

# Marie Goldman

POINTS OF VIEW

MP for Chelmsford

## Question time at Baddow school and meeting new head at Hylands

**T**HIS week is UK Parliament Week, which is an annual event that runs from November 18-24. It's an opportunity for people all over the world to find out more about what Parliament is, how it works and how it impacts your life.

Last year, more than 16,000 activities took place in the UK and across the world as part of UK Parliament Week, and I'm very pleased to learn that lots of activities are also taking place in Chelmsford this year.

I was delighted to be contacted by the Moulsham Brownies, who meet every Tuesday in Moulsham Lodge, and who told me about how they get involved in UK Parliament Week every year. Although the parliamentary timetable means I couldn't come and visit them in person, it was so lovely to be able to record and send them a video, which I recorded from inside the historic Westminster Hall, right in the heart of the Palace of Westminster.

Last week, in preparation for the mock elections they were holding for UK Parliament Week, I visited Great Baddow High School and took questions from students from Years 12 and 13. There was such a wide range of questions and I really enjoyed myself talking through some of the complex issues they raised on topics as diverse as Palestine, assisted dying, crime prevention and what we can do to get more clothes shops in our high street (don't buy so many clothes online would be a good start...).

Visiting schools and talking to teachers and students is easily one of my favourite things to do as a local politician. I loved doing it in my role as deputy leader of Chelmsford City Council and it's brilliant to be able to continue doing it as Chelmsford's MP. Anything I can do to help demystify Parliament and our democracy in general is time well spent, as far as I'm concerned.

I know from knocking on hundreds and hundreds of doors across Chelmsford that lots of people don't have a very good understanding of it and I'd really like to help change that. So, if you ever

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Marie Goldman MP is among those who will be responsible for pushing forward the restoration and renewal of The Palace of Westminster, seen here with Big Ben next to it  
CARL COURT

want to ask me a question about how things really work or want me to come along to your school or organisation to talk about Parliament and democracy, please do get in touch.

I also visited another school last week because I was keen to hear about the journey they're on to become a truly excellent school.

Hylands School has suffered over the past few years from poor performance and bad publicity. I know it has rarely been the first choice of secondary school for parents and I wanted to find out what's going on and what support they might need going forward.

I was very pleased to meet new head teacher Chris White, who gave me a tour of the school and told me, warts and all, the challenges they have faced. Having gone to the school not knowing quite what I might see, I have to say that I was

very pleasantly surprised. The children that I saw were polite and well turned out. The school buildings were bright, clean and tidy – some newer and more modern than others, but isn't that the case everywhere? I hadn't appreciated the vastness of the outside space they have available to them with huge fields providing great opportunities for additional facilities and experiences for their students and the wider community.

It was a relatively short visit, but I left feeling enthusiastic and excited for the school's future.

There's a lot of work to do to turn around the school's reputation, but if you're a parent currently thinking about secondary schools for the years ahead, if the passion and determination of the head teacher is anything to go by, Hylands should definitely be on your list to consider.

Finally for this week, I wanted to tell you about a new part of my role in the House of Commons. I've now been appointed to the Restoration & Renewal (R&R) Programme Board, as well as the R&R Client Board.

This board has the very exciting –

if somewhat daunting – task of pushing forward the restoration and renewal of the Palace of Westminster.

At some point, hopefully early next year, Parliament will vote on how the building works to preserve, restore and renew the Palace of Westminster will go ahead.

I'll give you more details nearer the time, but the three options currently being worked up are: 1) Full decant; 2) Permanent presence; and 3) Enhanced maintenance.

Option 1 would mean everyone moving out of the palace to allow works to proceed. This is likely to be the quickest and least costly of the options.

It is arguably also the safest option as it would keep parliamentarians, staff and the public far away from some of the more disruptive works, including the large amounts of asbestos removal that need to happen. It would probably mean the House of Commons temporarily relocating to somewhere else on the parliamentary estate, which is likely to be Richmond House.

At the same time, the House of

Lords would have to move out with the possibility of that being to the nearby Queen Elizabeth II Conference Centre.

Option 2 would mean always having some parliamentary activity in the palace, but moving that activity around as the building works require. This is likely to take considerably longer and be more expensive than Option 1.

Option 3 would essentially mean keep doing more of what has already been done, but trying to step up activities. As I understand it, this is the option that has had the least detail presented to Parliament to date, so I'll be interested to see what the analysis reveals, but I'm struggling to see how this option could achieve the goals while also being cost-effective.

If you want to find out more about why these works need to be done, there is a series of videos on YouTube from a few years ago that you might find interesting.

Search on YouTube for 'Restoration and Renewal of the Palace of Westminster' from UK Parliament.

Marie