

Appendix A

Councillor Usaama Kaweesa

Thank you Madam Mayor, Deputy Mayor, Deputy Lieutenant, Colleagues, Officers, Guests. It is with great pleasure that in only my second mayor making, I have the enormous privilege of nominating a fellow ward colleague, a proud Cricket Green Councillor, our very own Gill Manly as first citizen of Merton for the next municipal year. Correct me if I'm wrong, but I think it's an extraordinary thing to nominate a Councillor to the position of Mayor in only her second year in public life. But those of us who know Gill will also acknowledge that there's nothing ordinary about her. If there's anyone who can take on this role so early in her political career, who have the confidence and charisma to chair our meetings, to keep us united together and at times handle a room full of larger than life personalities, someone who is ready to represent us in the wider community and raise funds for fantastic local charities, that woman is Gill.

Madam Mayor, in the time I have, I could not possibly do justice to the remarkable life Gill has lived. I can however share the key moments that have shaped who Gill is today and the type of Mayor we all have to look forward to. First thing to know about Gill is that she lives to bring joy to others. She's an entertainer at heart with a remarkable voice and speaking as someone who should never be allowed to sing in public, it makes me admire her talent all the more. Music has been a constant throughout Gill's life, she grew up immersing in her Father's favourite jazz records and began singing at an early age. Little did she know back then that she would one day rub shoulders with the great Eartha Kitt. Aged eighteen, she headed to London to drama school where she began to perform, at first in various fringe musicals in London's West End, however Gill soon discovered that her real love lay in musical theatre and the great Broadway shows. It must have been at that moment the singer we know today was born.

Interesting fact you might not know about Gill, is when Jazz FM radio first came to life, Gill was there to usher it into our lives. She hosted weekly jazz gigs at Smollenskys introducing new acts and established singers live on various broadcasts. A very young Claire Martin performed with Gill on radio, she had been inspired as a sixteen year old by hearing Gill in a local club to then go on and become a jazz artist.

Gill is undoubtedly a jewel in the crown of British jazz having performed across London's greatest venues for over thirty years and since moving to Mitcham she has also shared her vocal talents with our jazz loving residents from some of our very best venues; venues like the Mitcham Parish Church, Vestry Hall, Merton Abbey Mills and many others across the Borough, most notably when she performed for her neighbours at the famous Mitcham Armed houses, this during the lockdown to lift everyone's' spirits.

I don't know about you, but I think Merton is ready for a jazz-singing Mayor. Am I right?

But Madam Mayor, Gill's talents do not stop there. She's also a playwright, an artist and an actress and I had the privilege of witnessing one of her plays just last year which to be honest was quite a scary play actually, a testament to how well written it was and I know other Councillors who were able to see it will attest to that too. It also featured bafta award winner Joanna Scanlan who we're fortunate to have with us tonight among many others who have accompanied Gill on her journey.

A jazz singer, a musician, an actor, a playwright, author, radio broadcaster, fierce champion for the residents of Cricket Green and soon to be the first citizen of our Borough.

Madam Mayor, Deputy Mayor, Deputy Lieutenant, Colleagues, Officers, Guests, I have no doubt, absolutely no doubt that our community will be well served by one of the most creative, hardworking and talented individuals I'm proud to call a friend and a colleague. I therefore nominate Councillor Gill Manly, thank you very much.

Councillor Michael Butcher

I first met Gill Manly at a Cricket Green Branch Meeting in the summer of 2019. As political meetings often do, the order of business had devolved into multiple conversations happening at the same time, across the room. Gill, who had been waiting patiently with her hand raised for some time, firmly announced to the room, 'Excuse me, I believe I have the floor.' I realised then that this was not a person to be trifled with.

Gill Manly can be fierce Cllrs; at various times I have described her as a Battle Axe, a Battering Ram, but also as the hardest working person I have ever met. I am proud to call her a colleague and friend.

You see, Gill never intended to seek public office. She only ever wished to further great causes and champion the arts in Mitcham. She only decided to stand as a Councillor after realising the potential difference she could make in the role. She is the prime example of someone who got into politics not to be something, but to do something. And what amazing things she has accomplished in her first year; from the foundation of the Mitcham Arts Collective, to a work-rate that often leaves Cllr Kaweesa and myself marveling at one another.

Gill has done great work here in the chamber as well; Gill has sat on many committees, and I've had the honour of sitting alongside her at Planning, where woe the Developer who has tried to pull a fast one on Gill Manly. Having experienced losing her own home earlier in life, Cllr Manly has been a champion for housebuilding in Merton, and she will be sorely missed on PAC; but Planning's loss is very much Merton's gain.

Gill's passion for music is well known and her work is grounded in this community - it's for those reasons that there is no better charity she could have chosen than the Merton Music Foundation which aims to advance musical education throughout our Borough.

Cllr Manly's other chosen charity is The National Brain Appeal. This is a charity very close to Gill and many colleagues, and we're extremely grateful to have

Dr Paul Mulholland, an expert in the field of Neurology with us here tonight. The charity continues to drive pioneering clinical research and provide funds for training leading scientists and clinicians.

Now, Gill may be the one with a passion for Broadway musicals, but it is often left to Cllr Kaweesa and I to tell her, in the vein of the musical *Hamilton*, to 'Take a Break'. And when she isn't emulating Alexander Hamilton's work ethic, she can on occasion be seen trying to channel his passion for rap music; her Grime performance with Unorthodox Kings at Croydon Composers 2017 is something to behold. Many politicians joke about being down with kids, but Gill has the credentials to back it up. But it is the title of that Grime track that channels Gill's approach to music but to politics as well; 'Common Ground'. Gill will work with anyone, if it is in the interests of the betterment of the people of Merton. I know this is an approach she will continue to champion as Mayor. Cllrs, it gives me the upmost pleasure to second this nomination.

Councillor Daniel Holden

Thank you Madam Mayor. On behalf of the Conservative Group we welcome the nomination and look forward to supporting Councillor Manly's year as Mayor of Merton.

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