

Marie Goldman

MP for Chelmsford



Businesses and hospital workers tell of challenges they are facing

AS Parliament was in recess last week, it was an important opportunity for me to spend more time in my Chelmsford constituency rather than having to commute into London. Here are a couple of the things I got up to in that time.

It was a privilege to attend and speak at an event organised by Chelmsford City Council – a breakfast meeting for Chelmsford businesses, held last Thursday morning at the Tiptree Tea Rooms in Bond Street. It was a very well attended event with lots of local businesses there to discuss the impact of business rates, how they're set and what support is available.

In the UK, business rates are essentially a property-based tax, and they're worked out through a combination of a property's rateable value – an assessment made by the Valuation Office Agency estimating what it would cost to rent the premises for a year – and a multiplier set by national government.

Your local council then uses these two elements to calculate the final bill, applying any reliefs for which a business may be eligible.

Revaluations take place every three years to keep the system aligned with changes in the property market. The next set of updated rateable values will take effect from April 1 this year.

These revaluations can mean bills go up or down, but an increase in rateable value doesn't necessarily mean an equivalent rise in the final bill, because multipliers change too.

In Chelmsford, although Chelmsford City Council collects business rates from businesses, it doesn't get to keep it all – much to the disappointment of local leaders who would dearly love to be able to use more of that money to reinvest back into the local economy to support businesses to grow. The lion's share of business rates get sent back to central government.

Many businesses are understandably worried about what the pending revaluations will mean for them, especially at a time when discounts largely put in place during Covid are being removed by the Government.



Marie Goldman MP at a breakfast meeting for Chelmsford businesses organised by the city council and held at the Tiptree Tea Rooms in Bond Street
PHOTOS: MARIE GOLDMAN MP

This is simply compounding the pressures these businesses are already feeling from recent Employers' National Insurance hikes, increases to the National Minimum Wage, and general cost-of-living increases, including higher costs of supplies and materials.

In short, it's been a tough few years for many businesses. While there is little the local council can do in relation to business rates other than help businesses ensure they are paying the correct rate and point them in the direction of grants and other support that may be available to them, it was a good event where businesses were also able to network with each other and provide that mutual support and help that comes from being part of the strong community that we have here in Chelmsford, even in difficult times.

On Friday, I held a confidential roundtable with frontline staff from Broomfield Hospital to understand more about the challenges they're facing. I wanted to create a space

where they could speak openly and honestly, away from the pressures of their daily roles, and I was incredibly grateful for their willingness to do so.

What came through most strongly was their sheer dedication to patient care, even as they face relentless workloads and increasing strain across the system.

Staff described the very real pressures of rising demand, staffing shortages and delays elsewhere in the health and social care system that inevitably spill into their wards and departments.

They spoke about the emotional toll this takes – the missed breaks, the exhaustion at the end of long shifts and the frustration of not always being able to deliver the standard of care they aspire to because time and resources are stretched so thin.

Yet despite all of that, their commitment to their patients and to each other was unwavering.

Importantly, they also shared practical suggestions for what would make a difference: better retention support, more investment in facilities and stronger coordination between different parts of the system.

Their insights were thoughtful and constructive, and listening to them



Marie Goldman MP has been listening to the views of businesses and hospital workers

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reinforced for me how essential it is that their voices shape the decisions being made about the future of our NHS. They are the people keeping the system going, and they deserve to be heard.

I am determined to ensure that their experienced voices are properly heard by the senior leadership team at the Mid & South Essex NHS Foundation Trust and, more importantly, that we get positive change – both for the sake of patients and for staff.

Ultimately, our shared goal should surely be for the trust to rise from languishing at the bottom of the league tables to becoming a shining

beacon for other trusts about how to do things.

There is, of course, a very long way to go before we get there, but we have such talented, dedicated staff and still an incredible amount of goodwill that I know it's possible.

Thank you to all those doing such dedicated, wonderful and genuinely life-saving work.

If you are an NHS staff member and would like to tell me about your experiences working at the Mid & South Essex NHS Foundation Trust, please get in touch: marie.goldman.mp@parliament.uk.

Keep well.

Marie