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COUNCIL
15 APRIL 2015
(19.15 - 21.04)

PRESENT The Mayor of Merton, Councillor Agatha Mary Akyigyina,
The Deputy Mayor of Merton, Councillor Laxmi Attawar

Councillors: Stephen Alambritis, Mark Allison, Stan Anderson, Hamish Badenoch, John Bowcott, Michael Bull, Adam Bush, Tobin Byers, Charlie Chirico, David Chung, Caroline Cooper-Marbiah, Pauline Cowper, Stephen Crowe, Mary Curtin, David Dean, John Dehaney, Nick Draper, Edward Foley, Brenda Fraser, Fidelis Gadzama, Ross Garrod, Suzanne Grocott, Jeff Hanna, Joan Henry, Daniel Holden, James Holmes, Janice Howard, Mary-Jane Jeanes, Abigail Jones, Philip Jones, Andrew Judge, Sally Kenny, Linda Kirby, Abdul Latif, Najeeb Latif, Brian Lewis-Lavender, Gilli Lewis-Lavender, Edith Macauley, Russell Makin, Maxi Martin, Peter McCabe, Oonagh Moulton, Ian Munn, Katy Neep, Dennis Pearce, John Sargeant, Judy Saunders, David Simpson, Marsie Skeete, Peter Southgate, Geraldine Stanford, Linda Taylor, Imran Uddin, Gregory Udeh, Peter Walker, Jill West, Martin Whelton and David Williams.

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (Agenda Item 1)

No apologies were received

2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST (Agenda Item 2)

No declarations were received.

3 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING (Agenda Item 3)

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 4 March 2015 were agreed as a correct record.

4 ANNOUNCEMENTS BY THE MAYOR, LEADER OF THE COUNCIL AND CHIEF EXECUTIVE (Agenda Item 4)

The Mayor provided the Council with a brief update on her recent Mayoral duties including discussing the Mayor's Ball which alone had raised in the region of £20,000 for her Mayoral charities.

The Mayor invited Councillor David Williams to say a few words on the death of Honorary Alderman and former Councillor Ethel Davis.

Councillors Stephen Alambritis and Oonagh Moulton, respectively said a few words on retirement of the Deputy Lieutenant, Sir John Wheeler, before the Mayor thanked him personally for the support he had provided during her term as Merton's First Citizen.

A presentation was then held with the Mayor, presenting Deputy Lieutenant, Sir John Wheeler with a motion of thanks from Merton Council in recognition his work representing the borough as Representative Deputy Lieutenant over the last 18 years. Sir John Wheeler then gave a short speech of thanks.

A copy of the speeches on Sir John Wheeler were included as appendix A to these minutes

5 PUBLIC QUESTIONS TO CABINET MEMBERS (Agenda Item 5)

The responses to the written public questions were circulated prior to the meeting. The Mayor then invited each of the questioners in turn to ask (if they wished) a supplementary question to the appropriate Cabinet Member.

A copy of the supplementary questions and the responses would be included within the 'Public questions to Cabinet Members' published document.

6 COUNCILLORS' ORDINARY PRIORITY QUESTIONS TO CABINET MEMBERS (Agenda Item 6)

The responses to the Members' ordinary priority questions were circulated prior to the meeting. The Mayor then invited each of those Councillors in turn to ask (if they wished) a further supplementary question to the Cabinet Member.

A copy of the supplementary questions and the responses would be included within the 'Councillors' ordinary priority questions' to cabinet members published document.

7a STRATEGIC THEME: COUNCILLORS' QUESTIONS TO CABINET MEMBERS (Agenda Item 7a)

The responses to the Members' strategic theme priority questions were circulated prior to the meeting. The Mayor then invited each of those Councillors in turn to ask (if they wished) a further supplementary question to the Cabinet Member.

A copy of the supplementary questions and the responses would be included within the 'Strategic theme: Councillors' questions to Cabinet Members' published document.

7b STRATEGIC THEME: MAIN REPORT (Agenda Item 7b)

The report was moved by Councillor Caroline Cooper-Marbiah and seconded by Councillor Stephen Alambritis

Councillor Gilli Lewis-Lavender also spoke on this item

RESOLVED:

That the report is agreed

7c STRATEGIC THEME MOTION: CONSERVATIVE (Agenda Item 7c)

The motion was moved by Councillor Gilli Lewis-Lavender and seconded by Councillor Brian Lewis-Lavender

The Labour amendment, as set out in item 18 was moved by Councillor Mary Curtin and seconded by Councillor Caroline Cooper-Marbiah.

Councillor Peter Southgate also spoke on this item

The Labour amendment was then put to the vote and was carried unanimously

RESOLVED

This Council notes that loneliness and isolation among older people can be the precursor for more serious illnesses, with recent studies suggesting it can lead to health-related consequences ranging from mild depression to serious mental health issues and also to dementia.

This Council therefore welcomes the activity clubs for older people established some time ago in West Barnes ward, and more recently in Raynes Park and Hillside wards, as well as the longstanding Friends in St Helier (FISH) group and the launch of its new expanded service, Friends in Lower Morden, a support group for older people, and FISH's new service in Cannon Hill. In addition there are a number of other excellent activity clubs for older people across the borough, including those run by the borough's rich diversity of faith groups. These clubs help to promote independence by giving older people the freedom to:

- develop for themselves the activities they wish to enjoy locally (usually within ½ mile of their home);
- be able to meet like minded people;
- make new friends; and
- raise their levels of fitness both of body and mind.

Council congratulates the many volunteers who give up their time to help others in their community. Council also welcomes our new Dementia Hub which is pioneering innovative ways of working with people with dementia where loneliness and isolation

is a key issue, and our Ageing Well Programme which focuses on prevention by tackling issues including depression and social isolation.

This Council believes that, in order to counter loneliness and isolation among older people in Merton, it is important that they can live as active lives as possible and that their views are listened to and properly taken into account by all those agencies involved in their wellbeing.

This Council therefore resolves to:

- a) request that Merton's Health and Wellbeing Board take positive steps to ensure that the needs of older people are properly assessed before they could become ill in order to achieve savings for both the Council and the local NHS through relevant preventative measures;
- b) ask Cabinet to review the Annual Residents' Survey to ensure that the views and needs of older people are being properly captured and taken into account; and
- c) endorse the contribution of all those involved in the growing number of activity clubs for older people across the borough, including the many older people themselves; and
- d) encourage councillors and residents in every part of the borough to consider innovative ways to promote the wellbeing of older residents in their local neighbourhoods, including through working in conjunction with the annual Celebrating Age Festival co-ordinated by Age UK Merton.

7d STRATEGIC THEME MOTION LABOUR (Agenda Item 7d)

The motion was moved by Councillor Stephen Alambritis and seconded by Councillor Peter McCabe

The Conservative amendment, as set out in item 19 was moved by Councillor David Williams and seconded by Councillor Suzanne Grocott.

Councillor Andrew Judge also spoke on this item

The Conservative amendment was then put to the vote, with votes in favour 20, and 35 votes against with 5 abstentions, and therefore the amendment falls.

RESOLVED

This council is shocked and appalled to learn of the secret plan to close St Helier hospital, which was revealed by the BBC on Monday 13 April. This comes despite recent assurances from hospital bosses that St Helier hospital was safe.

Council notes that the Deputy Prime Minister and Leader of the Liberal Democrats visited St Helier hospital on the very day this shocking plan was revealed and was roundly heckled by local residents.

Council notes that it is alleged that the secret plans include a preferred option to close both St Helier and Epsom hospitals and to build a new hospital in Sutton. Council recalls that a similar proposal was rejected by the previous Labour government after being called in by Merton's Labour administration.

Council reiterates its clear commitment to keeping our local hospital open and:

- 1 Calls for the release of these secret plans to close St Helier hospital
- 2 Calls for full disclosure of who is really behind these secret plans
- 3 Requests the Leader of the Council to write to the Secretary of State for Health and the Chief Executive of Epsom & St Helier Trust outlining the council's shock at these secret plans and the way they have been disclosed and making clear that Merton Council will continue its fight to protect our local hospital.

8 REPORTS FROM MITCHAM COMMUNITY FORUM (Agenda Item 8)

Councillor Ian Munn presented the report, which was received by the Council.

9 REPORT FROM MORDEN COMMUNITY FORUM (Agenda Item 9)

Councillor Philip Jones presented the report, which was received by the Council

10 REPORT FROM RAYNES PARK COMMUNITY FORUM (Agenda Item 10)

Councillor Brian Lewis- Lavender presented the report, which was received by the Council

11 NOTICE OF MOTION - CONSERVATIVE 1 (Agenda Item 11)

Prior to the commence of this item a set of three amendments were circulated throughout the Chamber for tabling for this item (Notice of Motion - Conservative 1) and the subsequent two items (Notice of Motion - Conservative 2 and Notice of Motion - Conservative 3).

A request was made for an adjournment. This requested was put to a vote, with votes in favour 24, and 35 votes against with 1 abstention and therefore the requests falls.

The Notice of Motion was then not moved or seconded and as a result the motion falls.

12 NOTICE OF MOTION - CONSERVATIVE 2 (Agenda Item 12)

The Notice of Motion was not moved or seconded and as a result the motion falls.

13 NOTICE OF MOTION - CONSERVATIVE 3 (Agenda Item 13)

The Notice of Motion was not moved or seconded and as a result the motion falls.

14 LOCAL PENSION BOARD (Agenda Item 14)

The report was moved by Councillor Peter McCabe and seconded by Councillor Imran Uddin.

Councillor Suzanne Grocott also spoke on this item.

RESOLVED

That Council:

- A). agrees to agrees to establishes the Local Pension Board and the Terms of Reference as detailed within Appendix A to the report;
- B.) delegates to the Director of Corporate Services the authority finalise all matters relating to the set-up of the Board including the power to make changes to the Terms of Reference in order to ensure compliance with relevant legislation and guidance; and
- C.) agrees that the Pension Board submit an annual report to Committee summarising its work.

15 CHANGES TO MEMBERSHIP OF COMMITTEES AND RELATED MATTERS (Agenda Item 15)

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

Councillor David Simpson also spoke on this item.

RESOLVED

That the changes to the membership of Committees approved under delegated powers since the last meeting of the Council are noted.

16 PETITIONS REPORT (Agenda Item 16)

A petition was presented by Councillor Linda Taylor. The petition was called 'Costa Coffee Planning application - Stop the planning form going ahead.'

17 BUSINESS FOR THE NEXT ORDINARY MEETING OF THE COUNCIL
(Agenda Item 17)

That the Strategic Theme for the next ordinary meeting of the Council to be held on 8 July 2015 shall be Sustainable Communities with an emphasis on Leisure and Sport.

Speeches honouring Deputy Lieutenant, Sir John Wheeler

Councillor Stephen Alambritis

It gives me great pleasure to say some words about Sir John Wheeler, Deputy Lieutenant of this borough for a great length of time. We have been blessed with his presence at functions. He has been a Minister of State and I well recall meeting him outwith functions; on the tube in Westminster, or outside Wimbledon Park tube station, and we always have a really good catch up. I myself, as someone who worked at Westminster for a number of years, have met a number of Deputy Lieutenants, some that we have lost such as Jack Wetherall, DL in Croydon. I must say they have risen to that position and represented their borough in glowing terms and Sir John Wheeler has done just that. We will obviously miss him enormously and we do hope that he will continue to attend our functions and we will of course have him on our invitation list. Thank you Sir John Wheeler.

Councillor Oonagh Moulton

It is a great honour to present the Rt Hon Sir John Wheeler with the certificate recording the council's vote of thanks which was actually made at our last ordinary council meeting, back on 4th February. We placed on record our thanks for the dedicated manner he has served the borough as our Representative Deputy Lieutenant from 1997 – 2015. He has indeed provided the longest service in the 50 year history of the borough and it is that period we are honouring tonight. As a former MP and Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, Sir John's record of public service has been quite extraordinary. I have placed on record that I was actually one of your early canvassers in the 1979 victory, so well done. Sir John and Lady Wheeler and family have lived in the borough for many years and they are residents in my ward of Wimbledon Park. Sir John has actively engaged himself, throughout his time in our ward, with the affairs of the local community, and he is recognised for his contribution on our residents' association and for chairing the Safer Neighbourhood team, which he only retired from fairly recently. So really he is an all round 'good egg'. He has had a special focus, and mission to get Merton residents engaged in volunteering and also supports their applications for the Queen's Award for Voluntary Service and is involved too in recognising other events and awards. Sir John has also welcomed many members of the Royal Family to Merton, including HRH The Prince of Wales, Prince William, and in 2012 he took the instrumental role in supporting the borough when the Queen and Duke of Edinburgh visited Merton as part of the Diamond Jubilee celebrations that took place at St Mark's Academy. As a past mayor of Merton I would like to speak on behalf of the mayoralty as well in endorsing the appreciation of the dedication, service and support he provided, to past mayors, leaders, councillors and officers who have all appreciated your support, advice and guidance and work in the community over the past 18 years. We all wish you well in your retirement and I am sure you will continue to be seen around Wimbledon Park. Very many thanks for all you have done.

The Mayor

I would like to give a big thank you to Sir John. I have been working with Sir John since June and he has been an absolute pleasure, a true gentleman and supportive of all of us, so thank you very much Sir John.

Sir John Wheeler

When I was a back bench member of parliament, and here is a cautionary word for you all, I was let into debate as long as I spoke for no more than four minutes. When I become a minister of course, I could talk for as long as I liked. However, this will be a few remarks well within four minutes. I would like to thank the council for its quite charming courtesy to me this evening, which is quite unexpected. I shall greatly treasure that moment of my service for the Queen and the borough over so many years. So many of the former mayors who I see before me, what a pleasure it has been to work with you, and what fun we have had in doing the many different things that we have all enjoyed together. I shall certainly miss that side of my public service. There are two people I would like to mention as a special thank you. The first of those is Carl Brown. Every mayor knows how vital Carl is to the mayoralty, and I can tell you as the current representative, Carl and I have shared a lot of confidences about you. Your secrets will be safe between us. The second person I would like to thank is my wife, Lady Wheeler, who has been a behind the scenes assistant to me. This uniform was designed by George IV and has spurs. You can only get into it with considerable help, more importantly you can't get out of it without considerable help. I am deeply grateful to Lady Wheeler for all she has done in helping me perform this service to you, and also getting me around the borough when Carl was not able to help me. So I thank you all very warmly, I wish you well, and I hope see you now and then in the future.

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