

Agenda item 5 – vote of thanks to retiring Mayor

Thank you Madam Mayor and welcome.

It's fashionable nowadays, isn't it, to claim that we are "on a journey", when we're not on a journey at all in the sense of moving from A to B at all, we're transitioning from one organisational arrangement to another, in the hope of making things better.

Well, in recent years our Mayors have made real journeys, over continents and oceans, to arrive in Merton. They've come from Jamaica, they've come from Nigeria, they've come from Guyana, and they've all achieved the recognition that comes with being elected the first citizen of our borough.

And so too, our retiring Mayor, Cllr Mary Curtin. Back in 1960, Mary came from Tipperary to serve in the NHS. Tipperary may not be as far away as the Caribbean, but that journey represented a vast leap between different cultures nearly 60 years ago. To misquote the old song from the First World War, "It's a long way **from** Tipperary..." and to change the ending "... but my heart lies **here**, in Merton"

Mary has dedicated her life here to the service of others. Her working life in the NHS, then being instrumental in starting Friends in St Helier, long before she became a councillor. FISH does so much to support our elderly population whose numbers are growing all the time, to combat loneliness and isolation through providing companionship and practical support through its lunch clubs.

Mary's other charity for the past year has been the Colour House Theatre. A number of us enjoyed an evening of cabaret in its intimate setting last summer, we were really bowled over by the impressive talent of young local performers that was on display. Now the house comedian had clearly been briefed that the mayor would not tolerate anything smutty. Denied his usual material, he struggled on for a while, risked one joke that was borderline blue, caught the steely glare of disapproval from the royal box and announced that he was cutting his set short, which he duly did. Our Mayor is a lady of strong moral convictions and religious beliefs, in case we didn't already know.

I'd like to finish by congratulating the Mayor on her initiative setting up a meeting here in the Chamber, bringing together two voluntary organisations set up to help those recently bereaved, one based in Raynes Park the other centred on the Sacred Heart church in Edge Hill. They gave powerful and moving presentations, and we hope they will inspire others to set up similar organisations in other parts of the borough.

So thank you, Mary, for all you've done for us in a very full Mayoral year.

Cllr Peter Southgate MPWIR

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