

The New Year view from Westminster

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From Epsom and Ewell Member for Parliament - Helen Maguire

The new year often brings a quieter moment. A chance to take stock once the noise and festive chaos of December fades. This year, that moment felt especially important to me.

Politics in Britain feels deeply unsettled right now, and the wider world even more so. One day brings news of geopolitical relationships breaking down in violent and inhumane acts; the next, warnings of democratic fragility from our neighbours across the Atlantic. It can all feel relentless. I don't blame anyone who feels disillusioned, or let down by establishments and leaders that are meant to provide stability and reassurance. I feel that frustration myself at times.

When that sense of turbulence sets in, I remind myself where my focus belongs. My responsibilities are not abstract; they are here. My priorities and primary interest are with the people of Epsom and Ewell, my community. That clarity matters. It keeps my work grounded, and it shapes what my work in Westminster will be this year.

One tangible example of that focus is recent progress on the issue of pavement parking. Residents have raised this issue with me consistently since before my election in July 2024, and for good reason. Obstructed pavements are not just a minor inconvenience; they affect people's safety. Parents with pushchairs, wheelchair users, people with visual impairments, and older residents are often the ones forced into the road just to get by.

After sustained campaigning, both locally and in Parliament, we are finally going to see meaningful change. This month, the Government gave councils new powers to tackle problematic pavement parking. What this means is that councils, not the police, can act where pavements are clearly blocked or unsafe, without long, street-by-street processes every time. Here's what it doesn't mean: this is not a blanket ban. Councils can still allow exemptions on narrow or busy residential streets where pavement parking is genuinely needed.

This is an important change that puts safety and accessibility first. I'm proud of this progress, not just for the outcome, but for what it represents: local voices being heard and practical problems taken seriously. I was pleased to receive recognition of my campaigning in a letter from Lilian Greenwood MP, the Minister for Local Transport, announcing the changes, and this year my priority will be ensuring that this change is implemented properly and consistently.

Another issue that comes up repeatedly is antisocial behaviour. This can take many forms, from vandalism and loud noise to the misuse of shared spaces. These issues can quietly have a real impact on our community and sense of belonging.

One specific concern constituents raise with me regularly is the growing problem of illegal or unsafe e-scooter use. I hear from parents worried that pavements or public pathways are no longer safe, and from older residents who no longer feel confident on their quick walk to the shops. One parent described a moment where their young child was mere millimetres from being knocked over by an e-scooter travelling far faster than it should have been, on a pathway it had no business being on. I dread to think what kind of irreparable damage could have been done if it weren't for just a few millimetres of space.

When e-scooters are used responsibly and legally, they can have a place in society. But reckless riding and a lack of coordinated enforcement create real and costly risks. Last year I worked with campaigners, police and transport partners to push for a more cohesive, joined-up response to the problem. This isn't about targeting young people or stifling new technology; it's about, as with the pavement parking issue, ensuring our public spaces are safe for everyone who uses them.

For anyone doubting just how much devastation an electric scooter can bring to someone's life and family, I would encourage them to read about Jacob's Journey, and the powerful work his mother Carly is doing as a result.

My work as Primary Care and Cancer spokesperson continues alongside my constituency campaigns, and the two remain closely intertwined. I will continue to fight for better healthcare across the constituency, whether that is through better access to GP appointments or timely treatment for cancer patients.

If there is a running thread through my priorities this year, it is a belief in the value of steady, practical action that is tangible for every single member of the Epsom and Ewell community. In the uncertain times ahead, the basics matter more than ever: safe streets, responsive public services, and a more affordable cost of living. I will continue to work hard delivering this for our constituency.

Helen Maguire MP

