

Marie Goldman

MP for Chelmsford



Raising awareness of local, national and international issues is essential

TODAY, Thursday May 1, is polling day. Across the country, lots of people will be voting in local elections. Of course, here in Chelmsford (and in most of the rest of Essex), we do not have the county council elections that were scheduled to take place today because they were cancelled by agreement between Labour and the Conservatives. However, there are council by-elections today in Moulsham Lodge and Moulsham & Central, so do not forget to go out to vote if you live in those areas. Remember: polls close at 10pm.

Whoever is elected in these by-elections, I would like to wish them all the very best in their new councillor roles. There are tumultuous times ahead for local government with reorganisation on the horizon and a potential Mayor of Essex being elected next year.

These new councillors will be part of the decision-making process for the shape of local government in Essex for many years to come and, against a backdrop of dwindling resources and high demand for services, it will be a tough challenge. I would like to thank them for putting themselves forward for what could be a very difficult role.

I am pleased to note the better weather has seen more of our local roads and pavements around the city being repaired - not before time. I know, however, that there are many outstanding issues, which is why it is frustrating that the Local Highways Panels are not currently meeting while Essex County Council reviews their structure. In the meantime and as ever, please do report any issues on the Essex Highways website at <https://www.essexhighways.org/tell-us>.

My team and I have been contacted by several constituents with safety concerns regarding the Dott e-scooters that are being trialled in the city. They are part of the Safer, Greener, Healthier initiative that Essex County Council is promoting. You can find out more information at www.essexhighways.org > Safer, Greener, Healthier > e-scooters. This page also tells you how to raise concerns.

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Marie Goldman MP in the House of Commons, raising the issue of intimidation of British MPs by foreign powers

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Recently in Parliament, I have been raising various issues on a wide range of topics: local, national and even international.

Starting with the local: Living Streets is a charity that for nearly 100 years has been campaigning to make it safer for pedestrians to walk around. Under its previous names, it has been responsible for campaigns to get pedestrian crossings installed and even for the driving test to be introduced in the 1934 Road Traffic Act. I recently walked around Old Moulsham with Catherine Woodhead, Living Streets' chief executive, looking at and talking

about how to encourage more active travel - in particular walking and wheeling, and the barriers to making that happen.

In Parliament, I raised this during a debate on Supporting Active Travel to School, where I also pointed out that in countries such as Switzerland, four-year-old children walk to school by themselves. With the right support and infrastructure, we could do far better in the UK - I would be very keen to see that happen.

With regards to more national focus, I have been raising the issue of the Hillsborough Law, which the Government promised to introduce before this year's 36th anniversary of the Hillsborough disaster, but which is yet to be published. This long-awaited legislation is supposed to introduce a duty of candour on authorities, but media reports over the Easter recess suggest the Government is considering watering this

down to a voluntary duty - which kind of begs the question: would a voluntary duty really have the desired effect of making people tell us what they know? I very much doubt that. We wait to see what the Government eventually brings forward.

And then internationally, I was deeply concerned to learn that my Liberal Democrat colleague, Wera Hobhouse, the Member of Parliament for Bath, was denied entry to Hong Kong over the Easter recess as she tried to visit her son and newborn grandson for the very first time.

The local authorities provided no explanation but bundled her onto the next plane back to the UK, despite this being a purely private visit. There can be no other reason than that Wera is a British MP.

I raised this in the House of Commons, highlighting the troubling and chilling implications that this could - but must not be allowed

to - have on parliamentary free speech. On behalf of my party, I asked the Government to consider carefully how it engages with authoritarian regimes who act in this way. We must not allow democracy to be threatened.

Finally, and on a much lighter note, I am pleased to say that I have now recruited an additional part-time caseworker to join my small constituency office team, as well as a new parliamentary assistant to join me in Westminster.

Thank you to all the constituents who write to me to share their thoughts on things happening both locally and nationally. We do try to respond to all correspondence, but are not always able to do that as quickly as we would all like. Thank you for your patience if correspondence is sometimes delayed.

Keep well.

Marie