

Speech by Cllr Stephen Alambritis welcoming Mayor Cllr Janice Howard as the First Citizen of the London Borough of Merton at the Annual Council Meeting in the Civic Centre Chamber on Wednesday 15 May 2019

Cllr Janice Howard was first elected in May 2010.

That was the year I was elected.

Janice was in Opposition and I went on to be Leader of the Council.

Janice settled nicely into her role on the exciting Licensing Committee

The 2010 administration was a No Overall Control Labour led administration and we gave the Mayoralty to the Conservatives as an agreement with the Independents. Janice was pleased with that.

A result she thought and something to work on as I knew she was keen to be Mayor

But there was to be no room in the Parlour for Janice as Oonagh, Gillie, David and finally Kirsty were selected by her Conservative Colleagues to the honour to be the first Citizens of this great borough from 2010 through to 2014

Both Janice and I were both re-elected again in 2014

This time sadly for Janice it was a Labour administration with a majority.

So Janice settled again very nicely into the committee structure but this time to the elevated position of Vice Chair on the Standards and General Purposes Committee.

It was about this time that Janice approached me very nicely I must say to see if the Labour Group would, could, may think of her as a future Mayor.

Not this year of course she would say but a future year perhaps Stephen.

I registered the request but alas for Janice the Labour Group selected and the council elected Agatha, David, Brenda and Marsie between 2014 and 2018.

Janice was now really looking forward to the 2018 local elections and again she was elected...and so was I along with another Labour Majority

Janice was now elevated to the shadow Spokesperson for Culture and used her more senior role to press me for any support on the Labour Group agreeing to her nomination for Mayor.

Alas the Group went for Cllr Mayor Mary Curtin as we all know

At last year's Annual Council Meeting for Mary I looked across the Chamber and nodded to Janice that there may be some movement Janice I said.

And so Ladies and Gentlemen after a few years of Janice badgering me, labouring the point, hassling me, keeping on about, making an issue, we are where we are and Janice is heading for the Mayors Parlour.

Seriously though it has been a real pleasure for this Labour Group in supporting Janice this year because we on this side have huge respect for her.

No regrets now Janice...it is too late to change your mind and you know you will not have much in the way of free time

I understand there will be no more visits to your brother in Brittany in France...is that right?

I understand no more watching Midsummer Murders which is your favourite programme....is that right?

The Mayors Parlour will be getting an achiever and will benefit from a councillor who as the Leader of the Opposition said, has a Master's Degree in Operations Management and again, as the Leader of the Opposition said, a career in conference and events organising, and I just look to Carl and to Sandra to say that you have someone who will be very adept at helping you to set in stone all the events.

And so from this side of the Chamber, we wish Janice and her husband Andrew and her charities a wonderful and fruitful year. Thank you.