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COUNCIL
13 MAY 2015
(19.15 - 20.15)

PRESENT Councillors Agatha Mary Akyigyina, Stephen Alambritis, Mark Allison, Stan Anderson, Laxmi Attawar, Hamish Badenoch, John Bowcott, Michael Bull, Adam Bush, Tobin Byers, Charlie Chirico, David Chung, Caroline Cooper-Marbiah, Pauline Cowper, Stephen Crowe, Mary Curtin, David Dean, John Dehaney, Nick Draper, Edward Foley, Brenda Fraser, Fidelis Gadzama, Ross Garrod, Suzanne Grocott, Jeff Hanna, Joan Henry, Daniel Holden, James Holmes, Janice Howard, Mary-Jane Jeanes, Abigail Jones, Philip Jones, Andrew Judge, Sally Kenny, Linda Kirby, Abdul Latif, Najeeb Latif, Brian Lewis-Lavender, Gilli Lewis-Lavender, Edith Macauley, Russell Makin, Maxi Martin, Peter McCabe, Oonagh Moulton, Ian Munn, Katy Neep, Dennis Pearce, John Sargeant, Judy Saunders, David Simpson, Marsie Skeete, Peter Southgate, Geraldine Stanford, Linda Taylor, Imran Uddin, Gregory Udeh, Peter Walker, Jill West, Martin Whelton and David Williams

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (Agenda Item 1)

No apologies were received.

2 DECLARATIONS OF PECUNIARY INTEREST (Agenda Item 2)

No pecuniary declarations were made.

3 ELECTION OF MAYOR FOR THE 2015/ 2016 AND THE MAYOR'S APPOINTMENT OF THE DEPUTY MAYOR (Agenda Item 3)

The Mayor called for nominations for the office of Mayor for 2015-2016.

It was moved by Councillor Stephen Alambritis, and seconded by Councillor Martin Whelton that Councillor David Chung be elected as Mayor for 2016-2015 (*A copy of the nomination speeches are included within Appendix A to these minutes*)

Councillors Oonagh Moulton and Peter Southgate addressed the meeting expressing their support for the nomination.

There not being any other nominations the Mayor put the motion to the meeting and it was

RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY

That Councillor David Chung is the duly elected Mayor of the London Borough of Merton for the Municipal year 2015-2016

Councillor David Chung made the statutory declaration of acceptance of office and was invested with the Mayor's chain and badge of office.

The new Mayor announced that his Deputy Mayor of the Municipal year 2015-2016 would be Councillor Pauline Cowper

Councillor Pauline Cowper signed the declaration of acceptance of office and was invested with the Deputy Mayor's badge of office.

The Mayor that his Mayoress would be Irina Chung, supported by his consorts Karen Chung, Kim Randell and Kerrienne O'Callaghan

The Mayor announced that in respect to his chaplaincy given the diverse nature of Merton, he would be asking the humanist association and leaders of different faith groups across the borough to lead the Council in prayers and reflection at the start of each meeting instead of appointing a Mayor's chaplain.

The Deputy Mayor announced that his consort would be Michael Cowper.

The Mayor presented badges to the outgoing Mayor, Deputy Mayor and their respective consorts.

The Mayor, Councillor David Chung, thanked Council for his election for the forthcoming year and announced that his Mayoral two charities would be FISH (Friends in St Helier) and Merton Centre for Independent Living, whilst also supporting the Merton Alzheimer Society through the Merton Dementia Hub, and One Life.

(A copy of his acceptance speech is included within Appendix B to these minutes).

5 VOTE OF THANKS TO THE RETIRING MAYOR (Agenda Item 5)

The Mayor invited Councillor Agatha Akyigyina to the dais to receive the Council's vote of thanks.

The Leader of the Council, Councillor Stephen Alambritis, moved and the Leader of the Conservative Group, Councillor Oonagh Moulton, seconded the vote of thanks to the retiring Mayor.

In doing so both Group Leaders along with the Leader of the Merton Park Ward Independent Residents Group, Councillor Peter Southgate and Councillor Brenda Frazer spoke in praise of Councillor Agatha Akyigyina's year in office.

(A copy of all these speeches are attached as Appendix C to these minutes).

RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY:

That the Council places on record its sincere thanks and appreciation to Councillor Agatha Akyigyina for the dedicated manner in which she has served as Mayor of the London Borough of Merton for the year 2014-2015.

Mayoral Citation:

Councillor Agatha Akyigyina. Mayor of Merton 2014-2015

At the time of her election as Mayor in May 2014, Councillor Akyigyina had completed eight years as a councillor for Figges Marsh in Mitcham. She has been a very personable, community-focused and energetic mayor, undertaking many charity fundraising events and numerous civic events and engagements.

The Mayor's main charities for 2014-2015 were Shooting Star Chase and Merton Street Pastors. Helping those in need in the local community as well as improving the lives of children are the Mayor's passions, and are reflected in her chosen charities as well as through her community work including helping at a mother and toddler group in Mitcham, working as a volunteer at Home-Start Merton and being a governor at St Mark's Primary School. The Mayor also supported charity events for the Colour House Theatre and HPCT (The Pilgrimage Trust) as well as helping to raise funds for the Ghanaian Parents Association.

Family is very much at the heart of the Mayor's work and helping Shooting Star Chase is particularly important to her as the charity supported Councillor Akyigyina and her family when her daughter Suzanna sadly became ill and passed away in 2007. This has been a driving force for the Mayor and she really enjoyed hosting a Christmas afternoon-tea event with the children and families who are being supported by Shooting Star Chase. True to the Mayor's fun nature, she stepped away from the Mayoral convention of wearing robes for this occasion and dressed up as a Christmas elf much to the enjoyment of the children at the reception.

Noted for her great sense of humour, Councillor Akyigyina has particularly stood out for her warm personality and her ability to put people at ease. Councillor Akyigyina's caring nature is exhibited in her work as a committed Street Pastor, Vice Chair of the North East Mitcham Community Centre and a Trustee of the Horizon Centre in Pollards Hill. Balancing this community work with charity efforts, Councillor Akyigyina worked hard during her Mayoralty to raise in the region of £65,000 for her charities.

The Mayor also organised a variety of events that were great fun, including a quiz night, an Irish-themed evening, a Ghanaian Independence Celebration, a curry night and Christmas events as well as the annual Mayor's Ball. Over 250 guests helped raise more than £20,000 at the ball.

Another highlight of the Mayoralty was coming second in the London New Year's Day Parade with the On the Move entry, created by the talented team at the Colour House Theatre. This raised £6,000 for the Mayor's charities. Many friends and colleagues, councillors, council officers and volunteers from Merton as well as local businesses helped to make the day a success.

Councillor Akyigyina was proud to represent the borough at civic events throughout the year, including the commemoration of Remembrance Day, Armed Forces Day, Holocaust Memorial Day and the London Mayor's Association Annual Civic Service event at the Abbey of Westminster.

The Mayor was particularly honoured to serve as Mayor during Merton's 50th anniversary as a London borough and helped to lead in the borough's Golden Jubilee celebrations throughout the year. The Mayor worked hard over the year to involve the community more in the Mayoralty and she held many reception events to meet and thank the unsung heroes of the borough who work hard to make Merton a great place to live.

Councillor Akyigyina's workload and achievements over her Mayoral year would not have been possible without the dedication and hard work of her Deputy Mayor, Councillor Laxmi Attawar, and deputy consorts Rami Attawar and Sally Rance. Between the Mayor and her deputy, they have attended around 450 engagements. The Mayor is also grateful to her councillor colleagues who helped raise money for her charities throughout the year and she is thankful for the support from Merton Council staff particularly her staff in the Mayoral office.

The Mayor was ably and lovingly supported by her husband Charles, her son Charlie and her daughter Teresa and friends who all shared the principal consort duties and without whom she could not have achieved so much in her year.

The Mayor was also prayerfully and loyally supported by her Chaplain Father Patrick Feyisetan.

Mayor Akyigyina is recognised by the council for her outstanding community-focused work as well as her positive attitude and dedication to her charitable activities, and for her work representing the London Borough of Merton as a whole. Her personal qualities of compassion and good humour contributed to her very successful year in Merton.

Councillor Agatha Akyigyina responded to the vote of thanks referring to a number of events and experiences during her mayoral year. She placed on record her thanks to a number of individuals for their support during her term of office, including the Deputy Mayor and the Mayor's office support staff.

(A copy of her speech is included within Appendix D to these minutes)

A framed copy of the citation together with a past Mayor's badge was presented to Councillor Agatha Akyigyina.

6 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING (Agenda Item 6)

That the Minutes of the meeting held on 15 April 2015 were agreed as a correct record.

7 CONSTITUTION OF COMMITTEES AND OTHER BODIES (Agenda Item 7)

The report was moved Councillor Stephen Alambritis and seconded by Councillor Mark Allison.

RESOLVED

That the Council:

- A. approves the constitution of committees, sub-committees and scrutiny bodies and agrees the allocation of seats, chair and vice-chair positions and the appointment of members to those seats, as set out in Appendix A of the submitted report;
- B. approves the constitution of consultative forums and other bodies and agrees the appointment of members to those seats; as set out in Appendix B of the submitted report;
- C. agrees the allocation of seats and appointment to the outside organisations as detailed in Appendix C of the submitted report;
- D. agrees the terms of reference of consultative and other bodies for which the Council is responsible and the Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee – South West London as set out in Appendix D of the submitted report
- E. agrees to delegate to the Planning Applications Committee the authority to appoint a non-voting co-opted member if this is deemed appropriate.
- F. notes that the Executive Leader has not made any changes to appointments to his Cabinet or to their respective portfolios as set out in Appendix E of the submitted report;
- G. notes that, in respect of the Mayor of Merton's Charitable Trust, Councillors John Sargeant and Laxmi Attawar have resigned with effect 5 June 2014 and that notes the appointment of the incoming Mayor Councillor David Chung and Deputy Mayor Councillor Pauline Cowper, as trustees from 5 June 2014; and
- H.
 - i) agrees the procedure rules and terms of reference of the South London Partnership Joint Committee (Joint Committee of The Boroughs Of Richmond, Kingston, Sutton, Merton And Croydon) as set out in Appendix G of the submitted report
 - ii) delegates authority to the Monitoring Officer to insert reference to the South London Partnership Joint Committee and its purpose as defined in Appendix G into the appropriate section of the Council's Constitution
 - iii) approves that the Leader be appointed to South London Partnership Joint Committee (Joint Committee Of The Boroughs Of Richmond, Kingston, Sutton, Merton And Croydon)
- I. agrees to appoint Councillor Brenda Fraser to the Council of Governors for the Kingston Hospital NHS Trust Board as the Merton and Sutton Borough Councils (Joint nomination).

**Nomination Speeches for Councillor David Chung
Councillor Stephen Alambritis**

Madam Mayor,

As Councillors we are all politicians

We begin by joining a party

We apply to be candidates by forwarding our profile

We go to selection meetings

We await to be longlisted and then shortlisted

We then go for the dreaded final interview

We then get the killer question

What inspired you to get involved in politics?

Madam Mayor

The best answer to this question that I have ever come across is from some one in this chamber

It comes from the person I am about to nominate for the position of Mayor of Merton for the municipal year 2015/16

It comes from Cllr David chung

When asked this question

David answered as follows:

I was inspired to get involved in politics by Jack Ashley

Madam Mayor

Very –Very few people achieve the status that Jack Ashley did

Jack Ashley was a beacon for the disabled

Both in the Commons and the Lords he was the most significant

British politician of the last 40 years to champion the cause of disabled people

There you have it Madam Mayor

We will have in Cllr Chung a Mayor of Merton who will also be a champion for the disabled

That is why I am so delighted and so thrilled to be making this nomination tonight

In addition to having a Mayor who will support great causes we will have a musical Mayor who can play the piano, the banjo and the guitar

God knows this chamber needs livening up sometimes!

And what about this for his musical taste and it goes from Johan Sebastian Bach to Bob Dylan

Keeping with the musical theme I understand that the answer to all David's prayers were not blowing in the wind but were to be found in church

Because that is where he first met his wonderful wife Irina

They are now blessed with three daughters and seven grandchildren

Born in Guyana (then British Guiana) David has been a strong family man regularly taking the family on holiday to Ocho Rios in Jamaica

He says Irina and their daughters repeatedly told him they liked the place for the weather, the beaches and the night life

But after all those years and looking at his bank balance today he has a sneaking feeling that they liked it because it was and still is a shoppers dream!

Madam Mayor

Over the years the Mayors Parlour always lays on a great traditional spreads for visiting guests

You know-cucumber sandwiches, mini sausage rolls and so on

But there is change in the wind here too

Because Davids favourite food is curry...very hot curry..curry that is so hot chefs have to wear goggles to make it

So get out those goggles Carl because you will also need them when carrying and helping to serve the Mayor his favourite dish

Times they are going to get hotter with this particular Mayor

Madam Mayor

Cllr Chung was elected to Merton Council in 1994 and has served Longthornton Ward since then

He has also has served on many committees including as Cabinet member for education

David's entire career has been in education both in the UK and abroad

Madam Mayor

I know David will talk about his choice of Deputy Mayor and without naming names I am delighted with his choice

I also know David will name his chosen Charities and there again I will leave him to name them

Suffice to say they are all charities promoting immensely worthy causes

Finally Madam Mayor

It gives me great pleasure to nominate

And I urge this council to then elect

Cllr David Chung as Mayor of the London Borough of Merton for the
Municipal year 2015-2016

Councillor Martin Whelton

It is a great privilege to second the nomination of David Chung as 51st Mayor of the London Borough of Merton. I first got to know David when we were first elected as Labour councillors in 2002. David was a good friend of mine from that time and subsequently I was a neighbour, six doors down from him, a few years after I got elected. David has been a person who has given distinguished service to the borough. Firstly in his first term as a councillor serving as Cabinet Member for Education, and I served alongside him as well on the governing body of Tamworth Manor. Alongside others, such as Cllr Judge, we did a great deal to change that school for the better, making it a Harris Academy.

He has also done a great deal in terms of equality for the borough. Twenty five years ago this council elected Joe Abrams, a fellow Ghanese citizen as Mayor. David and myself served alongside him in the first term and knew the contribution he made in terms of equality in the borough, and David very much follows in his footsteps, but also on disability as well. David came back from a serious illness a few years ago to be nominated as Mayor tonight, and he has been a tireless champion for people with disability in this borough. It also recognises his service as a Longthornton councillor. It is my understanding he is the first councillor from Longthornton ward to be nominated as Mayor throughout our 50 year history. I know how highly regarded he is in that area for the contribution he makes and he is a tireless champion for that part of the borough. I also know from past experience what an honour and privilege it is to be in the position of Mayor.

I know David, you will make a huge contribution to the borough. You are on a voyage of discovery, you will meet many fantastic people from across the community and the voluntary groups that make up this great borough of ours. I also know you will bring a great deal to the mayoral office in terms of your experience and years of service. It is rightly being recognised tonight in your nomination as Mayor for this municipal year. Good luck David, I know you will make a brilliant Mayor, and I ask council to support this nomination, thank you.

Councillor David Chung Mayor's Acceptance Speech

I'd like to begin by saying that for me, this is a truly Momentous occasion. I was born at the end of the second World war, in what was then known as British Guiana (quite a different place geographically from here, tropical) and this evening I am sitting in the Council chamber representing Merton as its first citizen and Mayor. This has been quite some journey.

You will be pleased to know that I am not about to give you a history lesson although my journey from Guyana to Merton represents in microcosm the history of Britain in the last 100 years.

It is indeed a privilege and an honour to serve as the Mayor of the London Borough of Merton. I am pleased to have the opportunity to support the positive work that goes on day to day that makes Merton a wonderful place in which to live and work. I shall strive to uphold the office of the Mayor in all that I do.

I am struck by the extent of the well wishes I have received from family, friends, residents, colleagues and many others. Thanks to my wife, my daughters and my family for their love and support without which I could never have contemplated undertaking this responsibility. Thanks to Ged Curran, the Chief Executive and the officers of the Council. Thanks to all of my councillor colleagues. A special thanks to the Mayoral officers, to Carol Vincent, Carl Brown, Steve Vincent and Mick Dore. Thank to everyone who contribute to this good office and I look forward to their continued support to me this year.

For my charities I have chosen FISH (Friends in St Helier) I believe that as older people we need to do what we can to remain active in our communities with the support of the voluntary sector and other organisations in Merton. Being active enhances our well being and contributes to the economic and social well being of our communities and society.

My second charity is Merton Centre for Independent Living. We have come a far way with the integration of disabled people in our communities and society and we still have a far way still to go.

In addition I shall be supporting:

Merton Alzheimer Society through the Merton Dementia Hub, a unique community based service for people with dementia, their family and carers.

I shall also be supporting One Life, a charity that works to help vulnerable young people realise their potential by providing essential life skills to them. Helping them to make a successful transition to adulthood.

Finally, kindly note that there will be a reception in Merton Link at the end of the Council meeting. You are all invited and I look forward to sharing your company.

Thank you all, once again. I feel deeply humbled and eager to embark on what promises to be a very exciting year. Thank you.

Appendix C

Speeches in respect of the vote of thanks to the retiring Mayor Councillor Agatha Akyigyina

Councillor Stephen Alambritis

Mr Mayor

At the time of her election as Mayor, Councillor Agatha Akyigyina had completed eight years as a councillor for Figges Marsh in Mitcham

She has been a very personable community-focused, and energetic mayor

She has been undertaking many charity fundraising events and numerous civic engagements in the community

The Mayor's main charities were Shooting Star Chase and Merton Street Pastors.

Both charities work to help children and young people in Merton.

The Mayor has also supported charity events for the Colour House Theatre and for the Pilgrimage Trust as well as helping raise funds for the Ghanaian Parents Association

Councillor Akyigyina worked hard during her mayoralty to raise in the region of £65,000 for her charities

Much of this money was raised through the individual efforts of councillors and other residents. Testimony to her commitment to those in the community working for the community

The Mayor organised a variety of events that were great fun, including the annual Mayor's Ball.

This event had a Ghanaian theme and over 250 guests helped raise more than £20,000

Another highlight was Merton's participation in the London New Year's Day Parade

The Tube/bus themed 'On the Move' entry created by the talented team at the Colour House Theatre came second and raised £6000

The Mayor was pleased with the prize money but was adamant Merton should have come first. She took a note of the Judges names!!!

The Mayor was proud to represent the borough at civic events throughout the year, including the commemoration of Remembrance Day, Armed Forces Day and Holocaust Memorial Day

Agatha was particularly honoured to serve as Mayor during Merton's 50th anniversary as a London borough and helped lead in our Golden Jubilee celebrations throughout the year

The Mayor is particularly noted for her focus on the community and often took a hands-on approach

Who can forget when she stepped away from the Mayoral convention of wearing robes for a Christmas event and dressed up as a Christmas elf much to the enjoyment of the children at the reception

This was much to the great surprise of Carl Brown, the Mayor's Executive Attendant,

And to the even greater surprise of Steve Vincent, the Mayor's Second Executive Assistant

And certainly to the humungous and delightful surprise of Carol Vincent, the Mayor's Personal Executive Assistant

Working to highlight and support the work of local communities in the borough, the Mayor hosted many receptions to give Merton's residents a platform to talk about community matters

Mr Mayor

The Mayor's workload and achievements over her mayoral year would not have been possible without the dedication and hard work of her Deputy Mayor, Councillor Laxmi Attawar and deputy consorts Rami Attawar and Sally Rance.

Between the Mayor and her Deputy, they have attended around 450 engagements.

The Mayor was ably and lovingly supported by her husband Charles, her son Charlie and her daughter Teresa and her many many and I mean many friends

These friends all shared the principal consort duties— without whom she could not have achieved so much in her year.

The Mayor was also prayerfully and loyally supported by her Chaplain Father Patrick Feyisetan

Mr Mayor

In saying goodbye to Agatha who leaves the chain gang tonight I do so knowing it is also goodbye to Jam Doughnuts all year round (points to stomach)

Mr Mayor

Please give me some solace on the food front

It may be jam doughnuts yesterday but you are committing to Curry with goggles tomorrow are you not?

So Mr Mayor

Agatha Akyigyina is recognised by the council for her skill in chairing council meetings as well as her hard work, creativity and dedication to her charitable activities, and for her work representing the London Borough of Merton as a whole.

Her personal qualities of compassion and good humour contributed to her very successful year in Merton

Councillor Oonagh Moulton

Mr Mayor it's a while since I've had to address a mayor as Mister – Male Mayors are nearly an endangered species!

I second the vote of thanks and speak on behalf of all Conservative and opposition councillors in thanking Councillor Agatha Akyigina for her dedication to the role of our Mayor over the last year.

The citation mentions many of her qualities but for me her warmth of personality and her funloving nature are what I shall remember her for whilst the community focus of her work and her work for her charities have been the outstanding features of her year.

The Mayor held a large number of charity events this year for her 2 chosen charities – Shooting Star Hospice and Merton Street Pastors. What a great range they were - most of which my colleagues and I were delighted to support - from the smaller quiz and curry evenings to the magnificent Charity Ball. The spirit in which they were held was remarkable – those who were there could not forget seeing Councillor Williams bring down the roof of the restaurant as the Laughing Policeman! Similarly at the ball it was lovely to see her use a Ghanaian theme and allow us all to share some of her own culture with us – it wasn't long before we were all on the dance floor!

The success of these events – many of which sold out - and the hard work shown by Agatha and her small but hardworking team consisting of Carol, Carl and Steve in the mayoral office is borne out by the wonderful sum raised over the year for her charities!

I should also like to praise the Mayor for her representation of the borough at the plethora of civic events throughout the year – especially Armed Forces Day, Remembrance Day, Commonwealth Day and just recently the 70th anniversary of VE Day. She also led the celebrations for Merton's 50th anniversary as a London Borough.

The range of the 450 events over the Mayoral year was enormous and could not have been completed without the help and support of her consort and family. I should also like to pay tribute to the Deputy Mayor Councillor Laxmi Attawar and her deputy consorts who have proved to be wonderful support too and contributed to this very successful Mayoral year.

Councillor Peter Southgate

Tribute to Mayor Agatha Akyigyina

And so, your Mayoral year really has come to an end, as all good things in life must. But I know you will look back on it with many happy memories as one of the outstanding years of your life. And we will all remember your Mayoralty for a long time, characterised by your larger than life personality, your humour, and your constant exhortations to us to enjoy ourselves.

It's only a few days ago, but I look back to your Civic Service with particular affection. Two things stand out in my mind. One is what a family affair this Mayoralty has been, with your sister, your husband Charles, your son Charlie and your daughter Teresa all playing their part in that service. And then there's the wider family of your church and its congregation, whom we had the chance to meet again at your reception on Monday, the members of the spirited choir and the supportive role the Father Patrick has played as your chaplain.

It's through insights into your life such as this outside the council chamber that we have come to know and understand you better. Your life has been touched by tragedy with the death of your daughter Suzanna, but the experience has made you a stronger person, and confirmed your religious faith.

This has manifested itself in the efforts you have put in on behalf of your two charities, Shooting Star Chase and the Street Pastors. Indeed in the case of the Street Pastors your really have demonstrated a willingness to walk the talk, by working as a pastor long before you became Mayor.

I recall in your homily to us at your Civic Service on Sunday, when you repeated something that you'd said before around Christmas time, and it was – look out for your neighbours. That's the advice I shall choose to remember you by, and against the uncertain future we all face as councillors working with shrinking budgets, I would suggest it's very sound advice.

I intended to keep this tribute short, as I know you prefer us to keep our speeches short, and I may already have exceeded my allotted two minutes. But I do want to thank you wholeheartedly for all you have done for Merton during your Mayoral year, on behalf of the many residents, volunteers and schoolchildren who will have cause to remember you. You've had a lot of fun, and we've had fun along with you.

Councillor Brenda Fraser

I just wanted to say a few words to thank Councillor Agatha Akyigyina, the outgoing mayor. Councillor Akyigyina has been a fantastic mayor for the last year. She has been very inclusive and shared her events with lots of us, including myself as consort. I have been very privileged to have insight into the communications and relationships of the mayoralty, and what is known as 'The Chain Gang'.

At the weekend, we were in central London at the Southwark Mayor's Ball – a Bollywood event – something to be seen! Councillor Akyigyina said she valued and believed in people and inclusiveness, and this has been evident throughout her year. I feel your charities have benefitted from all your efforts, not just monetarily, but with the exposure you've allowed them, and I feel that Councillor Chung has a very hard act to follow, although I am with you all the way.

Outgoing speech - Councillor Agatha Akyigyina - Mayor of Merton 2014-15

Good evening everyone,

Mr Mayor, councillors, distinguished guests

I would like to thank you all for giving me the privilege of being Mayor these past 11 months. As the 50th Mayor of Merton, I can honestly say it has been a wonderful adventure.

Being Mayor, you are there to serve the whole community; I hope I have done so proudly. I said at the beginning of my term that my year would be about the community and its unsung heroes.

I have met many of the unsung heroes in this wonderful community. I held various receptions for them and also other members of the community. My only disappointment is that I could not have held more receptions for people in the community.

Having been able to go out and meet other mayors from both near and not so near has been a wonderful experience, which hopefully has put Merton on the map. Since many of the local mayors would meet regularly at events, we officially formed a group called 'team 14' and even without our robes and bling we will continue to be friends!

Mr Mayor, I would also like to mention the extraordinary generosity of the people of the borough. People of Merton **thank you!** To all who have supported my charity events to raise money for **Shooting star chase and Street pastors, both will receive over £23,000 each** and other various charities that will also get some money.

I don't think I can even find the words to tell you how much I have enjoyed this last year and the great events I went to. I was proud to represent the Borough of Merton, to which I hope I did a good job. I was proud to see Merton's float in the New Year's Day parade take 2nd place – although in my eyes which we really won.

Firstly, I would also like to thank my family, who have done their best as my consort and have stated how pleased they are to not have any more pin holes in the clothes (lol).

I would also like to thank all those who helped me with various fundraisers:

- Mrs Bridget Mullens who helped with the Irish night.
- Carol, Steve and their girls for the Annual quiz they put together.

- Afua, Beau, Emmanuel, Wesley, Linda and Vivian who helped with the Ghana independence night.
- Linda Kidd and Linda Twyman who organised an additional quiz night.
- A special thank you goes out to my Ball committee; Margaret McDonagh who got all the Sponsors, Irene Strank who collected most of the prizes, Maria who did the wonderful table decorations, Laxmi who also supported me in preparing for the ball and all of the helpers from all England.
- I would like to thank all 3 leaders; Steven, Oonagh and Peter who have all been great and regardless of political belief have supportive of me and the people of Merton.
- I would like to thank Laxmi for being a great Deputy, along with her consorts; (her mum and Sally).
- Thank you to my fellow councillors for your support throughout the year. I really appreciate it.
- I would like to thank Carol for all her support and help in the office.
- Thank you to Steve and Mick for also supporting me.
- For Carl my attendant, Chauffeur, Photographer, 'Mr-do-it-all' or should I say 'Mr know-it-all' ha-ha. As mayors come and go, Carl provides seamless continuity and truth be told we could possibly say he knows more about the Borough than the Mayor.

It has been a very busy year and time really has flown. I will miss the role and the joy it brings to those out there, but most of all I will miss my bling!

So to conclude, nothing has made me more proud than being able to serve my community alongside my family and members of the community as my Consorts. I have attended over **420 engagements** with (I hope) professionalism, Mac Lip-gloss and a smile...and where there was a dancefloor, I made sure I showed them that in Merton we know how to get down ha-ha!

David (Mr Mayor), congratulations on your election as Mayor and I wish you all the best.

Use your voice for kindness, your ears for compassion, your hands for charity, your mind for truth and your heart for love!