

Councillor Mary Curtin
Speech – Mayor Making
23rd May 2018

Thank you very much.

It is an incredible privilege to stand before you as the new Mayor of Merton. To my fellow councillors who have elected me to this office, I give you my heartfelt thanks. I promise that, at all times, I will honour the great responsibility you have given me and represent our wonderful borough, and its people, with energy, dedication, and humanity.

As I stand here in front of so many able and passionate public representatives, it's really quite hard for me to comprehend the journey that I've been on, from my birthplace of Nenagh, County Tipperary, Ireland. Never in my wildest imagination could I have predicted this, yet when I consider the path I've travelled, I see many similarities with the people we are sent here to represent, who are proud to call Merton their home.

I arrived in the UK in 1960 and, along with many others from Ireland, came to work for the NHS as a nurse. Home was a nurses' hostel, where we lived and laughed alongside each other, each night swapping stories of our new, exciting life in this country. I soon specialised in helping people with mental health issues, which took me to different hospitals in south London and Surrey, and throughout this time, I saw the challenges faced by the NHS, but also witnessed the massive difference it made to lives of people receiving its care, regardless of how rich or poor they were. And central to making this happen were people, like me and my friends, who had come from another country, another way of life, to help Britain and the British people. For us, it was a labour of love.

It's this same drive to make a difference, help people, and build a better life that continues to bring people to this country and our borough. We see it in all parts of Merton, across all ages, religions, ethnicities, and levels of income; people working hard, doing their best for their families and communities, and making our little bit of the world a better place. We are very lucky that others choose to make their home

here, and we welcome the stranger because he or she is a friend we do not yet know.

My home is the same house in Merton where I settled with my husband and 2 children in 1984, and throughout this time, I've seen at first-hand how so many people and organisations make this a great place to be.

I've chosen 2 very different organisations to be the recipients of fundraising activity over the coming year who, in combination, show that Merton is a borough for everyone; these are Friends in St Helier and the Colour House Theatre. FISH is a vital and highly popular community organisation, providing much-loved social opportunities and support for older residents. Colour House is a beacon for arts and culture, but it is perhaps best known for its children's theatre, whose shows have been delighting our young people for over 21 years. Both organisations are perfect illustrations of the best of our borough.

I shall be ably assisted in my duties by three consorts, Marie Bateman, Delores Bismouth and my son William - who are all very special people. Marie and Dolores are long-standing residents of the borough and at the heart their local communities. I am also very fortunate to have Geraldine Stanford as my Deputy Mayor, who's experience and knowledge of the borough, and the council, will be invaluable. In the coming year we will visit all parts of the borough, shining a bright light on the fantastic efforts that we are doing to make Merton an even more wonderful place.

None of this would be possible without the people of Lower Morden, who re-elected me as their councillor on 3rd May. They know what a special place they occupy in my life and I want to thank them for their faith in me. And, I want to give a special mention to my ward colleagues Stan Anderson and Sally Kenny, for your unstinting support and friendship. You are both wonderful people.

Thank you all for coming and I'm looking forward to an exciting, engaging, and memorable year as I get the privilege of meeting with so many of the people who make this part of London such a great place to live. I can't wait to hear the stories, witness the activities, and celebrate all that's good about our lovely borough.

Well, we are so very fortunate to live in this special place.

Thank you.

This page is intentionally left blank