

# Marie Goldman

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



**POINTS OF VIEW**

## I'm proud of events like the Chelmsford Takeover in our city

**L**OVE to see Chelmsford city centre full of people, vibrancy and fun. A perfect example of that was last weekend when the Chelmsford Takeover took over.

For those of you who may have missed it, the Chelmsford Takeover is an event organised by Chelmsford's Business Improvement District (also known as Chelmsford For You - more about that later) that brings together a whole bunch of people from all over the country to cosplay.

I'll admit that cosplaying isn't a word that I was very familiar with until a few years ago. It seems to have crept into everyday language in recent times and is now used to refer to what I might previously have called 'dressing up'. But, in reality, it's far more than that.

On Saturday (April 13) Chelmsford city centre was awash with people cosplaying characters from film and television. There were the usual suspects, including Star Wars stalwarts Darth Vader and a very convincing Obi-Wan Kenobi (think original films, rather than prequels).

There were famous vehicles, including the A-Team van (a childhood favourite of mine) and, of course, the Back to the Future time-travelling DeLorean. I think I spotted all of the Ghostbusters team, right alongside their Ectomobile, poised and ready to shoot plasma at any passing ghoul from another realm.

For little ones, there was also a life-size version of Mater from Pixar's Cars, as well as enormous Transformers, striding around entertaining the crowds with the pure size and intricate detail of their huge costumes.

There was music and street stalls, and large quantities of fun and laughter. The sun was shining and lots of people had big smiles on their faces. In short, it was a wonderful event and something I am so proud to see here in Chelmsford.

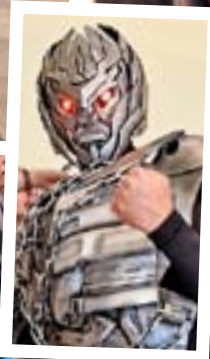
And it was in no small part down to the



Some of the cosplayers and vehicles at the Chelmsford Takeover, enjoyed by visitors to the city centre



Cllr Marie Goldman with Obi-Wan Kenobi  
PHOTOS: CLLR MARIE GOLDMAN



extremely hard work of the very small team at Chelmsford For You.

Chelmsford For You (CFY) is the more user-friendly name for Chelmsford's Business Improvement District (which is also often referred to as 'the BID'). It's an organisation set up to promote and enhance the interests of our city centre and the businesses that trade there. Lots of towns and cities have a BID, but some are considerably more successful than others.

BIDs work by having a membership made up of local businesses within a specific area,

usually a town or city centre.

These members each pay an annual levy that varies according to the size of the business. The BID also has associate members, which are usually businesses from slightly outside of the official area, who pay a reduced levy in order to help contribute to and benefit from the BID's activities.

This gives the BID an operating budget to be able to employ a BID manager (currently the indefatigable and exuberant Sara Tupper), along with a few members of staff.

These staff spend their time organising events and activities to benefit the city centre, ultimately hoping to draw in more people to spend money in the levy-paying businesses that are located there.

The Chelmsford Takeover was

organised by the BID and, judging by the large crowds that I saw as I wandered around on Saturday morning, it was very successful at drawing in shoppers, families, residents and visitors alike. That's great news, especially as it was also raising money for charity.

But the Takeover is by no means the only activity organised by CFY that Chelmsford visitors and residents will be familiar with.

The hugely popular and successful Concrete Canvas is another example of a CFY initiative, bringing joy, colour and creativity to some otherwise dull and uninspiring walls and facades around the city centre. As a street art festival, it attracts artists from all over the world - some of them globally famous in their sphere of activity. Other artists are more

home-grown, including a Chelmsford City Council colleague of mine, Cllr Richard Lee, who last year brightened up one of the city's unloved little bollards along by the river.

I think these sorts of events and festivals are hugely important to the success of our city.

They create a sense of belonging and interest, a feeling of pride in what is happening, bringing communities together.

I'm so pleased this kind of thing happens and I'm looking forward to seeing what the rest of the year brings.

You can find out more about events going on around Chelmsford on the Chelmsford For You website at [www.chelmsfordforyou.co.uk](http://www.chelmsfordforyou.co.uk).

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