



Paul Gilson: local viewpoint

I am very dismayed to see the Belvedere on Leigh Cliffs vandalised and covered in graffiti so soon after its restoration. It is a magnet for anti-social behaviour, drink, drugs, and wanton vandalism. Some of us got together to clean the site: we filled six bags with glass, tins, and fast food wrappings + 300 gas cylinders from an area smaller than a cricket square. Within days it was back as was, with mountains of broken glass. The site needs to be looked after and kept secure or the money spent on rebuilding the Belvedere will have been wasted.



MAKING PAVEMENTS SAFER FOR PEDESTRIANS
On a positive note, I was pleased to see cross-party support at Southend Council for a proposal put forward by Conservative councillor, David Burzotta. David submitted a motion to the Council to tackle dangerous cycling on pavements (one of my pet hates). This has always been illegal but is rarely enforced by the police. The Council will be consulting on a scheme to give Council officers powers to issue fines to pavement cyclists throughout the Borough of Southend.



SOUTHEND HOSPITAL TO RECEIVE £9.7M FUNDING BOOST FOR A & E

It's good to see that local residents using Southend Hospital's A & E will at long last get the sort of facilities they deserve. The £9.3m extra funding will go towards upgrading facilities, including expanding waiting areas, increasing the number of treatment cubicles, and preparing the hospital for winter.



SIR DAVID AMESS MP FOR SOUTHEND WEST WORD FROM WESTMINSTER



Most residents I speak to are absolutely fed up with the effect that the coronavirus pandemic is having on their lives. I share their frustration at what seems to be the endless changing of rules and regulations. The fundamentals however have not changed: *"Hands, Face, Space"*. Wash your hands frequently, wear a face covering where required and maintain social distancing.

I do think however, that whilst face coverings bring an undoubted benefit in not spreading infections, the 10pm rule seems to have the reverse effect. I also think the time has arrived when a decision has to be made whether we have these endless lockdowns and restrictions, in the knowledge that the virus is not going to go away. Such an approach might inevitably cause the economy to crash. Alternatively, are we going to learn to live with the virus and protect the most vulnerable? I am increasingly attracted to the latter approach.

The testing centre at Short Street, which I visited in September, is already providing residents with walk-through tests. A new drive-through facility at Nazareth House on London Road is being added to supplement the existing mobile centre at the Airport.

I have been out and about in Leigh recently, with Leigh Town Cllr Paul Gilson, visiting Cliff Parade, the Belvedere and Leigh Library Gardens. I also met with the I Love Leigh Cliffs Group and thanked them for their hard work in clearing up the Cliff.

