

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

13 SEPTEMBER 2023

(7.01 pm - 8.16 pm)

PRESENT

(in the Chair), Councillor Gill Manly,
Councillor Martin Whelton
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 Joan Henry, Councillor Daniel Holden,
Councillor Andrew Howard, Councillor Sally Kenny, Linda Kirby,
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 Helena Dollimore, Councillor James Williscroft,
Councillor Sheri-Ann Bhim, Councillor John Braithwaite,
Councillor Michael Butcher, Councillor Caroline Charles,
Councillor Eleanor Cox, Councillor Klaar Dresselaers,
Councillor Chessie Flack, Councillor Kirsten Galea,
Councillor Ross Garrod, Councillor Jil Hall,
Councillor Billy Hayes, Councillor Susie Hicks,
Councillor Dan Johnston, Councillor Andrew Judge,
Councillor Usaama Kaweesa, Councillor Samantha MacArthur,
Councillor Stephen Mercer, Councillor Stuart Neaverson,
Councillor John Oliver, Councillor Robert Page,
Councillor Michael Paterson, Councillor Tony Reiss,
Councillor Slawek Szczepanski, Councillor Matthew Willis,
Councillor Max Austin and Councillor Victoria Wilson

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (Agenda Item 1)

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Irons and Pearce.

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 Alambritis to move and Councillor Stringer to second the motion.

Councillor Alambritis

Madam Mayor,

Ivor Heller played a fundamental role in the resurrection of AFC Wimbledon but also in the return to the club's home at Plough Lane.

Furthermore, as a community figure Ivor developed the Club's commercial and hospitality revenues through extensive relationship building in Merton over the past 20 years.

What others say about Ivor

Kris Stewart said "Everyone at Wimbledon owes Ivor a debt of gratitude. His passion kept alive the dream of getting back home to Merton.

Mick Buckley added: "Ivor is integral to the AFC Wimbledon story in so many ways. He has led from the front, combining relentless drive with his ability to tell our story and engage with Merton's residents.

For my part I have had the pleasure of knowing Ivor for several years through many meetings. I could see first-hand the passion and dedication he has for the Club and the leading role he played in its reformation and his yearning to be in Merton.

That passion and drive has helped provide the Club with vital commercial revenues throughout the years and has nurtured relationships with a large number of Merton's businesses and Merton's stakeholders.

It has been the greatest honour of my 10 year leadership of Merton Council to have worked with Ivor and this amazing football club.

Ivor was focussed on one venue alone and that was to be back at Plough Lane and that came through loud and clear to me, to Cllrs Judge and Whelton and to our dedicated officers.

Another former leader who had a hand in making sure AFC Wimbledon are where they are today is Tony Colman

Tony was PPS to Mo Mowlam then Northern Ireland Secretary of State in the late 1990's during talks on the Good Friday agreement

Tony argued on the sidelines of those discussions to make sure Wimbledon FC did not get uprooted to either Belfast or Dublin. He won that case!

Years later, I had many meetings with Ivor and Erik Samuelson. Some starting first thing in the morning, not a pretty sight either of us!!!

Others took place last thing in the day after 6pm with Crown House empty of our superb staff and me and Ivor rattling in the building trying to get to grips with developers, financiers and architects...again not a pretty sight!!!!

Council leaders have many meetings, some better than others but meetings with Ivor were always for a purpose, for a decision, for a confirmation and all about getting the club back to Plough Lane.

The memories are many and mostly they are good ones.

The odd tremble between me and Ivor was when I tried to explain the Section 106 planning process to him!

But Ivor is not just about football.

Ivor has also been at the heart of community initiatives.

The Leyton Road Centre (formerly High Path) has been a massive part of his life and will continue to be so and it is a massive part of the council's caring approach.

St George's Hospital Charity is such an important part of the community here in Merton too- putting on the first gala dinner and successive ones and as the auctioneer he raised over £600,000!!

Ivor also supported encouraged and shouted about and volunteered on the most amazing foodbank in the country...The Dons Local Action Group...an award winning football charity helping people through the covid pandemic and beyond and to this day when we have a cost of living crisis

Madam Mayor, the Freedom of Merton recognition has been bestowed upon many worthy recipients for centuries.

I am so pleased to be speaking on this fantastic recognition for Ivor and for AFC Wimbledon where he joins past recipients like a certain Dickie Guy.

New name on the honours board Madam Mayor if you please and that name is for Mr Ivor Heller!

Councillor Stringer:

Thank you Madame Mayor, yes I am seconding, and it's a great honour to second. And this is an absolutely huge honour that we are bestowing on Ivor Heller and it couldn't be more richly deserved. Madame Mayor, years and years of hard work went into creating AFC Wimbledon and turning it into what it is now and Ivor was absolutely central to this as we've just heard. And even more hard work went into bringing the club physically back to SW19. With support from some of my colleagues on these benches, particularly former leader, Cllr Andrew Judge, former chair of the Planning, Cllr Linda Kirby, Martin Whelton and of course the passionate support of another former leader, Cllr Stephen Alambritis. Ivor's work has been transformative. Cllr Alambritis has talked about some of the footballing side, but as a local councillor for the ward that the Cherry Red Records Stadium sits in, I just wanted to thank Ivor for the benefits that it has brought to the wider community, it's put Plough Lane back on the map. The club has supported so many people through all of its charitable initiatives and most importantly it has created a wonderful community of people that love being a part of. It has been really brilliant seeing local families discover AFC Wimbledon and become avid fans since the return to Plough Lane and it's even more wonderful that the more longstanding fans who've seen it through thick and thin have been so welcoming of these new supporters. I'm also really touched by Ivor's commitment to adults with learning disabilities who use the Leyton Road Day Centre, the centre is just a stone's throw from my house and was refurbished a few years ago and is a lovely place providing activities for a range of adults with different needs and Ivor's commitment to supporting the work there is very much appreciated. Madame Mayor, what a great honour, but what a great man and I'm proud to second this proposal.

The Mayor then invited Councillors Hall and Kohler to speak to the motion.

Councillor Hall:

Thank You Madame Mayor. I am delighted to speak in favour of this. Ivor Heller is one of the co-founders of AFC Wimbledon as you have heard. As a life long supporter of Wimbledon Football Club, he was distraught, as most true fans were that their beloved club was due to be sold off and moved elsewhere. Dublin was one of the places considered, but in the end it turned out to be Milton Keynes. The day after

the FA made that fateful decision, allowing the club to be moved 50 miles away from its home, he and others got together to start a new Wimbledon Football Club from scratch and it would be a different club, a club run by fans for fans, and so AFC Wimbledon was born. Its offices were originally in Ivor's print business and trials took place on the Common's extension in May 2002. Hundreds of people turned up to try out, such was the passion for the new club. Ivor's dream, along with many others, was to return the club to Wimbledon and some said it couldn't be done. But here we are, in 2023, with that dream realised. Ivor's been the club's Commercial Director, he was responsible for helping the club raise money through sponsorship, through prudent running of bars, shops, tickets, season tickets. He has a passion for the club which is hard to match. He also places community at the centre of what the club does. There is much that could be said about the youth training, the charitable arm of the club, the Dons Local Action Group, there's just not the time to list all the things that he has done. Suffice to say, AFC Wimbledon is rooted in our community and is in many of our hearts. I personally am delighted my name is up there on the wall at the ground, he is held in very high regard from all who have worked with him. He worked so closely with Eric Samuelson, his right hand man from the early days at Kingsmeadow and now back at Plough Lane. Twenty years of effort and vision for a fantastic result and he is about to be made the life Vice President of the club at the end of this season. As a person he is hardworking, tenacious and full of integrity. He engages with people and is so proud of the club that he helped to form. He is someone that dared to dream and his saw his dream realised. He has achieved so much and to receive the Freedom of the Borough is so fitting for someone who has done so much for AFC and for Merton, come on you Dons!

Councillor Kohler:

Thank you Madame Mayor, I will be speaking briefly in respect of all five of tonight's worthy recipients. On behalf of my group I would like to congratulate all those recognised today, despite the modern tendency to deride it, public service both in the political and wider civic society is critical to our lives and our freedoms, our communities and our country, our wellbeing and our environment. I am consequently pleased tonight for a moment to reflect upon that before the pantomime of Full Council begins, ably refereed by you, Madame Mayor. Cllr Hall gave a fitting tribute to Ivor Heller, and I would only add that my political career notwithstanding and as a dyed in the wool Crystal Palace fan, I just wish my club would take a few lessons from him when it comes to remembering that supporters and not the moneymen are the beating heart of every club. Turning to the three politicians to be made Freeman, they were of course in office long before my, and in fact all my group's, time in this chamber. It is clear that they are an impressive triumvirate. The late Vincent Talbot was the first Leader of Merton Council. Harry Cowd was leader for an impressive 8 years, nearly as long as... the name escapes me! Both Vincent and Harry were

Conservatives and I must confess that it was not until today that I learned how long my fellow Tories reigned supreme in this borough, before that is the even longer period of Labour hegemony. May I venture the thought perhaps that the time has come for a third party to take on the mantle, and I look forward to the time when the Merton Park Independents are sitting on that side of the chamber. The third member of this impressive trio is Tony Colman, who I note has been a businessman, a councillor, an MP and an academic, that I can only add seems like a perfect combination. Finally, last but not least, I turn to the one Honorary Alderwoman of the night, Janice Howard, who I do of course know. A committed councillor for 12 years, a very successful and scrupulously fair mayor and someone who, despite our political differences, was always fun to gossip with, particularly when were together outside one of the polling stations in Wimbledon Park. I cannot think of anyone more deserving of this honour. May I finish by congratulating all those recognised this evening, along with their friends and families. Those of us now sitting in your seats will do our best to live up to your principles and learn from your examples. Thank you.

The Mayor then called for a vote and the vote was carried, unanimously. Ivor Heller was invited to receive a certificate conferring upon him the title of Honorary Freeman of the Borough 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 Ivor Heller as Freeman of the London Borough of Merton.

This honour is bestowed on Ivor Heller in recognition of the substantial contribution he made to the Borough including his work for AFC Wimbledon and his continuing work within the community.

4 FREEDOM OF THE BOROUGH (Agenda Item 4)

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

Councillor Judge:

Thank you Madam Mayor it's a pleasure to move this motion. Tony Colman was Leader of Merton Council from 1991 to 1997 before becoming MP for Putney. He'd originally stood in Durnsford against Theresa May before being elected in 1990 for

Lavender ward. He'd only been elected a year earlier but it was a measure of his quality that he became Leader of the Council so quickly.

He had been a director of the Burton group for more than twenty years and played a part in starting TopShop. As such, he brought business and managerial experience into the office. The Labour administration needed a new leader and Tony more than fitted the bill. It was soon apparent that he was completely on top of the business of the Council and demonstrated a sure touch and this was also the first administration Madam Mayor that operated in this Civic Centre.

The Council under his leadership carried through service improvements including being the first Council to introduce free nursery education. Learning disability services became state of the art and the capital headroom of the Council was prioritised for new housing. It was a time of considerable achievement and during his time the Council also had strong partnerships with the voluntary sector.

Tony was and is a strong environmentalist and attended the UN summit at Rio de Janeiro in 1992. An important appointment Tony made was Dame Heather Rabbatts, then our youngest Chief Executive who made a powerful impression and helped put Merton on the map. His next appointment was also a woman - Sue Charteris.

Tony started a monthly local Council newspaper – the Merton messenger to communicate with residents. Tony's deputies were Maria Louise DeVilliers and then Sheila Knight who was also chair of education. Siobhain McDonagh who is with us this evening, now the MP for Mitcham and Morden, was chair of housing. Linda Kirby was chair of social services, Mike Brunt chair of the environment, Paul Harper chair of leisure, Kingsley Abrams chair of finance and Joe Abrams equalities.

Tony instituted weekly 7.30am Leader's Strategy meetings to keep everyone on their toes, buoyed by compensatory bacon sandwiches. And not least of Tony's contributions were the efforts he made to influence, persuade and sometimes to cajole his Councillor colleagues. The Council then operated through a hierarchy of Committees, political management required a close knowledge of all reports but also the personalities and views of committee chairs. Budgets in particular were a difficult process with continuing cuts due to reductions in government funding. The Labour group had a culture of democratic decision making and the whole group was involved in budget votes, item by item. Tony would go out of his way to discuss details with committee chairs, Linda tells me he once visited her at the school where she was teaching in Wandsworth to discuss the impending social services budget. There is no doubt that Tony worked very hard as Leader. In a pre-digital age, legend has it that the postbox at the end of his road in Wimbledon village had to have an extra unit attached to accommodate his correspondence. He was assisted in all matters by his wife Juliet and they were a very sociable and hospitable couple. Tony was truly a professional leader who led significant achievements and gave Merton Council a profile it wouldn't otherwise have had. We honour Tony for his contribution to Merton.

Councillor McLean:

Thank you, Madam Mayor, and Deputy Lieutenant.

It is my pleasure to second Tony Colman as Freeman of the London Borough of Merton, recognising his six years as council leader as well his wider contribution to British politics, business and academia. This is honour is well deserved. Congratulations.

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

Councillor Brunt:

Much has been said about Tony already but as a fellow member of the class of 1990 having joined the Council with others who are no longer here, I'd just like to add to everything that has been said. I was 35 at the time and the Council seemed a very stuffy and stayed place, I think at that age most places do seem like that and Tony really transformed the place. He brought his business experience and he really expanded the service offer moving from what the Government wanted which was value for money to best value and best value was what we looked for in Merton to try and get the best value for our residents. There was one senior assistant director who was retiring towards the end of Tony's time and I remember him taking me aside and saying that under Tony's leadership and the appointments that he made, it was so refreshing that he turned from being a henchman to being a disciple and I think that's a real tribute from a Government officer to say that of a Council. The only blemish on Tony's career is that he became MP for Putney – some seek greatness others have greatness thrust upon them and I became Leader of the Council afterwards and had to deal with the owner of Wimbledon Football Club who tried to persuade us to build him a stadium and various other things but in the two years that I was Leader and that was at a time when Leaders of Councils were not paid, it was a voluntary occupation and you had to have a full time job outside, I don't know how he kept it up and I lasted two years I could not keep that pace up so it's a real tribute to Tony that he achieved so much and went on to achieve even more after leaving Merton, so I wholeheartedly support this resolution and thank you Tony.

The Mayor then called for a vote and the vote was carried, unanimously. Anthony Colman was invited to receive a certificate conferring upon him the title of Honorary Freeman of the Borough 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 Anthony Colman as Freeman of the London Borough of Merton.

This honour is bestowed on Anthony Colman in recognition of the substantial contribution he made to the Borough including serving as Leader of the Council from 1991-1997.

5 FREEDOM OF THE BOROUGH (Agenda Item 5)

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

Councillor McLean:

Madam Mayor, Deputy Lieutenant, I am delighted to propose Harry Cowd to be admitted as a Freeman of the London Borough of Merton.

Harry was a former Leader of this council serving from 1980-1988 and Deputy Mayor in 1982/83 and helped to welcome his Holiness Pope John Paul II to Merton.

Harry was first elected in May 1974 for West Barnes ward, where he has always lived. He was deputy Mayor in 1978/9 and served on the Education, General Purposes, Planning and Housing committees. He was later the Chair of Planning and also of Housing.

Harry helped to develop the conservation areas and the information plaques, as well as leaving his mark on Merton by promoting the development of Wimbledon Town Centre, Savacentre and M and S at Colliers Wood and regenerating Merton Abbey Mills. He worked closely with the MP for Mitcham on the rebuild of Phipps Bridge Estate and worked with the private sector to develop light industrial and retail estates to boost employment in Merton, and supported Cannizaro House and Wimbledon Theatre as they moved from council to commercial ownership, as well as moving the council to our current civic centre.

Harry was also a trustee and chair of the POLKA theatre and Merton Vision and was the chair of Merton and Sutton – later Merton and Wandsworth Health Authority for 17 years. Outside of the council Harry was Headteacher at Chesterton Junior and then later Chesterton Primary School for 30 years as well as being the Scout Leader for the 22nd Wimbledon Scout Group.

His colleagues and fellow councillors always spoke highly of Harry and his enduring qualities of hard work and kindness.

Madam Mayor and Deputy Lieutenant, I am delighted to propose Harry Cowd as freeman of the London Borough of Merton, in recognition of his years of service to the borough.

Councillor Garrod:

Thank you, Madam Mayor.

It is an honour to be able to second the motion to grant Freedom of the Borough to someone who has given so much to the place we all here call home.

Not only during his long stint as Leader of the Council – the second longest serving Leader in the history of the London borough of Merton - but as someone who has dedicated their life to helping make things better for people in our community.

Although not born in the borough – we'll forgive him for that fact - he was raised here in Merton. He went to school here, he was a scout here, and he was a Chorister here too. And he also served the good people of West Barnes, years before his time as a councillor in his duties as a paper a boy.

Harry joined Merton Council in 1974 representing the ward where he grew up. After serving on various committees, including education, general purposes, planning and housing he went on to become Leader from 1980 - 1988.

Now many people have remarked on how young I am to be leading the Council, but Harry was even younger than me when he started out. But his youth did not stop him from leaving a lasting impact in our borough.

He led the Council during the re-development of Wimbledon Town Centre, brought Council staff here into one building in the civic centre, kickstarted a wave of house building and refurbishing of council housing stock, helped keep Merton as the home of tennis, and was a fierce defender of the arts and culture in the borough. I know that Harry is especially proud of the twinning of Merton with Irving, Texas and that he is still in touch with a number of those involved at the time of when he was Leader.

An impressive political operator, Harry as Leader was formidable but thoughtful, tough but kind, and was driven by a clear vision for how he was going to lead Merton to achieve the best chances in life for the people who lived and worked here.

After being Leader of the Council, Harry gave his time to local causes and institutions – from the Polka Theatre to Merton Vision, and Charing the Merton, Sutton and Wandsworth Health Authority for 17 years where he also held onto local NHS lands standing up to government ministers to protect them for the future healthcare support for the people of Merton - some are still waiting to be redeveloped but that's another story!

A lifetime of service committed to Merton and this award is long overdue.

I want to if I can also congratulate Ivor Heller, Tony Colman, Janice Howard, and the family of Vincent Talbot for the recognition they are so deservedly receiving tonight and thank you for all you have done for Merton over the years.

It hasn't gone unnoticed that tonight the chamber is full of former leaders, not just those that we are celebrating at this meeting but the three that sit on these benches with me. I'm incredibly grateful to be able to turn to Cllrs Brunt, Judge and Alambritis, but also to be able to seek the sage guidance of leaders who stood for other parties than my own but are still generous in their advice and time.

Harry, congratulations and thank you for your unyielding commitment to this borough – the place where you grew up and led.

Madam Mayor, I second the motion.

The Mayor then called for a vote and the vote was carried, unanimously. Harry Cowd was invited to receive a certificate conferring upon him the title of Honorary Freeman of the Borough 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 Harry Cowd as Freeman of the London Borough of Merton.

This honour is bestowed on Harry Cowd in recognition of the substantial contribution he made to the Borough including serving as Leader from 1980-1988

6 FREEDOM OF THE BOROUGH (Agenda Item 6)

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

Councillor McLean:

Madam Mayor, Deputy Lieutenant, I am delighted to propose the late Vincent Talbot as Freeman of the London Borough of Merton.

Vincent was known by his nickname of 'Tolly'. He worked as a stockbroker and was born on 14th March 1916.

Tolly served twice as Leader of the council. He was the first ever Leader of Merton Council following the reorganisation of local government, first serving from 1965-71, he later returned to be Leader of the Council in 1974-75. He was the Mayor of Merton in 1981-82 before standing down at the 1982 elections.

Prior to 1965 Tolly was the Chairman of the Merton & Morden Urban District, this is listed on the board in the corridor beside the Council Chamber. He was always intrigued to wonder if, one day, someone would link the two mentions on the honour boards together. Perhaps this is an idea whose time has now come!

In addition to his service to Merton as a councillor Tolly served for many years on the Aldermanic Bench, until its abolition. He served as a JP in Wimbledon for many years before retiring to Sutton and then to the Sussex coast.

Madam Mayor and Deputy Lieutenant, I am delighted to propose the late Vincent Talbot as freeman of the London Borough of Merton, in recognition of his years of service to the borough.

Councillor Whelton:

Thank you Madam Mayor. I wish to second the nomination of Vincent Talbot. Vincent Talbot had a major part in the history of Merton. He was the first Leader of this Council in 1965. Like some subsequent Councils, it was a hung Council and he rested on the support of the residents to be the Leader. But nevertheless it was bringing three Councils together; Merton and Morden, Wimbledon and Mitcham and that was a time of great change. In that administration Merton was one of the first Councils to introduce comprehensive schools in 1968, something that I believe has significantly benefited this Borough in the past 55 years. He also started a major housebuilding programme a new Council enabled rebuilding of new homes in my ward Pollards Hill and also the Eastfields estate. He was also the first person to serve as Leader and subsequently became Mayor in 1981 to 1982, but after he stood down from the Council in 1982 he was Chair of the Mitcham Common Conservators. I am the current Chair of that body but I know we owe a huge debt of gratitude to Vincent Talbot for his contribution but also ensuring that body has stable finances from which we benefit to this day, so much so that back in 2011 a road in Pollards Hill was named after him on the meadows – Talbot Close. That is the honour of Vincent Talbot and his contribution to Mitcham.

I think in the history of Merton Vincent Talbot and Harry Cowd have two significant places to play given the Conservative dominance of the first 25 years of Merton Council, having us as a Labour party spending just three years of that in power from 1971-1974. They had a knack of winning elections, disappointing for us, but in terms of the Conservatives probably brought them huge benefits in terms of the number of years they governed this Council for, an incredible 22 out of the first 25 years. That success hasn't been replicated since but I think they did leave a legacy in the Borough and Harry Cowd as well as the Leader mentioned. I would also like to pay tribute to the work of Tony Colman. Tony Colman became Leader, this Council had been predominantly a Conservative dominated Council and through his legacy that this has been predominantly Labour since that time. Many difficult choices, many difficult decisions made but made a huge contribution and finally to Ivor Heller, what can I say Ivor about you and your contribution to this Borough?

I first got to know Ivor when I was the Mayor of Merton back in 2008/9; effervescent, lively and completely and utterly dedicated to AFC Wimbledon, rising up from what happened and that terrible decision in 2002 and AFC Wimbledon, if it hadn't been for people like Ivor, we wouldn't have a club in Wimbledon and it wouldn't be here today. It was also a great honour when I was Cabinet Member in my first stint for Culture, then subsequently for Regeneration to work with you in terms of delivery of that stadium, so congratulations to all the recipients today, I formally second, thank you Madam Mayor.

The Mayor then called for a vote and the vote was carried, unanimously. The family of Vincent Talbot were invited to receive a certificate conferring upon Mr Talbot the title of Honorary Freeman of the Borough 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 the late Vincent Talbot as Freeman of the London Borough of Merton.

This honour is bestowed on the late Vincent Talbot in recognition of the substantial contribution he made to the Borough as the first Council Leader of the then newly formed Borough of Merton.

Mr. Talbot was first elected in 1949 as a councillor for the then Merton and Morden Urban District Council, a position he held for 16 years. He then served as a councillor for the London Borough of Merton from 1964 to 1982 and was elected Mayor of Merton for the civic year 1981/1982.

When Merton was formed in 1965, Honorary Alderman Talbot held the influential position of the first Council Leader until 1971. Mr. Talbot returned to the role of Council Leader for a further year from 1974 to 1975. He was then made an Honorary Alderman for his long service to the Council in 1990.

7 HONORARY ALDERWOMAN (Agenda Item 7)

The Mayor invited Councillor Macauley to move and Councillor Foley to second the motion.

Councillor Macauley:

Thank you Madam Mayor. Deputy Lieutenant, Madam Mayor, distinguished guests, I am absolutely delighted to have the opportunity to propose the motion that former Councillor Janice Howard is conferred with the title of Honorary Alderwoman of the London Borough of Merton in recognition of her loyal, distinguished and exceptional service to the Council for many years.

Janice was first elected as a Wimbledon Park Councillor in May 2010 and was not re-elected in May 2022 after 12 years of active service as a Councillor. During her time as a Councillor in the Conservative group she was shadow spokesperson for environment, transport and parking as well as culture and leisure, health and wellbeing. She was also vice-chair of the General Purposes Committee and when it merged with Standards. She served on the Licensing Committee, Healthier Communities Older Persons Scrutiny Panel, Planning Committee and the now defunct Street Management advisory committee.

In May 2019 she was honoured to be elected as the first citizen of Merton and due to the pandemic she served until September 2020. She became the longest continuous serving Mayor of Merton. During her Mayoral year she raised £87,000 net, over £100,000 gross for her two charities Macmillan Merton Cancer Support and Faith in Action helping the homeless. She was able to give both of her two chosen charities

the sum of £40,000 each. In addition, she made smaller donations to Merton and Morden Guild and BAME Voice for their support during her Mayoral year. Janice had great support from the Aqua ladies of David Lloyd in Raynes Park and I am delighted to see them here tonight giving her support. After her Mayoral year she was part of the Mayoral fundraising Committee and the trust board helping the Mayors office with fundraising events and also collecting raffle prizes in support of the Mayors charities. In 2021 she was elected to the board of the London Mayors Association and still elected this year for another term. The organised events for all 32 London mayors, attending meetings, protocol training day for all new mayors in Westminster Council and also the London Mayors Civic Service in Westminster Abbey. Because of Janice's excellent skills in charity events, she is now the champion for organising the yearly Wimbledon Theatre event for the London Mayors Association which is very popular with the chain gangs. She is also a committee member of Macmillan Merton Cancer Support and also a school governor of St Mary's Primary School in Merton. Janice has given so much of her time to public duties with her outstanding skill and experience and therefore she deserves the honour of Honorary Alderwoman which I have no iota or scintilla of doubt whatsoever for her services for many years to the Borough. Our sincere thanks to Janice for all her work for the communities in Merton and I propose the motion, thank you very much Madam Mayor.

Councillor Foley:

Thank you Madam Mayor, Deputy Lieutenant. I have pleasure in seconding this motion and the speech I'd made actually repeats a lot of what Councillor Macauley has said. Janice was a Councillor for twelve years in Wimbledon Park, I had the pleasure of working with her for eight years sitting in this Chamber, not always agreeing with things that her party said as we will find out later tonight with various sides and being a true independent but it was in 2018 Janice approached me and asked if I would be her Deputy Mayor. It was a huge honour and in 2019 when she was elected as the first citizen of the Borough, I was Deputy Mayor – that's when you really get to know somebody – a former Councillor told me you really get to know a Borough when you become Mayor or Deputy Mayor which you will be finding out as you travel right across the Borough Madam Mayor, but I thought I knew Janice in the eight years I'd spent with her but that final year and a bit, we had a very busy year and it was a real pleasure working with Janice. She is one of these people with a can-do attitude, I didn't know her husband Andrew – Councillor Andrew Howard who's here at that time, yes I'd met him in the Chamber but I got to know him as well through her – there were a lot of late evenings when we'd be at functions together, she was working tirelessly for her two charities Macmillan Merton and Faith in Action. I also got to know her children Ben and Bella who are here tonight as well supporting her. It was such a shame whilst we heard the net and the gross amount, to do all of that pre-Covid and we never actually had the ball – I think that's always an unknown quantity what we could have actually smashed through but it was a real honour and I think so much has been said about her hard work Madam Mayor, Deputy Lieutenant I have pleasure seconding the motion for Janice to be Honorary Alderwoman London Borough of Merton.

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

Councillor Holden:

Thank you Madam Mayor.

On behalf of the Conservative Group I too am pleased that the former councillor and Mayor of Merton, Janice Howard, is to be bestowed the status of Honorary Alderman/woman of the London Borough of Merton.

I'm proud that we can make this honour to my friend and former council colleague. Janice Howard served in this place as the Wimbledon Park ward councillor from 2010 to 2022.

Most notably she served as Mayor of Merton from May 2019 until September 2020, making Janice's term in office the longest in a generation.

Janice served as Mayor with distinction, and it was unfortunate that COVID blighted the end of her mayoralty.

The main result being the cancellation of the mayor's charity ball, which was a shame, and I for one had been looking forward to it.

Her Deputy Mayor Cllr Ed Foley formed a good double act with Janice, and its nice to see that he is seconding the nomination.

Janice has an ability to get on with and work well cross-party, something which can be difficult for most of us in this place.

An example of this is her serving on the mayor's events committee and helping serve the mayoralty as a concept across the borough.

To that end I am grateful to Cllr Edith Macauley in the Labour Group for making the changes in the necessary committees to allow for us tonight to award the Honorary Alderman status.

Before retiring from work, Janice held a number of roles and jobs and was adept at event organisation. These talents she brought to her role as a councillor.

Organising successful events in our local Conservative Party, then her years of supporting events in the Mayor's events committee, and latterly since leaving this Council with the Macmillan Merton Cancer charity.

Helping to generate lots of money for the Mayor's charities and local charities.

Her hard-work and dedication also extended to serving in senior positions within our Conservative Group over the years, serving on a wide range of different council committees and in particular a focus on health.

At times her husband wondered why Janice was so busy, and so in 2018 the now Cllr Andrew Howard joined this place as member for Village, to find out.

Madam Mayor, I'm pleased tonight that we can award Janice Howard as Honorary Alderwoman for her years of dedicated service to this borough.

The motion was put to the vote and passed unanimously. Janice Howard was invited to receive a certificate conferring on her the title of Honorary Alderwoman duly affixed with the common seal of the Council.

RESOLVED:

That former Councillor Janice Howard 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.