

Marie Goldman

Deputy leader of Chelmsford City Council and Liberal Democrat Parliamentary candidate for Chelmsford



POINTS OF VIEW

Counting the human and financial cost of Essex's broken pavements

AS a local politician and political activist, I spend quite a lot of my time knocking on doors – and not just at election time either.

Apart from the obvious breaks at Christmas and a few other occasions throughout the year, my colleagues and I are out and about on the doorsteps all year round asking residents how they feel about what's going on in their local area, what they think about the national picture and asking them if they need help with anything.

As you might expect, a whole array of topics gets discussed, but there are some issues that keep coming up time and time again.

I suspect you'll be able to guess what some of them are, especially as they affect everybody and have been hot topics for quite some while.

Easily top of the list is potholes, followed closely by the dilapidated and downright dangerous state of many of our footpaths and pavements.

And this matters. I'm sorry to say that I've been contacted by several residents who have seen their cars damaged by driving over a particularly vicious pothole.



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CLlr Marie Goldman

But worse still are the reports that have been coming in from residents who have been injured – in some cases seriously enough to need hospitalisation – after tripping and falling on

broken pavements.

There is a huge temptation at this point to remind everyone which political party runs Essex County Council, the local authority responsible for maintaining (or not, as the

case may be) our roads and pavements (can you tell this is an issue that I get quite cross about?), but instead I think I'll focus on reminding you how you can report road and pavement defects if you spot them.

The best way to do this is via the Essex Highways website at: www.essexhighways.org/tell-us.

It's very important to report issues, not only to make the county council aware that they need to be fixed, but also because if you're injured and need to make a claim (which you can do here: www.essexhighways.org/roads-and-pavements/make-a-claim), it's far more likely to be rejected if the county council can say that it hadn't been aware of the issue.

But there's another reason why all of this matters. Aside from the horrible and unnecessary distress it causes residents, trips to A&E, operations, outpatient and GP appointments are all likely to be far more costly to the public purse than fixing the issue in the first place.

In 2020/21, an ambulance trip to A&E cost an average of £367. Treatment at A&E can cost anywhere from £86 to £418, and an average GP appointment costs £42. And that's without the additional costs to the economy of days off work as people recover from their injuries.

In my opinion, it would be far better to fix the issue and prevent the accidents in the first place. I'll keep campaigning to get these sorts of things fixed and for a more joined-up approach from the public sector on these issues.

In the meantime, please do report issues when you see them and be careful out there.

Marie

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