

Marie Goldman



POINTS OF VIEW

MP for Chelmsford

Hospital radio's extra special 60th birthday as it is set to return home

It never ceases to amaze me and bring a big smile to my face when I meet people who have spent many, many years making a big difference to their local community through voluntary work.

Last weekend, I joined the team from Hospital Radio Chelmsford as they celebrated 60 years of being on the airwaves, brightening up the days of patients in Broomfield Hospital as they embark on treatment and recovery.

Sixty years is a long time and lots of volunteers have come and gone during that time. But at the sparkly gala dinner the current team hosted simultaneously to celebrate the significant milestone, and to raise more money for the charity, they also handed out length of service awards.

There were several people present who had been dedicating their time for five or ten years, which is impressive in itself, but there were also a special few who had spent several decades of their lives making sure that the show went on, through good times and bad. I don't know about you, but I think that's pretty awe-inspiring.

And times haven't always been easy.

Just before Covid struck, the Hospital Radio Chelmsford team were told at extremely short notice that they had to leave their base at Broomfield Hospital and relocate elsewhere.

In just two weeks, they had to find a new home, dismantle their existing studio and move all of their equipment. The deadline was so strict and swiftly imposed that they were told their treasured mixing desks and other essential items would be unceremoniously dumped in a skip! Now, I could spend quite a bit of time trying to work out why that happened, complaining about the injustice of it, but there's a happy ending that was announced at the 60th anniversary, so let's skip over that.

The homeless plight of Hospital Radio Chelmsford was saved by Paul Morrish, who created a safe home (with the help of others, of course) at his business premises, Allied Vehicles, in Gloucester Avenue, Moulsham



From left, Tony Knight, Sam Jenkins, Marie Goldman MP and Paul Morrish at the Hospital Radio Chelmsford 60th anniversary celebrations
MARIE GOLDMAN MP

Lodge. And that's where they have been based for the past five years, including through the pandemic when voluntary organisations - like so many businesses - struggled to pay their bills and continue to deliver the services that make our communities so much better.

While it was great having a new home, Paul told me that the real beauty of hospital radio is the interaction with patients. You see, a lot of their work isn't sitting behind a microphone, it's chatting with patients at their bedside, finding out what their favourite songs are, what memories they conjure up, and adding them to the day's playlist.

For some patients, the hospital radio volunteers are the only people (besides medical professionals) that they get to speak to. Not being based at the hospital meant for Paul and the rest of the team that these conversations were lost.

But I said there is a happy ending. And there is! At the 100-strong gala

dinner, it was announced that a new home has been found for Hospital Radio Chelmsford - back in Brookfield Hospital!

It may take a few months to get it set up and working, but they will be back. I can't wait to visit their new studio when they are in.

A huge congratulations and a heartfelt thank you to all of the team at Hospital Radio Chelmsford for their wonderful work. And of course, if you fancy getting involved, dear reader, they are always on the lookout for people to join them. Go to www.hrc.org.uk to find out more and to listen online.

Turning to political matters, I mentioned in last week's column that Parliament is now in recess until October 7. Lots of MPs use this time to attend their party's conference and to spend time catching up with appointments in their constituency.

My party, the Liberal Democrats, held their conference in Brighton from September 14-17. It was a joyful event, with so much positivity and celebration, making the most of our momentous achievement of growing from 15 to 72 MPs. It was also a chance to thank the thousands of party members from across the country who had campaigned so

tirelessly to help deliver change.

Conference was also an opportunity for me to meet with various organisations to raise issues affecting Chelmsford.

Among others, I met with Greater Anglia where we discussed concerns that constituents have raised about the price of fares (set by central government), the bewildering array of ticket options (good news: contactless ticketing is coming to Chelmsford by the end of next year, although not Oyster, so there are still some issues to work out), and the concern from some that the new Beaulieu Park station may make it harder for those joining the trains at Chelmsford to get a seat (I am assured it won't).

I also met with the Music Venue Trust to discuss issues affecting small live music venues, such as Hot Box, and how they can be supported.

As regular readers will know, I think it's crucial that we support small venues to help keep and grow the cultural sector in our city.

I also had chats and meetings with organisations and individuals as diverse as Dementia UK, the Salvation Army, Lloyds Bank and various diplomats.

I took part in a panel at a fringe event hosted by the National Education Union, where I made the case for fixing the broken Special Educational Needs system, and putting extra-curricular activities firmly on the agenda for support and investment.

Conference was very busy and a very different experience as an MP compared to an ordinary member, or even councillor or candidate. But it was lots of fun and there was lots of hope in the air for the positive vision that my party has for the future of our country.

Finally, very shortly after returning from conference, the leader of the Liberal Democrats, Sir Ed Davey, announced his reshuffle of the party's spokespeople.

I am absolutely thrilled and humbled to have been appointed as the Shadow Leader of the House of Commons. This is a role that includes holding the Government to account for the legislation they are prioritising in parliamentary business. I'll tell you more about how this works in future columns once Parliament has resumed sitting.

Thanks for reading. See you next week.

Marie

A huge congratulations and a heartfelt thank you to all of the team at Hospital Radio Chelmsford.

Marie Goldman MP