

All minutes are draft until agreed at the next meeting of the committee/panel. To find out the date of the next meeting please check the calendar of events at your local library or online at www.merton.gov.uk/committee.

COUNCIL
5 SEPTEMBER 2022

(7.15 pm - 9.31 pm)

PRESENT (in the Chair), Councillor Joan Henry,
Councillor Agatha Mary Akyigyina,
Councillor Stephen Alambritis, Councillor Laxmi Attawar,
Councillor Thomas Barlow, Councillor Hina Bokhari,
Councillor Michael Brunt, Councillor Billy Christie,
Councillor Caroline Cooper-Marbiah,
Councillor Anthony Fairclough, Councillor Edward Foley,
Councillor Brenda Fraser, Councillor Jenifer Gould,
Councillor Daniel Holden, Councillor Natasha Irons,
Councillor Linda Kirby, Councillor Sally Kenny,
Councillor Paul Kohler, Councillor Edith Macauley,
Councillor Peter McCabe, Councillor Simon McGrath,
Councillor Nick McLean, Councillor Aidan Mundy,
Councillor Marsie Skeete, Councillor Eleanor Stringer,
Councillor Martin Whelton, Councillor Helena Dollimore,
Councillor James Williscroft, Councillor Sheri-Ann Bhim,
Councillor Michael Butcher, Councillor Caroline Charles,
Councillor Eleanor Cox, Councillor Klaar Dresselaers,
Councillor Chessie Flack, Councillor Ross Garrod,
Councillor Jil Hall, Councillor Billy Hayes, Councillor Susie Hicks,
Councillor Dan Johnston, Councillor Andrew Judge,
Councillor Samantha MacArthur, Councillor Gill Manly,
Councillor Stuart Neaverson, Councillor John Oliver,
Councillor Robert Page, Councillor Michael Paterson,
Councillor Slawek Szczepanski, Councillor Matthew Willis and
Councillor Max Austin

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (Agenda Item 1)

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Braithwaite, Galea, Howard, Kaweesa, Mercer, Pearce, Reiss and Wilson.

Councillors Dresselaers, Hall and Willis attended remotely.

2 DECLARATIONS OF PECUNIARY INTEREST (Agenda Item 2)

There were no declarations of interest.

3 FREEDOM OF THE BOROUGH (Agenda Item 3)

The Mayor invited Councillor Stringer to move and Councillor Alambritis to second the motion.

Councillor Stringer:

Thank you Madam Mayor. Deputy Lieutenant, Madam Mayor, Councillors, Officers and observers I'm delighted that we're here tonight awarding the Freedom of the Borough to two people who've given so much of their time and energy to the people of Merton and making Honorary Aldermen and Alderwomen of ten further former colleagues.

So can I take this time to also thank all of those who left the Council at the May elections and thank them for all the work they did for our Borough.

Madam Mayor I'm going to talk about Mark Allison and why he deserves this honor of the Freedom of the Borough. First you have the motion in front of you but I'll run through some of the facts; he was a Councillor for twenty years, including ten years responsible for the Boroughs' finances; seven and a half of those as deputy leader. In Autumn 2020 when Stephen Alambritis, still Councillor Alambritis stood down from ten years at the helm, Mark was elected as new Leader of the Council.

Madam Mayor taking on leadership while we're in the middle of a pandemic is a challenge but Mark didn't let that stop him continuing to deliver improvements for Merton residents while still making sure that we were doing everything we can to protect our residents from illness and support the economy during the lockdowns. Mark's achievements are many and I'm sure my colleague Councillor Alambritis will cover some of these but for starters he was key to insisting that we protect the lowest income residents from council tax even when the government took away that funding, he was crucial in shaping those principles that protected children's and adult services from the worst of the cuts as austerity started to bite and recent achievements like the OFSTED judgement that our children's services are outstanding is a testament to his focus on looking after our most vulnerable residents.

He also made sure that we had the funds to deliver the things that benefit all residents like a new leisure centre in Morden and a new library in Colliers Wood.

Madam Mayor, his commitment to Merton went well beyond his achievements at the Council he also spent his spare time, when not watching football, working to make life better for local people including setting up a new foodbank service at the start of the pandemic with his wife Jenny over in Pollards Hill and then continuing to regularly volunteer there.

He also spent many more hours on the doorstep listening to residents than was expected of him making sure to be in wards right across the Borough always willing to speak to voters especially when they had concerns to raise.

Madam Mayor I've outlined some of the achievements of Mark but what is hopefully clear is his hard work and his commitment to Merton and beyond this there's how he achieves things. Mark's approach was to develop relationships with people, put his trust in them and encourage those with good

ideas and I know this as someone who was a new Councillor four years ago. Straightaway Mark supported me in my ward work, was always ready to discuss any ideas I had and then when I was put on Cabinet he continued to support me particularly with tricky situations and even when I had very different thoughts on how to help to do things.

Madam Mayor I think what makes Mark different is he doesn't just give his trust and attention to allies he is happy to work with and consult with anyone with talents and ideas so as long as they are willing to work collaboratively too. This led to him appointing a Cabinet that was diverse not just in characteristics such as ethnicity and gender but diverse in opinions.

So Madam Mayor I'm proud to call Mark my friend, I'm proud of what he achieved in Merton and I'm grateful that we are bestowing this honour on him.

Councillor Alambritis:

Deputy Lieutenant, Madame Mayor, Councillors, Officers and guests.

My wife always asks me what am I up to now as I head into the civic centre for yet another evening?

When I said what I was doing namely seconding this motion tonight for Mark Allison, she screamed at me "What are you doing talking up a QPR fan"

Well here goes

It started with an election victory in 2002 for Mark Allison

Mark made it straight into the Cabinet for Special Projects and promptly launches My Merton

My Merton is a MUST read publication with a 86,000 circulation greater than the Spectator at just 83,000 in 2019 and the Liberal Democrat Voice at only 50,000 and the Morning Star at just 10,000

Between 2010 - 2014 I made Mark my Cabinet Member for Finance

Our 2011 July Principles when we protected residents from the cost of living crisis were put together by Mark

We Froze the council tax for 6 years

We kept Council Tax low

And it was Mark who insisted on maintaining one of Britain's most generous council tax rebate schemes

Mark also made sure we protected services for the most vulnerable, through a funding ratio ensuring budget cuts are lower for children's services and adult social care and so we have outstanding status from Ofsted for our childrens services

Between 2014 – 2020 I made Mark my Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance

Mark makes sure we get money for a new library, a new day centre, a new secondary school, 23 expanded Primary schools (no portakabins) and a new leisure centre

So not a bad list of achievements for residents of Merton from a QPR fan

Hey, look he has recovered some dignity as I understand he was there at the first AFC Wimbledon match against Sutton United back in 2002 where it all started and now his second team is AFC Wimbledon. Mark thank you very much.

I second this motion Madam Mayor.

The Mayor then invited Councillor Whelton to speak to the motion.

Councillor Whelton:

Thank you Madam Mayor, it's a great honour to support this recommendation for former Councillor Allison to be made Honorary Freeman of this Borough. I've known Mark for the past twenty seven years and we cut our political teeth way back in Sutton a long time ago challenging Borough, and Mark was always a very good friend and support when I was just starting myself in the Labour Party.

I've known Mark longer than I've known anyone else in this Council chamber, politics there was a challenge but both of us ended up in Merton which was slightly more fruitful territory than Sutton is for the Labour Party.

As well as that I've worked closely alongside Mark over the past twenty years I got elected with him at the same time to the Council in 2002 and I also served alongside him as a Cabinet member for the past twelve years.

I have to say I think Mark's record speaks for itself, I know the huge work you've done in Pollards Hill in terms of setting up and continuing to run the fresh foodbank which has helped hundreds and hundreds of people over the past two and a half years in one of the most deprived areas of the Borough. I also know as well the work he did through Covid.

Covid had been one of the most challenging times for this Council and in terms of the support he gave to businesses and the local community as the then Cabinet Member for Finance but obviously subsequently Leader after Councillor Alambritis stood down.

It's sad Mark is no longer with us in this Council chamber but I think this is recognition of his considerable service to the Council and I ask Council tonight to support this thank you Madam Mayor.

The Mayor then called for a vote and the vote was carried, unanimously. The Mayor then called for a vote and the vote was carried, unanimously. Mark Allison was invited to receive certificates conferring upon him the titles of Honorary Freeman of the Borough and Honorary Alderman affixed with the common seal of the Council.

The substantive resolution was agreed.

RESOLVED:

That, by virtue of the power vested in it by Section 249 of the Local Government Act 1972, the Council does admit Mark Allison as Freeman of the London Borough of Merton.

This honour is bestowed on Mark Allison in recognition of the substantial contribution he made to the Borough as a Councillor since his election to the Council in 2002, including serving as Leader of the Council from 2020 – 2022 and Deputy Leader from 2014-2020.

Mark held many positions on the Council and made a substantial contribution to the borough, especially in enhancing businesses, economic growth and prosperity, and in protecting those who are more vulnerable and on low incomes. Mark also played an important role in supporting charities in the Borough. As Cabinet Member for Finance, Mark oversaw the management of the Borough's finances for over ten years. Mark also ensured all Council staff were paid the living wage and introduced bereavement leave for staff who miscarry.

RESOLVED:

That former Councillor Mark Allison is conferred with the title of Honorary Alderman of the London Borough of Merton in recognition of his loyal and distinguished service to the Council over many years.

4 FREEDOM OF THE BOROUGH (Agenda Item 4)

The Mayor invited Councillor McLean to move and Councillor Holden to second the motion.

Councillor McLean:

Deputy Lieutenant, Madam Mayor, Councillors and guests, I'd like to begin by saying myself and Councillor Holden will be speaking to conservative colleagues tonight but the conservative group congratulates all former councillors being honoured for their contribution to this Council, all of whom greatly respected the privilege it was to represent the residents of their respective wards with a dedication to public service they can all be proud of.

Madam Mayor, It is my honour to propose the motion that by virtue of the power vested in it by section 249 of the Local Government Act 1972 the Council does admit David Tyrie Williams as freeman of the London Borough of Merton.

This honour is bestowed on David Tyrie Williams MBE JP in recognition of the exceptional contribution he made to the Borough as a councillor in over 45

cumulative years of service since his first election to the council in 1974 including serving as Leader of the Council from 2006 to 2010, the Mayor of Merton in 2012-13, Deputy Mayor 1981-82, Leader of the opposition 1999 - 2006 and his extensive civic service.

David has held a number of posts and senior positions on the Council throughout his time as a councillor and has chaired various committees and boards. David has also served the Borough in many other ways including having been a school governor at various levels for over 50 years, a member of the endeavour youth club management committee in Morden for 35 years and a member of Merton Deanery Synod for 16 years.

David has also served as a magistrate in Merton since 1986 and in 2019 received an MBE for political service in Local Government.

It is also moved that former Councillor David Williams is conferred with the title of Honorary Alderman of the London Borough of Merton in recognition of his loyal and distinguished service to the Council over many years.

Madam Mayor, Deputy Lieutenant, Ladies and Gentlemen that is the service record of former Councillor David Williams MBE JP and it is that outstanding dedication to the service of this Council and the residents that David was elected to represent that we are here to acknowledge tonight, as this Council bestows upon him the Freedom of the Borough.

As Council Leader there were many achievements, not least the opening of the Mitcham Eastfields train station; the first a very significant transport infrastructure project in the constituency of Mitcham and Morden.

David Williams, the heart of the conservative group for decades steeped in professionalism, constitutional knowledge, a perfectionist; this Council will miss his wise input. But Madam Mayor what has struck me with serving with David over the last four years is that despite the decades that he has been a member of Merton Council he remains a moderniser. Yes always an anchor to former practices but also keen to do things differently and that to me is the depth of his character, his energy and respect of this Council and the residents of Merton has not diminished, nor has his desire to serve the public as he once again takes up his place on the bench as a magistrate.

On a personal note, I want to thank him for his support to me, he has been my mentor and his friendship and guidance has been greatly appreciated. That said, something tells me he will still be getting quite a few telephone calls he hasn't quite escaped yet.

Madame Mayor it is with immense honour that I move this motion that David Williams MBE JP be admitted Freeman of London Borough of Merton and is conferred with the title of Honorary Alderman of the London Borough of Merton, nobody deserves it more. Thank you.

Councillor Holden:

Thank you. Deputy Lieutenant and Madame Mayor it is my pleasure and honour to second the nomination of my good friend and former Hillside ward colleague David Williams to be awarded the Freedom of the London Borough of Merton.

David is well deserving to be a Freeman of Merton after having served a grand total of 45 and a half years as a Councillor in Merton. As Councillor McLean has outlined David has served in all the local civic roles which one can do in this place which very few others have ever done or achieved.

So what was happening in 1974 when David first joined this place, well there had been an energy crisis, a three-day week, an invasion of a European country namely Cyprus, the UK hosted the Eurovision song contest, there were two general elections, a local government reorganisation and you couldn't eat at McDonald's in this country although that changed in December of that year. Now we fast forward to 2022 so upon David's retirement there are some similarities; we are facing again an energy crisis, a European country Ukraine being invaded, we've had ward boundary changes and we are about to host Eurovision again and also you can eat in many more restaurants too.

The phrase plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose - the more things change the more they stay in the same comes to mind. David has been steadfast and resolute standing fast in honour and strength throughout all those years. David has served in two wards first in Canon Hill and then when I was just four and a half years old David became a Councillor in Hillside ward which he has brilliantly served for 32 years.

David has throughout his time had a series of ward colleagues including Chris Grayling MP and retired councillors James Holmes and David Simpson, both of whom we are honouring as Honorary Alderman tonight.

The third ward Councillor often changed at each election. I first met David at the Hillside Conservatives Christmas party in December 2010 where I was warmly welcomed by David and David and Stephen Hammond MP at this point David had already been in situ in Hillside for 20 years.

David was also an excellent Mayor of Merton in 2012 coinciding like this year in the Jubilee year. In that year David created recognition pin badges for individuals or groups who had done good work in the community or helped the Mayoral team. The badge here that I often wear on my jacket at these meetings, I proudly wear for services that I did to David Williams and Krystal Miller when they were Mayor of Merton.

Only a couple of years later I was selected to stand with both Davids at the 2014 council election becoming the latest in the series of new third Councillors in Hillside. I was somewhat the junior upstart member with new ideas and keenness to use social media but David kept me on the straight and narrow and taught me a lot of about being a good Councillor for which I am eternally grateful.

David's expertise in Local Government is well known and regarded which is why he received an MBE in 2019 at which point both David's had an award.

I think I have some way to go before I receive one as well. I do at times affectionately call David the oracle because of his deep knowledge of all things Local Government and even as he approached and went into retirement David received calls from other Councillors asking for advice knowledge or his recall of history; I'm sure that will continue if David doesn't mind.

Madam Mayor I am delighted to second this well deserved nomination David Williams to become a Freeman of the London Borough of Merton and an Honorary Alderman thank you very much.

The Mayor then called on Councillors Fairclough and Macauley to speak to the motion.

Councillor Fairclough:

Deputy Lieutenant Madam Mayor, before I speak about David Williams I just wanted to say that over recent weeks my group's thoughts have been with all the families affected by the tragedy in your ward Madam Mayor at Galpins Road, particularly with the families most affected. I've already said to Hannah and I think that she and we should be proud of her teams and how they came together and are still doing to support residents on the ground in such awful circumstances I'm sure we're all grateful for their services.

Turning to the matter in the citation, we've already heard from Councillors McLean and Councillor Holden in detail and I just wanted to add a few words of my own and on behalf of my group.

I think it's important to highlight that the legislation that powers local authorities to bestow the Freedom of the Borough the 1972 act explains that this honour should be given to those who have rendered eminent services to the Borough; on any understanding over 45 years service to the Borough falls within this definition and we should all be grateful to David for his work.

I would also like to highlight his manner; he is courteous respectful and although strident online, particularly on Twitter, someone who will always engage with fellow Councillors of all parties as individuals.

I enjoy speaking with David as we've done at Mayoral and Civic events and he is generous with his opinion and fair-minded, I can certainly understand why his colleagues were keen to support him as Leader of the Opposition and after winning the 2006 election why they were keen to support him as Leader.

He is also I think the only Councillor to use both points of order and an intervention by way of personal explanation within Council meetings and the same one even and he's probably one of the few councillors who understands that the

latter exists; certainly a level of procedural and constitutional wonkery that any Liberal Democrat would be proud of. Thank you Madam Mayor and thank you David.

Councillor Macauley:

Thank you Madam Mayor. Deputy Lieutenant, Madam Mayor, Councillors, officers, distinguished guests. I'm delighted to have arrived back in London safely this morning from the Tennis in New York in time for this very important meeting.

It gives me great pleasure to speak on the nomination for the Freedom of the Borough in respect of David Williams MBE JP. I am a joint member of the bench in Wimbledon Magistrates Court, now the southwestern Magistrates Court. David initially joined the bench in 1986 but came off in 1987 when he left the Council and went to Hong Kong for two years. He came back to the Council and the bench in Wimbledon in 1990 he was Deputy Chairman of the Wimbledon bench until it merged to the Southwestern Magistrates Court and also Deputy Chairman of the Youth bench for three years to 2020.

David also mentored more than a dozen new magistrates, in fact when I joined the bench in 1995 having known David before I was elected to Merton Council in 1998, we both attend the same church Saint Martins in Lower Morden; David was very helpful to me during my chairmanship training together with Jackie McCabe, Peter McCabe's wife they helped me with my training and I was delighted with all the help I got from David as we all know that Wimbledon bench are very strict with their court's procedures, the criteria was quite clear in that you have to have first-class knowledge of the criminal justice system. David has served the court for well over 30 years and even when he decided to retire last year he has now been called back to the bench as Chair for a further four years due to the great contribution which he has made to the court with outstanding and excellent knowledge of court procedures and loyalty to the bench. He has never claimed any expenses for his services to the court.

David has also been a school governor for various schools for nearly 50 years i.e prior to his first election as a Councillor. He became a Councillor in Cannon Hill ward in May 1974 to October 1987 and for Hillside ward from May 1990 to May 2022, some 45 years.

David has chaired several panels and several committees i.e allotments, Housing, improvement grants etc he was Deputy Mayor in 1982 and he served alongside Theresa May during her eight years on the Council 1986-1994. He was also involved in education matters initially Deputy Group Leader 1994 to 1999 and Group Leader from 1999 to 2010 and Leader of the Council from 2006 to 2010. He became the Mayor of the London Borough of Merton in 2012-13 which was the time of the Olympics and Diamond Jubilee and in later years he was involved in finance including Standards and General Purposes Committee.

David was awarded an MBE for political services to the Borough he received his MBE from her majesty on the 8th of June 2019 and his MBE was presented by his Royal Highness Prince William at Buckingham Palace which was well deserved for all his political services to the Borough and I think at the time when he was receiving his MBE, Prince William turned round and said to him my goodness me you spent over 40 years in the London Borough of Merton you are a hero. Both in politics and criminal justice system David has made substantial contributions to this Borough and awarding him with the Freedom of the Borough is highly and richly deserved for such a very hard-working and dedicated man thank you very much Madam Mayor.

The Mayor then called for a vote and the vote was carried, unanimously. David Williams MBE JP was invited to receive certificates conferring upon him the titles of Honorary Freeman of the Borough and Honorary Alderman affixed with the common seal of the Council.

The substantive resolution was agreed.

RESOLVED:

That, by virtue of the power vested in it by Section 249 of the Local Government Act 1972, the Council does admit David Tyrie Williams MBE JP as Freeman of the London Borough of Merton.

This honour is bestowed on David Tyrie Williams MBE JP in recognition of the exceptional contribution he made to the Borough as a Councillor in over 45 cumulative years of service since his first election to the Council in 1974, including serving as Leader of the Council from 2006 – 2010, the Mayor of Merton in 2012/13, Deputy Mayor 1981/82, Leader of the Opposition 1999-2006 and his extensive civic service.

David has held a number of posts and senior positions on the Council throughout his time as a Councillor and has chaired various Committees and Boards.

David has also served the Borough in many other ways, including having been a School Governor at various levels for over 50 years, a member of the Endeavour Youth Club Management Committee in Morden for 35 years and a member of Merton Deanery Synod for 16 years. David has also served as a magistrate in Merton since 1986 and in 2019 received an MBE for Political Service in Local Government.

RESOLVED:

That former Councillor David Williams MBE JP is conferred with the title of Honorary Alderman of the London Borough of Merton in recognition of his loyal and distinguished service to the Council over many years.

5 HONORARY ALDERMEN AND ALDERWOMEN (Agenda Item 5)

The Mayor asked for a proposer and a seconder for the motion to confer the title of Honorary Alderman on former Councillor David Dean.

Councillor McLean:

Thank you Madam Mayor. Former Councillor David Dean served on Merton Council for 16 years in the wards of Trinity and Dundonald. Members that have served with David during this time will attest that he is indeed a unique character. While David Williams was the embodiment of sound structure and authority, David Dean prescribed more to the view better to ask for forgiveness than permission; a quality for getting things done but a group leader's nightmare. Indeed, when I'd make one of my regular calls to conservative group Councillors I would invariably say to David what are you up to, bracing myself for the response.

But Madam Mayor David did get things done, Mr Daffodil himself, a Councillor who didn't just talk or jump on a bandwagon but delivered. Despite sometimes causing my blood pressure to rise, David was an important member of our group because he brought that all-important breadth of political argument from left to right. As a functioning political group this is the important ingredient to good debate.

Madam Mayor my Council colleague Councillor Holden will speak further to David's time on this Council however I'd like to finish by referencing his contributions to the debate in this chamber. I know he was not a particular favourite with other parties but he would have been horrified if he was, but I think deep down even non-conservative members might just miss David a little bit. I know we certainly will miss him a lot.

David, you like so many receiving this honour tonight have served the London Borough of Merton with a dedication that you can be very proud of and I wish you the very best. Madam Mayor is my very great privilege to move this motion for David Dean to be conferred with the title of Honorary Alderman.

Councillor Holden:

Thank you I'm honoured to second the nomination of my friend and former Councillor David Dean to the status of Honorary Alderman for the London Borough of Merton.

David served a total of 16 years on this Council, first in Trinity ward then in Dundonald ward. David is a somewhat unique individual character, extremely well liked and regarded by a lot of colleagues and residents, his plain speaking and dedication to getting things done despite the odds and then some he well and truly rubbed up the wrong way. I'm pleased to say I'm one of the former. David is a close friend and confidant we still regularly chat about Council and party matters.

In this place David had two main passions; town planning and the environment. Throughout my time here I served with David in committees where he displayed these passions, namely the Planning Applications Committee and the Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel. David defended residents from bad applications often going against the politically correct consensus to do so. This won him plaudits from the residents but did annoy some in the administration, who even once managed to throw him off the committee until I got him back on.

David's other passion the environment was ably demonstrated by single-handedly planting thousands of trees, tens of thousands of daffodils and being an early adopter of electric cars and electric vehicle charging long before it came to fashion.

David always offered good entertainment in this place, a unique individual with a good heart, he did his own thing and got things done. A true environmentalist and 16 years of dedicated service to the community, he is truly deserving as Honorary Alderman. Madam Mayor I second the nomination for David to be Honorary Alderman thank you.

The vote was carried, unanimously and David Dean was subsequently invited to accept a certificate conferring on them the title of Honorary Alderman duly affixed with the common seal of the Council and to address the meeting.

RESOLVED:

That former Councillor David Dean is conferred with the title of Honorary Alderman of the London Borough of Merton in recognition of his loyal and distinguished service to the Council over many years.

The Mayor asked for a proposer and a seconder for the motion to confer the title of Honorary Alderman on former Councillor John Dehaney.

Councillor McCabe:

Deputy Lieutenant, Madame Mayor, Colleagues and friends, it's an absolute pleasure to nominate John Dehaney, my friend, my colleague for the title of Honorary Alderman.

John was born in Kingston Jamaica and he worked in an accountancy office before coming to this country as a cashier and got an experience of accounting and he came to the UK in 1961, just after the Windrush generation; but I'm sure he would have experienced many of the experiences of that generation and when he arrived here he was straight to work in post office counters, where he worked in Tooting for many years and then he applied to become a VAT inspector and he did that job and served this country for 20 years, 222 days before retiring in 1995.

He joined the Labour party in 1990 and stood for the Council in 2002 representing Graveney ward, representing the ward in which he lived amongst the people who were his neighbours and he represented them with great distinction.

He served on the general purposes committee and for some unfathomable reason, certainly as far as I'm concerned, the Planning Committee for many years - glutton for punishment if you ask me. He also served on the scrutiny commission he served as the Deputy Mayor on two occasions which is very rare indeed - the first being in 2006 and seven where he was serving his apprenticeship to what happened the following year when he took on the role of Mayor in 2007-8 supported incredibly well by Audrey his wife.

When I think of John I'm reminded of a man who is, as he is this evening, impeccably turned out, always looking like a million dollars and he also brought to our proceedings a common sense approach, both to life and to politics.

John is and was incredibly hard working for the people that he represented and he took on the role, the thankless task I would say as a treasurer of the Labour group and when you think about it, having served for so many years as a VAT inspector he was superb extracting money from his colleagues, always with a smile on his face - you always felt really pleased to have parted with your money when John asked you and you know there was never any problem with collecting the subs from us here because you know you become fearful of VAT inspectors if you've had anything to do with them.

John and I share a number of things; we share our politics but we also share our faith and for me John lived his faith, he didn't just go along to mass on a Sunday and pray but he actually demonstrated his Christianity in the way that he set about his life and I think that may come from his time in primary school where he like me he was taught by some pretty fierce nuns who drummed into him the important messages in life.

Madame Mayor, John Dehaney is a thoroughly decent man, a great Councillor and a worthy recipient of the title Honorary Alderman, I move the motion.

Councillor Christie:

Thank you Madam Mayor, good to see you John. Unlike Councillor McCabe I've only known John for eight years but in those years John and I have become good friends so I'm delighted to second his nomination as an Honorary Alderman this evening.

John's 20 years of service to the people of Merton have seen him take on many roles from committee chairman to school governor, two stints as deputy mayor as Councillor McCabe said and as the 43rd Mayor of Merton in the year 2007 2008. That was the year I finished my A levels and so I wasn't fortunate enough to witness his fantastic fundraising efforts for his two charities Sickle Cell Thalassaemia and Deen City Farm but I can well imagine how John would make a fantastic Mayor.

He's the most dignified person I know, charming, friendly and always immaculately dressed, John never had an off day when representing the Borough, whether as Mayor or attending Council meetings or on Sunday morning canvassing sessions, walking up the path of some unsuspecting Graveney resident with his disarming 'good morning madam' he knows how to talk to people in a way that makes them want to engage.

Madam Mayor, just as Bill Clinton used to say of his wife that voters who elected him got a two-for-one deal, so it is the case with Audrey, John's wife and I want to take a moment to recognise her too. Ever-present at his side for community events, formal occasions and every single mayoral fundraiser, Audrey and John have both been fantastic servants and supporters of this Borough.

So Madam Mayor not every Councillor earns the title of Honorary Alderman when they retire, it's only conferred on those that the Local Government Act describes as persons of distinction who have rendered eminent services to the Council as a member.

Dignified, charming, always present, kind, honourable and with a distinguished record of service for the people of Merton I can think of none more deserving than former Councillor John Dehaney and I'm happy to second his nomination for the title of Honorary Alderman thank you.

The Mayor then invited Councillor Kirby to speak to the motion.

Councillor Kirby:

Thank you, I've known John and his lovely wife Audrey a long time before he became a Councillor and I think I might have even been involved in persuading him to become one which was a really special thing for him to do.

John is one of the loveliest colleagues that you could wish to work with and I think we've spent the time that he and I have been on the Council together having a lot of laughs together we do an enormous amount in the ward and he is very well liked by local residents.

He is the epitome of sartorial elegance, I think he's a bit worried about the moth invasion in his wonderful collection of suits. I think it's absolutely wonderful for him to be granted this and I totally support it, he's a lovely man.

The vote was carried, unanimously and John Dehaney was subsequently invited to accept a certificate conferring on them the title of Honorary Alderman duly affixed with the common seal of the Council and to address the meeting.

RESOLVED:

That former Councillor John Dehaney is conferred with the title of Honorary Alderman of the London Borough of Merton in recognition of his loyal and distinguished service to the Council over many years.'

The Mayor asked for a proposer and a seconder for the motion to confer the title of Honorary Alderman on former Councillor Nick Draper.

Councillor Cooper-Marbiah:

Thank you. Deputy Lieutenant, Madam Mayor, Councillors and guests I'm delighted to move this nomination for the title of Honorary Alderman to be awarded to my friend and former colleague Nick Draper. This is in recognition of his 24 years of service for the residents of this Borough.

Over those years he served as Councillor for three wards; Lower Morden, Colliers Wood and St Helier. His extensive service covered nearly every area of the Council including Cabinet member for community and culture from 2012 to 2019. Whilst on the Council he chaired various committees including the Licensing Committee and for five years Nick chaired Merton Council's life chances scrutiny panels. He also served as a member of many committees including Standards and General Purposes Committee, Planning Applications Committee, Appointments Committee, Borough Plan Advisory Committee and many many others.

Nick was a Governor of Cricket Green where he also served as Chair of Governors and I know that he served that School with great passion whenever he spoke about it. He also served as governor at St Thomas of Canterbury and the Smart Centre. In addition he represented Merton on various outside bodies including the Mitcham Common Conservators and the Wandle Valley Trust.

One of Nick's proudest moments was when he became Mayor of Merton in 2009 raising 47,000 pounds for his chosen charities and undertaking 391 official engagements. Anyone who knows Nick will know him for his enthusiasm, fun and good humour. This came through during his Mayoral year when he became the first Mayor of Merton to perform on the guitar to serenade his wife at his Mayoral reception.

On a personal note Nick is hugely responsible for me being a Councillor and I thank him for that.

Deputy Lieutenant, Madam Mayor, Councillors, Nick worked many years with distinction for Merton, it therefore gives me great pleasure to propose this nomination for Council to confer the title of Honorary Alderman upon him thank you.

Councillor Attawar:

Thank you. Madam Mayor it gives me great pleasure to second the nomination of my friend and former ward colleague Nick Draper to be Alderman of the Borough of Merton.

I remember the night in 1994 when Nick found himself accidentally elected Councillor for Lower Morden; he was so worried about breaking the news to his wife Sheila that Siobhain McDonagh had to accompany him to break the news to her for him. That said, there was no one more proud of Nick and the work he did for the community and on the Council than Sheila.

In 2002 he became the Councillor for Colliers Wood and I joined him in 2010 when Sheila Knight stepped down. Whatever your view of Nick you could not fault him for his commitment, dedication and enthusiasm on the Council. He was very political and never missed an opportunity to score political points if he could. As a ward colleague he was a great team player and always supportive of his ward colleagues.

In typical Nick fashion he threw himself heart and soul into every challenge thrown at us, whether it was the dawn raid to sort out the anti-social business, the regeneration of Colliers Wood Town Centre after the riots in 2011, or simply helping a resident build a brick wall which needed rebuilding, the residents all knew he was always there for them no matter how small or big their problem. As Cabinet Member for Community and Leisure he could be found in the library singing to the children at rhyme time every Monday morning which the children loved. Amongst his many achievements while Cabinet Member for Community and Leisure was seeing the brand new library for Colliers Wood and the new Leisure Centre in Morden built.

Madam Mayor I second Nick Draper's nomination for Alderman of the Borough of Merton.

The vote was carried, unanimously and Nick Draper was subsequently invited to accept a certificate conferring on them the title of Honorary Alderman duly affixed with the common seal of the Council and to address the meeting.

RESOLVED;

That former Councillor Nick Draper is conferred with the title of Honorary Alderman of the London Borough of Merton in recognition of his loyal and distinguished service to the Council over many years.'

The Mayor asked for a proposer and a seconder for the motion to confer the title of Honorary Alderman on former Councillor James Holmes.

Councillor McLean:

Thank you Madam Mayor. Former Councillor James Holmes served on this Council for 16 years. At the tender age of 21, James represented the Hillside ward from 1994

until 1998 and then most recently the trinity ward from 2010 to 2022. James is a former Deputy Leader of the Conservative group, has served in a number of shadow cabinets and has his passion being education and children services where he excelled on scrutiny panels.

His work as a Governor at Melrose College has been tireless and something he can be very proud of. James was a very successful Chair of the Wimbledon Community Forum, a champion of greater local resident involvement. A very effective politician, James practiced a nonpartisan style of politics; for the new members to the Council who did not have the privilege to witness his debating style, I can tell you it was quite something - his calm ability to sum up a debate and deliver a winning argument was quite artful, he used his polite demeanour to devastating effect.

Madam Mayor, James was a very important member of the conservative group representing the breadth of political opinion I mentioned earlier, although on a different wing to David Dean. Over the last four years I've got to know him a lot more, a man with a very funny and dry sense of humour, someone whose opinion I value. For a politician James does not crave the limelight, indeed it was always very difficult to have his photo taken - not something that happens with politicians in Trinity Ward often.

James you like so many receiving this honour tonight have served the London Borough of Merton with a dedication and humility that you can be very proud of. Your contributions to debates in this chamber will be greatly missed.

Madam Mayor it is my honour to move the motion for James Holmes to be conferred with the title of Honorary Alderman.

Councillor Holden:

I'm honoured to second the nomination for my friend and former Councillor for Hillside ward James Holmes for the status of Honorary Alderman for the London Borough of Merton.

James served a total of 16 years on this Council across two non-continuous periods, first in Hillside ward and then in Trinity ward from 2010 until its dissolution this year. I've known James since about 2011 when I first became more involved in the local scene and I thought what a jolly good chap he is. James often used to like to tell stories to us new and young councillors back in 2014, the only problem being it was sometimes hard to know if it was true or a witty joke. James was always very cheeky and witty like that.

Never knowingly angry or losing his cool James got on well with everyone, he was well liked and regarded within our party and across the chamber and with the officers. James's particular passions in this place were children and policymaking. James served on the children's and young people's scrutiny panel, coordinated school governorships across the Borough and spent much energy to develop an education and skills for young people across the Borough.

James also loved serving on scrutiny task groups and doing good work in the cross-party fashion in these forums. He was dedicated to improving the lives of residents in the Borough. Though we had different backgrounds and on different wings of the party, James was a very good friend to me. He even once got a parking ticket whilst taking me for dinner at the Ivy in the village and refused any money for it so that became a very expensive birthday dinner and I'm very grateful to him for paying for it.

I will miss James very much in this place and as a group we'll miss him very much, Madam Mayor I second the nomination for James to be Honorary Alderman.

The vote was carried, unanimously and James Holmes was subsequently invited to accept a certificate conferring on them the title of Honorary Alderman duly affixed with the common seal of the Council and to address the meeting.

RESOLVED:

That former Councillor James Holmes is conferred with the title of Honorary Alderman of the London Borough of Merton in recognition of his loyal and distinguished service to the Council over many years.'

The Mayor asked for a proposer and a seconder for the motion to confer the title of Honorary Alderman on former Councillor Russell Makin.

Councillor Whelton:

Thank you Madam Mayor it's an absolute great honour to move that Russell Makin is made Honorary Alderman of London Borough of Merton.

I've known Russell for over 25 years and he was also before I became a Councillor in Pollards Hill served four years in that ward and I have to say his knowledge, his expertise but also his understanding of the area was a great help when I was elected in 2002 in what was not an easy ward, it certainly stood me in good stead for the subsequent 20 years I've served the people of Pollards Hill.

When I first came on Merton Council in 2002 my first position was Chair of the Street Management Panel and Russell was the then cabinet member for transport. I have to say it was an absolute eye-opener dealing with some very fraught cpzs in the Borough some difficult traffic management schemes but also having to deal with a myriad of different issues - street management is never an easy task to undertake but Russell as the then Cabinet Member performed it admirably and he was a great support to myself in that position which obviously stood me in good stead many years later when I was the actual Cabinet Member for street management.

We also got to know each other quite well traveling on the train to London each morning and talking about his hobbies and the things he likes to do, but also talking

about the Council, giving me the knowledge and breadth of his experience. I also recognise his role in terms of education, his position as chair of governors at Haslemere School and one of the most memorable engagements I had when I was the Mayor of Merton many many years ago was attending an engagement and actually having to open an all-weather park which included jumping up and down which certainly caused a few interesting photographs at the time, but I know as well how dedicated he was to that position, to the service of that school but also to his ward of Cricket Green which he served for 20 years after he had four years as a Pollards Hill Councillor.

He's a colleague who will certainly be sorely missed by many of us, I certainly enjoyed his dry sense of humour and his wit but he's been a supportive colleague through some very difficult times so I'd like to say thank you Russell and thank you for all your service of the Council but also to everyone else here tonight who are receiving Honorary Alderman and Honorary Freeman we owe you all a great debt of gratitude for your service to Merton Council, thank you Madam Mayor.

Councillor Akyigyina:

Deputy Lieutenant, Madam Mayor, Councillors and distinguished guests. What can I say about Russell? Russell is a very complex man with a great heart, he's one of the nicest people you can meet and when you get to know him you know he's a really good guy, he'll help you any way he can.

When I became a Councillor at first he was very good in giving me information and supporting me in what I need, sometimes people think that he's a bit grumpy but he's not, as I said he's a really good guy even I remember when he was on transport we would discuss things about transport when you were governor I would actually go in there to do some visits and speak to the mums that were there and you would actually support me. The head was there we would have a good conversation about what was going and how the children were doing he was very very very very very supportive of the school and also about the children and also the committees that he'd been on. I think I'll leave it here before my voice goes for the next person but

Russell is a great guy and I think you deserve what you're getting and it's my honour to actually support you getting this Alderman status thank you very much.

The vote was carried, unanimously and Russell Makin was subsequently invited to accept a certificate conferring on them the title of Honorary Alderman duly affixed with the common seal of the Council and to address the meeting.

RESOLVED:

That former Councillor Russell Makin is conferred with the title of Honorary Alderman of the London Borough of Merton in recognition of his loyal and distinguished service to the Council over many years.

The Mayor asked for a proposer and a seconder for the motion to confer the title of Honorary Alderwoman on former Councillor Oonagh Moulton.

Councillor McLean:

Thank you Madam Mayor. Former Councillor Oonagh Moulton served on Merton Council for 20 years representing the Wimbledon Park Ward with immense dedication.

During her time on Merton Council, Oonagh was the Mayor of Merton, Leader of the opposition and Conservative group leader. Education and children's services was always a long-standing priority and Oonagh held roles in both cabinet and shadow cabinet. In recent years health and well-being became a focus, serving on the health and well-being board and the Covid vaccination task group. As a strong community champion Oonagh was also a governor of Merton schools for nearly 20 years, firstly at Bishop Gilpin serving on the board for 10 years, the management board of the smart centre before becoming a governor at Ricards Lodge and later at Wimbledon Park Primary School. For Oonagh being the Mayor of Merton was a huge privilege of her time on the Council she found it an extraordinary year, particularly meeting so many wonderful unsung heroes and supporting communities in the voluntary sector across the Borough whilst also raising some healthy funds for Macmillan Merton and the Wimbledon Civic Theatre Trust.

Madam Mayor after six years as conservative group leader Oonagh retired in 2019 and I had the privilege of succeeding her and on a personal note I would like to thank her for the support and positive guidance she continued to demonstrate. Her character, professionalism and likability will be missed by the conservative group and this Council and I wish her the very best, Madam Mayor it is my great privilege and honour to move this motion for Oonagh Moulton to be conferred the honorary title of Alderwoman.

Councillor Holden:

Madam Mayor thank you it is my privilege and honour to second the nomination of my friend and former Councillor Oonagh Moulton to the status of Honorary Alderwoman of the London Borough of Merton.

Oonagh had served 20 years on this Council being a founding councillor for the current Wimbledon Park ward in 2002 following the recent boundary changes that ended the old Durnsford ward. One of those Councillors from the then Durnsford ward was one Theresa May. Like Theresa, Oonagh was a determined disciplined hard-working public servant who offered our conservative group a strong and stable leadership for six years. Oonagh was well regarded both within our conservative group and across the chamber and with officers. Oonagh has also been the Mayor of Merton and it was at her Mayoral Charity ball in 2011 when I met her for the first time.

Oonagh was very kind and helpful to me as a young Council candidate back in 2014 and made sure new councillors received support mentoring and other opportunities to develop, including arranging for me to attend several LGA training courses. Oonagh always led from the front and was at all events and campaign sessions and was consistently top of my infamous campaign spreadsheet even outdoing me. Oonagh inspired others to be involved in all aspects of the Council role and it's a creed that I have tried to follow since. This often involved travelling to events like conferences around the country and I was always in tow often the bag carrier, photographer and in effect Oonagh's aide-de-camp.

I very much admire Oonagh and I think it's fitting to bestow her the status of Honorary Alderwoman, Madam Mayor I second the nomination for Oonagh thank you.

The vote was carried, unanimously and Oonagh Moulton was subsequently invited to accept a certificate conferring on them the title of Honorary Alderwoman duly affixed with the common seal of the Council and to address the meeting.

RESOLVED:

That former Councillor Oonagh Moulton is conferred with the title of Honorary Alderwoman of the London Borough of Merton in recognition of her loyal and distinguished service to the Council over many years.

The Mayor asked for a proposer and a seconder for the motion to confer the title of Honorary Alderman on former Councillor David Simpson CBE.

Councillor McLean:

Thank you Madam Mayor. Former Councillor David Simpson CBE served on this Council for 20 years representing the Hillside ward. A former cabinet member between 2006 and 2010 where he held the post of cabinet member for the environment, David was also a member of the shadow cabinet most recently shadow cabinet member for Safer Merton. His work on the Licensing Committee, locations board and with the police was very much valued. Once again my colleague Councillor Holden will speak further to David's service to the London Borough of Merton, however I'd like to reflect further on his contribution to the Conservative group in particular as group whip.

As many in this Chamber will recognise, the role of group whip is essential to a strong and functioning political grouping and David carried out this role with a balanced blend of support, persuasion and the odd sprinkling of menace. Often a man of few words but when he spoke you certainly listened, crikey you listened. A man who would deliver the unvarnished truth- valuable advice to a group leader and it is in that spirit that I wish to thank him for his guidance to the previous Conservative group leaders past and present; former Councillors Debbie Shears who indeed is with us tonight, Oonagh Moulton and myself.

David, you like so many receiving this honour tonight have served the London Borough of Merton with distinction. I wish you the very best in your retirement and it is my very great privilege to move this motion for David Simpson CBE to be confirmed with the title of Honorary Alderman.

Councillor Holden:

Thank you Madam Mayor I'm honoured to second the nomination of my friend and former Hillside colleague David Simpson to the status of Honorary Alderman of the London Borough of Merton.

David served a total of 20 years in this Council in Hillside ward replacing one Chris Grayling MP. He served continuously alongside David Williams who had already served 12 years prior to David joining. I first met David Simpson at the Hillside Conservatives Christmas party in 2010 with a bit of a theme going on there, where I just joined the local party in Wimbledon. A few years later I would join David and David in this place as the third Hillside Councillor where we had a good eight years together serving the residents of Hillside.

David's main talent was his ability to get things fixed quietly behind the scenes such as his hard work on the licensing committee, the locations board and with the local police. David never sought any limelight for this which is very rare for us councillors. David also used his skills in our conservative group where he was group whip for many years. For a few years I was his understudy, an apprentice to his being master if you will.

David knew everything and always had advice ready for the group leader for the party and even the MPs. David got things done, smoothed out problems and made sure the ship kept on sailing. Even though David has retired we know we can go to him for wise counsel, my nickname David as the master of dark arts as a result of his talent and skill for getting things done.

I will miss David from Hillside he was an able ward colleague whom I learned a lot from. I wish him well in retirement, Madam Mayor I second the nomination for David Simpson to be Honorary Alderman.

The vote was carried, unanimously and David Simpson CBE was subsequently invited to accept a certificate conferring on them the title of Honorary Alderman duly affixed with the common seal of the Council and to address the meeting.

RESOLVED:

That former Councillor David Simpson CBE is conferred with the title of Honorary Alderman of the London Borough of Merton in recognition of his loyal and distinguished service to the Council over many years.

The Mayor asked for a proposer and a seconder for the motion to confer the title of Honorary Alderman on former Councillor Peter Southgate.

Councillor Foley:

Thank you. Deputy Lieutenant, Madam Mayor, fellow Councillors in the chamber, officers and distinguished guests, I'm very pleased and proud to nominate my friend and former Councillor Peter Southgate as Honorary Alderman for the London Borough of Merton.

Peter was first elected in 2002 as some of you know and were also elected in that year as we've heard tonight. He has dedicated 20 years to serving the residents of Merton Park as an independent Councillor, during that time he served as the group leader of the Merton Park Independents and at a time when the Merton Park Independents played a part in the balance of power.

He also served on the Planning Applications Committee, he distinguished himself as the Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Commission for 16 years. Peter was also Deputy Mayor and a school governor at Merton Park primary school. I was very fortunate and privileged to have served with him for eight of these years and as a new Councillor his knowledge and experience has proved invaluable.

Just before I finish I'd also like to give a mention to the dedication of his loyal wife Pauline, who's with him tonight. I think one always forgets, it's been mentioned tonight by some other Councillors but Pauline has done a sterling job. As I got to know both of them over these times and was very privileged to be at their golden wedding anniversary and I think Pauline needs a mention tonight as well, but Peter's service to the London Borough of Merton over this period deserves to be recognised. Madam Mayor I nominate him for this title of Honorary Alderman for the London Borough of Merton thank you.

Councillor Alambritis:

They say you can tell a person's character by their favourite film. Actually they also say, you can tell a person's age by their favourite film! So here goes!

More than half a century ago in 1971 a film was shot in the North East in parts of Newcastle, Gateshead, Hartlepool and Blythe.

And this is Peter's favourite film called 'Get Carter'

Here are some of the critical reviews

It is an acclaimed 1970's British thriller starring Michael Caine as a hardened gangster returning to his hometown in search of the truth behind his brother's death

The film is also said to be tough, grimey and gritty

Carter is said to be menacing and brutal but retains his coolness

So how can this be our former councillor's favourite film?

Is Peter really a hardened gangster? A hardened scrutiny chair more like!

Is Peter grimey? Certainly not. Tough on the executive and gritty in questioning yes!

Is Peter menacing and brutal. No but coolness personified? Yes!

They also say you know a person better by their middle name

Peter's is William

We all have read the books of that name by Richmal Crompton and some of those titles are interesting

There is 'William the Showman'. Not our Peter, always modest.

There is 'William the Dictator'. Not Peter, ever the democrat.

Then there is 'Just Willam'. Peter working on his own? No, always the team player.

My favourite William book is titled 'William Does His Bit'.

To former councillor and scrutiny champion in Merton, Peter William Southgate, you have certainly done your bit for our residents and I am very happy to second this motion.

The vote was carried, unanimously and Peter Southgate was subsequently invited to accept a certificate conferring on them the title of Honorary Alderman duly affixed with the common seal of the Council and to address the meeting.

RESOLVED:

That former Councillor Peter Southgate is conferred with the title of Honorary Alderman of the London Borough of Merton in recognition of his loyal and distinguished service to the Council over many years.

The Mayor asked for a proposer and a seconder for the motion to confer the title of Honorary Alderwoman on former Councillor Geraldine Stanford.

Councillor Linda Kirby:

Thank you I would have to say first of all that Geraldine is a very close friend of mine so I'm very happy to move this motion. Geraldine in her time on the council which was from 1990 to 2022 has been an excellent Councillor and in that time she was Chair of Finance, Cabinet member for corporate resources, Cabinet member for education and she was Mayor of Merton too and as well as sitting on numerous other committees and she has been very very active in her own ward.

She has been an excellent ward Councillor keeping in regular contact with her local residents and taking up their concerns. She was involved with me in setting up North East Mitcham Community Centre back in 1982, in setting up the Colour House Children's Charity and also in setting up the North Mitcham park friends group, as well as every year running along with me Graveney and Figges in bloom. Geraldine is also very interested in history and is on the board of Merton Priory Trust and

produced the lower and upper Mitcham heritage maps that were accessible on Merton's website.

She organised the annual mayor of Merton's entry to the London new year's day parade making costumes and raising over 54,000 pounds for Mayoral charities plus jointly organising the Mitcham Carnival for many years. Her commitment to the Council has been absolutely phenomenal and I think she thoroughly deserves to be an Honorary Alderwoman.

Councillor Mike Brunt:

Thank you Madame Mayor, Deputy Lieutenant, Madam Mayor, fellow Councillors, distinguished guests I stand as someone who was elected with Geraldine Stanford in 1990 for the first time; I'll mention a few names Slim Flegg, Dave Proctor, Tony Colman, Nathan Lee, Keith Harris, Gerard Harkin, Fred Flatt, Maria Dingwall, Andy Vail, Mazhar-Ul Khan, Chris Watson. There were 13 of us elected for the Labour party in 1990 and there's been one that's been ever present ever since then and that's Geraldine Stanford.

It's been an honour to be a Councillor with Geraldine, she's phenomenal when it comes to casework her knowledge of the area and that's a sad loss, although I'm sure it's not a complete loss because she will be nudging her Councillors with any casework that comes her way in future.

She's been a friend through that time. I stood as I mentioned in 1990 with Geraldine we were fresh on the Council just took control, some of us didn't know what we were doing really at the time because we hadn't expected to be there. If I hadn't beaten a certain Christopher Grayling in Dundonald ward then we wouldn't have had control so it's been an honour to serve with Geraldine. She's been group secretary of the Labour group for over 25 years, she was ever present on the Planning Committee and what she didn't know about planning and the dedication she put to that throughout that time isn't worth knowing.

I lost in 2002 at the electorate's decision by six votes which is not grating with me but I do remember it and I lost in 2006 and decided that was it. I happened to be on holiday in Hong Kong in 2016 in March and I had a phone call in the middle of the night and it was from Geraldine, saying to me we've got a by-election in Figges Marsh would you consider standing and it was great to be invited to do that and I stood alongside Agatha and Geraldine in 2018 to be re-elected, but what Geraldine taught me through that time as well is the importance of being local and that motivated my decision to move to Abbey ward where I live now and I'm proud to represent, but Geraldine is at the heart of what it is to represent local people with dedication and in a quiet unassuming way and I'm delighted to second the proposal that she be made an Honorary Alderwoman of the Borough of Merton.

The Mayor then invited Councillor Judge to speak to the motion.

Councillor Judge:

Thank you Madam Mayor, Deputy Lord Lieutenant and colleagues. In 1995 when I was first selected as a candidate for Figges Marsh, Geraldine took me on a tour to show me every site of interest in the ward and enabled me to benefit from her detailed knowledge. In fact throughout her time on the Council she remained first and foremost a ward Councillor, committed untiring but also as Councillor Brunt has mentioned, very modest about her achievements.

She was always heavily involved in casework and served as a ward organiser through many elections. Now in those days with our colleague and friend Danny Connellan, Figges Marsh Councillors led the Council, we were a very happy ward team.

Geraldine as you've heard held the education brief and she was able to contribute much from her personal experience of teaching at a time of great change for our schools when they moved from three to two tiers and she was a sensible and well-informed presence in the cabinet.

Personally I owe Geraldine a great deal for being such a good friend over many years and I thank you Geraldine for your 32 years of unstinting public service and comradeship, thank you.

The vote was carried, unanimously and Geraldine Stanford was subsequently invited to accept a certificate conferring on them the title of Honorary Alderwoman duly affixed with the common seal of the Council and to address the meeting.

RESOLVED:

That former Councillor Geraldine Stanford is conferred with the title of Honorary Alderwoman of the London Borough of Merton in recognition of her loyal and distinguished service to the Council over many years.