

COUNCIL ANNUAL MEETING
17 MAY 2017

(7.15 pm - 8.08 pm)

PRESENT Councillors (in the Chair), Agatha Mary Akyigyina, Stephen Alambritis, Mark Allison, Stan Anderson, Laxmi Attawar, Hamish Badenoch, John Bowcott, Michael Bull, Adam Bush, Mike Brunt, 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, Joan Henry, Daniel Holden, James Holmes, Janice Howard, Mary-Jane Jeanes, Abigail Jones, Philip Jones, Sally Kenny, Linda Kirby, Abdul Latif, Najeeb Latif, Brian Lewis-Lavender, Gilli Lewis-Lavender, Edith Macauley MBE, Russell Makin, Peter McCabe, Oonagh Moulton, Ian Munn BSc, MRTPI(Rtd), Katy Neep, Jerome Neil, Dennis Pearce, John Sargeant, Judy Saunders, David Simpson CBE, Marsie Skeete, Peter Southgate, Geraldine Stanford, Linda Taylor OBE, Imran Uddin, Gregory Patrick Udeh, Jill West and Martin Whelton

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (Agenda Item 1)

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Jeff Hanna; Andrew Judge and David Williams

Apologies for lateness were received from Councillors Joan Henry and Jerome Neil.

2 DECLARATIONS OF PECUNIARY INTEREST (Agenda Item 2)

No declarations of pecuniary interest were made.

3 ELECTION OF MAYOR FOR THE FORTHCOMING MUNICIPAL YEAR AND MAYOR'S APPOINTMENT OF THE DEPUTY MAYOR (Agenda Item 3)

It was moved by Councillor Stephen Alambritis, and seconded by Councillor Edith Macauley that Councillor Marsie Skeete be elected as Mayor for 2017-2018.

(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

Councillor Marsie Skeete 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 her Deputy Mayor of the Municipal year 2017-2018 would be Councillor Judy Saunders. Councillor Saunders signed the declaration of acceptance of office and was invested with the Deputy Mayor's badge of office.

The Mayor announced that her consorts would be Arexa Skeete, Yeuton Crandon, Dolores Bisnouth and Stephen Sanders. The Mayor's chaplains would be Reverend Gerry Stanton and Reverend Peter Jeffrey.

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

The Mayor, Councillor Marsie Skeete, thanked Council for her election for the forthcoming year and announced that her Mayoral two charities as Mencap and Commonsense Community Development Trust.

(A copy of her 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 Brenda Fraser 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 spoke in praise of Councillor Brenda Fraser's year in office.

(A copy of 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 Brenda Fraser, for the dedicated manner in which she has served as Mayor of the London Borough of Merton for the year 2016-2017.

6 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING (Agenda Item 6)

RESOLVED

That the Minutes of the meeting held on 12 April 2017 were agreed as a correct record.

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

The report was moved by Councillor Stephen Alambritis and seconded by Councillor Brenda Macauley.

RESOLVED:

1.
 - i) that the constitution of committees, sub-committees and scrutiny bodies set out in Appendix A to the report be agreed; and
 - ii) that the allocation of seats, chair and vice-chair positions and the appointment of members to those seats be agreed.
2.
 - i) that the constitution of consultative forums and other bodies set out in the revised tabled Appendix B to the report be approved; and
 - ii) that the appointment of members to those seats be approved.
3. the allocation of seats and appointment to the outside organisations as detailed in the revised tabled Appendix C to the report be agreed.
4. the terms of reference of consultative and other bodies appointed by the Council, detailed in Appendix D to the report be agreed.
5. to note that the Executive Leader has made no changes to appointments to his Cabinet or to their respective portfolios, outlined in Appendix E to the report.
6. notes the membership and Terms of Reference of the London Borough of Merton Local Authority Property Company Sub-Committee, as set out in Appendix F.
7. that the Council's Constitution be amended to incorporate any changes resulting from the approval of recommendations 1 to 6.

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The nomination of Cllr Marsie Skeete

For Mayor of Merton 2017-2018

By Cllr Stephen Alambritis

Who is the Leader of the Council

At the London Borough of Merton

On Wednesday 17 May 2017 in the Council Chamber

Madam Mayor,

We are blessed to have the headquarters of the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development in this borough

That organisation is all about excellence in the work place

They are about good relations between employers and employees

And they are about that dreaded form...the job description

That got me thinking about the kind of job description needed for

Our Mayor

Our Mayor of Merton

Our First Citizen of this borough

Well, we always need those essential skills in a Mayor

Of warmth

Of compassion

Of kindness and of generosity

Of a love of people and of children

Then there are those desired skills

Of Punctuality (I know Carl is listening)

Of brevity

Of Patience

Then there are the required qualifications

Someone who has placed themselves before the people of the borough

Someone who has been elected to serve the people of this borough

Someone who is a sitting councillor

I was also thinking about

Reporting relationships

And if that was about the Mayor

Reporting to me

But no I hear you say

And yes I know my place

Our Mayor reports to Carl!

And so the councillor I am about to nominate for the position of Mayor of Merton for the municipal year 2017/18

The councillor who fits our job description for Mayor

Who has the qualifications and the skills to be our First Citizen of our Borough

That councillor, that person is Cllr Marsie Skeete

Madam Mayor

Cllr Skeete was elected to Merton Council in 2014 and has served Longthornton Ward since then

She has also has served on many **important committees**

Committees that reflect her passion for people

Cllr Marsie Skeete is a member of the following committees:

Activities in Learning Disability Day Centres

Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Panel

Healthier Communities and Older People Overview and Scrutiny Panel

Joint Consultative Committee with Ethnic Minority Organisations

Licensing Committee (we will come back to this and especially to the subject of Rum later)

Preventing Loneliness and Social Isolation in Merton

That last committee is in keeping with Marsie's full time occupation

Marsie works in the Prison Service working with prisoners and helping them to get out

When they have served their time!!!

To get back into the world of work when they are released

Madam Mayor

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

I also know Marsie will name her chosen Charities and there again I will leave her to name them

Those are her choices but I now want talk about Marsies choice in Rum

Marsie is from the wonderful country that is called Guyana and they do love their Rum there

Her Favourite rum is from the Demerara Rivers Finest Sugar Canes the true gold that is El Dorado Rum

In Marsie we indeed have true gold

Madam Mayor

On the subject of Rum it is appropriate that we are overlooked in this chamber by Lord Horatio Nelson

When this gallant fighter died in battle there was a need to bring the body back to these shores

Madam Mayor

As far as I understand it Nelson's body was immersed in a cask of Guyanan Rum possibly from the Demerara River and quite probably El Dorado Rum

The ship the body was brought back in, so they say, was HMS Pickle

There you have it Madam Mayor a bit of history from me

And importantly for this occasion, we have not got ourselves into a pickle over this nomination

It has been very straightforward among my colleagues in particular

I asked some of them them for the first word that comes to their mind when Marsie is mentioned

The following sprung to mind

Tall

Glamorous

Passionate

Vivacious

Strong

Knows what she wants (watch out Carl!)

Madam Mayor

Tonight we look forward to our next municipal year and I know that Cllr Marsie Skeete will spring some wonderful and surprising events on us in the forthcoming year and I for one cannot wait!

So, Madam Mayor

It gives me great pleasure to nominate and I urge this council to then elect Cllr Marsie Skeete as Mayor of the London Borough of Merton for the Municipal year 2017-2018

Councillor Edith Macauley MBE - Speech for Mayor-Making

Madam Mayor, my sincere congratulations to Councillor Marsie Skeete, First Citizen for the London Borough of Merton 2017/18.

I first met Councillor Skeete during one of our canvassing sessions in Colliers Wood and Lavender Fields ward over 5 years ago.

After the end of canvassing, I spoke to Councillor Skeete to find out if she enjoyed speaking to residents and also her views about meeting different people in the community. The feedback was quite positive and she was really fascinated by the issues which residents were raising. I was not surprised that she enjoyed the canvassing session as during our conversation she seemed to be politically motivated and it was quite clear that she had excellent skills dealing with people as in her full time job she was used to meeting and dealing with people of all races.

I was absolutely delighted when she was elected to become Councillor for Longthornton as during the first selection process, I interviewed her for Lower Morden and it became quite obvious that Councillor Skeete was a professional person with exceptional skills.

I have no scintilla or iota of doubt that as a young, vibrant, glamorous, stylish and classy Mayor, she will raise the profile of the borough as the First Citizen and also uphold the dignity of the Mayor's office. I welcome Councillor Skeete to the London Mayor's Association and also as a Member of the chain gang.

In support of the nomination of Marsie Skeete Councillor Oonagh Moulton

Madam Mayor

I am pleased to speak in support of the nomination of Cllr Marsie Skeete for the important position of Mayor of Merton for the municipal year 2017-18.

I am sure that Cllr Skeete's work as a lecturer and turning round lives at High Down Prison will give her a great foundation on which to work with members of our community.

I note that on her blog she has stated that she enjoys 'doing her bit to improve the lives of individuals and our society' and I'm sure she will find ample opportunity to do so as our First Citizen of the Borough.

Cllr Skeete has been just over 3 years on the Council but she has a strong record of committee membership including the Children & Young people and the Healthier Communities & Older People Overview & Scrutiny Panels plus the Licensing Committee.

Madame Mayor as you know I will always encourage our Group to support the Mayor, community events and the Mayor's Charities.

We look forward to supporting your successor as we have yourself!

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Mayoral Speech – 17 May 2017

Honoured and distinguished guest, family, friends, colleagues and fellow councillors, I would like to welcome and thank you for showing your interest and support by being here this evening. I am thrilled and privileged to stand here as the elected Mayor of this great, stimulating and diverse Borough of ours, Merton.

I would not have been here tonight without the unwavering support of my family, fellow councillors, friends and the community which I serve; my debt to you all is incalculable. I am truly grateful to my leader and fellow councillors for their trust in me.

I take this responsibility and the confidence bestowed upon me seriously. I am consigned to serving the people of the Borough of Merton to the best of my ability with earnestness, solitude and allegiance to our community. I will constantly reflect on Life's two rules #1. Never quite #2.

Always remember rule. I also give thanks to my colleagues for the challenge support, and trust over the years, for electing the first Black Female Guyanese as Mayor of the Borough of Merton. This borough stands proud of its divergent and vibrant community. Thank you so much! In this milestone, I arrived in the UK in 2001 and followed on with my career as an educator.

I obtained my teaching qualification at London Southbank University then went on to impart my knowledge at TBG Learning College in Brixton, St Mark's Academy, and currently enabling offenders an opportunity to gain a qualification thus enabling them to minimise re-offending at HMP High Down.

During my pre – Britain years, I attended, Cumberland Nursery, Cumberland Primary School, BHS, Cyril Peter College of Education, and the University of Guyana where the schools curriculum covered similar subjects as in British curriculum. My duties included managing schools, representing parents, children answer stand in a daily basis.

I was always keen on the Mayors and their glitz, glamour and grandeur that come with the history and tradition of Britain. Little did I know, or even dreamt that I would become the Mayor of the London Borough of Merton and adorn myself with the red robe to add pulchritude to my glamour and style.

Today I say, dreams do come true, to become Mayor of this magnificent borough is not just an honour; it is a gargantuan responsibility and elephantine opportunity to make a difference in Merton. I am committed to work with the entire community,

voluntary and charitable groups to add sparked to the lives of the residents in Merton and here I will conclude with this thought from an unknown author; Go where you are celebrate- not tolerated, if they can't see the real value of you, it's time for a new start.

I am not going anywhere because I am celebrated here in Mitcham, so let's celebrate together.

Thank you.

Appendix C

Cllr Stephen Alambritis, Leader of the Council, London Borough of Merton, Moves the Mayoral Citation and the Vote of Thanks at the Annual Council Meeting of Wednesday 17 May 2017 in Honour of Councillor Brenda Fraser, Mayor of Merton 2016-2017

Councillor Fraser enjoyed the distinction of being the first ever female Jamaican Mayor in Merton.

A respected member of the community, Councillor Fraser is a magistrate and has had to juggle her responsibilities to the Bench with her mayoral duties.

Her career has been in the health sector and the police.

It is perhaps natural that her chosen charities should both have a focus on health and wellbeing.

Age UK Merton has a passion for making the borough a great place to grow old.

The Avanti Club, seeks to empower local residents with mental health issues to use their skills to progress and develop.

A number of fund-raising events have benefitted these charities during the Mayoral year.

The Avanti Club hosted the Mayor's Charity Live Gig Night, while Age UK guests raised a glass at the Mayor's Charity Wine Tasting evening.

South Thames College hosted the Mayor's Christmas Dinner.

And a 'Winter Warmer' celebration of Merton music-making was held at St Mark's C of E Academy.

Ambience in Wimbledon was the venue for a Mediterranean Night

And Tooting and Mitcham Community Sports Club hosted an Afro-Caribbean Night with a Jamaican theme.

Councillor Fraser's Caribbean roots were also celebrated at the Mayor's Ball, with the All England Lawn Tennis Club resonating to the sounds of steel pans.

As a college governor herself, it was particularly pleasing for the Mayor to host a reception for more than 35 school governors where she was able to thank them for their commitment and dedication.

October saw Silver Sunday, a celebration of the achievements of older people.

The citizens of the future were welcomed to the Civic Centre during Democracy Week.

A sporting highlight of the year was the promotion of AFC Wimbledon to Sky Bet League One

This was celebrated with a breakfast at the Wimbledon Centre Court Shopping Centre before Councillor Fraser joined the players on their open top bus victory parade.

Councillor Fraser has been a conscientious, dedicated and hard-working mayor but her duties have always been a joy – not least when she proved she could herself still master two wheels when she launched the fund-raising for the new scooter park adjacent to Poplar School.

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 Stan Anderson, and his wife, Deputy Mayoress Mrs Jennifer Anderson.

Between the Mayor and her Deputy, they have attended over 400 engagements and many planned meetings in addition to the official engagements.

The Mayor was ably and lovingly supported by her:

Husband and Principal Consort Lloyd

And her daughter and Consort Gillian, family, and friends.

Mayor Fraser is recognised by the council for her enthusiasm in reaching out to all parts of our community and her work representing the London Borough of Merton.

Her enthusiasm, compassion and warm personality have contributed to her very successful year in Merton.

But, Finally Madam Mayor

We now need to **Resolve unanimously**: that the council places on record its sincere thanks and appreciation to Councillor Brenda Fraser, for the dedicated manner in which she has served as Mayor of the London Borough of Merton for the year 2016-2017.

I Beg so to Move

Vote of thanks for Mayor of Merton – Cllr Brenda Fraser

Madame Mayor it gives me great pleasure to second this vote of thanks to Cllr Brenda Fraser for her dedicated service to our Borough for the Municipal year 2016 to 2017.

Cllr Fraser has been a great supporter of health & wellbeing and that was her focus over her year and with her chosen charities – Age UK Merton and Avanti.

I would also like to endorse the thanks paid to her Principal Consort plus her daughter and Consort Gillian for their work too over the Mayoral year. I must also pay tribute to the outgoing Deputy Mayor Stan Anderson and his wife Jennifer. The Mayoral team ably supported by Carole, Steve and Carl have attended around 400 engagements which is a tremendous achievement.

Our group have been pleased to support the many fund-raising events held by the Mayor for her charities and I myself have particularly enjoyed the Christmas Dinner, the winter warmer celebration of Merton Music and her Jamaican Afro-Caribbean night. It was also a fun moment to both attend the wonderful Thank You party for the Mayor's charities and supporting organisations whilst also supporting my husband Tom's Rock Choir performance at it!

The icing on the cake was the excellent Ball at the All England Club, which I am pleased that members of our Group both supported and actively helped with the fundraising for it.

Madame Mayor I know I speak for our whole Group in thanking Cllr Fraser for her dedicated work over her year for which she can indeed be proud and I endorse the citation.

Councillor Oonagh Moulton

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Every Mayor brings his or her own passions and priorities to the role when elected to office, and one of the privileges of being the first citizen of the borough is the opportunity to do something about them. And so we can see reflected in Cllr Fraser's many activities during her Mayoral year, her professional interests in health and in justice, both in the police and as a magistrate. That experience on the bench has stood her in good stead when addressing a wide range of different audiences, not least this council chamber. She has commanded our attention every time.

Each Mayor's year is different, reflecting their involvement in the unique events that shape our borough and our city each year. I was privileged to be invited to join the Mayor for the service of hope and reconciliation at Westminster Abbey which followed the attack on Westminster Bridge and the tragic deaths of PC Keith Palmer and innocent bystanders. The service was a moving demonstration of unity in defiance of a senseless act of terrorism, with our Mayor to represent Merton with all 32 London boroughs and the City.

In a more celebratory mood, the crowds turned out for the triumphal open top bus parade when AFC Wimbledon won promotion to League One at the end of last season, and prominent among the guests of honour were our Mayor and consort on the top deck.

But it's not always the big, set piece events that evoke the sharpest recollections. At the launch of Dementia Friendly Merton in February, Mayor Brenda managed to upstage the guest of honour, the still very glamorous Angela Rippon, by arriving spectacularly late in the middle of la Rippon's speech – I'm sure it was unintentional. She then went on to deliver a very credible speech of her own.

She proved she didn't mind getting down and dirty when she donned a hi-viz tabard and litter picker to join the Morden town centre clean up in March, and encouraged a host of youngsters from the Ahmadiyya youth and a goodly number of not so young councillors to join her.

And who can forget Mayor Brenda mounting a scooter still in her elegant high heels for the launch of Poplar Primary school's scooter park, surrounded by hordes of excited children? Admittedly I don't remember her scooting as opposed to posing for photographs, but she helped to make it a memorable day for the children at Poplar and boosted the appeal to raise £20,000 to complete the scooter park.

In fact it's been a memorable year throughout, for both the large and the not so large events. On behalf of the Merton Park Independents, I'd like to thank her and her consort Lloyd for all the effort and hard work they've put into the Mayoralty this year.

Cllr Peter Southgate

