



Marie Goldman

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

POINTS OF VIEW

Utterly ridiculous for country not to know date of the General Election



Some of the amazing colourful displays in Hylands Park, Chelmsford
CLLR MARIE GOLDMAN

I'm going to talk a bit about the local elections. Apart from anything else, as a local politician writing an opinion column in a local newspaper in the week after a momentous set of results, I think it would be a bit weird if I didn't.

As a reminder, the only local election we had in Chelmsford on May 2 was the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner election.

Although it wasn't an election that we expected to win, I was very pleased to see the Liberal Democrat candidate come second in the Chelmsford vote, with the Conservatives an unsurprising first and Labour in third place.

It reconfirms what we already knew in Chelmsford - it's a two-horse race between the Conservatives and the Liberal Democrats. Of course, that isn't true everywhere, but it is in Chelmsford. Well done to our candidate, Kieron Franks, for flying the Lib Dem flag.

Elsewhere in the country, it was a devastating set of results for the Conservatives. They lost nearly half of the council seats they were trying to hold on to, finishing with just 515 councillors across these elections, which is 474 fewer than they had just over a week ago.

In stark contrast, both Labour and the Liberal Democrats made considerable gains, up 186 and 104 councillors respectively. This means that for the first time in about 30 years, the Liberal Democrats have pushed the Conservatives into third place in local election results. That's a truly amazing feat.

I'm incredibly proud of the hard work that I know my Lib Dem colleagues put into winning those seats. It can be very hard for smaller parties to get the national media coverage that gives voters the confidence

to put their trust in them at the ballot box. The fact that they got so many gains is testament to the huge effort my colleagues across the country put in. Well done to each and every one of them.

Of course, the real question on everyone's mind, politically speaking, is what does this mean for the General Election? When will it be called? Can we tell from these results who will win? You can read and listen to all of the political pundits pontificate about this, but the real answer is that nobody knows.

Local elections can give an indication of how things might look in a General Election, and they might show the direction of travel, but the only way of knowing the result is once the ballots are cast and counted.

One thing that I'm absolutely certain of, however, is that it's utterly ridiculous for the country not to know the date of the General Election yet. How can it be right that in a democracy as old as ours, the ruling party - indeed, the current Prime Minister - can decide alone when the election will be called.

By law, it must be called (i.e. announced, not necessarily held - they're two separate things), within five years of the previous General Election, but other than that, they can call it whenever they want.

It gives a huge advantage to the incumbent. I don't think that's democratic at all and it's another example of a broken system. But we are where we are.

So, in the absence of a specific date for the General Election, I will continue to campaign for the things that I know voters care about: better and more reliable access to the NHS, health and care services, homes that



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people can afford with the right infrastructure to go with them, and better jobs and opportunities that allow people to lead their best life free from the worry of where the next meal is going to come from.

Also a school system that allows teachers to teach and children to reach their full potential without worrying about ceilings falling in on them or resources that are dwindling further every year.

And of course, the environment, making sure that we reverse the damage and decline that has been wreaked upon our planet so that we leave a safe and healthy home for our children and grandchildren for generations to come.

There's so much that needs fixing. A lady said to me on the doorstep in Chelmsford recently that she

thought the task was overwhelming.

I agree that it can sometimes feel that way. But we mustn't allow ourselves to be daunted.

By focusing and being determined, it's amazing what can be achieved.

I take my inspiration from those who are much younger than me - children who have their whole lives in front of them.

They say that you should judge a society by how well it looks after its most vulnerable - that must surely mean children.

I think that's probably why I get so cross when I see children being let down by those who should be fighting for them. It's not the sort of society I want to be part of.

I will keep fighting for change in my home city of Chelmsford.

And if I need my mood to be uplifted while taking on that fight, I find myself relishing in my early morning dog walks.

At this time of year, there are few places more beautiful than Hylands Park. We're so lucky to have it on our doorstep.

Thank you to the amazing parks staff and army of volunteers that keep it looking so amazing.

At the moment and over the past few weeks, it has been bursting with colour and promise of things to come.

There are plenty of things yet to come this year and we don't know what they will all be, but drinking in the visual feast that's on display at this time of year certainly keeps me motivated. I hope it does you, too.

Marie