

### **Councillor Stephen Alambritis**

Mr Mayor, Deputy Lieutenant, Councillors, Colleagues, officers, guests it gives me the utmost of pleasure to nominate Councillor Henry to be the first citizen of this great Borough of ours. To be our mayor for this next municipal year. To chair our meetings, to keep us united and together and at times apart. To represent us in the community, to raise funds for worthy causes and to do as Carl says.

Mr Mayor Councillor Joan Palmetta Henry was born in Jamaica into a family of 10 children and many are here tonight.

Times were tough then in Jamaica; aged just seven Joan would regularly make the four mile journey to school on foot there and back.

Politics featured in the family for Joan at a very early age with grandparents who ran a sugar plantation. Their grandmother Imogen was always fighting for the rights for working farmers to own the land. Imogen would take young Joan with her to the political rallies in the town square sit her down in the front row, where she could listen watch and learn how to lobby the rights of workers.

Joan's parents emigrated to England in 1959 settling in nearby Tooting leaving her in the care of her grandparents and more politics. At the age of 27 Joan decided to herself emigrate to England with her three children joining her parents in Tooting. Joan then attended South Thames College and Queen Marys in Putney and undertook an access course in nursing. While a nurse at both and St Georges Hospital, Joan became a special constable. As a special constable and in 1996, Joan covered every shift from 6 in the morning until 8pm at night at the Wimbledon championships when it famously that year rained for every day of play during that tournament but very soon she will be undercover at the tennis championships in the royal box; karma indeed.

Joan did over 10 years as a special constable and received a commendation for her long service from the then brilliant Home Secretary Jackie Smith. In 1990 Joan bought her own house for her family in Mitcham and has been there ever since and quickly started volunteering for Merton Victims Support and Marie Curie and many many other organisations. Her volunteer efforts included a long walk from Charing Cross in Central London to Canterbury Cathedral raising over £3000 for homeless people.

Between 2003 and 2011 Joan was a foster parent to 16 children many of the children have gone on to university and have had great careers. It is a testament to the fondness the foster children have for Joan that I can confirm tonight that they still keep in touch with her to this day.

In 2012 Joan met Siobhain McDonagh, another excellent MP and local Councillor Brenda Fraser. They spoke about the work of the Council and the rest is history as they say.

Joan was duly elected as Councillor in the ward of Pollards Hill in 2014, 2018 and just recently completed her hattrick of wins in the local elections this month. Now when I was Leader of the Council, Joan would always make a point of inviting me to

events to mark Black History Month in Pollards Hill ward and I know Councillor Whelton when seconding Joan will touch more on Councillor Henry's work.

Joan has been an avid committee member here in the council and has been a member of the following committees; Councillor Henry has been on Licensing, Standards and General Purposes Committee, Planning, Children and Young People, Sustainable Communities, Healthier Communities and Older People Panels, Joint Consultative Committee and those lively committees being the Cemetery Board and the Crematorium Board.

Joan has in the very recent past been Chair of the Labour group, probably the best Charing experience one can get.

Mr Mayor, Deputy Lieutenant, Councillors, Colleagues, Officers, Guests, it is not a probability but a certainty that we will be served well by Councillor Joan Palmetta Henry; I therefore so nominate thank you very much.

### **Councillor Martin Whelton**

Thank you Mr Mayor, I would like to second the nomination of Councillor Joan Henry to be the 58<sup>th</sup> Mayor of the London Borough of Merton. As a colleague of Joan's since 2014 and a Pollards Hill Councillor since 2002 it is a great privilege for the ward to have the next mayor. Since our foundation as a borough in 1965, Pollards Hill has only had two mayors, Tom Bull from 1980 to 81 and to myself, in 2009. Hopefully tonight, Joan will be the third. I know many people locally are excited about the prospect of having another Pollards Hill Mayor and I know the community is incredibly supportive as they were when I served 14 years ago. Being the first citizen is a wonderful privilege bestowed on a few but recognized by many of the public as part of our civic identity. With this year being the Platinum Jubilee, we will have even greater recognition as we recognize the service of Her Majesty The Queen over the past 70 years. Joan, as a person, is deeply committed to her community and especially Pollards Hill. Her tireless dedication to helping people with whatever problem they may have, but also working closely with many in the community - the voluntary groups and the church groups within our ward. With her work is also widespread recognition in the community about her ability to get things done. Many of us here have been regaled with the work of the Hadley Road allotments and how she'd been a driving force in getting people involved in those allotments. But also, as well, her passion for the local Pollards Hill Community Centre in terms of securing additional funding and as Councillor Alambritis mentioned, organising Black History Month events in the library every October. I have no doubt that Joan will be a great ambassador for this borough over the next year and anyone who has undertaken the position of mayor knows how demanding this can be, but you also get the opportunity to see many different sides of the borough and many of our unsung heroes who do so much in making Merton such a great community to live work and learn. And whichever party you have been elected for in this chamber tonight I hope that you all collectively support the civic side of the borough and the mayoralty especially in the work in raising money for the mayor's charity and I'm absolutely delighted that Joan will be choosing The Don's Local Action Trust as one of her charities that do so much to help the local community in

this borough but also support the weekly food bank in Pollards Hill which has supported thousands of families over the past two years. the work of the mayor also stretches far beyond the confines of keeping us in order in his chamber, it is important that we work alongside the Mayor, support the Mayor as they are about to undertake this position. Finally we will get the opportunity to thank you again tonight, but can I offer my thanks for your service, Mr Mayor, as the 57<sup>th</sup> Mayor and for everything you have achieved over the last year. I ask Council therefore to support the nomination of Councillor Joan Henry as the 58<sup>th</sup> Mayor. Thank you

**Councillor Nick McLean, Leader of the Conservative Group**

Madam Mayor - may I congratulate you on your election as Mayor - and I have no doubt that you will show great dedication to the role of First Citizen of the Borough.

And you can certainly count on the full support of the Conservative Group - because supporting the Mayoralty, and indeed attending civic events, is such an important part of community leadership and central to the role of being a Cllr.

Madam Mayor, I also know that you will uphold the impartiality of the Mayor's office in public and in this chamber.

I am glad that the previous council unanimously passed the motion so eloquently put forward by former Cllr Wilkinson and the Merton Park Independent Residents Group, that motions that come before council must adhere to the SMART goals of being specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and timely.

We only have five normal meetings of the full council each year and far too much time has previously been devoted to councillors grandstanding about national or international issues when they could have been getting on with the job which they were elected to do - improving the lives of Merton residents.

I know that your office will strongly adhere the principles of the SMART goals and the Conservative group look forward to supporting you through what we are sure will be a successful Mayoral year.

Thank you and all the best.

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