

Marie Goldman

MP for Chelmsford

Reality of an MP's life...it's a day job, an evening job and a weekend job

WAS at an event in Chelmsford the other day when someone asked me a question that took me by surprise: they asked me what I do for my day job.

Now, I have to set this conversation in context because otherwise you might think that this seemingly well-educated gentleman simply didn't know that I was a Member of Parliament, in which case his question would have been perfectly understandable. But I had already been introduced as the Chelmsford MP and anyway, my first answer to his question was to reiterate that I was the local MP. His follow-up was then to ask whether that was a full-time role.

My answer to that question is: yes, and then some.

But I don't like being definitive about something without providing evidence, so I thought you might be interested to read about how I spent my time just last week. Here goes.

Monday, March 31, 10am-11pm:

Mondays are a bit of a strange day in Parliament. As lots of MPs live a long way away from Westminster, it can take several hours for them to travel to London from their constituencies. To allow for this travel time, Parliament doesn't officially sit until mid-afternoon on Mondays. Sometimes, I have meetings in Parliament on Monday mornings, including attending meetings of the House of Commons Commission, but last week I didn't have any Westminster-based morning meetings. Instead, I used the time to catch up with my Chelmsford-based team and tackle some of my email

inboxes after the weekend. I had an early-afternoon Teams call with Lib Dems in our Cabinet Office cluster (parliamentarians and aides from our party whose roles focus on or overlap with Cabinet Office issues).

At 2pm, I made my way into London where I continued working from my Westminster office in Portcullis House, overlooking the Palace of Westminster.

There were lots of votes on Monday evening: ten in total, finishing just before 10pm, which meant I got home about 11pm.

Tuesday, April 1, 7.14am-8.08pm:

I started my day with a Teams call



Marie attended the Essex Annual Cadet Forces Reception in Ingatestone
MARIE GOLDMAN MP

from my Westminster office with a Chelmsford-based nursery very worried about the new guidance being issued saying they are no longer allowed to charge parents for additional items, but instead have to ask for voluntary contributions. With the rise in National Insurance Contributions and other costs also increasing, more and more early years settings are finding it difficult to remain viable. They provide a vital service and I'm keen to support them in their battle for fairer terms and conditions.

This was followed by a call with the National Housing Federation (NHF). Their members are housing

associations from across the country - organisations that build and maintain what we used to think of as council housing, now usually referred to as social housing. Like developers in the private sector, many of their clients have discovered in the wake of the Grenfell Tower tragedy that remedial works

need to be done to their buildings to make them safe from the risk of fire. Private developers have access to the Government's Building Safety Fund whereas housing associations don't. The BSF are lobbying for this to change.

I then had a call with the regional Lib Dem team, followed by a drop-in to an event in Parliament about the aerospace industry, with discus-

sions mainly focusing on skills and enticing young people into jobs in the sector.

At 11am, I attended a briefing for members of Parliament's Restoration & Renewal Programme Board (which includes me) about the works currently being done to renovate Parliament's northern estate.

Between midday and 1pm, I read the papers for the afternoon's Modernisation Committee and then caught up via Teams with my mainly Chelmsford-based office manager.

At 1pm I attended a meeting of the All Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) on Early Education and Childcare.

At 2.30pm, the Modernisation Committee (ModCom), of which I am a member, held a public meeting during which it took evidence from current and former disabled MPs about their experience of Parliament. After the weekly meeting of the Liberal Democrat Parliamentary Party (PPM) at 5pm, a private meeting about the Israel/Gaza conflict, and a brief catch-up with the Leader of the House of Commons, Lucy Powell, I headed home, arriving back in Chelmsford just after 8pm.

Wednesday, April 2, 9.30ish-10.51pm:

I'll admit that I can't remember exactly which train I caught this day, but I know it got me into London in time to get set up for the day and sort a few things out before I went into the House of Commons chamber at about 11.45am ready for PMQs to start at midday.

For the rest of the afternoon, I had a short, private meeting with the

Clerk of the House, popped into three separate 'drop-in' events and tried to catch up with some of my emails and other computer-based tasks.

At 6.30pm, I joined several businesses from across Essex at a round-table dinner in the Palace of Westminster hosted by the Essex Chambers of Commerce. It was a very informative evening, giving the three Essex MPs who were there (host Pam Cox MP, and David Burton-Sampson MP, both Labour, and me) the chance to hear directly from businesses and an opportunity for us to show them that we genuinely do work cross-party where we can.

Thursday, May 3, 7.05am-8.30pm:

Most MPs don't have to be in Parliament on Thursdays as the business is usually quite light and general in nature - there aren't often votes. But in my role as Lib Dem Shadow Leader of the House of Commons, I am my party's spokesperson (often shortened to 'spokes') for Business Questions, which is scheduled for every Thursday morning at 10.30am, although in reality it rarely starts on time.

After Business Questions, I usually head back to Chelmsford where I catch up with my Chelmsford-based team, visit organisations within the constituency and, this week, hold a virtual surgery.

At 5pm, I went out knocking on doors in Old Moulsham, talking to constituents about local issues and the upcoming by-elections.

At 7pm, I attended the Essex Annual Cadet Forces Reception in Ingatestone. This is a lovely cere-

mony where the Lord Lieutenant's five new cadets for the year are introduced. It's also an opportunity to recognise the outstanding efforts of the adults who support the cadets and help give these amazing young people the chance for constructive but exciting activities - surely what we need more of across our society.

I finally arrived home for the evening around 8.30pm.

Friday, April 4, 9am-4.30pm:

Over the past couple of weeks, I've been interviewing for a new parliamentary assistant to join my team. The penultimate interview was on Friday morning. On Friday afternoon, I visited Ellison's Solicitors in New London Road where I met three of their fabulous apprentices. The partners wanted to talk to me about the Government's proposals to scrap the funding for the Level 7 apprenticeships that these young people are undertaking. It's something that I'm very frustrated about and have already raised more than once in Parliament.

My final appointment for the day was a walk around the local area with a representative from Living Streets, a charity supporting everyday walking. We looked at the physical impediments to walking around Chelmsford, and discussed some of the habit shifts that need to take place if we are all going to get the health benefits that walking can bring to those able to choose this as a way of getting around.

Saturday, April 5, 9.30am-4pm:

In the morning, I cut the ribbon to open the Little Edi Foundation's new premises in Baddow Road - a wonderful little Chelmsford-based charity supporting children and their families who have stumbled on hard times.

In the afternoon, I was out door-knocking in the New Writtle Street area of town. I even did a bit of case-work while I was out, making sure an out-of-order lift was going to be looked at soon so that elderly residents would still be able to get to and from their upper floor flats.

Sunday, April 6:

I wrote most of this column while travelling to watch my daughter play in a hockey tournament in Nottingham.

I hope this gives you a flavour of the week of an MP. It's a day job, an evening job and a weekend job!

Marie will be taking a well-deserved fortnight off from her column for Easter.

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