

COUNCIL  
23 MAY 2018

(7.15 pm - 8.28 pm)

PRESENT            The Mayor: Councillor Marsie Skeete

The Deputy Mayor: Judy Saunders

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, Mary Curtin, 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, Mark Kenny, Sally Kenny, Linda Kirby, Paul Kohler, Rebecca Lanning, Najeeb Latif, Edith Macauley MBE, Russell Makin, Peter McCabe, Simon McGrath, Nick McLean, Oonagh Moulton, Hayley Ormrod, Dennis Pearce, Owen Pritchard, Carl Quilliam, David Simpson CBE, Peter Southgate, Geraldine Stanford, Eleanor Stringer, Dave Ward, Martin Whelton, Dickie Wilkinson and David Williams

1        APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (Agenda Item 1)

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Aidan Mundy.

2        DECLARATIONS OF PECUNIARY INTEREST (Agenda Item 2)

No declarations of interest were made.

3        ELECTION OF MAYOR FOR 2018/19 AND THE MAYOR'S APPOINTMENT OF THE DEPUTY MAYOR FOR 2018/19 (Agenda Item 3)

It was moved by Councillor Stephen Alambritis and seconded by Councillor Sally Kenny that Councillor Mary Curtin be elected Mayor of the London Borough of Merton for the 2018/19 municipal year.

Councillors Oonagh Moulton, Peter Southgate and Dennis Pearce spoke in support of the nomination.

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

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

## RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY

Councillor Mary Curtin made the statutory declaration of office and was invested with the Mayor's chain and badge of office.

The new Mayor announced that her Deputy Mayor for the 2018/19 municipal year would be Councillor Geraldine Stanford. Councillor Stanford 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 William Thompson, Marie Bateman and Dolores Bisnouth. The Mayor's Chaplain would be Father John Mulligan.

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

The Mayor, Councillor Mary Curtin, thanked the Council for her election for the forthcoming year and announced that her two Mayoral charities would be Friends in St Helier and Colours House Theatre.

*(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 Marsie Skeete 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 Oonagh Moulton, seconded the vote of thanks to the retiring Mayor.

In doing so both Group Leaders, along with the Leader of the Merton Park Ward Independent Residents Group, Councillor Peter Southgate, spoke in praise of Councillor Marsie Skeete'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 Marsie Skeete for the dedicated manner in which she has served as Mayor of the London Borough of Merton for the 2017/18 municipal year.

## 6 ELECTION OF LEADER OF THE COUNCIL (Agenda Item 6)

The Mayor asked for nominations for the Leader of the Council.

It was moved by Councillor Mark Allison and seconded by Councillor Edith Macauley that Councillor Stephen Alambritis be elected as Leader of the Council.

The Leader of the Liberal Democrat Group, Councillor Anthony Fairclough, also spoke on the nomination.

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

RESOLVED

That Councillor Stephen Alambritis be duly elected Leader of the Council.

#### 7 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING (Agenda Item 7)

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on 28 February 2018 are agreed as an accurate record.

#### 8 CONSTITUTION OF COMMITTEES AND OTHER BODIES (Agenda Item 8)

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

The Conservative amendment as set out in Item 10 was moved by Councillor Oonagh Moulton and seconded by Councillor Daniel Holden.

The Conservative amendment was put to a vote and was lost - votes in favour 17, votes against 42, abstentions 0.

The substantive motion was then put to a vote and was carried – votes in favour 36, votes against 23, abstentions 0.

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.

- E. notes the appointment, made by the Leader, of the Deputy Leader and his respective portfolio and appointments to the Cabinet including their respective portfolios detailed in Appendix E to the Council report.
- F. agree the amended terms of reference of the Mertantun Development Limited Sub-Committee, as set out in Appendix F.
- G. agree the membership and note the amended Terms of Reference and Rules of Procedure for the South West London and Surrey Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee (JHOSC) as set out in Appendix G.
- H. agrees that the Council's Constitution be amended to incorporate any changes resulting from the approval of recommendations A to G.

## 9 FREEDOM OF THE BOROUGH (Agenda Item 9)

The motion was moved by Councillor Stephen Alambritis and seconded by Councillor Oonagh Moulton.

Councillor Peter Southgate also spoke on this item.

### RESOLVED:

That the Council agrees to award the Freedom of the Borough to former Councillor Philip Jones in recognition of his long service to the Borough and agrees to the holding of a Special Council meeting on 12 July 2018 for the purposes of passing the necessary resolutions.

## **Nomination of Cllr Mary Curtin for Mayor of Merton 2018 - 2019 by Cllr Stephen Alambritis in the Council Chamber on Wednesday 23 May 2018**

Tonight is a grand occasion

It is a pageant if you like

It is all about a brand new Mayor for this borough

It is about the First Citizen of Merton

So it is with great pleasure

That I announce

That I am tonight

In this day of our Lord

This Wednesday 23 May 2018

And in this council meeting

In the Civic Centre

Making a nomination

For that First Citizen of this borough

And

Therefore to be the next Mayor of Merton

For the year 2018- 2019

And that Nomination is for.....

Councillor Mary Curtin

But before I say a few words about Mary

Nice words I assure you

I would like to welcome our new councillors from all parties

I would also like to thank all retiring councillors who either lost out on 3<sup>rd</sup> May or stepped down

Our retirees have together contributed to over 200 years of public service to the residents of Merton

In no particular order they are:

Andrew Judge

Mary-Jane Jeans

John Bowcott

John Sargeant

Gilli Lewis-Lavender

Brian Lewis-Lavender

Philip Jones

Ian Munn

Greg Udeh

Katy Neep

Abigail Jones

Abdul Latif

Michael Bull

Suzanne Grocott

Fidelis Gadzama

Linda Taylor

Ross Garrod

Jill West

Charlie Chirico

Hamish Badenoch

Jeff Hannah

Jerome Neil

Brian Lewis-Lavender

And of course to Judy Saunders who ends her term of office tomorrow

It is also important to note that later we shall also be

Saying thank you to our current Mayor Cllr Marsie Skeete

So Madam Mayor, tonight is special

Mary will have known about tonight and will have prepared for tonight

No doubt she will have invited special guests whose presence tonight will mean much to Mary

So tonight is a special night for them and for us

But yet again before I say a few words about Mary

Yes, nice words, I assure you

I wanted to emphasise the different nature of this council meeting so we all enjoy this special occasion for Mary

In order to do this I am reminded of Walter Bagehot and his book the English Constitution published in 1867

In talking about government and governance he dismissed theories about “the division of powers” and of “checks and balances”

What was crucial he said was to understand the difference between the dignified parts of the constitution and the efficient parts

Tonight we are all about the dignified parts

So tonight is special

Special because it is not about how this place “works and rules” and the politics of it all

But it is about how to “excite and preserve the reverence of the population” and that refers to the dignified parts of the council’s constitution

And so to the dignity that is personified by Cllr Mary Curtin

Mary came to England aged 18 from Tipperary in Ireland

She was a nurse and she married in 1972 and has 2 grown up children and 3 grandchildren

Mary loves music and dancing as we will no doubt witness later in the reception downstairs

Mary moved to Morden in 1984 and was elected in May 2014 for Lower Morden and just re-elected earlier this month

I would worry if any one here wants to play fast and loose at council meetings because Mary was a very very strong and effective Chief Whip to my Group....so watch out, you have been warned!

I know Mary will bring joy to our work in Merton

I am reminded of the song “Tipperary” Girl by Billy O’Dwyer Bob

Critics and lovers of this song say it:

Has an insistent rhythm

Has an highly infectious chorus

Holds wide appeal

Defies the generation gap

Captivates listeners of all ages

Has a contagious melody and

It has very very catchy lyrics

And so Madam Mayor

We will all find that our next Mayor, our Tipperary Girl, will reflect the strengths of that song

Mary Curtain, Madam Mayor, will be

Infectious, appealing, defiant, captivating, catchy and contagious

in a most charming and dignified way with us all and with all our residents

So, Madam Mayor

It gives me great pleasure

As we look forward to our next municipal year

To nominate and I urge this council to then elect Cllr Mary Curtin as Mayor of the London Borough of Merton for the year 2018-2019



## **Nomination of Councillor Mary Curtin for Mayor of Merton 2018/19**

### **Councillor Sally Kenny**

It is my privilege and pleasure to second Councillor Mary Curtin as the Mayor of Merton.

Mary brings very many attributes to this role. Her vocation as a nurse equips her very well for this role. She is:

- A fine communicator
- A flexible worker
- A critical thinker
- and she has embedded in her nature the desire to help

Her work with FISH and FILM is built on these skills and embedded in her love of caring for older people, as well in the community, keeping them active, involved and fully occupied.

All these skills will enable Mary to be a marvellous ambassador for the London Borough of Merton.

She will work passionately, being committed to always doing her very best and passionately support her charities, as she has done in her four years as a Councillor in Lower Morden.

I second Mary Curtin without reservation.

Thank you.

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## **In support of the nomination of Mary Curtin**

Madam Mayor I am pleased to speak in support of the nomination of Cllr Mary Curtin for the important position of Mayor of Merton for the municipal year 2018-19.

I am sure that Cllr Curtin's professional and community work first as a nurse and then with the Friend's of St Helier will give her a strong foundation on which to work with members of our community.

Cllr Curtin has served as a councillor for four years and has taken her knowledge of care and nursing onto the Healthier Communities and Older People Overview and Scrutiny Panel, whilst also serving on the Standards and General Purposes Committee plus the Licensing Committee. amongst others.

As you know Madame Mayor I will always encourage our Group to support the Mayor at civic and community events and the fundraising events for Mayor's Charities.

We look forward to working with your successor Cllr Curtin as we have with yourself.

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## **In support of the nomination of Mary Curtin**

Councillor Peter Southgate, Leader of the Merton Park Ward Independent Residents

Thank you Madam Mayor.

I am delighted to support the nomination of Councillor Mary Curtin as our Mayor for the next year.

I think she's shown by her commitment to the work of Friends of St Helier long before she became a councillor that she is made of the right stuff to be our Mayor and her work on the Healthier Communities Scrutiny Panel has been very thoughtful and therefore we are happy to support her nomination.

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## **In support of the nomination of Mary Curtin**

Councillor Dennis Pearce

Thank you Madam Mayor.

Finding words to describe Mary, when I was talking to someone about this and she must have heard me because she came up and said you better find the ones I will forgive you for, eventually.

I first met Mary when I went to get involved with Friends in St Helier and Mary was one of the community workers back in those days, and when I was asked to be the Chair one of the things I said was when you're running this you have to use your common sense and Mary piped up and said from her Irish background she said yes the English are very keen on common sense, what a pity they don't have enough of it.

The words I would use to describe Mary are hardworking, dedicated and caring and I know that she has applied that in all her years involved in FISH and I know that she has done exactly the same since she has become a Councillor for Lower Morden and if Mary applies the same hard work, dedication and caring to the Mayorality, her Mayorality, the Mayorality and the people touched by her Mayorality, will be much the better for it.

I would like to support Mary as the Mayor for 2018/19.

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**Councillor Mary Curtin**  
**Speech – Mayor Making**  
**23<sup>rd</sup> May 2018**

Thank you very much.

It is an incredible privilege to stand before you as the new Mayor of Merton. To my fellow councillors who have elected me to this office, I give you my heartfelt thanks. I promise that, at all times, I will honour the great responsibility you have given me and represent our wonderful borough, and its people, with energy, dedication, and humanity.

As I stand here in front of so many able and passionate public representatives, it's really quite hard for me to comprehend the journey that I've been on, from my birthplace of Nenagh, County Tipperary, Ireland. Never in my wildest imagination could I have predicted this, yet when I consider the path I've travelled, I see many similarities with the people we are sent here to represent, who are proud to call Merton their home.

I arrived in the UK in 1960 and, along with many others from Ireland, came to work for the NHS as a nurse. Home was a nurses' hostel, where we lived and laughed alongside each other, each night swapping stories of our new, exciting life in this country. I soon specialised in helping people with mental health issues, which took me to different hospitals in south London and Surrey, and throughout this time, I saw the challenges faced by the NHS, but also witnessed the massive difference it made to lives of people receiving its care, regardless of how rich or poor they were. And central to making this happen were people, like me and my friends, who had come from another country, another way of life, to help Britain and the British people. For us, it was a labour of love.

It's this same drive to make a difference, help people, and build a better life that continues to bring people to this country and our borough. We see it in all parts of Merton, across all ages, religions, ethnicities, and levels of income; people working hard, doing their best for their families and communities, and making our little bit of the world a better place. We are very lucky that others choose to make their home

here, and we welcome the stranger because he or she is a friend we do not yet know.

My home is the same house in Merton where I settled with my husband and 2 children in 1984, and throughout this time, I've seen at first-hand how so many people and organisations make this a great place to be.

I've chosen 2 very different organisations to be the recipients of fundraising activity over the coming year who, in combination, show that Merton is a borough for everyone; these are Friends in St Helier and the Colour House Theatre. FISH is a vital and highly popular community organisation, providing much-loved social opportunities and support for older residents. Colour House is a beacon for arts and culture, but it is perhaps best known for its children's theatre, whose shows have been delighting our young people for over 21 years. Both organisations are perfect illustrations of the best of our borough.

I shall be ably assisted in my duties by three consorts, Marie Bateman, Delores Bismouth and my son William - who are all very special people. Marie and Dolores are long-standing residents of the borough and at the heart their local communities. I am also very fortunate to have Geraldine Stanford as my Deputy Mayor, who's experience and knowledge of the borough, and the council, will be invaluable. In the coming year we will visit all parts of the borough, shining a bright light on the fantastic efforts that we are doing to make Merton an even more wonderful place.

None of this would be possible without the people of Lower Morden, who re-elected me as their councillor on 3<sup>rd</sup> May. They know what a special place they occupy in my life and I want to thank them for their faith in me. And, I want to give a special mention to my ward colleagues Stan Anderson and Sally Kenny, for your unstinting support and friendship. You are both wonderful people.

Thank you all for coming and I'm looking forward to an exciting, engaging, and memorable year as I get the privilege of meeting with so many of the people who make this part of London such a great place to live. I can't wait to hear the stories, witness the activities, and celebrate all that's good about our lovely borough.

Well, we are so very fortunate to live in this special place.

Thank you.

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## **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 23 May 2018 in Honour of Councillor Marsie Skeete, Mayor of Merton 2017-2018**

At the time of her election as Mayor last year, Councillor Skeete had completed just three years as a councillor.

From her time as our first citizen and Mayor this past year one would have thought she had been a councillor for more than three years.

Before beginning a life in active politics, Councillor Skeete volunteered with Mitcham and Morden Labour Party and with the Guyana UK Social Development Association.

Councillor Skeete, was born in Guyana where she obtained a degree in education.

She has dedicated her career to the rehabilitation and education of offenders within the prison service.

Coming from a family of teachers, she is passionate about improving the lives of individuals and society.

Madam Mayor,

It is therefore no wonder that both her charities involve the development of the total self.

Although both charities provide support for people with different needs, their contribution to the community is greatly appreciated.

Merton Mencap is a local charity that supports both people with a learning disability as well as their family and carers.

The Commonsides Community Development Trust works to improve the lives and environment of people living in Merton..

A number of fund-raising events hosted by Councillor Skeete have taken place at top Indian restaurant, Chak89, which hosted the Mayor's Guyana Night and Charity Ball.

South Thames College hosted the Mayor's Christmas Dinner,

A 'Winter Warmer' concert in conjunction with Merton Music Foundation was held at St Mark's Church of England Academy.

Ambience in Wimbledon was the venue for a Mediterranean Night.

I was told about this particular fundraiser that the restaurant prepared the Greek Salad earlier.

By the time the Mayor's guests arrived it was a Feta Compli.

More Seriously, Tooting and Mitcham Football Club hosted the Mayor's Commonwealth Day Big Lunch and with the Minister and former Merton Councillor, Tariq Ahmad, also there.

Passionate about raising awareness of the issues facing people with mental health, Councillor Skeete's Silver Sunday hosted an afternoon tea.

This was was a celebration of older people aimed at nurturing an atmosphere for them to meet other like-minded people.

During Local Democracy week Councillor Skeete hosted local schools at the civic centre and through various fun activities students learnt about how local political systems work and the importance of democracy and short speeches!

The Mayor was also honoured to represent the people of Merton at several civic engagements, to pay tribute to those who lost their lives or were injured since the First World War.

The Mayor also attended memorial events that remembered victims of the holocaust and honoured the men and women who make up the Armed Forces in the community.

During her year Councillor Skeete hosted over 18 receptions primarily to personally thank groups and persons for their work and support.

This included a reception to appreciate staff of Merton Council who volunteered and supported rest centres at both Grenfell and Camden after the tragic fire.

The Mayor's workload and achievements over her mayoral year would not have been possible without the dedication and hard work of her Deputy Mayor, Councillor Judy Saunders.

Between the Mayor and her Deputy, they have attended over 300 engagements and many planned meetings in addition to the official engagements.

The Mayor was ably and lovingly supported by her daughter Arexa, grandson Kahyjel, Mr and Mrs Mingo, family and friends

With whose support she has been able to achieve a lovely year with some excellent events and perform her duties serving the residents of Merton.

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 Marsie Skeete, for the dedicated manner in which she has served as Mayor of the London Borough of Merton for the year 2017-2018.

I beg so to Move



## **Vote of thanks for The Mayor of Merton – Cllr Marsie Skeete**

Madame Mayor it gives me great pleasure to second this vote of thanks to Cllr Marsie Skeete for her dedicated service to our Borough as the Mayor for the Municipal year 2017 to 2018.

Cllr Skeete has been a great supporter of education and mental health causes, and that was her focus over her year with her chosen charities – Mencap and The Commonsides Community Development Trust.

I would also like to endorse the thanks paid to her Principal Consort Arexa plus Grandson Kahyjel, and Mr and Mrs Mingo for their work and support too over the Mayoral year. I must also pay tribute to the outgoing Deputy Mayor Judy Saunders. The Mayoral team ably supported by Sandra, Steve and Carl have attended over 300 engagements which is a tremendous achievement.

Our group have been pleased to support the many fund-raising events held by the Mayor for her charities and I myself have particularly enjoyed the Christmas Dinner at South Thames College, my husband Tom enjoyed the Winter Warmer celebrations of Merton Music and a number of us had a great time at the Mediterranean night and the recent 'Thank You Party' at the Canons.

This year the Ball was held at Chak 89 on the eve of the election providing a brief break from canvassing and campaigning as we turned to a night of fundraising and fun instead, I am pleased that members of our Group not only supported the event but also actively helped with the fundraising for it.

Madame Mayor I know I speak for our whole Group in thanking Cllr Skeete for her colourful and dedicated work over her year for which she can indeed be proud and I am delighted to endorse the citation and to second the vote of thanks.

## **TRIBUTE TO RETIRING MAYOR – CLLR MARSIE SKEETE**

Thank you for allowing me to add my tribute to Cllr Marsie Skeete for her successful Mayoral year that has now come to an end.

Each member who takes on the role of Mayor brings something new and unique to it – that is the advantage of living in a borough as diverse and lively as Merton. So you might expect me to mention Cllr Skeete’s Guyanese heritage, which has featured so prominently in the events – and the cuisine – of her year. But in fact she shares that with former Mayor Cllr David Chung, her fellow councillor in Longthornton and Mayor in 2015/16.

No, Marsie’s claim to uniqueness is to be the most glamorous granny ever to have graced the dais in this chamber. Most people can manage to look good in the Mayoral robes, but it is Marsie’s high fashion sense beyond the bounds of the robes that we have come to look forward to at her events and celebrations. And her fashions work so well because of the radiant presence that fills them. She has brought life and vivacity to the many events she has hosted, especially on behalf of her two chosen charities, Merton Mencap and the Commonsides Community Development Trust. Both work with vulnerable people in Merton, and both have benefitted significantly from her support. Marsie has always been prepared to go the extra mile for the causes she believe in – no mean feat on those platform soles!

And allow me to add a tribute to the Deputy Mayor, Cllr Judy Saunders, now retired. This is for largely personal reasons – I greatly enjoyed the year I spent as her Deputy when Judy was Mayor in 2005/06, and learned an enormous amount about the borough and how it works while still a relatively new councillor. She has continued to contribute to our civic life in many roles since then, and it is fitting that she should conclude her 25 year career as a councillor in Merton with a second term as Deputy Mayor. Judy, you leave for your retirement by the seaside in Kent with our warmest best wishes.

**Cllr Peter Southgate**

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