



LRA's Loughton News

16 January 2026

In this issue, read that [May's local elections are still planned for](#), despite local government reorganisation looming.

The [winners of the Town Council's Christmas Window Competition](#) have been announced, with the cold weather please [take care at ponds in the Forest](#), and be aware of [road closures around town](#) from early February.

And, in case you tried LRA's Christmas Quiz for 2025 [here are details of the winner, and of course, the answers](#).

You can contact us by emailing contact@loughtonresidents.co.uk to raise an issue, give your views, or offer help.

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LRA News

May local elections

Following the Government's recent decision to defer the Mayor of Greater Essex election from 2026 to 2028, the Government offered to affected local councils a postponement of May's local elections.

District Council group leaders subsequently met to discuss the offer. Despite hearing about the cost of holding elections and that they risked delaying local government reorganisation, group leaders agreed that elections should still take place and no extraordinary meeting of full Council will be required to formalise the council's response. [More](#)

The final decision by the government on deferral of the elections is expected in the next few weeks.

18 District Council seats held by Cllrs who came third in the all-out, three-member ward elections in May 2024 will be up for election. These include four LRA Cllrs in the District Council's Loughton wards.

[Background on local government reorganisation](#) is on our website.

Infrastructure funding

The District Council has acquired significant sums from developers to be spent on local infrastructure under Section 106 legal agreements (although the funding element will be mostly replaced by the new Community Infrastructure Levy).

[The Council has produced this report](#) on the funding for 2024-25, with £4.6m secured, £1.5m received, and £202,950 spent. That difference can be partially attributed to the time required for developments to proceed and complete, and planning to spend the funds which can run over several years.

However there have been concerns in the past that the Council has failed to spend the money it has raised (some of which goes to other bodies for use on, for example, education and transport). The Council has stated that they are *"developing an enhanced governance framework to ensure the efficient and effective allocation of S106 funds. This will provide clearer oversight, strengthen consistency and transparency, and support the alignment of contributions with the Council's strategic priorities and community needs."*

There was a particular case a few years back in Loughton, where bus stop displays for the time of the next bus were meant to be fixed by means of a Section 106 in respect of a development on Newman's Lane. This was lost and the money returned to the developer. LRA Cllr Chris Pond has been assured that the same cannot now recur.



The winner and answers to LRA's Christmas Quiz

Thank you to all those who sent in their quiz – and to the very many who told us they hadn't because they were stuck on one clue or another. First out of the hat, and all correct, was Peter Kempe, who wins a £20 book token. [The answers are here.](#)

Congratulations to everyone who took part in this annual event. Happy New Year to you all.

Planning and Licensing

[Read more on our website](#) about Planning and Licensing, the role of the LRA Plans Group (LRAPG), how to get more information and how to comment to the Town Council and the District Council, and to the LRA Plans Group – please have your say.

You can [download the most recent week's applications here](#) or [search for planning applications here](#).

Wo Fat Restaurant, 270-272 High Road

This licensing application is for opening hours to be extended to 1am every day, with recorded music, indoor and outdoor refreshment, and sale of alcohol also until 1am.

LRAPG has objected to this application, given the disturbance this would inevitably cause to residents who live above and nearby, and from customers leaving the premises, many of whom will have parked in nearby quiet residential streets.

LRAPG thinks 11pm is the latest the Wo Fat should be open every evening. Even if the premises are well-sound-proofed, the noise of such customers (and their vehicles) leaving late at night, at a time when other daytime noises are much reduced, would obviously disturb residents.

Reference [WK/202513840](#)

Roads, Parking and Travel

Planned road closures

Dates and details can change so [check here for the latest updates](#), and for other planned roadworks including ones that involve only temporary traffic lights. Remember closures and road works can still happen without prior notice.

- Clifton Road and access to car parks - resurfacing of Clifton Road is continuing with the road fully closed between 8am and 5pm until the end of the month. There will be no access to the car parks behind the High Road between 8am and 5pm until 27 January (weekdays only). [More](#) and [more](#).
- [Sparelease Hill](#), [Tycehurst Hill](#), [Queens Road](#), [Hillyfields](#) - Permits have been granted to close parts or all of these roads from 2 February for some months for works by Thames Water. These seem very long closures; they could change. Check the links for the latest updates.
- Borders Lane - the side road outside the parade of shops will be closed on 2-27 February from 8am to 5pm for road reconstruction by the County Council. [More](#)
- The Croft - the road will be closed 2-7 February for works by Thames Water. [More](#)
- Oakwood Hill - the road will be closed between Chigwell Lane and Roding Road on 3-5 February from 8pm to 5am for road resurfacing by the County



Council. [More](#)

- Albert Road - the road will be closed from the junction of Elm Close to the junction of Cedar Close on 19 February from 7pm to 11pm for sewer cover replacement works by Thames Water. [More](#)

Police, Fire and Crime

Drug gangs arrests in 2025

A drug line run by three brothers which saw cocaine trafficked from the Midlands to the streets of Essex has been dismantled. This is one result from the work carried out by our Serious Violence Unit of the police which included:

- 460+ arrests
- 340+ suspects charged and remanded
- 220+ drug lines dismantled
- 30+ kilograms of drugs seized
- 130+ weapons recovered
- £360,000+ in criminal cash confiscated
- 50+ evidence packages prepared by our Orochi teams for enforcement.
- 190+ vulnerable adults and young people safeguarded
- 80+ referrals to partner services for support

[More](#)

Fraudsters using social media and messaging services

Just like with phone calls and SMS messages, fraudsters can make social media messaging appear genuine. Common frauds include:

- Social media account takeover also known as 'social media account compromise' which can result in you being locked out of your own account, as well as fraud criminals taking over a friend's account. Look out for unsolicited direct messages and odd posts from genuine contacts/friends on social media who may have had their account compromised.
- A message claiming to be from your child seeking financial support for a fictitious emergency. This is also known as the 'Hi Mum and Dad' fraud which started on WhatsApp but has also spread to text messages. Always take steps to double check you are communicating with the person you think you are speaking to.

Checking out financial firms

Scammers have got very good at producing lookalike websites pretending to be genuine investment firms. They also use social media, texts and phone calls to attract people's interest. Fall for one of these scams and your money will disappear, usually for good, and you won't be protected by the Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) rules.

The FCA now lets you check out a financial firm and make sure it's not a lookalike and whether they are authorised for the service you want. In addition you can check whether the contact details you've got for the firm match the ones held by the FCA – if not, it's a lookalike aiming to steal your cash. [More](#)

More from the police

- More from the police for [Loughton](#) and [Buckhurst Hill](#) including other news and crime statistics. The data is updated to November 2025.
- Some items we report on come from the Dispatch Newsletter from Essex Police. You can [subscribe here for free](#) (choose the Epping Forest edition).
- There are regular events in [Loughton](#) and [Buckhurst Hill](#) with the police locally. Just drop in, no booking required. [All future events are listed here](#).



Council News

Christmas Window Competition

The Town Council has thanked all the town's businesses that decorated their windows, bringing some festive cheer to the town. All Christmas-themed shop windows were automatically eligible which was split into four classes of entry – local/independent businesses, multiples/chain stores, charity shops and eateries (cafes, pubs and restaurants).

The judges this year were Town Mayor LRA Cllr David Wixley, along with LRA Cllrs Stephen Harriman and Wendy Dodd. The winners were:

- Forest Casual and Schoolwear (local/independent businesses)
- David Clulow Opticians (multiples/chain store)
- Haven House Children's Hospice (charity shops)
- The Aviary Bar & Brasserie (cafes, pubs and restaurants)

The charities chosen by the category winners will each receive a £75 donation from the Town Council and this year, they are Chigwell Riding Trust, St Clare Hospice and Haven House Children's Hospice. [More, including the runners up](#) (PDF).



Have Your Say on the Future of the High Road

The Town Council is inviting local businesses, charities, community groups, and residents to an informal meeting to explore the idea of creating a new High Road Town Centre Partnership.

In the past, Loughton First (formerly the Loughton Town Centre Partnership) brought people together to support the High Road and strengthen community spirit. While it eventually dissolved due to a lack of sustained volunteers, there is now renewed enthusiasm to see whether a refreshed, more focused partnership could make a positive difference for everyone involved.

This meeting is purely exploratory — a chance to

gauge interest, share ideas and discuss what a modern, practical, and inclusive town centre partnership could look like. [More](#)

The meeting is at Lopping Hall on 5 February from 6-7pm.

Christmas Giving campaign supported local families

The District Council's campaign which aimed to ensure that no child, living in the district, goes without receiving a Christmas present enabled 700 presents, which were distributed to over 260 families across the district. These families have been identified by local schools and frontline children and family service providers as needing extra support over the festive period. [More](#)



New Epping Leisure Centre

LRA Cllr Louise Mead, the chair of District Council, officially opened the new Epping Leisure Centre on 12 January. Many Epping residents were enthusiastically waiting on the doorstep for the facilities to open. Children from Epping Primary School were playing ball games on the interactive games court. Louise didn't just cut the ribbon but plunged shortly afterwards into the pool.

This is the first time Epping has had public swimming pools. A 25 metre pool and a smaller learner pool with a moveable floor are now already being used for swimming lessons by several hundred children.

Every effort has been made to make the building as energy efficient as possible - solar panels are on the roof and sound insulated air source heat pumps are used.

Prices are on a par with the Loughton Leisure Centre. If residents are tempted to go and explore the new centre it is cashless and payment is by card. It was decided to make parking free before 8am and after 6pm in the nearby multi-storey car park to make it the same as the Loughton Leisure Centre for users. A pass is available at the desk to display on the dashboard. At all other times users will need to pay for parking. [More](#) and [Leisure Centre details](#).

Food and garden waste collections changes

Food and garden waste will be collected separately from 31 March. Households will receive new brown kerbside and kitchen caddies for food waste, which will be collected weekly. This service will be free.

The existing green-lidded wheelie bin will be used for garden waste only and collected fortnightly. The District Council are planning to charge £60 per year from 31 March, although the cost is to be confirmed. Residents who want to subscribe will be able to apply from 1 February. [More](#)

Council Tax paperless billing

Local Cllrs have been briefed by the District Council on plans to encourage as many residents as possible to opt for [paperless e-billing](#) in the next financial year. The District Council has thousands of email addresses and the plan is to encourage residents to opt in for this method of paying Council tax.

A trial has been done with a several thousand households with very positive responses. In many councils this is already in place. This saves on paper and

postage, and with the reduced second class postal deliveries bills have been taking longer to arrive. The District Council Revenue and Benefits team also receives around 35,000 phone calls a year related to Council Tax and the idea is to reduce the volume of calls.

Anyone claiming Universal Credit now has to have an email address. It is also recognised that many residents will still prefer traditional paper billing.

Help choose the district's favourite trees

To celebrate the 40th anniversary of the District Council's Countrycare, the Council is compiling a list of the 50 favourite trees of the district.

The top suggestions will become the new 50 Favourite Trees of Epping Forest District and be part of an exhibition at the District Museum in Waltham Abbey during November. This will be an update of the first edition of the same book published in 2007.

[More](#) and [nominate a tree here](#). Entries close in May.

Save on Council Tax

There are discounts available which you may not have thought you could claim. For example, some adults aren't counted as residents, so if there are two of you living in a property and one of you qualifies, [you can claim the single person discount](#). If you know of a property that's occupied only by someone who is severely mentally impaired, then [they can claim to be completely exempt from Council Tax](#). There are also [other discounts available](#).



Warm places

Warm places help people during winter months and provide a warm, safe and welcoming place for people to spend time in. Most host activities, offer free food and drinks, and some have free wi-fi. Local warm places are Debden Library, New City College, Loughton Library and the Oakwood Hill Community Centre and Community Hub. [More details on these locations here](#).

What's On in Epping Forest?

The District Council has published details of activities, events, exhibitions and workshops from November to April. [More](#) (PDF)



Local News

Local library events

[You can see upcoming events at Loughton and Debden libraries here](#). More about the libraries at [Loughton](#) and [Debden](#). At Loughton Library there is:

- 10 February - Home Instead Dementia Advice. No booking required. [More](#)
- 23, 30 January and 6, 13 February - support for your laptop, tablet or phone, or log onto one of the library's computers. [More](#)
- 20 January - Fraud Awareness. Our local PCSO will be available to give advice on how to avoid being scammed or if you need to talk about any community concerns you may have. No booking required. [More](#)
- 27 January - Specialist Employment Support - Come and chat to Employ-Ability, a specialist employment support charity working with people experiencing mental ill health. No booking required. [More](#)
- 4 February - BookTrust Storytime - sharing a new BookTrust book each week and encouraging parents/carers to vote for their favourite. No booking required. [More](#)



Free course to support mature car drivers



The County Council offers a driving confidence course for anyone concerned about their driving, supporting mature drivers to continue to drive safely, for longer.

This free course is developed by experts to support older drivers that may have become less confident with their driving skills. [More](#)

Health and Wellbeing

Get the right care this winter

With more healthcare options available, it's important to know where to go for support. There are a range of services that you can access, depending on the problem and urgency.

- Your pharmacy
- NHS 111 and 111 online
- The NHS app
- GP surgeries
- Urgent care
- Emergency care

[More](#) plus [the winter health and wellbeing hub](#)

Childhood vaccination changes

The NHS childhood vaccination schedule has recently been updated to help give children even better protection against diseases. Changes include protecting children against some diseases earlier and adding vaccines that protect against more diseases. [More](#)

Warning over weight loss products

The Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) continues to warn about the serious risks linked to buying weight-loss products from unregulated websites or through social media. Products sold illegally may be fake, contaminated, incorrectly dosed, or contain powerful ingredients not listed on the packaging. These can lead to dangerous side effects, including heart problems, psychological effects and dangerously low blood sugar. [More](#)

Epping Forest

Little Saplings storytime and craft activities

Join this event to hear a seasonal story, enjoy a craft activity/game and sing some nursery rhymes for pre-schoolers on 30 January at the Visitor Centre at Chingford, Booking required. [More](#)

Take care at Forest ponds

Firefighters were called to Connaught Water on Rangers Road, following a dog rescue attempt that left two people in icy water. A member of the public fell through ice in an attempt to rescue a dog. A passer-by then entered the water to try to help. Both people were able to get out of the water and were left in the care of the ambulance service. The dog was safely reunited with its owners. [More](#) and [news article](#).

Frozen ponds can be very hazardous so please do not step onto the ice. If you are walking a dog, please don't allow them to venture onto the frozen ponds either.

Ecological monitoring volunteering

If you are interested in wildlife and conservation, join us this online session on 29 January to find out more about ecological monitoring and how you can volunteer to get involved. This session will introduce the surveys being carried out in 2026 including;

- Pond surveys
- Reptile surveys
- Butterfly surveys
- Grassland and plant surveys

Booking required. [More](#)

Forest Focus - December 2025

Some items here come from Forest Focus. The edition for [December](#) has lots more interesting articles. You can [subscribe here for free](#).



And More

Recycling corks

[Recorked UK](#) run a natural wine cork recycling program. For every cork collected, they donate a percentage of their profit to their nominated charities. They also supply free corks to various charities and schools for use in craft projects.

If you have corks for recycling simply post them for recycling, although there is currently not a freepost way of doing this. [More](#)



Seven sky spectaculars in 2026

The night sky this year brings stargazers some sights to behold, with the highlight being a solar eclipse in August with up to 90% of the Sun obscured. There is also a partial lunar eclipse, three supermoons, a blue Moon, a February planet alignment plus an array of meteor showers to

enjoy. [News article](#).

There is also the Loughton Astronomical Society - [more here](#), with Theydon Bois being the venue for meeting and observing for many years.

*Thank you for supporting LRA. The next regular news email is planned for Friday 13 February.
Regular news emails are issued every 3-4 weeks and special news emails occasionally.*

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