

Agenda Item 3

COUNCIL
15 MAY 2019

(7.15 pm - 8.20 pm)

PRESENT The Mayor Councillor Mary Curtin
 The Deputy Mayor, Councillor Geraldine Stanford

Councillors Agatha Mary Akyigyina OBE, Stephen Alambritis, Mark Allison, Stan Anderson, Laxmi Attawar, Eloise Bailey, Thomas Barlow, Nigel Benbow, Hina Bokhari, Kelly Braund, Mike Brunt, Adam Bush, Omar Bush, Ben Butler, Tobin Byers, Billy Christie, David Chung, Caroline Cooper-Marbiah, Pauline Cowper, Stephen Crowe, David Dean, John Dehaney, Nick Draper, Anthony Fairclough, Edward Foley, Brenda Fraser, Edward Gretton, Joan Henry, Daniel Holden, James Holmes, Andrew Howard, Janice Howard, Natasha Irons, Sally Kenny, Linda Kirby, Paul Kohler, Rebecca Lanning, Najeeb Latif, Edith Macauley MBE, Russell Makin, Peter McCabe, Simon McGrath, Nick McLean, Oonagh Moulton, Aidan Mundy, Hayley Ormrod, Dennis Pearce, Owen Pritchard, Carl Quilliam, David Simpson CBE, Marsie Skeete, Peter Southgate, Eleanor Stringer, Dave Ward, Martin Whelton, Dickie Wilkinson and David Williams

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (Agenda Item 1)

There were no apologies for absence.

2 DECLARATIONS OF PECUNIARY INTEREST (Agenda Item 2)

There were no declarations of interest made.

3 ELECTION OF MAYOR FOR 2019/20 AND THE MAYOR'S APPOINTMENT OF THE DEPUTY MAYOR FOR 2019/20 (Agenda Item 3)

It was moved by Councillor Nick McLean and seconded by Councillor Stephen Alambritis that Councillor Janice Howard be elected Mayor of the London Borough of Merton for the 2019/20 municipal year.

Councillors Oonagh Moulton, Daniel Holden, Edith Macauley and Anthony Fairclough also spoke in support of the nomination.

(Copies of their speeches are attached at Appendix A to these minutes)

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

RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY

Councillor Janice Howard signed the statutory declaration of office and was invested with the Mayor's chain and badge of office.

The Mayor announced that her Deputy Mayor for the 2019/20 municipal year would be Councillor Edward Foley. Councillor Foley signed the statutory declaration of office and was invested with the Deputy Mayor's badge of office.

The Mayor announced that her consorts would be Councillor Andrew Howard, Benedict Howard and Isabella Howard. The Mayor's Chaplain would be Father Simon Peat.

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

The Mayor, Councillor Janice Howard, thanked the Council for her election for the forthcoming year and announced that her two Mayoral charities would be Faith in Action and Macmillan Cancer Support.

(A copy of her acceptance speech is attached at Appendix B to these minutes)

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

The Mayor invited Councillor Mary Curtin 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 Nick McLean seconded the vote of thanks to the retiring Mayor.

In doing so, both Group Leaders, along with the Leader of the Liberal Democrat Group, the Leader of the Merton Park Ward Independent Residents and Councillor Sally Kenny all spoke in praise of Councillor Mary Curtin's year in office.

(A copy of these speeches are attached at Appendix C to these minutes)

RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY:

That the Council places on record its sincere thanks and appreciation to Councillor Mary Curtin for the dedicated manner in which she served as Mayor of the London Borough of Merton for the 2018/19 municipal year.

6 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING (Agenda Item 6)

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on 3 April 2019 are agreed as an accurate record.

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

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

Councillor Kohler also spoke on the report.

RESOLVED

That the Council:

- A. i) approves the constitution of committees, sub-committees and scrutiny bodies set out in Appendix A to the Council report; and
ii) agrees the allocation of seats, chair and vice-chair positions and the appointment of members to those seats;
- B. i) approves the constitution of consultative forums and other bodies set out in Appendix B to the Council report; and
ii) agrees the appointment of members to those seats;
- C. agrees the allocation of seats and appointment to the outside organisations as detailed in Appendix C to the Council report.
- D. agrees the terms of reference of consultative and other bodies appointed by the Council, detailed in Appendix D to the Council report.
- E. notes the changes to the appointments to the Cabinet including their respective portfolios, detailed in Appendix E to the Council report;
- F. agrees that the Council's Constitution be amended to incorporate any changes resulting from the approval of recommendations A to E.

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Appendix A

Speech by Cllr Nick McLean nominating Cllr Janice Howard for Mayor of the London Borough of Merton

Thank you Madam Mayor,

It is with great pleasure that in my first mayor making as Leader of the Conservative Group I have the privilege of nominating our Conservative colleague, Wimbledon Park Councillor, Janice Howard as first citizen and Mayor of the London Borough of Merton for the year 2019 - 20 – a deserved honour in recognition of her contribution to Merton residents, the Council and wider civic society.

We in the Conservative Group have experienced first-hand the hard work, energy and diligence that she brings to the role of Councillor – skills that will contribute greatly to a successful mayoralty.

Madam Mayor, Councillor Howard, was elected to Merton Council in 2010 where she has pursued her passionate agenda of promoting healthy lifestyles to improve the lives of residents.

Madam Mayor – it is with this passion that during the coming year, Cllr Howard will, as Mayor, deliver her messages on how a few simple lifestyle changes can really impact positively on everyone's quality of life.

Among Councillor Howard's many achievements is the pride that she has taken in promoting, alongside Councillor Kirby, and others from the cultural advisory group – the very successful and highly regarded - Film Merton.

It is this combination of cultural and healthy living that underpins an improved lifestyle for residents and is why Councillor Howard is its champion.

During her long career in corporate conference and events management, Councillor Howard also successfully studied for, and achieved with distinction, a Master's degree in operations management – study that was undertaken as a working mum demonstrating her drive and determination.

And it is these strong personal and organisational characteristics that will help raise the profile of Councillor Howard's chosen charities.

Madam Mayor, Councillor Howard is a much valued member of the Conservative Group - and as we wish her every success, we also want her to know that we, as will all Merton Councillors, be there in support. I now nominate and I urge this council to then elect Cllr Janice Howard as Mayor of the London Borough of Merton for the year 2019-2020. Thank you.

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.

**Speech re Nomination for the New Mayor of Merton – Cllr Janice Howard
By Cllr Oonagh Moulton, Wimbledon Park Ward at Annual Meeting 15.05.19**

Madame Mayor

I am delighted to stand here and support the nomination for our new Mayor, Cllr Janice Howard as a fellow Ward Member of Wimbledon Park. Cllr Edward Gretton along with our former ward councillors - Tariq Ahmad (now Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon) and Linda Taylor join me in congratulating and appreciating her nomination.

And it is indeed pleasing that Cllr Howard follows a good cross-party tradition for our Ward, as she also follows not just myself as a fellow Conservative Mayor in 2010 but also the late Cllr Joyce Payton who was a previous Labour Mayor in 2001. She is popular across the Chamber and in our community and many have expressed their delight to me when her nomination was announced.

Madame Mayor, Cllr Howard has been a very hard working and diligent ward councillor who has provided excellent support and service to our constituents, the local community and to the wider borough.

I would also like to pay tribute to her consort here tonight Cllr Andrew Howard and their children Ben & Bella who have grown up with our boys and I know will be great supporters too.

On a personal note I have worked closely with Cllr Howard for many years and as Cllr Macauley and former Cllr Brierley, also here, can attest from our sessions exercising in the David Lloyd she will bring added vigour and energy to her role as Mayor. Indeed as many here tonight know she also has wonderful organisational skills which combined with her great focus and powers of persuasion will I am sure ensure that everyone here tonight gets involved in her year and events that are already planned!

I am further delighted that one of my former Mayoral chosen charities is to be one of hers too and another great charity, local as well, and I look forward to joining a great fundraising year!

Madame Mayor in short Cllr Howard will be a worthy successor to yourself and we all will I am sure all enjoy a great year ahead!

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Cllr Daniel Holden speech in support of the nomination of Cllr Janice Howard for Mayor of Merton

Thank you Madam Mayor. I too would like to support the nomination of Councillor Janice Howard as the next Mayor of Merton for the year 2019-20. I think Councillor Janice Howard will be an amazing Mayor of this borough and she is well deserving of this nomination.

Councillor Janice Howard has some key attributes which I think will make her year very successful and I will just run through a couple of them. She is very friendly and gets on well with many people from different walks of life and inclusion in this chamber across the council. Attention to detail and planning, which will come in very handy for her Mayoral events. I'm already looking forward to her Mayoral Ball in 2020. Also Janice loves socialising, enjoys good food and good drink which is key to good fundraising parties and events.

From a personal perspective I will be disappointed to miss out on my regular nutritional meals I have at Chez Howard on Sunday evenings as I imagine Janice will be quite busy throughout this coming year.

Madam Mayor, Councillor Howard will be a great Mayor and a great follow up to yourself and I support her nomination as the next Mayor of Merton. Thank you.

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Cllr Edith Macauley speech in support of the nomination of Cllr Janice Howard for Mayor of Merton

Thank you Madam Mayor. Firstly I would like to welcome the Deputy Lord Lieutenant of Merton, Clare Whelan, who is also here and she is the Chair of the LMA, the Mayor's Association. Welcome Claire.

I too support the nomination of Councillor Janice Howard. She first, as the Leader said, joined the Council for the Wimbledon Park ward in 2010 and she has lived in the Borough since 1990. She has performed many duties in the Council – Vice Chair of the General Purposes Committee; Shadow Cabinet Member for Health and Wellbeing; Shadow spokesperson for culture and leisure; a member of Film Merton Advisory Board and also the Compact Board. An active member of David Lloyd and she enjoys various activities such as Zumba, Pilates and aqua classes.

I am delighted to say that Merton has always raised the profile of the Mayor and it is great that the Labour group have unanimously offered the Mayor's role to a stunning and dedicated lady who has excellent skills with people and I am sure that this will go down very well with our community in Merton.

I would also like to mention that at the executive meeting yesterday of the LMA forum, we were notified that for the first time in 50 years Westminster Council has given the Lord Mayor of Westminster role to a female Labour councillor. This also shows that there is a feel good factor in local government politics and despite our political differences we are supporting each other to raise the profile and also giving full support to local charities in the borough. I have no doubt whatsoever that Janice will be an excellent Mayor and she will continue to work closely with the community in Merton as she has always done in the past.

Finally, the Lord Mayor of Westminster, Chair of the LMA, Clare Whelan, and the executive members of the LMA will be welcoming Janice and have concert at Westminster City Hall on 1st June for the 32 London Boroughs on the protocol to follow during the mayoral year. I wish her every success for the year and welcome her to the Chamber. Thank you.

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Cllr Anthony Fairclough speech in support of the nomination of Cllr Janice Howard for Mayor of Merton

Thank you Madam Mayor, I just had some brief comments of welcome and best wishes from the Liberal Democrat group for Councillor Janice Howard and her nomination to that of Mayor this year. I simply wanted to say what's been very obvious to us is that Janice has a lightness of touch and an ability to work cross-party and that she's shown through the cultural group and Film Merton that we welcome.

Welcome and best of luck to Janice and her consorts. Thank you.

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Appendix B

I would like to thank you all for electing me as Mayor of Merton for the forthcoming year.

It is a great honour and privilege to be representing the London Borough of Merton. I will do my best to Chair your meetings impartially and represent the whole community for the next municipal year, as was done so well by outgoing Mayor, Councillor Mary Curtin.

I moved to the London Borough of Merton in January 1990, having lost both my parents within 12 months, I immediately realised Merton was a great borough to live in, marry and raise a family!

I was first elected a Councillor in 2010 and through many Committees and Boards have recently been part of the Health and Wellbeing Board.

This gave me a real insight into the lives of the people of Merton and the many challenges they face. I have therefore chosen two principal charities to support which both aim to help the people of Merton.

The first of these has in fact been the Mayor's charity before. Councillor Linda Kirby was instrumental in setting up Faith in Action. A multi faith charity looking after the Homeless in Merton. Providing a drop-in centre two days a week, offering meals, showering, laundry, change of clothes, haircuts, food parcels, sleeping bags and help with benefits and job applications. Faith in Action relies on local volunteers who dedicate their time, support and skills to help the most vulnerable people.

The other charity will be Macmillan Cancer Support, who have a local fundraising project for an Ambulatory Oncology Care Unit at St Georges Hospital. St Georges

looks after two thirds of cancer patients from the Borough of Merton. This unit will allow cancer patients suffering from conditions and complaints associated with the disease to be seen by a specialist as day patients, thereby removing the stress of attending A&E and, in many cases, being admitted to hospital for treatment.

I am delighted that representatives from both charities have joined us here tonight and there will be an opportunity to speak to them at the reception after this meeting if you would like to know more.

I have already secured two key dates for your diary – the Mayor's Christmas Dinner on Saturday 30 November at the Wimbledon Club and the Mayors Ball at the All England Club for the 25 April 2020 - I hope that you will all ink these dates in your diary ☺ you will need to book early to avoid disappointment

I hope you will join me for a drink in Merton Junction at the conclusion of the official business. For those who are not familiar with the Civic Centre, there will be ushers giving directions

I will leave it there for now as I will also say a few words later tonight at the reception.

Thank you.

Appendix C

Cllr Stephen Alambritis, Leader of the Council, London Borough of Merton, Moves the Citation and Vote of Thanks at the Annual Council Meeting of Wednesday 15 May 2019 in Honour of Councillor Mary Curtin, Mayor of Merton 2018-2019

Welcome Madam Mayor and thank you for giving me this opportunity to move the vote of thanks for the outgoing Mayor, Councillor Mary Curtin. At the time of her election as Mayor last year, Councillor Mary Curtin had completed just four years as a councillor in Lower Morden ward

From her time as Mayor this past year you would have thought she had been a councillor for many, many years given the way she has conducted herself as our first citizen of this our great borough of Merton

The news of her election did not go unnoticed back in her native Ireland and was covered by the local Nenagh Guardian, the equivalent of our Wimbledon Guardian but with a few more pages and lo and behold stories relevant to the area!

Her election to Mayor was also featured by the mighty Tipperary Star, read throughout Ireland. Now that elicited not just distant relatives but also old school mates getting in touch to find out what on earth was going on!

And so it soon became the gossip of the village about how a Tipperary lass was now Mayor of a London Borough

How did Mary react...as she always does Madam Mayor...she got on with the job

Before beginning life in active politics, Councillor Curtin was a nurse in the NHS and then went on to set up and administer Friends in St Helier, or FISH as we all fondly call it.

Councillor Mary Curtin was of course born in Nenagh, County Tipperary where they would not let their lasses leave home till the age of 18 I understand

Until that age she was as always up front with her values in respect for others, hardworking and loved her family life

Mary was certainly up front as a centre forward for her County when playing Irish Hurling or Camogie as it is called

And she scored many goals worth a valuable 3 points when placing the ball under the bar

I do not know if they used the off side rule but Mary would use all means legal or otherwise to score goals for her beloved county

But her main goal was to travel and so, aged just 18 a determined Mary came to England in 1960 in response to the government's call for nurses to work in the expanding NHS

She would go on to spend many years in the NHS, working in both general and mental health nursing

And which hospital did she work in and in which accommodation did she stay in may you ask back then in the swinging 60s?

Why, St. Helier Hospital of course and she stayed in the then nurses accommodation in Ferguson House of course!

It is no surprise therefore that Councillor Curtin made FISH an official charity of her year of office

She also selected the Colour House Children's Theatre, in Merton Abbey Mills, which has been bringing the wonder of live theatre to children for more than 20 years

Councillor Curtin has raised not £50,000 not £60,000 Madam Mayor but more than £70,000 for the two charities during her year as Mayor

Her Irish roots, and a love of the music and dance of the country, were reflected in many mayoral events.

An evening to mark St Patrick's Day was held in Wimbledon's Irish Centre and the annual Mayor's Ball had an Irish theme.

The ball, at the All England Tennis Club, was well sold out and featured a fresh Gaelic menu of lamb, colcannon and spring greens

Young dancers from world-medal-holding Irish dance academy, Ní Cholmáin wowed the audience with their skilled display

Many of Councillor Mary Curtin's 350 engagements were aimed at families

She presided over the Easter egg hunt to be organised by a Mayor, the first ever, in the borough. This was held in Morden Park over the Easter weekend and attracted more than 1,700 people

Councillor Curtin opened the new family-friendly leisure centre in Morden and was delighted to launch Merton's first sensory library

Councillor Curtin attended the annual Remembrance Day service, one hundred years after the hostilities of World War I ceased

She also marked this important centenary at a special service at Mitcham War Memorial, where she commemorated the war hero William Allison White, a recipient of the Victoria Cross

For Councillor Curtin, the year brought many other highlights – from a seat in the Royal Box at the Wimbledon Championships to being inspired by Merton’s homeless drop-in at the Salvation Army Hall

Another legacy of her time as Mayor will be a new friendship group for people recently bereaved, which will meet in Mitcham and be a valuable resource in the east of the borough Madam Mayor

The Mayor has been supported in her work by Deputy Mayor, Councillor Geraldine Stanford and her consorts; her son William and friends Marie Bateman and Dolores Bisnouth

According to Councillor Mary Curtin, being elected Mayor was a privilege and an honour. She has approached her many engagements with dignity, compassion and a sense of fun, during a year of office dedicated to bringing people together.

Putting aside her chain of office, Councillor Curtin hopes to return to help in the kitchens at Merton’s homeless drop-in at the Salvation Army Hall and continue to officiate at Merton’s Citizenship Ceremonies whenever she can

But now Madam Mayor enough from me, Because

We now need to resolve unanimously:

that the council places on record its sincere thanks and appreciation to Councillor Mary Curtin, for the dedicated manner in which she has served as Mayor of the London Borough of Merton for the year 2018-2019.

I beg so to Move Madam Mayor, thank you.

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Councillor Nick McLean speech in support of the vote of thanks for Councillor Mary Curtin

Thank you and welcome Madam Mayor,

As a first year Councillor, I have now had the opportunity to witness the immense commitment that a successful mayoralty requires and Cllr Curtin has certainly given that commitment to both the mayoralty and by extension the residents of the London Borough of Merton.

Madam Mayor - I volunteered, along with Cllrs Sally Kenny and Dennis Pierce at this year's Friend in St Helier Easter lunch, one of Cllr Curtin's chosen charities – it was a wonderful experience and one I will be repeating.

By volunteering I was able to see first-hand the exceptional work that Nicola, Andy and the many other FISH volunteers do to ensure that the elderly residents of our Borough are not forgotten – and Cllr Curtin has been an integral part of this important and rewarding organisation for over 35 years!

I would also like to congratulate Cllr Curtin and her team on an excellent Mayors ball held at the All England – the event was entertaining, relaxed and fun.

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank the Deputy Mayor and consorts.

Madam mayor during her mayoralty, Cllr Curtin has participated in well over 300 engagements and raised approaching £80,000 for her chosen charities The Colour House Children's Theatre and the Friends in St Helier.

I am sure we will all agree – quite the achievement!

Therefore it is with great pleasure that I second this vote of thanks and commend the citation.

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Cllr Anthony Fairclough speech in support of the vote of thanks for Councillor Mary Curtin

Thank you Madam Mayor and welcome also. I wanted to express the thanks from my group to the outgoing Mayor, Councillor Curtin, and her consorts and to Councillor Stanford and the work they have done in their Mayoral year.

I remember from this time last year when appointed, Councillor Curtin spoke about her desire to work to build a Merton family and that really spoke to me as a concept of community as a family, is a really important one and I think it's what we all do as Councillors. We all work hard to build meaningful relationships with different communities so I would like to thank Mary for her support in her very first Inter-faith Iftar held in Merton this time last year, in West Barnes Library, at which you attended and spoke – for which we were very grateful – bringing together different communities for the breaking of fast.

And you also spoke at the second one, held at the Tooting and Mitcham Community Sports Club, a larger event with representatives from the Police, community groups and a number of councillors. So thank you all for attending that.

And lastly I wanted to touch on the fantastic centenary remembrance event that I got to share with you, the events at the Mitcham War Memorial and before that at the Nelson. They were quite touching at a time of conflict in the world. I got to share the journey with you between the two and we didn't quite leave enough time to get from the Nelson to Mitcham. I got to go in the Mayoral car, which was a highlight. I'll only note that it's probably fortunate that the administration's desire to bring in 20mph speed limits hasn't yet been implemented because we did just about make it.

Thank you very much Mary for your work, it's been a great year. Thank you.

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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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Councillor Sally Kenny in support of the vote of thanks for Councillor Mary Curtin

Thank you Madam Mayor, and welcome to your year.

Mary, I am most happy to thank you for all you have done in your Mayoral year. You have been a credit to the Mayoralty and I know that you have taken on this role as a great honour.

Throughout your year you have been dignified, committed and very hard working. You have thoroughly enjoyed every occasion, meeting and experience and treated each one with commitment and enthusiasm. Your care and concern for people has shone through in all you have undertaken.

You have shown genuine interest in all whom you have met, generating warmth and concern, building valuable and meaningful relationships.

Your desire has been to support, help and encourage all people in Merton and indeed beyond. You have shown appreciation to all who have supported you. You have valued with gratitude the teamwork which has created your amazing year as Mayor.

Councillor Mary Curtin, you will be missed by those with whom you have worked and all who benefited from your commitment and care. You have raised valuable funding for your 2 charities which will enormously benefit these organisations. I know they greatly appreciate your support and have been superbly supportive to you.

Mary, you have been most dignified in your Mayoral year and we are all very proud of you. However, now it is back to Lower Morden. We are delighted to welcome you home with open arms. We have missed you.

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