaces like this: spaces where we feel a little less alone, where we are not simply surviving circumstances not of our choosing, but are given room to create, connect, imagine and with a goal to ultimately thrive as we deserve.

The free Embodied Listening workshop took place in May, supported by Newham Council and the London Arts and Health Initiative. To host or attend a future workshop, or the poetry reading taking place during Refugee Week in June, follow [@bemanzini](#) on Instagram or email: newhampoetryprize@gmail.com to join the mailing list.





OUT AND ABOUT IN NEWHAM

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

EXHIBITION

Newham-born Forces' Sweetheart Dame Vera Lynn's personal belongings are on display at the **Imperial War Museum**.

Her daughter Virginia told *Newham Voices*: "I chose the IWM for some of my mother's war time memorabilia because it seems the most appropriate place."



Dame Vera Lynn, image ©IWM

AWARDS

V&A East Storehouse, which opened in May 2025, has been selected as one of the finalists for Art Fund Museum of the Year 2026, the world's largest museum prize.

The winner of the £120,000 prize will be announced on 25 June at a ceremony at Cutty Sark in London. Each of the four other finalists will be given £20,000.

Local BBC 1Xtra broadcaster Fee Mak and *Trench* magazine reporter Naz from Newham conducted interviews on the red carpet of the **MOBO Awards**. Local musician D Double E performed during the *MOBO Salutes: Grime 25'* medley.

Jo Martin, from Newham, was honoured at the **British Urban Film Festival** for her contribution to film and television across four decades.

EVENTS

The Music is Black festival *The Music is Ours* is a family-friendly weekend curated by Footsie honouring East London's Soundsystem legacy and recognising Grime's game-changing impact on sound and bass.

13 - 14 June, 12pm - 7pm, *The Waterfront Stage and Mid Terrace Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park*

The community programme **Bittersweet: Legacies of Sugar** will be launched by the Newham African Caribbean Heritage Reference Group in partnership with Museum X, with funding from the Lyle Local Fund.

Free tickets available from Eventbrite.
6 June, 1 - 4pm, *Cundy Community Centre*

Discover Children's Story Centre is reopening on 20 June with a new Baby and Toddler Sensory Story Space, a frontage mural by artist Hanna Benihoud and a new café and bookshop.

Newham Volunteer Fair is part of National Volunteers week (1 - 7 June)

Free tickets available from Eventbrite.
4 June, 3pm - 7pm, *East Ham library*.

Green Fair by Sustainable Newham takes place during the Great Big Green Week.

7 June, *Stratford Park, West Ham Lane, E15*.

BOOKS

Local author **Kia Abdullah**'s fifth novel, *What Happens in the Dark*, has been nominated for the Theakston Old Peculier Crime Novel of the Year, the UK and Ireland's most prestigious crime fiction award.

The shortlist will be announced on 18 June. The winner will be named at a special ceremony at the Theakston Old Peculier Crime Writing Festival on 23 July.

Signed copies of *What Happens in the Dark* are available at Newham Bookshop

Rosetta Arts will host the official launch of Nadine Holdsworth's new book, *Homelessness in Performance, Art and Society: Becoming Visible* alongside an exhibition co-created with Arts & Homelessness International artists Amerah Saleh and Calum Perrin. Tickets available via Eventbrite.

11 June, 5.30pm - 8.30pm, *Rosetta Arts, 1 Hamilton Road, E15*

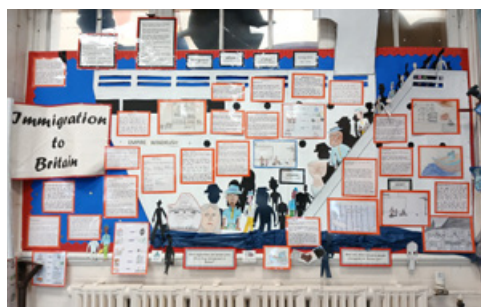
MUSIC

Drummer **John Withers** celebrated his 97th birthday in May playing at St Antony's Catholic Club, aka Red House, Jazz Nights

Forest Gate-born John was recently interviewed for *Sound Waves: Music in Newham, 60 Years of Local Music, Venues and Community*. The project was created by Rendezvous Projects CIC in partnership with Newham Music and supported by the National Lottery Heritage Fund.

WINDRUSH

Monega Primary School pupils created an Empire Windrush artwork display. Windrush Day takes place on 22 June.



Monega Primary School Windrush artwork ©Neandra Etienne

The Company of The Harder They Come at Stratford East (2026). Photography by Pamela Raith



THEATRE

Stratford East alumnus Matthew Xia's production of the reggae musical *The Harder They Come* is back at Stratford East from 16 May to 4 July. Written by Tony Award and Pulitzer Prize-winning playwright Suzan-Lori Parks, the play is based on the 1970's film of the same name. This staging features brand-new songs.

Stratford East has secured £1,700,000 from the Creative Foundations Fund to undertake vital restoration work.

East London Shakespeare Festival returns to Newham with their new production, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.

The show is a fun, family-friendly take on Shakespeare's comedy, and includes Newham actor Jack Bence in the roles of Oberon and Bottom.

Jack Bence, who is best known for playing Grayson in *Bad Education*, told *Newham Voices*: "I'm most excited about bringing the show to where I grew up. East Ham was really important in shaping who I am and I'm very excited to return home doing what I love."

25 - 26 June, *Central Park, East Ham*.

Midsummer Magic at **Art in the Docks** is a hands-on creative workshop including a children's adaptation of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Donations can be made via Eventbrite.

13 June, 12pm, *Art in the Dock's Outdoor Stage, 25 Shackleton Way, E16*.

BLUE PLAQUE

A London English Heritage blue plaque will be unveiled in June to honour **Kamal Chunchie** (1886-1953). Kamal was a pastor and community activist of Sri Lankan heritage who supported East London Black and Asian communities. He also founded the Coloured Men's Institute (CMI) in Canning Town in 1926.

The road leading up to the Greater London Authority in Royal Docks was renamed Kamal Chunchie in tribute to him.

PRIDE

Forest Gayte Pride takes place from 26 to 28 June.

Steven Braines was a Green Party candidate in Newham's recent local election but as the votes were being counted Steven transformed into his drag alter ego Sandra Spitz and performed at a sold-out wrestling show in East London.

Steven was nominated for LGBTQIA+ leader of the year at the National Diversity Awards. He cofounded HE.SHE.THEY, which has been at Newham venues such as Fold and The Cause.

HE.SHE.THEY centres on diversity and inclusion in the music industry and beyond.

Sandra Spitz is making her stand up debut at The Comedy Store on 21 June.



Sandra Spitz, image ©Rob Head Drop

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

Autism and mental health: a secure space for solidarity

NICK GILL

A local peer support group for autistic people who have experienced mental health challenges has been speaking in World Autism Acceptance Month about the “vital” role it’s playing in people’s lives.

Speak Out Newham was invited to talk on community radio station Nagrecha Radio about its free mental health peer support group for autistic adults in May.

Run by national advocacy charity VoiceAbility, the group provides a safe and welcoming space for autistic adults

with shared experiences of mental health to connect, support one another, and explore ways to improve their lives.

Trish Moody, a VoiceAbility facilitator who has two young grandchildren with an autism diagnosis, explained how the group came about.

“Because many services are closing, there is very little free support in Newham for people with autism and mental health needs to come together and support one another,” she said.

Trish said that since launching the peer support group – which runs on every second Monday of the month at

the Resource Centre in Chargeable Lane, Plaistow – it “has been working really well”.

VoiceAbility peer support worker Bella Miles, who was diagnosed with autism later in life and has lived with complex mental health challenges since childhood, spoke about how peer support is “all about people coming together through shared lived experience”.

“What makes it so powerful – and so crucial – is that it’s mutual,” said Bella.

“It’s not about one person being ‘helped’. Everyone brings value through their own experiences, and that creates a really empowering dynamic where people feel less alone and more confident in themselves.

“That’s especially important because many autistic people experience isolation – whether that’s due to anxiety, agoraphobia, or co-occurring physical health conditions. So having a space where you feel genuinely understood, seen, and accepted without needing to mask or explain yourself can be incredibly powerful.”

The group welcomes any adult who is struggling with their mental health and is autistic, self-diagnosed as autistic or is exploring/considering their own autism and wants to learn more.

There is no need to book – just turn up to the Resource Centre in Chargeable Lane, Plaistow (E13 8DW) between 12.30pm and 2pm on the second Monday of any month.



Poetry in Mind

Zhenreenah Muhxinga shares a tribute for all fathers

Happy Father’s Day, Daddy

Today is the day to feel happy
You are strong in love and loyalty
Your presence is royalty
Working hard from day to night
To make sure his family’s future
is bright

Through every prayer, struggle, and every test
Father always tries to give his best
To protect and provide
His love will not hide
No matter the storm, no matter the pain
He stands beside his children again and again

With guidance, wisdom, strength, and care
A good Father will always be there
Because there’s no better
Than a loving wonderful Father
Happy Father’s Day to the fathers
who work hard, love deeply, and hold
their families together with strength
and care.



Science from the heart

RICHARD STUBBS

In April I attended a graduation ceremony for Citizen Scientists held at UCL East in Stratford. The students had been recruited by Newham Community Research Network, a network of local groups, funded to support local people identify issues that are important to them, acquire research skills, carry out research and thereby help support local action to address the needs of their community.

It was fascinating listening to the graduates talk about their work, for instance *Mothers Between Two Worlds* by Nahid Shaikh, who had come to this country eight years ago.

She had a child and then researched the issue of immigrant mothers bringing up children in a world where the child is fluent in English and fits in easily with its culture whereas the mother has difficulties adapting with both.

Another, Almas Ali Mohammed, described his work on the problems international students face in terms of isolation, financial pressures and

adjusting to a new culture. Another issue identified was the problem of migrant professionals unable to follow their careers in the UK, one example given being a doctor having to work as a fast-food delivery driver.

I asked the graduates what they felt they had gained most from their experience and the consensus appeared to be increased confidence. All had chosen topics based on their personal experience, so they understood the issues and were committed to the research. For many it appeared to be less a graduation and more the beginning of working towards making changes.

The training and support offered to the Citizen Scientists was led by Joseph Cook and Twinkle Jay from the UCL Citizen Science Academy. No qualifications or prior research experience was required to join the project, just a passion for the local community and a willingness to try new things.

The group of graduates I listened to were all addressing problems facing “Migrants and Refugees in Newham”. The second group focusing on “Marginalised

Women” is now underway. Recruitment for the third and final group, “Young Adults with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities”, will take place later this year. If you would like to be involved in this project somehow please contact the Newham CRN at marilyn@compost-london.org.uk.

A book on the citizen scientists work will be launched during Refugee Week 2026, and will be viewable online at www.newhamcrn.org.uk from mid-June.



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from Newham every
second week!

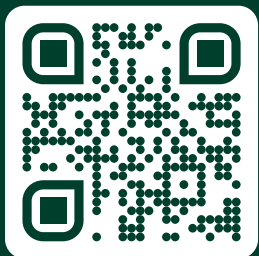
Waltham Forest College



#1 London College

for 16-18 year old student achievement

Waltham Forest College has been ranked Number 1 in London for student achievement among 16-18-year-olds in the National Achievement Rate Tables (NARTs) for Further Education in England 2024/25, rated 'Outstanding' by Ofsted, and is one of the UK's highest-performing further education institutions.



#ThinkBIG

APPLY NOW



Ashok's Vision International named finalist for Greener London Award

BOYA SUN AND ZARA FAROOQI

Ashok's Vision International (AVI) is a youth-led mental health charity based in Newham, supporting young people through environmental projects, wellbeing activities and community-based initiatives. Since 2019, we have created opportunities for young people to build confidence, develop leadership skills and strengthen their connection with the local community through practical, hands-on experiences.

Over the last seven years, AVI has delivered more than 600 projects, worked with over 35 partner organisations, and engaged more than 11,750 young people across Newham through environmental, wellbeing and community-based work.

We are incredibly proud to have been recognised as Finalists for the Greener London Award at the London Youth Achievement Awards 2026, due to be presented as *Newham Voices* went to press at London City Hall, the office of Mayor Sadiq Khan. This recognition reflects the collective effort behind AVI and celebrates the dedication of young people who continue to lead environmental and community-focused work across Newham.

As a grassroots organisation, funding plays an important role in helping us continue our work. Through community-led projects, we have secured funding from Newham Council. We also recently received funding from the Asda Foundation and the



Alec Dickson Trust. Many of our youth leaders are also involved in supporting funding applications, gaining real experience in teamwork, communication and leadership along the way.

One of the most rewarding parts of AVI is seeing young people grow into leadership roles and gradually find their voice within the community. Sayeed, one of our trustees, reflects on this journey, sharing how meaningful it has been to work alongside young people and partners across Newham.

As he puts it: "I have found it deeply rewarding to work alongside fellow trus-

tees and youth leaders, witnessing the charity's positive impact on many young people. This experience enables us to network and collaborate with influential individuals, such as the Mayor of Newham. The most fulfilling aspect is witnessing its growth and seeing young people across Newham engage and contribute to their community."

The impact of AVI is also felt strongly within families. Yusaf's mum shared how his time with AVI began during a difficult period, when he was feeling isolated and unsure of himself. Over time, she watched him slowly grow in confidence, begin

speaking publicly, take on leadership roles, and become part of a supportive youth-led team.

She said: "What kept him coming back was the sense of belonging — he felt seen, valued and part of something meaningful. As a parent, watching this transformation has been incredibly moving. Knowing AVI has been shortlisted fills me with so much pride. It reflects his growth, his hard work, and the support the charity has given him."

The roots of AVI go back to personal purpose. Founder Shofa Miah launched Ashok's Vision International in memory of her brother, Ashok Ali (1974–2003), whose life continues to inspire the charity's mission of connecting young people with nature and supporting mental health wellbeing.

"Our young people are our future," says volunteer Koli Begum. "It's on all of us to guide them, open doors for them, and encourage them to become the best versions of themselves. When we do, we help them grow into people who contribute with integrity, purpose and a deep sense of worth."

As Ashok's Vision International continues to grow, this recognition motivates us to expand our work further and create more opportunities for young people across Newham. More importantly, it reinforces our belief that when young people are trusted, supported and given space to lead, they don't just take part in change, they create it.

Women's lives in film

An exploration of women's stories, representation and lived experience through film is being launched by The Women's Museum in partnership with Film London Artist's Moving Image Network and Film London Spotlight.

The *Materiality of Memory*, film programme will run from June 11 until November 19.

The Women's Museum, 4 - 5 Barking Wharf Square, IG11 7DQ

For more information, please visit womensmuseum.org.uk



Champions at Jack Petchey's Speak Out Challenge!

JAMES MORGAN

On 23 April, the Royal Docks Academy played host to the Newham Regional Final of Jack Petchey's *Speak Out Challenge!*, the UK's largest youth public speaking competition.

At the event, Jemima Sarker, representing Sarah Bonnell School, was crowned Newham Regional Champion with Favour Nana, representing Langdon Academy runner-up. Arta Siddique, representing St Angela's Ursuline School, came third.

The *Speak Out Challenge*, delivered by the Speakers Trust in partnership with the Jack Petchey Foundation, sees Year ten students from every state school in London and Essex perform a speech on a subject of their choice to an audience of peers, friends, teachers and parents.

To reach the regional final, participants must first pass through a series of competitive stages, beginning with a bespoke workshop designed to help them craft their speech, and a school level assembly final where peers vote for the best

performances. Participation at all levels requires great creativity and skill – the speeches are delivered without notes and are strictly timed at three minutes – and no small amount of courage.

The judging panel at the Newham Regional Final included West Ham and Beckton MP James Asser. "It's been fun and inspiring and it was a great event to take part in," said competition winner Jemima who now moves on to the national semi-final for a chance to reach the grand final due to be held at the Cambridge Theatre, London on 6 July.



COMMUNITY NEWS ROUNDUP

By Neandra Etienne

Top class, Sir David!

Monega Primary School's day of celebration for Sir David Attenborough's 100th birthday was featured on ITV London News on 8 May. Pupils took part in creative and thoughtful activities inspired by Sir David's lifelong dedication to the natural world and environment.

They wrote cards and letters of thanks to express their appreciation for his work, created portraits celebrating his life and achievements, while classroom discussions and debates focused on key environmental issues affecting the planet today. The celebrations ended with a special lunchtime party



that included Sir David's favourite treat, ice cream.

Headteacher Elizabeth Harris told *Newham Voices*: "The children loved having the opportunity to showcase their school on television. All pupils are incredibly proud of the work they do to promote sustainability and protect the environment, and they thoroughly enjoyed watching the clip back."

Royal visit to campus

The Princess of Wales visited the University of East London's Stratford Health Campus on 6 May to launch *Foundations for Life: A Guide to Social and Emotional Development*, an educational guide for people working with babies, young children and their families. It was developed by The Royal Foundation Centre for Early Childhood and founded by the Princess of Wales in 2021.

Balance sheets for score sheets

Intuit for Education brought its Financial Literacy Forum event series to West Ham United's home at the London Stadium.

Students and teachers from East London schools, in collaboration with the West Ham United Foundation, took part in interactive learning, real-world financial and business simulations, which were designed to bring financial concepts to life.

Educator, author and West Ham United Foundation Education Ambassador, Bobby Seagull, and former West Ham United defender and Club Ambassador, Anton Ferdinand discussed the importance of financial education and their own entrepreneurial experiences.

...And Finally

The 20th anniversary Mass for Migrants celebration, for the Feast of St Joseph the Worker, took place at St Antony of Padua Catholic Church in Forest Gate on 4 May, and finally a date for the diary – World Environment Day is on 5 June.

June Health Awareness Campaigns in Newham

SHEILA NURSINHULU

June brings several important national health awareness campaigns.

Carers Week (8-14 June) recognises the contribution of unpaid carers and highlights the challenges many face. This year's theme, Building Carer Friendly Communities, encourages better support and understanding for carers. Newham has planned activities through the local carers network and community organisations. Please check the Council website for events which require advance booking. Visit: <https://tinyurl.com/mry69r9k>.

This year's **Loneliness Awareness Week (15-21 June)** theme is "Giving

Loneliness A Voice". It reminds us that social connection is vital for good mental and physical health. Newham's Be Connected programme is running local activities. For more information, visit: <https://tinyurl.com/bdeuwn67>.

Mental wellbeing remains a focus across the Borough. Organisations such as Healthwatch Newham and Mind in Tower Hamlets, Newham and Redbridge continue to provide support, information and wellbeing activities for residents.

For local activities, resources and support, residents can visit Newham Council, Well Newham, local libraries and community wellbeing services for updated events throughout June.

LOCAL NOTICES

Published 29th May 2026

LICENSING ACT 2003 Application for a New Premises Licence

Premises Name: Chain Coffee Master
Applicant: GUAPOTEAM UK LTD
Address: The Sphere, 110 Silvertown Way, London, United Kingdom, E16 1EA

Licensable Activities:

- Sale of Cocktails, Coffee and Individual Alcoholic Drinks (for consumption on the premises only)
- No large-scale music entertainment
- Children may enter but alcohol will not be sold or supplied to persons under 18

Proposed Days and Hours:

- Monday – Sunday: 11:00 – 22:59

Notice Period:

Start Date: 3 April 2026
End Date: 12 June 2026

Representations:

Any responsible authority or any other person wishing to make representations regarding this application must do so in writing to:
Licensing Team
East Ham Town Hall
Barking Road
East Ham
London E6 2R

Representations must be received within 28 days from the day after the application was received.

LICENSING ACT 2003 Application for a New Premises Licence

We Chai and Chill Food Service LTD have applied to NEWHAM COUNCIL for a premises licence for **172 High Street North, London, England, E6 2JA** so that the following licensable activities may be provided on the following days and hours:

Provision of late night refreshment

- Mon – Sun 23:00-03:00.

Newham Council's Licensing Register is kept at the office of the Licensing Team, Town Hall, 328 Barking Road, East Ham, E6 2RT (open from 10.00am to 4.00pm Monday to Friday) any queries should be sent to licensing@newham.gov.uk.

Any representations against the application must be made in writing and received by the Licensing Team at the above address or via email, by no later than the **15/06/2026**

Note: It is an offence, liable on conviction to a fine up to £5,000 for a person to knowingly or recklessly make a false statement in connection with the application.

LICENSING ACT 2003 Application for a New Premises Licence

We The Crystxl Lounge Ltd c/o Shereen-Crystal Emmanuel have applied to NEWHAM COUNCIL for a premises licence for **The Crystxl Lounge, 339 Barking Road East Ham E6 1LA**, an event space for private and community events, workshops and creative activities with licenced bar (sale of alcohol), independent movie screenings and live and recorded music so that the following licensable activities may be provided on the following days and hours:

Movie Screenings

- Monday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, Saturday and Sunday from 19:00 – 22:30

Live Music

- Wednesday and Friday from 18:00 – 22:00

Recorded Music

- Monday to Sunday from 10:00 – 23:00

Sales of alcohol

- Monday to Sunday from 12:00 – 23:00

Newham Council's Licensing Register is kept at the office of the Licensing Team, Town Hall, 328 Barking Road, East Ham, E6 2RT (open from 10.00am to 4.00pm Monday to Friday) any queries should be sent to licensing@newham.gov.uk.

Any representations against the application must be made in writing and received by the Licensing Team at the above address or via email, by no later than the **06/06/2026**

Note: It is an offence, liable on conviction to a fine up to £5,000 for a person to knowingly or recklessly make a false statement in connection with the application.

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Email for a quote to licences@socialspider.com or call Klaudia Kiss 07732 000 430 or Mark Brown 07728 520 116
Next publication date: 26th June | Booking deadline: 24th June



Get to know the faces behind your local community newspaper

Indie News Week is the celebration of independent news. In 2026, we would like to give our readers the chance to celebrate Indie News Week by learning more about the faces behind their local community newspaper and what goes into accurately covering local stories.

Meet with our staff and some of our many valued contributors/volunteers:

Neandra Etienne, Chief Reporter and Culture Editor

Neandra is one of the founding team of writers for *Newham Voices*. She is our Chief Reporter and Culture Editor. Neandra's reporting features prominently in all our work – covering local news, arts reporting, and also stories about the sporting lives and times of Newham residents.



Her *Out and About* column is the go-to place to find out what's happening, and where, across the Borough every month. She's our primary contact for news on the cultural and creative life of Newham, both past and present.

Jean Gray, Managing Editor

Jean is our Managing Editor, the key person in keeping our editorial work up to standard. For almost 20 years she led the team at



Nursing Standard, Britain's leading journal for nurses and health workers.

In the 1970s she worked as a journalist on local papers in Newham and East London. She also provided professional support to homeless people producing their own newspaper. She set up the unique *Newham Voices* training programme which has given our team of volunteers guidance and support in developing their journalistic skills.

Mickey Ambrose, Columnist

Mickey is a former professional footballer with Chelsea and Charlton. His monthly *On The Ball* column keeps a close eye on the ups (and downs) of West Ham Utd, but his talents also extend to media and social concerns. He is a formidable public speaker and has written powerful and challenging pieces on homelessness and inequality.



His connections in parliament and in society – even royalty – give him unique insights and make him one of the most influential members of our editorial team as a champion of diversity and equal rights.

Aidan White, Editor and Founder

Aidan is the Editor and founder of *Newham Voices*. He worked on local papers in Newham in the 1970s and later for the *Guardian*. For 25 years he led the world's largest journalist's organisation based in



Brussels and returned to Newham in 2013.

He is a long-time campaigner against racism and supporter of local democracy. He's responsible for management of the team of volunteers who produce the paper.

Shofa Miah, Contributor

Shofa is a local government professional and founder of the Forest Gate Charity Ashok's Vision, promoting the rights and interest of young people. She has written on community actions and has, importantly, helped *Newham Voices* provide a space for young people to write and express themselves freely. Like other volunteers on our team, she is actively engaged in the life of the community.

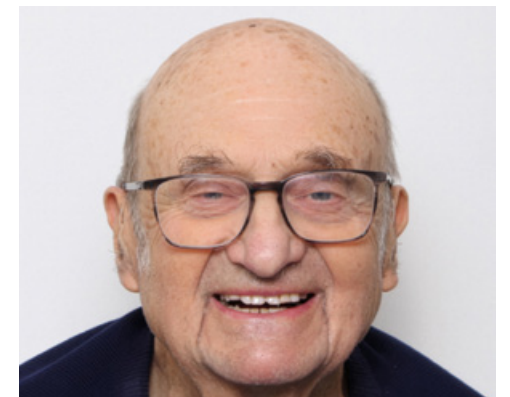


Peter Landman, Contributor

Peter is based in East Ham. He is retired, but is a veteran *Newham Voices* journalist, report-

ing on news from the Town Hall. He writes a regular Council notebook. He is also an activist for rights of older people and reports regularly on the meetings of Newham's Older People's Reference Group.

He is also deeply involved in community life and has worked closely with the project-based People's Powered Places programme



Simon Shaw, Contributor

Simon is a local teacher, community activist and writer on political and social affairs. He has written specifically on the rights of migrants and refugees. Prior to the recent elections he wrote profiles of political leaders. His insightful reporting helps readers make sense of an otherwise often confused and changing political landscape.



Newham Voices has 36 readers who are supporters of the work we do in covering local news and highlighting issues that are important to our community. We are independent, and we write the facts without bias.

Can you spare £5 a month? Not much, but sometimes it is what we need. *Newham Voices* exists because our readers are backing us up. Join and support: newhamvoices.co.uk/membership

Get Dance From Every Angle

Acosta Danza Y Junior

Next Generation



17 - 20 Jun 26

Interplay

Phoenix Dance Theatre



24 - 27 Jun 26

Vicki Igbokwe-Ozoagu's

OUR MIGHTY GROOVE



2 - 4 Jul 26

Aakash Odedra Company

Songs of the Bulbul



7 - 11 Jul 26



SOMETHING'S BREWING



There's a Forest Gate pub for sale, but Phil Mellows is not buying it

Early doors at the Rising Sun and I'm first in. It's a nice day so the friendly chap behind the bar asks me whether I'd like to drink my Guinness in the garden.

He leads me past the pool hall at the back and through a corridor into a small, neglected yard. He draws up a decent chair to catch a patch of sunshine and, with difficulty, drags an extremely heavy guano-spattered table into position by my elbow before disappearing back inside.

I'm here because the Rising Sun, on Romford Road in Forest Gate, is up for sale. Not that I'm buying. The price tag is an astonishing £6 million. Whoever's in the market for this, they're not interested in a run-down pub business.



The agent selling the freehold is Tyron Ash Real Estate, not one of the usual licensed property firms. Its website announces "luxury properties across the UK and Dubai" and there's a photo of the team, young and smartly dressed, archly posed in front of a black marble counter upon which a woman in a bright red dress is, hilariously, half reclined.

What do they know of Forest Gate?

The advert on RightMove describes what we get for our £6 million. The pub itself, two bars and the pool room with its four tables and one of those punch-ball boxing machines you find at the fair, is taking £3,000 a week at the bar. Even after adding on another grand in machine takings this is death-rattle loose change.

The business is no doubt kept alive by letting out a flat and 11 rooms on the two storeys above.

More than 10,000 square feet in total, the agent suggests it could be converted into 25 apartments or a hotel, "or even kept as a public house" on the ground floor.

But a buyer will surely need to spend millions more to attract the high roller tenants and guests that will deliver a return on their investment.

Can it add up? The Rising Sun is certainly in a pleasant corner of the Borough, and with the Elizabeth Line now providing fast access into central London it could make Forest Gate and Manor Park ripe for gentrification. Retaining the pub might even be a selling point.

But I'm not buying it. In any sense. My money is on us losing another boozier.

Get your paper

Pick up *Newham Voices* all across the Borough!



Check out where newhamvoices.co.uk/pick-up-your-copy



*a selection of our regular stockists, but it is not an exhaustive list



Good reads in Newham

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

- **Humans Not Robots**
By Michail Antonio
- **The Book of Birds: A Field Guide to Wonder and Loss**
By Robert Macfarlane and Jackie Morris
- **John of John**
By Douglas Stuart
- **Piper at the Gates of Dusk**
By Patrick Ness
- **World of Football: My Ultimate Guide to the Game**
By Marcus Rashford
- **Beti and the Little Round House**
By Atinuke (Illustrated by Emily Hughes)

Michail Antonio will be signing copies of his book at Newham Bookshop on Sunday 31 May from 2-4 pm.

– Compiled by David Ceen, Newham Bookshop

Bookshop award

Newham Bookshop is one of 44 independent bookshops to receive a Penguin Children's Bookshop Grant for 2026

The scheme provides grants of between £1,500 - £5,000 for projects that are free of charge and designed to encourage children and young people to read, and that provide increased access to books.

The naval hero who brought the cedars to West Ham Park

RON INELL, FRIENDS OF WEST HAM PARK

Many famous people have resided in West Ham Park notably Dr. John Fothergill, Samuel Gurney and Elizabeth Fry. But one person who in his time was more famous than Admiral Horatio Nelson was Admiral Sir John Elliot who owned West Ham Park from 1752-1762.

He is said to have brought cones from cedar trees from Levant (Lebanon) and planted them in his garden, the house then known as The Cedars. It is also said that he gave young trees as presents to his family and friends.

Elliot was born in Scotland in 1732, the fourth son of Sir Gilbert Elliot, 2nd Baronet of Minto and Lord Chief Justice of Scotland.



Image: Cristina Gottardi/Pexels

Elliot joined the Royal Navy at a young age and after graduating from the Royal Naval Academy, Portsmouth he quickly rose through the ranks, partly due to his brother being a Lord of the Admiralty.

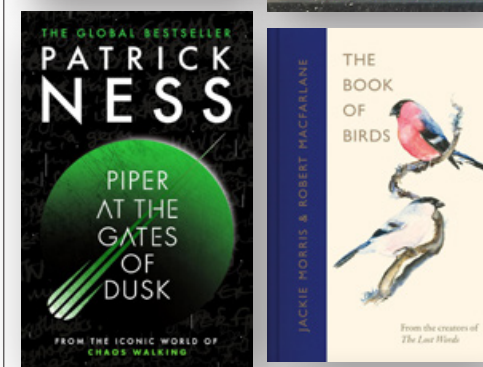
In 1758 he was given command of the new 32 gun frigate HMS Aeolas. Elliot had an extensive naval career in which he saw service in the Seven Years War, The American Civil War of Independence,

the Relief of Gibraltar and the Battle of Cape St Vincent, to name but a few.

It was during the Seven Years War that Elliot learned the whereabouts of the infamous French privateer Francois Thurot who had taken over the town of Carrickfergus in Ireland. Elliot immediately readied his ships and set off after him. Close to the Isle of Man a fierce battle took place resulting in Thurot being killed and 300 Frenchman being killed or wounded. Both the Irish and British parliaments sent commendations to Elliot and his Captains.

In 1786-1789 he was appointed Governor of Newfoundland

In 1795 Elliot was promoted to Admiral of the White but due to age and ill health he retired to his home in Roxburgshire, Scotland where he passed away in September 1808.



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

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SPORTS SHORTS

Compiled by Neandra Etienne



Derek Akosah March for Men

Viddal Riley became the cruiserweight European Champion after his win against Mateusz Masternank on the undercard of Derek Chisora vs. Deontay Wilder.

Viddal, who is newly managed by Anthony Joshua's 258 Management, trained for his fight at West Ham Boxing Club in Plaistow.

Former St Bon's student **Chuba Akpom** plays for Ipswich Town. They have been promoted to the Premier League.

The school's Head of PE Simon Firth was a guest on CommuniTEA Chat on ReviveFM, presented by Chief Reporter and Arts and Culture Editor Neandra Etienne, in May.

stbons.org

Congratulations to **Newham Wanderers FC** who are Premier Division West Champions. They have also been promoted to Essex Senior Division.

[@newhamwanderers](https://www.instagram.com/newhamwanderers)

A1 Judo Club, Palavani Judo Club and Stratford Judo club were part of the Newham team that took part in the 2026 London Youth Games Judo Competition held at UEL SportsDock.

Tahmina Ada, Head Coach A1 Judo Club said: "As a coach, I couldn't be prouder of our Newham girls bringing home bronze at the London Youth Games. Our best result in years, and for many it was their first competition. The team spirit, courage, and support they showed each other made it a day to remember."

Ezri Konsa, from Newham, who has played for the England was among the team of Aston Villa players who won the Europa League on 20 May.

- FIFA World Cup 2026 England International friendlies 6 and 10 June
- FIFA World Cup 2026 World Cup 11 June to 19 July

Be Heard As One Chief Executive Officer Derek Akosah, who has lived in Newham all his life, will be taking part in the annual **Prostate Cancer UK March For Men**.

Former manager and West Ham United player Chris Hughton, from Newham, was diagnosed with prostate cancer in April 2025. He had an early diagnosis and underwent surgery in May.

March for Men sponsored by Bupa, 13 June, Battersea Park, event village will be open from 9am

June is Men's Health Month
[@officialbeheardasone](https://www.instagram.com/officialbeheardasone)

Stratford based **London Lions** completed a historic Super League Basketball (SLB) quadruple

- SLB Playoff Champions
- SLB Regular Season Champions
- SLB Cup Champions
- SLB Trophy Champions

Captain Ovie Soko announced his retirement from professional basketball, he said: "It's a lifelong moment that will always be special to me. I appreciate the team, the fans, the season—it's really meaningful. It's the perfect way to end my career."

thelondonlions.com



London Lions SLB Playoff Final. Image ©Nathan Green

Newham based **Central Park Allstars FC** grassroots football team will receive a grant of up to £3,000 through London City Airport's annual Community Fund.

London City Airport granted £36,000 to 13 charities and not-for-profit organisations across six boroughs.

The deadline for local charities and not-for-profit organisations to apply for the next round of Community Fund grants is 26 June.

[@cpa.fc](https://www.instagram.com/cpa.fc)



Central Park Allstars FC

North Woolwich based **Fight for Peace** is running free women-only Brazilian Jiu Jitsu sessions at their Academy, every Monday from 7pm-8.30pm.

Open to all abilities.

Fight for Peace is also taking applications for their sports-based education programme for 16-18 year olds, which starts in September.

For more information please contact education@fightforpeace.net or join their open days on 17 June and 15 July from 5pm

fightforpeace.net

Oona Siren won **West Ham United** women's team's 2025/26 Hammer of the Year and Goal of the Season awards.
whufc.com/en/teams/womens-team

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

Inspiring the next generation of boxers

KAYLA MARIE TROY

Local youth organisation Fight for Peace recently saw coach and professional boxer Dylan Adebisi continue his unbeaten run, with an impressive victory at York Hall – strengthening his reputation as one of East London's rising boxing talents while inspiring the next generation through his work with young people in Newham.

Competing on Sunday 3 May, Adebisi delivered a composed six-round performance against Jordan Grannum, using sharp movement and fast jabs to secure his fourth professional win.

But beyond the success in the ring, Adebisi's impact is being felt closer to home through his role as a coach at Fight for Peace, where he mentors young people and helps them build confidence, discipline and resilience.

Having first joined Fight for Peace himself at the age of 16 to train in muay thai, Adebisi never imagined he would go on to become a professional boxer.

"Becoming a professional boxer was never part of the plan," he said. "I just wanted to learn the skills and train, like a lot of young people who come to Fight for Peace."

Coaches at the Newham organisation quickly recognised his potential and encouraged him to transition into boxing. At 18, he won his first amateur bout at a Fight for Peace home show,



Dylan at York Hall, ©Andrei Gradinar

kick-starting a successful amateur career that included three London regional titles and a national title.

Adebisi says the journey helped him develop confidence that did not come naturally to him growing up – something he now hopes to pass on to the young people he coaches.

"Someone told me recently that often a boy's first male role model is a PE teacher if they don't have a father figure around," he said. "I related to that. I like to think of myself as that person for some of the young people here."

Fight for Peace provides free boxing and martial arts for 7-25 year olds. For more information visit their website.

Relegation nightmare: the inquest begins



Mickey Ambrose asks:
Where Did It All Go Wrong for the Hammers?



It was a moment of irony and despair as 68,000 supporters crammed into the London Stadium on one of the hottest days of the year to watch the Hammers' final game of the Premier League season.

West Ham were always up against it going into the Leeds United match. They were sitting two points behind their relegation rivals Tottenham with a vastly inferior goal difference. There was an air of acceptance among fans that relegation was inevitable particularly after a poor first half display.

To the players' credit they battled in the second half and got the lead and win they needed to put the pressure back on to Tottenham, but to avoid the drop Spurs had to lose to an Everton side led by David Moyes, the man who just three years ago led the Hammers to their first major silverware in 43 years and the Europa Conference League title.

There was a certain irony to West Ham relying on David Moyes, their former Manager, to help them avoid relegation. But Moyes was not able to turn things around at Spurs, who won their game and consigned West Ham to the

Championship for next season.

West Ham fans vented their anger with chants against Chairman David Sullivan and their frustrations are certainly understandable with the prospect of second tier football looming and uncertainty over the future of some key players and manager Nuno Espirito Santo.

The last time West Ham were in the Championship, their stay was brief as they bounced back at the first time of asking. Whether that can be repeated depends on what happens in the coming months.

The one question I would like to ask is how can a team get rid of a manager who secures European glory and your first trophy in decades as they did with Moyes?

Moyes saved West Ham from relegation twice but it did not stop the club's bosses from dispensing with him for a second time in May 2024.

Now the club management has headaches aplenty – to keep star players and to continue to make the best of the London Stadium, a venue that cries out for some sort of atmosphere but continually suffers from being an athletic track rather than a football stadium.

In one sense you could say West Ham can feel hard done by because they went down with the highest points total in a decade.

But another view is that they have only themselves to blame. They have been in steady decline since deciding Moyes's football wasn't exciting enough and setting out to find a manager who could deliver results in the expansive style of the days of Brooking, Hurst, Devonshire and co. But when will fans realise that football is a results game!

I saw Moyes as always the stabiliser. West Ham first turned to him in November 2017, when they were in the bottom three, and he steered them to 13th. They then declined to extend his six-month deal, preferring the Premier League winner Manuel Pellegrini. They finished 10th under the Chilean but when his second season unravelled, West Ham decided perhaps Moyes wasn't so bad after all. They were 18th when he swallowed his pride and returned and he kept them up yet again.

Sixth and seventh-placed followed, then the Europa Conference League Trophy in one of the most successful periods in the club's history. And then the team that Moyes put out started to get a bit boring. They had stability alright, but it was all too beige: too built on solid defences and organised midfields and the fans didn't like it.

So they brought in Julen Lopetegui who lasted six months. Then came Graham Potter, who was sacked five games into

the season after winning three points.

Moyes was probably the ideal manager to replace Potter, but going back cap-in-hand once is one thing, twice was too embarrassing for all involved.

So in came Nuno Espirito Santo from Nottingham Forest, who sparked a fleeting recovery in November, only for a winless run from 22 November to mid-January to leave them seven points adrift of safety. Yet Nuno dug in and briefly lifted them out of the relegation zone.

But form collapsed, and three successive defeats, coinciding with Tottenham's resurgence under Robert De Zerbi left them on the brink.

With relegation confirmed Jarrod Bowen's name along with other key players will be on the lips of every West Ham fan, although they might hope that his father in law Danny Dyer might have a say in that decision.

Other stars, like Declan Rice, have left West Ham to win trophies. Other stars may follow him out of the door at West Ham.

But staying at the London Stadium will come at a price for Londoners who face a £2.5million bill because the Hammers will pay only half the rent when they are in the Championship and the rest of the bill for operating the London Stadium will be paid by London rate payers through the Greater London Authority.

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

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