

Appendix C

Councillor Ross Garrod, Leader of the Council

Thank you, Madam Mayor.

I am delighted to be leading this Chamber's vote of thanks to Councillor Joan Henry, who has served this borough with dedication, dignity, and decorum as our first citizen and Mayor over the last twelve months.

Councillor Henry came to London originally from St Thomas in Jamaica, and Merton has been her home, and the home of her three children, for more than three decades now.

And in that time, Councillor Henry has prided herself on working hard for the community that she is a part of.

Her background in nursing, working for organisations such as Marie Curie, more than 15 years as a special constable with the local police and victims support, and almost eight years as an elected councillor has embedded her in the local community as someone people can rely on, and who will look out for those most in need of support.

With all that experience, this was the perfect year for Councillor Henry to take on the role as Mayor of Merton. And what a year it has been.

Not many Mayor's have had to lead the Borough in times of such national celebration, but also sorrow. First marking the late Queen's Diamond Jubilee, and then leading Merton in mourning at the news of her sad passing in September. And since then, working hard with our dedicated team of staff and councillors, as well as our partners in the community to pull together the fantastic Coronation celebrations for His Majesty King Charles just a couple of weeks ago.

With these events, it's a wonder how you managed to do anything else – but you did!

Councillor Henry has helped to raise over £50,000 for her chosen charities – Dons Local Action Group, who do incredible work to support local people with food, technology and other essential items, and the Jimmy Asher Foundation, whose

tireless work supports young people and their parents from disadvantaged backgrounds.

In all of this work, Councillor Henry has been supported by the local community, her family, her consort Floyd Blake, her attendant Carl Brown, her Deputy Mayor Councillor Agatha Akyigyina OBE, and her Mayoral Committee – who have helped the Mayor to attend nearly 500 engagements over the year.

Thank you very much, Councillor Henry, for all your work on behalf of the people of Merton. Your year in office will certainly be one marked in the history books.

Councillor Anthony Fairclough, Leader of the Liberal Democrat Group

Thank you Madame Mayor, Deputy Lieutenant,

And I too am delighted to be seconding this motion of thanks to the outgoing Mayor, Cllr Henry, and her Deputy Cllr Akyigyina, your consorts and team.

But first I will welcome you to your role Madame Mayor – long may we find ‘Common Ground’

And to Cllr Whelton, as your deputy too.

Madame Mayor, Cllr Henry and Cllr Akyigyina – Joan and Agatha – have really thrown themselves into their mayoral year.

What a fantastic amount raised for the Dons Local Action Group and the Jimmy Asher foundation - well done!

These are two local charities committed to improving people’s life chances – Cllr Henry – as I said when welcoming you to the role last year, your commitment to your residents and ward shines through. I know that the Jimmy Asher Foundation in particular, is very active in Pollards Hill.

With over 500 engagements - I wanted to touch on some of your fantastic Mayoral events, such as your ball and Christmas party.

My group I think excelled at some of the more competitive events you put on – making up both teams in the final of the bowls competition ... and not to mention the safe pair of hands that is Cllr Kohler, goal keeper extraordinaire, at your Cllrs vs officers football match.

Cllr Henry you said at the last full Council meeting, he’s the ‘talk of the town’ – indeed, and not just because he’s all over the leaflets we put out every month!

Although I will make a special mention of Cllr Neaverson and his commitment to “total football” (for any Ted Lasso fans out there) – he was all over the pitch – in a good way.

But the real stars were actually the kids who joined our teams to help us make up the numbers and were pretty much the best players on the pitch.

It's also been an incredibly busy civic and ceremonial year, with the passing of the late Queen and the recent coronation.

You both handled some very demanding events with grace.

Cllr Henry, I hope you're proud of your time as Mayor, you deserve to be.

Councillor Daniel Holden, Deputy Leader Conservative Group

On behalf of the Conservative Group, I too thank the outgoing Madame Mayor Cllr Joan Henry, for her year as 1st Citizen of the London Borough of Merton.

Back in May 2022, many here did not expect this past year to become so ***varied and tumultuous***. It has been some year.

Cllr Henry's year as Mayor has seen the Platinum Jubilee of Her Late Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, and then very sadly the Queen's State Funeral.

At the end of the Mayoral year we had the coronation of His Majesty King Charles III, which was a joyous uplifting spectacle. These Royal events resulted in many local events across Merton, which kept Cllr Henry very busy indeed. I hope she enjoyed the various jubilee and coronation street parties.

Cllr Henry as Mayor visited locations throughout the borough, and depending where, bumped into different councillors from across this place. Always bright and bubbly and keen to know more about the people and events she visited.

The mayoral charity ball last month was a particularly good highlight of the year, and well supported by the Labour Group and the Conservative Group. It was a fun evening.

My thanks to the outgoing Mayor, Cllr Joan Henry. We wish you the best for the future, and hope you thoroughly enjoyed your time as Mayor.

Councillor Edward Foley, Leader of the Merton Park Ward Independent Residents Group

Thank you Madam Mayor. It is an honour and a privilege to be here tonight to express my gratitude and appreciation to our outgoing Mayor of Merton, Cllr Joan Henry. Cllr Henry has served our borough with dedication, passion and integrity for the past year. She has been a champion of community engagement, social justice and environmental sustainability. She has also been a generous and supportive patron of many local charities and causes in Merton, including her two chosen charities, The Jimmy Asher Foundation and The Dons Local Action Group.

I am proud to have been asked by Cllr Henry to join her charities events committee team and to organise a successful bowls evening last August. It was a wonderful opportunity to showcase the talent and diversity of our councillors, as well as to raise funds and awareness for her two chosen charities. I would like to thank Merton Bowls Club for allowing us the use of their facilities.

Cllr Henry, you have been an inspiration and a role model to many others in Merton. You have made a lasting impact on our borough and on our lives. On behalf of everyone here, I would like to thank you for your time, your service and your leadership. Thank you.

Councillor Susie Hicks

Thank you Madam Mayor

This has been quite a year for our first Citizen and her deputy, and I would like to thank them both.

I can't believe it has been a year from those early drinks and nibbles in Civic House (those were the days, I was warned it would not happen often!

Since then Madam Mayor and Madam Deputy Mayor have been everywhere, always friendly and positive, even when carrying a candle in the dark and cold, making speeches (on occasion outside, also in the cold, I can vouch), presiding over meeting after meeting, attending event after event, charming everyone from Ambassadors to football playing children, always with great style.

Madam Mayor has been First Citizen through a momentous year, with the death of Queen Elizabeth and the Coronation of King Charles. She has presided over difficult situations- an angry Piers Corbyn, some fractious exchanges in the chamber, and always in magnificent regalia. Looking at the weighty insignia Madam Mayor has to wear, Penny Mordaunt should be looking to her laurels.

Madam Mayor has also devoted huge time and energy to fundraising for her chosen charities.

And I see she has been thanking Parking Enforcement Officers for their hard work and strong work ethic.

I think we should be saying the same to Madam Mayor and Madam Deputy Mayor.

Thank you for all your very hard work, it is greatly appreciated and you have been tremendous 😊

Councillor John Oliver

Thank you Madam Mayor. When I first came here after being elected in May 2022 I was a bit surprised at what a hostile environment it could at times be, however during your time as Mayor I have felt none of that from you. You always made me feel welcome and valued. My personal highlight was the concert at the Harris Academy when I think all of us present were very moved by the amazing performances by the children and young people and by your emotional speech which stressed your belief that we should as a community be doing all we can to help and support our young people. I think the people of Pollards Hill are lucky to have you as a Councillor and we have been blessed to have had you as a Mayor for the last year.

Councillor Joan Henry, responding to the vote of thanks

Ladies and gentlemen, Deputy Lieutenant, our new Chaplain, my Madam Deputy Mayor, my consort, my two charities I could not have done what I've done without the support that I have behind me, all across the parties. Every single one of you spoke to me.

I came from Jamaica forty three years ago, I had no idea that I would ever become the first citizen of the Borough of Merton. But one person, Councillor Brenda Fraser, you are the person who gave me the opportunity to be standing here today. I hadn't written a speech but having listened to colleagues on this side you made me feel powerful, thank you.

Councillor you always made me feel welcome and so do my other councillors on this side.

In 2010, I was on Figges Marsh doing my police work and I met Councillor Fraser. Having a conversation I said to her I'm going to take early retirement and she said what are you going to do, because I made a pledge and when I make a pledge I carry it through. I made a pledge that I was going to retire at 60, mind you I'm still 60. I said to her I'm coming up to 60 and I've signed all the documents but the Government says I have to reach 67 to get my pension she said what are you going to do and I said I don't know really. She said I've been watching what you've been doing and we need somebody like you. I asked what she did and she said she was a Councillor and invited me to come canvassing.

I went with her a few times and she said I was doing well and could go on my own so I did and she told me to speak to our MP Siobhain McDonagh so this is why I'm here.

When I gave my first speech I said you were the pillar I could lay my head on and I still believe that. Thank you all for your support, my family, I think my Dad may be watching if he's setup his Youtube, he's 95 and I can't wait to go and see him.

Thanks to my Deputy Mayor, we have worked together very closely and my two charities I cannot tell you how much they support me, because even when sometimes I go home and feel a little bit down I can always pick up the phone and give one of them a ring.

I really know they are here for me because I can feel it, so I want to say thank you all.