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COUNCIL
25 MAY 2022

(7.15 pm - 9.01 pm)

PRESENT (in the Chair), Councillor Michael Brunt,
Councillor Edith Macauley Sally Kenny,
Councillor Agatha Mary Akyigyina,
Councillor Stephen Alambritis, Councillor Laxmi Attawar,
Councillor Thomas Barlow, Councillor Hina Bokhari,
Councillor Billy Christie, Councillor Caroline Cooper-Marbiah,
Councillor Anthony Fairclough, Councillor Edward Foley,
Councillor Brenda Fraser, Councillor Jenifer Gould,
Councillor Joan Henry, Councillor Daniel Holden,
Councillor Andrew Howard, Councillor Natasha Irons,
Councillor Linda Kirby, Councillor Paul Kohler,
Councillor Peter McCabe, Councillor Simon McGrath,
Councillor Nick McLean, Councillor Aidan Mundy,
Councillor Dennis Pearce, Councillor Eleanor Stringer,
Councillor Martin Whelton, Councillor Helena Dollimore,
Williscroft, Bhim, Braithwaite, Charles, Cox, Dresselaers, Flack,
Galea, Councillor Ross Garrod, Hall, Hayes, Hicks, Johnston,
Councillor Andrew Judge, Kaweesa, MacArthur, Manly, Mercer,
Neaverson, Oliver, Page, Paterson, Reiss, Szczepanski, Willis,
Austin and Wilson

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (Agenda Item 1)

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Butcher and Skeete who both attended remotely.

2 DECLARATIONS OF PECUNIARY INTEREST (Agenda Item 2)

There were no declarations of interest.

3 ELECTION OF MAYOR FOR 2022/23 AND THE MAYOR'S APPOINTMENT OF THE DEPUTY MAYOR FOR 2022/23 (Agenda Item 3)

It was moved by Councillor Stephen Alambritis and seconded by Councillor Martin Whelton that Councillor Joan Henry be elected Mayor of the London Borough of Merton for the 2022/23 municipal year.

Councillor Nick McLean also spoke in support of the nomination.

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

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

RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY

Councillor Joan Henry signed the statutory declaration of office and was invested with the Mayor's chain and badge of office.

The Mayor announced that her Deputy Mayor for the 2022/23 municipal year would be Councillor Agatha Akyigyina. Councillor Akyigyina signed the statutory declaration of office and was invested with the Deputy Mayor's badge of office.

The Mayor announced that her consort would be Floyd Blake. The Mayor's Chaplain would be Reverend Kenneth Scott.

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

The Mayor, Councillor Joan Henry thanked the Council for her election for the forthcoming year and announced that her two Mayoral charities would be the Dons Local Action Group and the Jimmy Asher Foundation.

(A copy of her acceptance speech is attached at Appendix B to these minutes)

4 VOTE OF THANKS TO THE RETIRING MAYOR (Agenda Item 4)

The Mayor invited Councillor Michael Brunt to receive the Council's vote of thanks.

The Deputy Leader of the Council Councillor Eleanor Stringer, moved and the Leader of the Liberal Democrat Group, Councillor Anthony Fairclough seconded the vote of thanks to the retiring Mayor.

In doing so, both, along with the Leader of the Conservative Group, the Leader of the Merton Park Ward Independent Residents Group and Councillor Andrew Howard all spoke in praise of Councillor Brunt'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 Michael Brunt for the dedicated manner in which he has served as Mayor of the London Borough of Merton for the year 2021-2022.

5 ELECTION OF LEADER OF THE COUNCIL (Agenda Item 5)

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

It was moved by Councillor Eleanor Stringer and seconded by Councillor Edith Macauley that Councillor Ross Garrod 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 Ross Garrod be duly elected Leader of the Council.

6 VOTE OF THANKS TO FORMER COUNCILLORS (Agenda Item 6)

The report was moved by Councillor Kirby and seconded by Councillor McCabe.

Councillor McLean also spoke on the report.

RESOLVED:

A. That, following their retirement from membership of the Council, the Council places on record its sincere appreciation of the valuable services rendered to the Borough by the former Councillors listed in the attached Appendix A and extends to them its grateful thanks for their activities on behalf of the Borough.

B. That Council notes that a Special meeting will be held on 20 July 2022 to award Alderman status to eligible former Councillors and Freedom of the Borough to Councillor David Williams MBE JP (*post meeting note: this was subsequently amended and will now be held on 5 September 2022*).

7 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING (Agenda Item 7)

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on 2 March 2022 are agreed as an accurate record.

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

The report was moved by Councillor Garrod and seconded by Councillor Christie.

The Liberal Democrat amendment as set out in Item 9 was moved by Councillor Kohler and seconded by Councillor Bokhari.

The Liberal Democrat amendment was put to a vote and was lost - votes in favour 24, votes against 29, abstentions 2.

The substantive motion was then agreed,

RESOLVED:

That the Council:

- A. i) approves the constitution of committees, sub-committees and scrutiny bodies set out in Appendix A 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 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.
- 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 her portfolio responsibilities, appointments to the Cabinet including their respective portfolios; and, if appointments are made, Assistant Cabinet members including their areas of responsibility (Appendix E)
- F. 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 F;
- G. To note that the Council, together with the other five South West London Boroughs comprising the area covered by the South West London Integrated Care System, will be required to jointly nominate a local authority partner member(s) to the Integrated Care Board with effect from 1 July and to delegate the authority to make that nomination to The Chief Executive
- H. To appoint Cllr McCabe, in their capacity as Chair of the Health and Wellbeing Board, to the South West London Integrated Care Partnership.

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 58th 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 57th 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 58th 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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Mayor Making speech

Cllr Joan Henry

Deputy Lieutenant Mr Chris Cotton, fellow councillors, distinguished guests, family and friends, good evening.

I am delighted and privileged to be before you, as the Mayor, the First Citizen of the London Borough of Merton for the year 2022 to 2023. To outgoing Mayor Councillor Mike Brunt I thank you for your guidance and congratulate you on an outstanding year.

It has been a journey to be now holding this great office, and to be able to represent our wonderful borough of Merton, and I look forward to engaging with the local community.

Coming from the beautiful island of Jamaica, I arrived in the UK **43** years ago with my 3 children. I first lived in Wandsworth with my parents and siblings before moving to Merton 32 years ago.

My grandparents, parents and siblings have always been in one way or another serving the community and giving back.

As the eldest, no one was surprised when I became a councillor in 2014 and it has been my most rewarding experience serving the community of Pollards Hill and contributing to Merton being a great borough to live, work and enjoy.

None of my achievements would be possible without the people of Pollards Hill, who re-elected me for a 3rd term on May 5th 2022, because they know what a special place they occupy in my life.

I want to thank my ward colleagues Martin Whelton and Aidan Mundy for all their support. I also would like to say a very special thank you to my colleague Councillor Brenda Fraser, who has been like a soft pillow to rest my head on when I am in need.

My Deputy, our Consorts and I are pleased to be elected in the year of our Queen's 70th Jubilee Anniversary, and are looking forward to an exciting, engaging and memorable year.

The pandemic has highlighted the importance of community spirit and togetherness, and so I am pleased to announce my charities for the year being Dons Local Action Group and Jimmy Asher Foundation.

Formed in response to the pandemic the Dons Local Action Group is a local network of volunteers offering support and helping those in our community to fight poverty. The group provides food parcels, household goods, furniture and appliances. They also provide laptops for children to access online learning through their Keep Kids Connected Initiative. The groups work covers Merton, Wandsworth and Kingston.

The Jimmy Asher Foundation offers support to young people from diverse backgrounds who wish to make positive life choices and develop into responsible young adults, further impacting on the wider community. They offer a variety of programmes including Sport, Drama, Music, Media and Healthy Cooking as a core part of the work they do. Based in Pollards Hill, the group also works in Lambeth, Kensington and Chelsea, Hackney, among several other boroughs and has international projects in Gambia, Sierra Leone and Jamaica.

I am delighted that representatives from both charities have joined us here tonight and there will be an opportunity to speak to them at the reception after this meeting if you would like to know more.

In closing, I promise that I will value the huge responsibility I have taken on and work together with my deputy and our consorts to represent our wonderful, beautiful and vibrant borough of Merton and those who live and work here.

Thank You.

Councillor Eleanor Stringer, Deputy Leader, Merton Council

Madame Mayor, Welcome. First of all it's wonderful to be addressing you by that title. Well Madame Mayor, I'm glad to have the privilege of moving the vote of thanks for my friend Councillor Mike Brunt. So I request the Council reports in its written record its sincere thanks and appreciation for Councillor Michael Brunt for the dedicated manner in which he has served as a Mayor of the London Borough of Merton in the year 2021 to 2022.

Councillor Brunt was elected to the council in 1990 and served as a councillor for 18 of the last 32 years. He was elected mayor at a virtual meeting in April 2021, taking over duties from Lower Morden Ward Councillor Sally Kenny. He started his official duties on the 9th of May. Councillor Brunt most recently represented Figges Marsh Ward as former leader of Merton Council and former Cabinet Member for the Environment.

Two of his grandparents were born in the borough in the and his parents lived all their lives in the borough. Councillor Brunt was also born in Merton and grew up here. Councillor Brunt developed a passion for healthcare during six years working for the Donald Woods foundation and HIV Charities in South Africa. As he helped lead Merton out of the Covid-19 pandemic, his theme for the year was focused on healthcare and wellbeing. Councillor Brunt selected Christian Care Association as the first of his nominated charities. The association provides emotional support and practical help in their home for struggling families. The second charity is Marie Curie, the UK's leading cancer charity, Marie curie provides frontline nursing, hospice care as well as a free support line for those coping with a terminal diagnosis. Councillor Brunt helped raise more than £58,000 for his chosen charities His highlights include the sleep out for 60 people at AFC Wimbledon in November, could have organised that in the summer, but it had to be in November. And a raffle organised by Councillor Brunt aided £44,000 pounds for local charities. He also organized a charity cricket match for the Mayor's XI against the team from Richmond Cricket Club, which was played on reportedly the oldest pitch in the country. For some reason the formal report neglected to mention the final score and as one of the players, I can't for the life of me think why this was omitted from the formal facts

Councillor Brunt then hosted teas and tours at the All England Lawn Tennis and Croquet Club, the venue for the first Mayor's Ball since 2019. Councillor Brunt presented Freedom of the Borough to Dickie Guy at AFC Wimbledon's ground. As a season ticket holder Councillor Brunt was privileged to watch their side play their first full season back in the borough and he was also delighted welcome the London Broncos to Merton.

Councillor Brunt hosted an afternoon tea at Tooting and Mitcham Hub in recognition of Silver Sunday - a celebration of older people, and combat issues such as social isolation.

Madame Mayor, aside from his charity work, Councillor Brunt led tribute to the fallen servicemen and servicewomen on Armistice Day and Remembrance Sunday and he led citizenship ceremonies throughout the year the year as part of his civic duties.

With a focus on promoting community spirit as Merton recovered from the pandemic, Councillor Brunt championed testing and vaccination and visited more than half the schools in the borough, to highlight how Merton could be a more positive example.

Councillor Brunt's joint chaplains from the Merton Priory Team and the Mayor has been supported throughout by his consort, his mother, Joan Brunt and by the Deputy Mayor, Councillor Edith Macauley MBE.

Madame Mayor. Councillor Brunt's mayoralty will be remembered by the way in which he prioritised health, wellbeing and engaged with young people in Merton schools.

Merton runs through Councillor Brunt to his core and he's extremely passionate about safeguarding the borough's future. Through his charity work and civic duties he encapsulated the borough's strong collective spirit and has been especially impressed by the way the community has come together over the year as Merton recovered from the pandemic. I formally move this motion of thanks to Councillor Michael Brunt.

Councillor Anthony Fairclough – Leader of the Liberal Democrat Group

Thank you Madame Mayor, I'm very pleased to be seconding this motion of thanks to Councillor Brunt and Councillor Macauley. But first, Madame Mayor, I would like to welcome you and congratulate you on your own results. I don't think I've ever heard you speak in the Chamber or in a committee or indeed in person where you haven't mentioned the people Pollards Hill with a certain warmth and I think this is a lesson to us all in why we are here, so thank you.

You spoke meaningfully of your time in South Africa and I think what came through to me about that was the sense of family and community and community impact that has gone on throughout your life and I think you brought some of that into your mayoralty as well.

I also wanted to highlight briefly the role that we don't talk about for the Mayor which is the chairing of our meetings and keeping us in order. You haven't, and I know you remarked, had to stand up. Though Councillor Henry may do if she wants me to shut up. We were working through times that weren't easy and weren't easy to manage or get our heads around. But Councillor Brunt managed that while keeping us calm and staying on task and for that I'm very grateful. I'd like to thank you for your service. Thank you very much.

Councillor Nick McLean – Leader of the Conservative Group

Madam Mayor may I congratulate Cllr Brunt on a successful year as mayor. And also may I congratulate Cllr Macauley for her strong contribution as Deputy Mayor.

The first Mayor's ball back after the pandemic was a great event, it was especially gratifying to see so many councillors after the disruption of the pandemic.

Cllr Brunt and Cllr Macauley, by your support for the Christian Care Association and Marie Curie your year as our Mayor and Deputy Mayor has raised much needed money for some truly vital causes. The Conservative group thanks you both.

I would also like to pay tribute to the other Mayors from the previous municipal term, which was so tragically disrupted by covid. Former councillors Mary Curtin and Janice Howard and Cllr Sally Kenny gave sterling service to Merton through tough times, we thank them all for their service to the borough.

Thank you.

Councillor Edward Foley – Leader, Merton Park Ward Independent Residents

Thank you Madame Mayor and congratulations to you and your Deputy Mayor as well. On behalf of the Merton Park Independent Residents, I am pleased to contribute to the vote of thanks to the retiring mayor, Councillor Mike Brunt. I've often found it interesting how much will you discover about someone in the year of office than you knew before. I'd been on the Children and Young Peoples Scrutiny Panel with Mike and chatted with him at various functions and events. I knew he had been a teacher, I did not know about his time at British Airways, nor how when he left BA that he took some time out to work in an orphanage in South Africa. Having helped organize a charity cricket match when I was Deputy Mayor, I was pleased to be asked again last year. Having come second to Richmond Cricket Club, the first time I played, I had prepared myself for a similar outcome. It was not to be, we had some different councillors playing this time, and a couple of external players as well. Mike batted early, maintaining he had not played for many years however he put on a very good performance and even managed to score a four a memorable accomplishment especially as mentioned it's the oldest cricket club in the country. I'm also pleased to say we came first that year and I just looked at the score, we were chasing 160 runs over 20 overs and at the end of the 90 we managed to get 162 so came first.

I'd like to pay tribute too, to the Mayor's support for charity during this year in office. His two charities were Christian Care Association in Merton and Marie Curie, a charity which supports people at the end of their lives and their families. Mike had personal experience of the support of Marie Curie with his late father and how much they helped in those final days and nights. Having gone through a similar situation with my wife last year I was not so fortunate as Marie Curie did not have anyone the time to help and by the time they did have somebody, sadly it was too late. I know he is very keen to support and help start a local Marie Curie support team and fundraising in Merton and if any other councillors are interested then please do get in contact with him and let's see what can be done to make this happen.

Throughout he has been supported by his mother Joan, often at his side and in her role as Mayoress. She deserves our thanks too, it was great to see them both together at Buckingham Palace recently. Mike has attended over 70 citizenship ceremonies at Morden Park House and welcomed over 700 new British Citizens to the borough. He has visited 31 schools in Merton, including his own former schools Holy Trinity Primary School and Garth High School which is now the Harris Academy. Another special visit was his mother's school, Wimbledon Park Primary

School which when she first entered that school it was the day of World War II. She visited the school again this year on the day that Russia invaded Ukraine.

Before I finish I would like to give a special thanks to his Deputy Mayor Councillor Edith Macauley. Not only did Edith support Mine at virtually every event throughout the year, but you also raised nearly £3,000 for the Mayor's charities with her sponsored swim. Thank you Edith.

Councillor Howard

Thank you Madame Mayor, as others I'd like to welcome you to your new post and congratulate you on your succession. I am looking forward to your year and I must say it's nice to find myself at your elevated level in the chamber a level from which we may both look down on those currently seated between us. Now I'm going to sing your praises in 12 months' time, I have no doubt, so give me a moment to focus on your predecessor Councillor Michael Brunt. I know that my wife Councillor Janice Howard, would have wanted to thank Mike personally but as you know she's been promoted to a public gallery when she can now hold us all to account, starting no doubt with me.

The Queen, God bless her is represented by the mace before us, but it is our residents, some behind me, that we owe a more immediate fealty. Councillor Brunt, together with Janice, I had the immense pleasure in supporting a good knock at Civic events. I know Janice took immense pride in being able to contribute in any way to the organisation that you and your team put into them. We know that Merton Council offers a fantastic support to the office of Mayor. Support that many others cannot provide. That Councillor Brunt the driving force, with your own energy and enthusiasm for fund raising for your chosen charities Christian Care and Marie Curie gave us many opportunities to support you. The Mayor's XI cricket match in Mitcham where your team was victorious was a great start to the year due of course to a significant innings, your own.

This was followed by a dinner and of the year of course topped off by a ball at the All England Club. As a point of interest Janice and I did do quite well at some of the raffles. Councillor Brunt, you visited all schools in Merton and gave so many children in insight to the role of a civic mayor and the london borough and amongst those children i am sure there will be future councillors now in the making. I'm sure that your mayoral year will be so well remembered for all you have done for the community of Merton and it is heartening to know that you remain among us. You're a good councillor and above all a genuinely good man. Thank you.

Councillor Michael Brunt, speaking in response to the Vote of Thanks

Madame Mayor, Deputy Lieutenant, fellow councillors, ladies and gentlemen in the gallery. Thank you for all the kind words that have been said about me so far. I'm

not sure that I recognise them all completely, but I really appreciate that and it's coming from across the chamber. It means a lot to me. The last year has been amazing it's been a huge privilege to be Mayor of a London Borough,. Although I predate Merton by 10 years I owe everything to Merton and its where I grew up. I was born and educated in the borough, it's where I'm from, it's what shaped me. I used to play in the parks go to the cinemas, I even remember the Rialto, in Raynes Park and some of the cinemas in Wimbledon. I'm not sure when some of the names of parks changed, but I remember Trinity Gardens being Trinity Gardens, not South Park Gardens, but times change and names change. Tonight is my last chance to have a captive audience and no time limit. I remember when I was first elected to the council the lights you'll get used to over here it's green for four minutes and it goes to amber for the fourth, and it goes red at five I used to admire the people speaking at five minutes. I soon came to realise that the ones to admire were the ones that managed to finish before the amber light came on. You've got me know, so I'm going to carry on.

It's time to say thank you and to mention some highlights. Thank you to those who were councillors last year for putting your trust in me and thank you to all of those who've supported me throughout the year either directly or indirectly. Thank you for those who attended fundraising events or donated prizes or cash, sponsored the Deputy Mayor's swim which has been mentioned raised at least £3000, for my Movember fundraising and for the big sleepout which did raise money for the Dons Local Action Group and for Faith in Action as well as Tooting Community Venture.

Thank you for all of those who've given moral support to me. As I said at the thank you event on Saturday, there's always a risk of leaving someone out where you start naming people but again I'll take that risk and apologise in advance if I inadvertently leave you out. I'll start with thanking my mum for agreeing to be Mayoress, at 93 years old I think she's done remarkably well. Thank you mum. To Terry, who can't be here, for encouraging me and always giving me sound advice and ensuring I keep my feet on the ground despite what can happen to Mayors. To Edith for being my deputy, Edith has been a constant support throughout the year and supported every fundraising event as well as her £3000 for the sponsored swim. I don't think that I could have done it without your support, so thank you very much for that. You have been so dedicated and been good at giving me quiet advice in the background, putting me right before I've gone wrong, so thank you. I know that Carmel can't be here but I know he's been a support to you, even though he's not been able to attend many things because he's in his first year at university and university students have other things to do. Thank you to my joint chaplains this year. IT's been really good to have you being part of this whole journey with me. Thank you to the Deputy Lieutenant for your support and your wisdom and I look forward to our lasting friendship. Thank you to Mayor's Office, to Sandra, Carl, Steve, Mick and of course Sharon. Sandra has been a wise adviser and incredible support. And I learnt early on, as you'll learn Madame Mayor, that you lose your name for the year. I did say to Sandra early on, in the first week I think, when it's just us, please call me Mike or Michael and she said yes Mr Mayor. That's the way it works. Carl Steve and Mick, as I mentioned before for your patience with my back seat driving, sometimes we

would get to a junction and I would say shouldn't we go that way? But no, they always knew better than either I or the sat nav. To Sharon for keeping the Mayor's parlour so spick and span and for your invariably shiny and smiling personality. For the rest of the team who do so much behind the scenes at many events, Diane, Amy, Andrew and others. To Jane and your team, you do incredible work for those in need in Merton and the effects are lasting. To Sharifa and all those in Marie Curie Care. Through the support we received I got to know what you do and how valuable that is. Thank you to the All England Tennis Club for all your hospitality and your generosity, they always make a strong contribution to the Mayor's charities. But especially for making mum feel so welcome and so welcome and special in the royal box. That was a really special. If you ask her afterwards she will say that that's the highlight of the year. To the team at Wimbledon Theatre also contributed, particularly during the pantomime, where Shane Ritchie, who is my other best friend, kept announcing at the end of every performance that the staff would be collecting for the charities with buckets. £11,5000 was raised there. To the team at the registry office who've been encouraging and made me feel so welcome all the time, as we mentioned over 70 ceremonies, and that's been a great privilege to do that. To all those involved in rolling out the vaccine in Merton. I've been able to visit and have vaccines publicly several times i went to thank them this afternoon and they said, do you want your second booster now while you're here? And that's why I'm wearing this, I have the second booster up until next year.

To Hannah Doody and Louise Round, your advice and support, particularly during the hybrid meetings and helping me to get through those. Fellow counsellors, for never making me have to stand up. I appreciate that, you've always conducted the meetings, with a bit of chastising and good humour so I do thank you for that. Merton/Morden Guild, for being a constant support, working behind the scenes on things like Silver Sunday and the cricket match. To Janice, Sally Oonagh, Ed, Linda, as former mayors and members of the committee on the fundraising you've been invaluable. You've given me steadfast support and advised me on the role of Mayor and it's been great to know that as you've gone before me, that you can advise. So thank you to those that I've mentioned and to all former Mayors who still sit on the Council because I know i know that you have that experience.

I'll briefly mention some highlights of the year and I've already mentioned the tennis so I won't go into that. Edith and I went to the schools and that was very special and particularly last week, one of the highlights a three-year-old girl in the nursery came up to me because I always used to go into the schools in robes. Madame Mayor you can do that in the future. But this three year old girl came to me and said, where's your dressing up box? And I said, I haven't got it with me, and she took me by the hand and took me to the dressing up corner in the nursery and that was a precious moment and I realised just how confident our young people are in this borough, and we have a fantastic education system and I think we should encourage all councillors in their wards to get to know the schools, particularly the primary schools, be in there and get to know them.

The Silver Sunday was a highlight, and that's already been mentioned as well. The rising stars football team, Pollards Hill, was a fantastic event - one of the first public

events I went to after we came out of Covid. And that is a team that has been brought together by the PCSO in that area and these are young men who would not necessarily be doing good things but they were all on track and they support each other and they're going on to support each other and making lives in football but also in other areas as well. A big highlight was standing in the semi-circle giving Dickie Guy his freedom of the borough and also having him here in the Council Chamber. And showing I really have been a supporter since 1977 by giving him the first programme I ever bought which he was on and that was in January 1977.

Tooting Mitcham for Teenagers, those not in education, not in training, seeing how things work there is incredible, these are young people who would not necessarily achieve because they're not in school for educational training for all sorts of reasons. But I met some youngsters who are going on to apprenticeships and degree and going to university, phenomenal work.

The celebration of music with Merton Music Foundation Christmas concert was amazing and then following on from that 1001 nights at King's College School but it included children from local primaries and most of the secondary schools. I don't think it was a dry eye in the house when the boy sang supercalifragilisticexpialidocious.

The Garden Party was a special one as well, I think that was mum's second highlight of the year and we discovered the advantage of having a wheelchair because the wheelchair users were lined up in a line next to the palace and the royal party shook hands with all of them. So mum met the future king and also Princess Anne who is one of her heroes. I'll stop there because I could take up the whole evening, but I'll say in conclusion that being Mayor has been a humbling experience. I felt that I've learned a lot during the year and I'll be ever thankful for that. I learned a lot about myself as well. Merton is a wonderful, vibrant, diverse borough, that is full of talent, hope and respect I hope that all 57 of us live up to the expectations of the residents we are here to serve. And there is just one small anecdote. In the 98 elections at the count, I had a Liberal Democrat in a rosette come up to me at the count, and said you won't remember me, but I've just voted for you, I voted two liberal and you. You may remember, because I was 9 years old, I came to see you in your first surgery - he didn't know it was my first surgery, but it was my first surgery - because there was broken glass on the tennis courts. I reported that to the director that was cleared and he remembered that. I think we should all remember that we're here partly because our party but also here because of the respect we show our residents and the dedication to each other. A number of children at schools ask what it's like to be mayor and whether I'll miss it when it ends. My answer has always been, that it's such a special experience that it needs to be shared. I often say to them that it's a bit like being Dr Who – the robes are the TARDIS but the person wearing it changes each year. And I'll finish off by saying there's an expression that I'd learnt during my time in South Africa, which was "things happen when the time is full", and I think the time is full, so thank you.

