

Review of Mayoral Year speech – 16 September 2020

Thank you, Madam Mayor

I was so privileged to be elected Mayor of Merton by you, my fellow Councillors! As first citizen of the Borough, I have had the most amazing and extraordinary year.

I already knew Merton was a great Borough to live in, but during my year as Mayor I encountered such generosity and care giving from so many charities and organisations. They offer so much support to the community across the borough it makes me so proud and I know I wouldn't live anywhere else.

It was such a great honour to greet Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth 2nd and welcome her to the Borough on behalf of every resident. It was her first visit for 15 years to open the new houses at the Haig Housing Trust.

Fundraising for my two charities has been such an important part of my year and we raised a gross figure of around £100,000 for Faith in Action helping the homeless and Macmillan Cancer support. Due to the Covid-19 epidemic, of course my fundraising activities were abruptly cut short. My one regret is not being able to host the Charity Ball at the All England Lawn Tennis Club which would have been a splendid fundraising evening and a fitting end to my Mayoral year.

However, I may possibly hold the record for the longest continuous serving Mayor!

There were many amazing events, the Royal Box on the opening day of Wimbledon being just one highlight - thank you to the All England Club. Then there are the touching moments of generosity a little girl gave me a frozen pin badge at the Christmas Tree lighting in Mitcham, I was really touched as it was obviously precious to her.

A very big thank you is due to my Events committee and charities - in particular to Councillor Linda Kirby for all her help with the New Years' Day Parade and Councillor Edith Macaulay for the signed US Open memorabilia, sponsored swim and her help with gathering raffle prizes.

Thank you to all the Councillors who have supported me and to so many who made my year such a wonderful experience.

I also want to thank my Deputy Mayor Councillor Ed Foley and his wife Miranda who were the best deputies a Mayor could have asked for.

Our wonderful deputy lord lieutenant for Merton Clare Whelan has also been a great support to me throughout the year and I wish her well as she stands down from this role.

To the two wonderful people in the Mayors' Office, Carl and Sandra without whom I could not have carried out such a

professional and packed programme. I shall miss you - your support was invaluable - thank you so much. Also - to Steve and Mick, my relief drivers who also looked after me so well.

Finally, a huge thank you to my husband Councillor Andrew Howard who supported me every step of the way and my two children Ben and Bella who have undertaken consort duty on a number of occasions.

I know Councillor Sally Kenny will be a terrific Mayor and I will support her in any way I can.

Thank you all.