

COUNCIL
16 SEPTEMBER 2020
(8.35 pm - 9.43 pm)

PRESENT The Mayor, Councillor Sally Kenny
 The Deputy Mayor, Councillor John Dehaney

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, Nick Draper, Anthony Fairclough, Edward Foley, Brenda Fraser, Jenifer Gould, Edward Gretton, Joan Henry, Daniel Holden, James Holmes, Andrew Howard, Janice Howard, Natasha Irons, Linda Kirby, Paul Kohler, Rebecca Lanning, Najeeb Latif, Edith Macauley MBE, Russell Makin, Peter McCabe, Simon McGrath, Nick McLean, Oonagh Moulton, Aidan Mundy, Hayley Ormrod, Dennis Pearce, Owen Pritchard, Carl Quilliam, David Simpson CBE, Marsie Skeete, Peter Southgate, Geraldine Stanford, Eleanor Stringer, Dave Ward, Martin Whelton, Dickie Wilkinson and David Williams MBE JP

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (Agenda Item 1)

There were no apologies for absence.

2 DECLARATIONS OF PECUNIARY INTEREST (Agenda Item 2)

There were no declarations of interest.

3 ANNOUNCEMENTS BY THE MAYOR, LEADER AND CHIEF EXECUTIVE
(Agenda Item 3)

The Leader of the Council led a vote of thanks for the Deputy Lieutenant, Ms Clare Whelan, on her retirement. Councillors McLean, Macauley, Moulton and Southgate also spoke on the vote of thanks.

The Mayor advised that a framed citation would be presented outside the meeting. Ms Clare Whelan then gave a short speech of thanks.

A copy of the speeches on the vote of thanks are attached as Appendix A to these minutes.

4 MOTION TO SUSPEND COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULE 2.3 TO VARY THE
ORDER OF BUSINESS AS SET OUT BELOW (Agenda Item 4)

The motion was formally moved by Councillor Alambritis and formally seconded by Councillor Allison.

There being no dissent to the motion it was

RESOLVED:

That the order of business be varied so that the agenda will only consist of the following:

- 5) Public questions
- 6) Member questions
- 7) Social Media Guidance
- 8) Amendments to constitution: officer employment procedure rules/ appointment committee terms of reference and delegation of authority to implement Covid-19 emergency action
- 9) Appointment of Director of Children, Schools and Families; and Assistant Director of Public Protection
- 10) Nomination of the next Strategic Theme

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 those who had notified the Council in advance to ask a further question to the Cabinet Member. A copy of the supplementary questions and responses will be included in the 'public questions to Cabinet Members' published document.

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

The responses to the written member ordinary priority questions were circulated prior to the meeting. The Mayor then invited each of the members in turn to ask (if they wished) a further question to the Cabinet Member. A copy of the supplementary questions and responses will be included in the 'member ordinary priority questions to Cabinet Members' published document.

7 SOCIAL MEDIA GUIDANCE FOR COUNCILLORS (Agenda Item 7)

The report was moved by Councillor McCabe and formally seconded by Councillor Allison.

There being no dissent to the recommendations it was

RESOLVED that the Social Media Guidance for Councillors be adopted.

8 AMENDMENTS TO THE CONSTITUTION (Agenda Item 8)

The report was formally moved by Councillor Alambritis and formally seconded by Councillor Allison.

There being no dissent to the recommendations it was

RESOLVED

1. That the Scheme of Delegation to the Chief Executive set out in Part 3E of the Constitution will be amended to reflect the decision of the Cabinet on 7 September 2020 to delegate authority to implement the local lockdown provisions set out in The Health Protection (Coronavirus, Restrictions) (England) (No. 3) Regulations 2020 SI 2020 No.750 to the Chief Executive;
 2. That the amended Terms of Reference for the Appointments Committee and Officer Employment Procedure Rules, as set out in Appendices A and B respectively be approved;
 3. That authority be delegated to the Monitoring Officer to amend the Council's constitution to incorporate any direct or consequential changes resulting from the approval of recommendation B above; and
 4. That it be noted that the Standards and General Purposes Committee agreed at its meeting on 23 July 2020 to commence a review of the Council's constitution and to appoint a working group of members to carry out that review in conjunction with the Monitoring Officer, with a view to reporting back to Council in February 2021.
- 9 APPOINTMENT OF DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN, SCHOOLS AND FAMILIES;
AND ASSISTANT DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC PROTECTION (Agenda Item 9)

The report was formally moved by Councillor Allison and formally seconded by Councillor Alambritis.

There being no dissent to the recommendations it was

RESOLVED

1. That the recruitment salary package of £96,840 to £101,193 per annum for the post of Assistant Director, Public Protection as required by the Council's pay policy statement be approved.
 2. That the commencement of the recruitment process for a replacement Director of Children, Schools and Families within the current Merton Director salary package of £108,564 to £125,829 per annum, plus market supplement payable at such a rate as the Chief Executive, in consultation with chair of the Appointment Committee considers reasonable and necessary in order to attract excellent candidates, be approved.
- 10 BUSINESS FOR THE NEXT ORDINARY MEETING OF THE COUNCIL
(Agenda Item 10)

The Leader of the Council made a personal statement announcing his stepping down as Leader of the Council and Leader of the Labour Group after 10 years. Council would elect its new Leader at the next meeting.

A copy of the Leader's speech is attached at Appendix B to the minutes.

Councillors McCabe, Christie, Henry, Allison, McLean and Williams paid tribute to the Leader. The Mayor advised that further tributes and speeches could be given at the next meeting on 18 November 2020.

The Leader of the Council advised that the Strategic Theme for the next ordinary meeting of the Council, being held on 18 November 2020, shall be Health and Wellbeing with a focus on healthy living.

Speech by Cllr Stephen Alambritis pursuant to a motion of Thanks to Merton Council Retiring Deputy Lieutenant Clare Whelan on Wednesday 16 September 2020

Madam Mayor,

I wish to convey the sincere thanks and appreciation of this council to Clare Whelan, Deputy Lieutenant for the dedicated manner in which she has served as Representative Deputy Lieutenant for the London Borough of Merton

Clare has enjoyed a remarkable five year tenure from 2015 to 2020 and we too have enjoyed having here in our borough

As the council leader throughout her tenure I have been so lucky to have Clare next to me at our events

Clare was initially appointed in 2015 as a Deputy Lieutenant in Merton, having previously served for 24 years on the London Borough of Lambeth and there you have proof of a loyal public servant

Clare was the Mayor of Lambeth for the millennium year

Clare was awarded an OBE for services to local government in 2013

She worked at Parliament for 25 years and is now an advisor on the healthcare sector and local government.

Clare represented the Lieutenancy within the borough with distinction

Her unwavering support of local commemoration events such as Armed Forces Day, Remembrance Sunday and Holocaust Memorial Day, among others, has been noticed and indeed admired

She has support of the uniformed youth groups, encouraging their working together and her annual presentation of the Deputy Lieutenant Certificate to outstanding cadets is to be commended

As Merton's Deputy Lieutenant Clare was influential in giving us the privilege of welcoming Her Royal Highness The Queen to the borough during her visit to Haig Homes in St. Helier ward to open an impressive new housing development for veterans.

Clare has also been a dedicated Chair of the London Mayors Association and her enthusiasm for London's Mayors has spread to all our former mayors who take an increasingly active role in that Association and all due to Clare's warmth welcoming approach

We shall all miss her deeply

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SPEECH FOR CLARE WHELAN

Thank you Madam Mayor.

Clare Whelan, OBE and also Deputy Lieutenant for the London Borough of Merton. Firstly, I must state that Deputy Lieutenants are appointed by the Lord-Lieutenant to assist him with his duties. The Lord-Lieutenant selects one of his DLs to represent him in each of the 32 London Boroughs, except the City.

The most distinguished Clare Whelan served as a Councillor for 24 years in the London Borough of Lambeth, and was in the Millennium year, Mayor of Lambeth. Clare was appointed OBE for services to local government in 2013. She held many senior roles in the council, including responsibility for social care, also Cabinet Member for the Environment. She became involved in local government at national level, not least working with others to attract people with diverse experience and backgrounds to put themselves forward as councillors.

In July 2016, Clare was elected as new Chair of the London Mayor's Association to succeed Robert Davis. Clare believes passionately in the civic mayoralty and she has encouraged and given support to the London Mayors in the important role they play in their communities. She also sees the role of the London Mayors' Association as giving that support, upholding the values of the civic mayoralty and also maintaining its traditions and ensuring it is relevant to the 21st century.

As Chairman of the LMA, she gives great assistance to members of the Executive, the opportunity to enjoy the traditional Civic Service in Westminster Abbey, Annual Dinner, Whittington Walk, overseas and other visits and the New Year's Day Parade for all 32 London Boroughs. I must say that there is a strong officer team and executive members and this is why the LMA is very popular and non-party political.

Clare has shown excellent skills since she was elected as Chair of the Association and also during her term as Deputy Lieutenant for Merton, she has had a very good relationship with officers of Merton Council and also with councillors. Remembrance Sunday in November is a very important role that she plays in the borough and she always gives her full support by attending the annual service with the current Mayor and councillors leading the procession; and she is well known to the Legion in Merton for all her hard work.

On behalf of all councillors, officers, voluntary organisations and residents in Merton, I would like to extend my sincere thanks for all the help, support and assistance which Clare has given to Merton over the years.

We wish you all the best in your deserved retirement with good health.

Thank you Clare, you will be sorely missed.

Congratulation to Deputy Lt Clare Whelan

Thank you Madam Mayor,

On the behalf of the Merton Conservative Group I would like to offer my congratulations to the Deputy Lieutenant on receiving this citation for her dedication to the London Borough of Merton during the period 2015 and 2020.

This citation clearly describes a career of immense commitment to public service, as evidenced by being awarded an OBE for services to Local Government in 2013.

Clare, thank you for all you have done for our Borough as Representative Deputy Lieutenant and I wish you all the very best in your next endeavour.

Thank you.

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**Speech re vote of thanks to retiring Representative Deputy Lieutenant
for L B Merton – Clare Whelan OBE**

Madame Mayor

Thank you for allowing me to add to the thanks from across this virtual Chamber to Clare Whelan who is now retiring having served our Borough with distinction as the Representative Deputy Lieutenant for Merton.

Madame Mayor, Merton and its Mayor, councillors, officers and constituents have appreciated her diligence and it has been an honour for us all to work with someone as dedicated to public service as Clare.

As the former Leader of the Opposition I saw first-hand her commitment and support to our Mayoralty and her unwavering support for our Borough at its important commemorative events. She has also been a champion of our uniformed forces and cadet forces and I recall her support of our first Merton Fire Cadets and their first parade which I was privileged to attend with her.

I have also enjoyed working beside her on the London Mayors Association and although she has also retired from there as Chairman I feel sure that she will continue to support events once we are able to hold them again.

Madame Mayor I know that across the Chamber we would like to thank Clare for her dedicated service and Clare we wish you well in all your future adventures.

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Thank you Madam Mayor, and let me add a brief tribute from the Merton Park Independents for the service of our retiring Deputy Lieutenant Clare Whelan.

Before she came to us as the representative Deputy Lieutenant for our borough, Clare already had a long and distinguished career in Local and national Government behind her. She was a councillor in our neighbouring borough of Lambeth for 24 years. She held a number of different posts there including Cabinet Member and Scrutiny Chair; and she served as Mayor for the millennium year. She continues now to work in an advisory role on health and social care, drawing on her experience of 25 years in parliament.

She has been very supportive in her role as Deputy Lieutenant here in Merton and she has been a constant presence at events such as Remembrance Sunday, Armed Forces Day and Holocaust Memorial Day. Her work with uniformed cadets group included the opening of the new HQ for 134th detachment, the South West London Armed cadet Forces in Dorset Road. Very much a top brass occasion, as a mere ward councillor I had to blag my way in on the coat tails of the Mayor.

So thank you Clare, for all you have done for Merton in your time here as our Deputy Lieutenant.

Councillor Peter Southgate

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Speech by Cllr Stephen Alambritis to the Council Meeting of Wednesday 16 September 2020 announcing that he is stepping down as Council Leader at the council meeting of November 2020

Madam Mayor,

Before I get to the business of the next ordinary meeting of this great council I have a personal statement to make

This evening I am announcing that after 10 years as Leader of Merton Council, and 10 plus years as Leader of Merton Labour Group, I will be stepping down at that next ordinary meeting on November 18th

Madam Mayor,

It has been an absolute honour to lead Merton, in what has been an extraordinary ten years of attainment for this best achieving council

When I became Council Leader in 2010 I was determined that we would be a business-like council

Determined to make Merton a great place for families and bridge the gap between the East and West of the borough and ensure we cared for the most vulnerable in our society

Looking back we have done just that in spite of unprecedented cuts to our budget and tough economic circumstances

We have managed to protect statutory services to vulnerable groups like fighting for St Helier Hospital and at the same time deliver positive growth and change across the borough

We have been consistent in our support for the return of a fan owned club leading to a brand new stadium for AFC Wimbledon at Plough Lane with over 800 housing units to boot

We delivered on a state of the art leisure centre in a park setting in Morden

We now have a new award winning library in Colliers Wood and we have opened a new secondary school with a new building for the children in South Wimbledon on the horizon

And what a joy it was to be with Mary Curtin as our Mayor to open to a new centre for adults with learning disabilities at Leyton Road

Madam Mayor

I am pleased to report that all that investment has brought new homes; new jobs; new apprenticeships which we have helped to create as a council, with much more in the way of new office and leisure space

At the same time we have been able to deliver flagship policies with the introduction over 23 expanded primary schools leading to over 4,500 extra places for our primary school children;

We are trailblazers in the country for the progress our children make in our secondary schools and those schools are all rated good and outstanding

And indeed the schools in our borough regularly out-perform the London and national averages, with our children's services also rated good with outstanding features

Madam Mayor

Now onto something I am particularly proud of and that is exempting care leavers in the borough from paying the council tax until the age of 25, protecting our households on low incomes with full 100% council tax support and delivering a zero council tax for 6 years

I was keen to retain our ongoing support for widening the opportunities to enjoy culture and the arts with our work with Wimbledon Theatre and Polka Children's theatre. With regards to the World class Polka Theatre I was pleased to link them with the Greece based Stavros Niarchos Foundation and that Foundation is now a major supporter

Madam Mayor

Our work putting public health and social regeneration at the heart of all that we do as a council by working with our local NHS and CCG has been inspiring

Our voluntary sector is thriving via the MVSC and reflected in the number of compact awards we have achieved from the Cabinet Office

We worked very closely with Merton Chamber of Commerce for our businesses and we were awarded the title of best small business friendly borough by London Councils

I am pleased that residents continue to be positive about the council and return increasing satisfaction levels in successive independent surveys with the way the council runs things, increasing satisfaction with the local area, that the council provides value for money and that the council acts on the concerns of local residents

Madam Mayor

The past decade has also seen us face huge challenges as a Council – from riots to floods to the covid-19 pandemic

These events have scarred individuals and all our communities with Covid-19 having a disproportionate impact on our BAME communities

But Madam Mayor these events have also demonstrated the amazing resilience and support we have been able to offer each other as residents of Merton

Being a best achieving council would not have been possible without the support of all my fellow councillors, an amazing team of officers and Merton Council staff, and friends and partners right across Merton and London

I have always believed that we work best as a partnership, and that together we share responsibility for our successes and give credit where due

Thank you for the part played by every councillor from every party in helping to make Merton such a safe borough; a borough of hope and opportunity

We have also been winning local elections since 2010 and that is because of our commitment to deliver a business-like council and to making the area attractive, safe and free from discrimination for all our residents and this has been the winning formula

We have demonstrated that a courageous focused and disciplined and well-run council informed by our care for the more vulnerable in Merton and our values and aspirational for our all communities and residents is politically attractive

Madam Mayor,

In football language no referee or VAR technology can take away our hat trick of local election wins in 2010, 2014 and 2018

Madam Mayor

As Chair of the South London Partnership it has been an honour to represent our sub regional grouping at London Councils and to work with Mayor's Boris Johnson and Sadiq Khan to make the case for Sutton, Richmond, Croydon, Kingston and of course Merton in our gloriously green part of South London

I am very proud to have been the leader since 2010 and of course I will miss being leader but now is the right time to go

Madam Mayor,

Merton will elect a new leader on November 18th

I am confident the next leader of the Council takes over a borough with much to look forward to and that they will continue to build on our achievements and work with all of you

Between now and November the 18th there is more work to be done to protect our residents from this awful pandemic

I will also use the time to continuing working with you and saying a personal "thank you" to you all here at Merton Council

And Finally Madam Mayor and from a very personal and family perspective this is the right time for me to move on

This last ten years have given me the opportunity to represent Merton both within the borough and to London as a whole

And given me to opportunity to fight for our values and this has been such a huge honour for me , so above all else I would like to thank the people of Merton for giving me this opportunity

END