

Marie Goldman

MP for Chelmsford



Looking back on my packed first year as your MP for Chelmsford

IT'S been just over a year since the General Election and since I was elected to serve as the Member of Parliament for the Chelmsford constituency. A lot has happened in that time, so I thought I'd spend this week's column on a brief recap of what's been going on.

July 2024

The aftermath of the election was a whirlwind. It was lovely to celebrate becoming the first non-Conservative MP in Chelmsford for 74 years with so many of the lovely people who helped make that happen.

From the tireless Liberal Democrat foot soldiers who delivered tens of thousands of leaflets across the Chelmsford constituency, to my amazing campaign team who put together a campaign strategy that allowed us to take advantage of the momentum we had been building up over several years, at a time when, nationally, the country wanted change. It was also lovely to see the smiles on the faces of voters who, often for the first time, had voted for a winning candidate.

But while July was a time to celebrate, it was also a time to get down to business – to learn not just the ropes, but the knots, the sails, the crew and everything else that goes into the unstoppable ship, the UK Parliament. And wow, there's a lot to learn. From strange procedures, to the labyrinthine Palace of Westminster with its myriad staircases, long, dark corridors and huge oak doors, every twist and turn of those first few weeks threw up new challenges.

But by far, the biggest challenge was keeping on top of my inbox. I was receiving hundreds of emails every single day, from a mixture of well-wishers, to organisations wanting to lobby me on every subject under the sun, to constituents needing help with something.

To be honest, my inbox felt like a huge game of Whack-a-Mole – as soon as I had I got to the bottom of one set of emails, even more would pop up to replace them. I'd leave my computer to go to a meeting – perhaps a gathering in the House of Commons Chamber to hear from Mr Speaker about the etiquette and rules around

Marie Goldman MP speaking at an event in Parliament about the East of England
MARIE GOLDMAN MP



parliamentary proceedings, or perhaps a meeting with my party, or perhaps an online meeting with Chelmsford-based key stakeholders, such as the police, or the local councils – and when I came back, I'd discover 200 new emails had arrived in my inbox.

What became clear very quickly was that I couldn't deal with this by myself. There was no way I could sift through the deluge with any confidence that I would be able to reliably spot the urgent emails from constituents in desperate need. To do that, I needed to hire staff.

August 2024

Parliament was in recess for August and I spent a lot of my time recruiting key members of my team. This included conducting online interviews from the back of my tent while away on a family holiday that had been booked in October 2023.

I remember logging on to one of the interviews just as two little birds flew into my tent and started flapping around behind the sleeping pods. I tried very hard to keep a straight, poker face as my husband

tried, as silently as he could (impossible) to chase them out!

September 2024

My main memory of September is of my Maiden Speech – the first time I spoke in a debate on the floor of the House of Commons.

I spoke about Chelmsford's rich history and heritage in the world of technology, and I was clear that my priorities included, at their heart, the importance of education and giving children the best possible start in life. It's something that has been guiding my work for the whole of the past year.

From raising the plight of struggling maternity services, to championing children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), and from challenging the Government on their inadequate funding for schools, to ensuring that I visit lots of schools and speak to children and teachers across Chelmsford, it's at the heart of what I've been doing.

September was also conference season and my first Lib Dem Autumn Conference as an MP, which can mainly be summed up as: BUSY!

But I was thrilled to receive a phone call from our party leader, Sir Ed Davey, soon after conference, appointing me to the Liberal Democrat front bench as Shadow Leader

of the House of Commons.

October to December 2024

This period is the long stint in the parliamentary calendar – the run-up to Christmas (known as the tinsel term to many teachers) can be quite a hard slog in any job, and while I'm certainly not complaining, it's true to say that Parliament is no different. But it gave me a good period of time to settle into my new role, and raise all sorts of issues, including local government funding, and the huge shortfall in money for SEND. I became vice-chair of the All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) for the East of England and hosted a launch event in Parliament focusing on the East of England's economic potential, called Opportunity East.

And I visited lots of organisations across Chelmsford, from care homes, to schools, to businesses and everything in between.

January 2025

I was lucky to be drawn in the ballot to ask my first ever PMQ – a question to the Prime Minister in the Wednesday lunchtime session that is the most-watched weekly event in the parliamentary calendar.

I raised the awful situation faced by community pharmacists who often have to dip into their own pockets to keep their pharmacies open, due to the terrible way the

NHS contract operates. With huge thanks to Dipak from The Pillbox in Meadgate for first alerting me to this issue. I'm pleased that the pharmacy contract has now been changed, but there is still a big shortfall in funding – the issue is far from fixed.

I also challenged the Government to provide more funding for Police Community Support Officers, after Essex's Conservative Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner threatened to axe all 99 of them across Essex. It was a relief when the Government subsequently did indeed provide more money and the PCSOs were saved.

In Westminster Hall, I held one of the most well-attended debates the session had yet seen, this time on Education, Health and Care Plans for SEND children.

Oh yes, and I met the King(!) at an event in Buckingham Palace that just happened to fall on my birthday.

February 2025

Another busy month. Among other things, I took part in local TV and radio interviews, met with organisations in Chelmsford including Chelmsford Foodbank, and visited the East of England Ambulance Service at their call centre near Broomfield Hospital.

March-June 2025

The last few months have been full of lots of interesting meetings, including through my work on Parliament's Modernisation Committee looking at how we drag Parliament into the 21st Century, and the Restoration & Renewal Board, focusing on how we look after the crumbling Palace of Westminster to ensure it is protected as the seat of British democracy for generations to come.

June also saw me deliver my first-ever keynote speech. This was to the Institute for Government, commemorating 30 years of the Nolan Principles, where I talked about the importance of modernising our political system, encouraging more people into politics and leading by example.

I hope this gives you a flavour of the work I've been doing. For more regular updates, do continue to read these columns, and follow me on Facebook, Bluesky and YouTube. Plus, you can sign up to email updates on my website: mariegoldman.uk.

Thanks for reading and thank you again for giving me the honour of representing Chelmsford in Parliament. Keep well.

Marie

To be honest, my inbox felt like a huge game of Whack-a-Mole.

Marie Goldman MP