

VICKY FORD MP



HOUSE OF COMMONS

LONDON SW1A 0AA

The School Council  
178 New London Road  
Chelmsford  
CM2 0RG

19 July 2022

Dear Students from Our Lady Immaculate,

I hope that you enjoyed your visit to Parliament, and I am very sorry that I was not able to come and meet with you.

My assistants Hannah and Peter have spoken to me about your visit and have passed on some of your suggestions to me. I would like to provide a response to all of your suggestions and comments.

#### Free School Buses

Currently the Government and the Local Authority are trying to ensure that children go to a school near their homes where they are able to walk and therefore do not need to take the bus. However, those in more rural areas are provided with a free bus service. Furthermore, I have worked hard to introduce lower bus fares for families who are on low incomes, to support children who do need to take a bus to get to school.

#### Cigarette Butts on the Street

I agree that this is extremely disgusting, and it is littering. One of the first things I did as a Member of Parliament was to help introduce stronger rules and fines for littering, especially people throwing litter out of car windows.

#### Phase Out Diesel Cars and More Electric Cars

The Government has introduced rules so that all new cars by 2030 need to be electric.

#### More Bike Lanes in Chelmsford

I have been supporting more bicycle friendly travel in Chelmsford, however if there are areas that you think could benefit from a cycle lane, please do let me know.

#### Net Zero Zone for Chelmsford

I think this is a very interesting idea and I will certainly raise this with Essex County Council, however currently the focus is on trying to encourage people to walk, cycle or use the park and ride service rather than driving through Chelmsford City Centre.

Member of Parliament for Chelmsford

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### More Disability Friendly Chelmsford

There are strong rules across the UK so that Local Authorities must ensure that City Centres are accessible for all people, including those with disabilities. This is outlined in the Equality Act 2010. Chelmsford has good accessibility however if there are specific areas that you think need adapting, please do let me know.

### Free Kids Sports Centre

Running local sports facilities is the role of Chelmsford City Council. However, I have been supporting more activities for children and young people. When I was the Minister for Children and Families, I rolled out the Holiday Activity and Food Project across the country. This gives children on free school meals access to enriching activities as well as food during the school holidays. From sports to arts to media and culture, it enabled hundreds of young people to take part in activities that they would not normally have been able to access.

### New London Road Pavements

I agree that the pavement needs improvement. This is something that I do see raised by some constituents and an issue that I am raising with Essex County Council as I know there are a lot of school children who will use this road, as well as elderly constituents who are at risk of a fall. Please let me know of specific parts of the pavement that need urgent repair.

### Extraction of Oil and Gold

The Government is committed to Net Zero by 2050. This means we are transitioning away from oil to more sustainable energy such as wind, solar, nuclear and hydrogen power. North Sea Oil has very strict environmental regulations and is known across the world as being one of the safest extractions of oil. Furthermore, gold is a very important mineral with many uses, particularly in technology. There are very strong regulations on the extraction of minerals to ensure that this is done safely with minimal environmental impact. There is also work being done to recover gold from used electronics to reduce the need to extract new gold. When I was a Member of the European Parliament, I worked to ensure that Europe adopted our safe practices for extracting oil and this was further developed during COP26.

### Plant More Trees

One of the best ways to fight climate change is to plant more trees. Not only do they capture carbon, but they help reduce urban temperatures in extreme heat by providing shade and limit flooding by intercepting rainfall and improving soil drainage. At the environmental conference, COP26 in Glasgow last year the UK encouraged over 100 World Leaders to end deforestation and protect trees. In Chelmsford, we need to focus on planting trees, especially around our new developments. Essex County Council has committed to plant 375,000 trees. The Government has introduced new rules to ensure biodiversity including trees and planning for wildlife is included in all new developments. I was pleased to support this.





This needs to be done in a considered way, in the middle of a biodiversity crisis we must be careful to plant native species for the benefit of our wildlife. We must also ensure that we are planting trees at far enough intervals for them to thrive and giving them the right protection from grazers and the elements. Saplings should have the appropriate tree guards and need a lot of water. Provision of water must be considered, especially in hot and dry summers.

I want to thank you again for drawing these important issues to my attention and I hope you have a lovely summer holiday.

Yours sincerely,

Thank you for such super questions.  
Vicky Ford

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