

MINUTES OF EXTRAORDINARY MEETING OF FULL COUNCIL HELD ON Thursday, 8th October, 2015, at 19.00hrs

PRESENT:

Councillors: Charles Wright, Eugene Ayisi, Patrick Berryman, Barbara Blake, Mark Blake, Clive Carter, Pippa Connor, Natan Doron, Sarah Elliott, Tim Gallagher, Kirsten Hearn, Peray Ahmet, Adam Jogee, Jennifer Mann (Mayor), Liz McShane, Liz Morris, Peter Morton, Felicia Opoku, Ali Gul Ozbek, James Patterson, Raj Sahota, Elin Weston, Gina Adamou, Charles Adje, Kaushika Amin, Dhiren Basu, David Beacham, John Bevan, Gideon Bull, Joanna Christophides, Ali Demirci, Gail Engert, Joe Goldberg, Eddie Griffith, Claire Kober, Toni Mallett, Martin Newton, Sheila Peacock, Lorna Reith, Reg Rice, Anne Stennett, Alan Strickland, Bernice Vanier, Ann Waters, Jason Arthur, Stephen Mann and Peter Mitchell

111. FILMING AT MEETINGS

The Mayor referred to the details as shown on the summons in relation to filming at meetings.

NOTED

112. TO RECEIVE APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Clare Bull, Carroll, Diakides, Ejiolor, Gunes, Hare, Ibrahim, Ryan, and Ross, and for lateness from Councillors Akwasi, M Blake, and Opoku.

NOTED

113. TO ASK THE MAYOR TO CONSIDER THE ADMISSION OF ANY LATE ITEMS OF BUSINESS IN ACCORDANCE WITH SECTION 100B OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

There were no items of urgent business.

NOTED

114. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interests.

NOTED

115. TO RECEIVE THE REPORT OF THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE

The Chief Executive advised that his report before the meeting for consideration sought approval of Full Council to changes to political group composition, and resultant changes to appointments to Committees for 2015/16, and outside bodies.

The Chief Whip **MOVED** that the recommendations in the report be agreed, and it was:

RESOLVED

- i. That the changes to Political Group composition, and political group officers as detailed in paragraphs 4.3 of the report be noted, and as follows:
 - a. that following a By-Election on 17 September 2015, Councillor Stephen Mann was elected to represent Noel Park Ward, and Councillor Peter Mitchell was elected to represent Woodside Ward. Councillors Stephen Mann and Peter Mitchell are members of the Labour Group.
- ii. That the additional changes to Labour Group memberships of committees and outside bodies be agreed as follows and as also detailed in Appendix 1 attached the report:
 - Councillor Peter Mitchell to fill the vacancy on the Regulatory Committee.
 - Councillor Stephen Mann to fill the outside body vacancy on the Alexandra Park and Palace Statutory Advisory Committee
 - Councillor Stephen Mann to be appointed to the Council, Collage Arts (outside body)

116. MEMORIAL TO THE LATE COUNCILLOR GEORGE MEEHAN

The Mayor announced that, following the sudden death of George Meehan on the 16th July, Full Council had been convened this evening in memory of George. She welcomed George's family, his wife Mary, his children Michael and Martin and his daughter in law Debbie to the meeting and announced that Michael would say a few words shortly.

The Mayor also welcomed to the meeting Tony Hartney CBE, headteacher of Gladesmore Community School, all councillors past and present and Sean Fox from Unison.

The Mayor said that she would also like to say a few words. She said that when she joined the Labour Party and went along to Hornsey and Wood Green meetings, George Meehan was a huge presence in the party as an activist, a campaigner and so full of knowledge and understanding of how the party worked, procedures, rules etc. Years later, when she was selected alongside Elin Weston and Adam Jogee as candidate for Hornsey Ward they were fortunate to have George as their mentor.

George proved to be, as you would imagine, an excellent guide as to how and what to do as a candidate and a campaigner – how to do it, how to speak to people, approach voters and so on. He was so experienced, and they were very fortunate candidates. The Mayor said that many speakers tonight would relate anecdotes and stories of their longer and deeper knowledge and friendship with George, and his tremendous achievements and the huge amount of work for the borough and for the people of Haringey so she would finish by saying that she always found George to be a tower of strength and knowledge, whom she was very fortunate to have known.

Michael Meehan addressed the meeting and, on behalf of his family, thanked the Council for arranging this special Council meeting in honour of his dad and he was sure that he would have been very pleased that so many of his colleagues both past and present were present. He said that just after his father died, he and his wife Debbie went to Haringey's 50th anniversary party at Bruce Castle Park and the event reminded him just how much of this borough's history his dad had been a part of. He first became a councillor in 1970 and remained one for all but four of the next 45 years. The Council was a huge part of both his and the family's lives and this building was a home from home for him. He loved being a local councillor, and for him politics was a way of making ordinary people's lives better. He had strong and unwavering political beliefs, and was a Labour party man through and through, however he had friends across the political spectrum, and always saw the person before the politician. Like many of his generation in Ireland, he left school at 14 and came to England to work, first laying roads, then as a bus conductor, before learning his trade as a carpenter. It was a tremendous achievement for someone from such a humble background to become the leader of a borough of 200,000 people. His upbringing shaped his beliefs. He was a force of nature, who believed in hard work and aspiration, but also in the power of communities to help each other improve their lives, especially of those most in need. Through the Labour party and this Council, he was able to put those beliefs in practice. He was hugely ambitious for Haringey, and passionate about the Council doing well. He also recognised that with leadership comes great responsibility and accepted the accountability that comes with this, and never shied away from making difficult decisions. Because his day job was in Camden Council's housing department, he knew what it was like to be a council officer and what could and couldn't be achieved.

Mr Meehan thought that this had helped him tremendously as a councillor and that, although he may have given some officers a hard time, he would sing the praises of all those who had done well. He loved getting things done for the people of this borough and especially all the small things that made people's lives better. No matter what role he held, he always recognised that it was the voters who mattered and because of that he never lost an election. Mr Meehan said that they missed Dad, but as a family they were tremendously proud of what he accomplished and that they remembered the wonderful man that he was.

Tony Hartney addressed the meeting and expressed his great honour to have been asked to speak about this great man, the great man that he knew as George Meehan. Mr Hartney advised that he said that because of the way he touched him personally in terms of inspiration, and that the work he did was something everyone should admire and truly respect. Mr Hartney recalled that he first started at Gladesmore as headteacher in September 1999 and, to illustrate the kind of power and influence this

great man had on him, he advised that at that time he used to regularly have visitors to the school under different guises, some suggesting they were going to advise, some to challenge, some to inspect. It didn't really matter, everybody blurred into one. They all effectively came along and told him the school was terrible, the children were hooligans and the school might close. Officers came along and told him 'Did you know only 15 families put Gladesmore in the top 6 choices? I don't think the school will survive'. He said that, when you're starting a new job with optimism, these things hurt. He had another one telling him that the big problem was the governors, he needed to start with the governors as they were not cohesive. He said that he had noticed on one occasion, in his first meeting, one of the governors had picked up a whole tray of Fox's biscuits and threw it across the table at another and he could tell there were issues there. The person in charge of behaviour came along and said 'You've got the highest number of exclusions on record in this school, attendance is the lowest in London. Did you know that your Deputy Head had been assaulted by one of the students?' Mr Hartney said that the fact that he'd got a broken arm and had been beaten to the ground with a metal bar, he had noticed. And so it went on like this. Even the Ofsted inspector that had inspected the school a couple of years ago said she remembered the school, it was the worst school she'd ever been in.

Mr Hartney said that then the great man came along, visited, and they went around as with all of the other visitors. He explained to him that he thought the children were fantastic, and all they needed was guidance and support and they would do really well. George Meehan was a man known for straight talking, not taking prisoners, and he said to Mr Hartney 'I believe it'. He said 'the school will get better, it will improve, I'm confident of that. Even in this visit it seems better than the last time I came'. Mr Hartney said that he could not explain how powerful that was to him. George Meehan was the only one that could see that the children had got the potential and would do better. The only one. And, coming from such an eminent person, the leader of the Council, it inspired him. Mr Hartney said that George Meehan said it as he felt it, if he'd have felt it differently, he would have said. A couple of years later he came back, did the tour and was full of praise. Again, that gave a lift.

Mr Hartney said that those were the kind of golden moments you remember in a career when all is against you, you notice those special moments and that is why he described George Meehan as the great man. For him, he was an inspiration. Across the many thousands of young people in Haringey, George Meehan made a difference - he led improvements, he inspired improvements, he demanded improvements and everyone must congratulate him and so much must go down to his credit, the fact that he led all of that. Mr Hartney said that he felt very honoured to be able to speak tonight and that he wanted him to be remembered as a very, very special human being.

Sean Fox addressed the meeting and said that was unusual for him to speak in this chamber in a restrained way, and that councillors in this room may be familiar with that. He gave his thoughts to George's family. Mr Fox advised that he knew George Meehan for 20 years, and knew him before he started working for Haringey, as a local resident and as a Labour Party activist but that he also knew George as a Unison member. George was a trade unionist all of his life, he was proud of his background in trade unions and that was an invaluable thing. Mr Fox thought that George had influenced everyone in the room, he had shaped everyone in this borough, and that as

his son had said, he almost spanned the lifespan of Haringey as a councillor, and he made a difference to many people in this room. Mr Fox said that George Meehan had made a difference to the workforce and had made a difference to the trade unions as well, and that's what he wanted to speak about. He always found George a man he could speak to. Mr Fox said that one of the things that most of his members would say to him was: 'We all know George, when we see him walking down the street we recognise him and he says good morning to us, or good afternoon. Sometimes he shouts at us.' Mr Fox said that he too may have occasionally been the victim of such raised voices from George, but he took them in the spirit they were intended because he knew there was a deep belief and passion in Haringey, its workforce and its community.

Mr Fox felt that he was a man who didn't stand with ambition, he was a man who stood for the local community. He was the typical councillor that everyone knew and loved, the councillor who gave up his own time and energy and sacrificed the interests of his own family on occasion to support his local community as an elected member of this council. When he dealt with the trade unions, he dealt with them with respect, he listened to them, he responded and sometimes there were disagreements, you would expect that, but when there was disagreement, it was in a comradely spirit and with respect. Mr Fox said that some of the things that have benefited the workforce of Haringey were down to George Meehan, as he saw it. Even at the last Staffing and Remuneration Committee he had spoken at, George had made an intervention that made a real difference to young people in this borough because there was a report on bringing apprentices in, something that many hold dearly, and the unions were speaking at the meeting saying we need to pay apprentices the London Living Wage, and the position of officers at the time was 'we'll do that, but we'll wait a year'. The unions didn't want that, and then George, completely out of the blue, said 'Why don't we make it 6 months?', so in effect he too recognised that young people needed to be treated with respect, and he recognised that that early pay rise for young people starting out working in the council would make a real difference. That meeting was probably the last time he had seen Cllr Meehan, because unfortunately after that he became ill and wasn't able to attend meetings but that stuck in his mind as something where a little thing he did made a real difference to those people that were brought in as apprentices, and those people who would grow into the council's new workers and longstanding community. All of those people were local – the local community mattered to George, and it matters to everyone in this room.

Mr Fox said that he really just wanted to say thank you, and that he was really honoured to be able to speak about George, because he considered him a friend as well as a colleague, he was someone that he viewed as sharing his interests, and actually he was a bit like his dad. He said that his father was a first-generation Irish immigrant and that all of the things that Michael had said about George rang true to him because it sounded so much like his experience of his own family. He said thank you, and that everyone in the room should recognise the contribution that George gave to this borough, because he made this borough a better place and he would be sadly missed.

Cllr Waters said that she only knew George from when she was selected to stand in Woodside in 2009, so nothing nearly as long as many people here, but that she did get to know him well, she had worked with him closely from then, through Pat Egan's

death last year and until this summer. When she first realised she'd be working with George, she had found it rather daunting. She said that, as you can imagine, you'd hear stories. But when she got to know him, it wasn't bad, in fact it was great. In speaking about working with George as a ward councillor, Cllr Waters said that he always saw ward councillor as the important role, far more important than being a cabinet member or even leader. He was totally committed to getting to know residents and improving their lives, their environment, housing, health, education and employment prospects. This meant that the day after the election you were out there working again in the ward. It meant knocking on every door when out on voter ID, whatever the instructions from Middle Lane. It meant the local councillors doing most of this, rather than the troops from Haringey and across the whole of London, because it meant that way they got to know the residents and, to be honest, trust the results of their work. Woodside for many years had the highest contact rate of any ward in Hornsey and Wood Green. It also meant that whenever you were out doing voter ID with George you got a potted history of every family before you started up the front path, because he knew them, he'd helped them and he'd seen the family grow up. He really knew the ward.

Cllr Waters said that he was immensely encouraging, he was kind, he was thoughtful, he was interested in others and he would always provide her as a new councillor with sound advice and practical guidance, whether it was sorting out an individual resident's problem, or a more general ward matter. Even when he was very ill earlier this summer she remembered asking for advice on a particularly knotty problem. He of course knew the resident concerned and gave a nod and a smile as a pointer to the right direction to take. Of course when he was ill everybody missed him – Cllr Waters said that she never went to see him without having to remember who had told her that she must remember to give him their best wishes, whether it was a chief executive or a street sweeper. The residents stopped her in the street, they emailed, they texted her to make sure that she passed on their good wishes, and of course residents continue to miss him, and not only because the fly-tippers have taken advantage of the significant drop in reports of dumped rubbish. Cllr Waters said that working on the by-election in the autumn could of course at times be quite upsetting because residents took the chance to tell her their memories of George, and there were groups of residents who took the opportunity to tell her 'Cllr Meehan used to look after that for us', or individuals who commented 'Cllr Meehan used to drop in every couple of weeks and sort out any problems', and they had seemed remarkably numerous. Perhaps more concerning was the resident who told her that he didn't think he'd ever vote again as no one could live up to Cllr Meehan. She said that she had to agree, but added that actually she thought that Cllr Meehan would like him to vote again. And then there was the resident she had seen last week, who still had the ward tribute card on his mantelpiece, as it had a photograph of George.

Cllr Waters added that of course he was not just a great ward councillor, he was a great politician. He had great integrity. In politics, where as far as she could see everybody gossiped all the time, George never gossiped, he kept his own counsel. But he was a real political operator, he knew how to get things done and he knew how to enable others to feel that they'd got things done. He was in politics to make things happen and to make things change, not for its own sake and not for his. He set high standards for himself in everything that he did. He read all the Council papers and absorbed them and could comment on them and Cllr Waters said that there were,

without casting aspersions, very few people who could say that. She had learnt a lot from him, and had very happy memories of eating chocolate biscuits and drinking tea in his kitchen, Mary pressing chocolate biscuits on her. Woodside was high on his agenda, but not as high as his family, particularly his grandchildren. Cllr Waters said that when she first started being a councillor she discovered early on that some days were Olivia days and that nothing else would be done. The next day you would be told what they'd done together and his face lit up and you could see that was what he really enjoyed. He was then quite different from the councillor everyone knew in the chamber, shouting determinedly at everybody. Everyone had benefited from George's commitment to Haringey, and in Woodside all the residents had a lot to be grateful for and there was a great legacy to build on. But she said that we do miss George.

Cllr Engert said that, speaking on behalf of the Liberal Democrat Group, George Meehan's death was not only a loss to his family but also a loss to the council and to the borough as a whole. George was a very dedicated councillor for 40 years, he had served the local communities in Green Lanes, Coleraine, Tottenham Central and Woodside wards with aplomb. He was also an able deputy leader and leader of the council. Personally, she said that she would always remember the political lessons he taught her. She said that there was one occasion when she arrived at a cabinet member signing meeting to object to a proposal. She was one minute late and was promptly told by Cllr Meehan that the decision had already been made and that she should have been there on time. Cllr Engert said that she had been very careful to arrive on time for meetings ever since. But the occasion she most remembered was when she first attended an executive meeting, just after she had been elected as a councillor in a by-election in 2004. She said that she was there representing local parents who were complaining about a lack of primary school places. She said her piece, and then got a fearsome riposte from George. She was devastated, turned as red as the frock that she had on, but after the meeting she met George who smiled and said that had been my first lesson in being a real politician. She thanked George, for his teaching. Although he could be a fierce political opponent, Cllr Engert said that she always found George a gentleman outside of the combative atmosphere of political meetings.

Councillor Engert commented that, like his great friend Pat Egan, he understood that while they may have different political views, they were united in their desire to serve the people of this borough. He always bore that in mind, and respected anyone who dedicated themselves to public service. It was no secret that George had a firm belief in the power of education to improve people's lives. To quote the man himself, 'Education is one of the very important services that the council delivers, I believe we must make sure that it is delivered to the highest standard possible so that all Haringey's young people will achieve their full potential and provide them with the skills necessary for their future lives'. George played his part in helping local children to achieve their potential. Cllr Engert said that she remembered sitting through many Children's Committee meetings with George where he would always do his best to ensure the Council was doing its best to provide a good education for local children. Cllr Meehan was also a very active school governor, and was heavily involved in the project to build the new Heartlands Secondary School in Wood Green. Cllr Engert said that she could think of no better monument to George than the new school he worked so hard for. She said that she would remember Cllr George Meehan as a gentleman, as a principled man who was never afraid to speak his mind, as someone who was dedicated to public service and as a firm believer in the power of education. She said

that her thoughts were with his family and friends at this difficult time, particularly his wife Mary and his sons Michael and Martin.

Cllr Rice spoke and said that he had first met George Meehan in about 1989 when he was selected to stand for the Coleraine ward, along with the late Maureen Dewar. Although he had known of George because he was active in the Tottenham Labour Party and George Meehan was the leader of the Council during those years. George lost his place on the Council in the mid 80s because of the highly contentious political tension at the time, which was to do with setting the legal rate. Following the loss of his seat on the Council, George turned his attention to developing the structure of the Irish Centre and bringing forward much needed improvements for the Irish community in Haringey. During the 89-90 campaign, he seized the opportunity with great passion and vigour to get back onto the Council. In those days it was left to the three candidates; George roped in Mary Meehan, his wife, to take on the task of regaining the seat we had lost to the liberals in 86 and retaining the two seats that they were left with. They had won the election with a comfortable majority and proceeded to form a majority group on the Council. On entering the Council, Cllr Rice said that George had taken him under his arm and guided him in the process of being a local councillor.

He was very concerned about housing, and they used to have a housing surgery every week on a Saturday, for 2 and a half hours, three hours, sometimes. George had great ambitions for improving the housing in this area and he wanted to greatly improve the offer in this area in housing provision. He was passionately against right to buy, and Cllr Rice noted that he was not around at the moment to help fight the right to buy for housing association properties, which would have been a wonderful tribute to him if he got involved in that. He had a great passion for education – as his son Michael had said earlier, he did not have the benefit of a university education but was a carpenter by trade. Nevertheless he seized the poor quality of education that was for some time in the east of the borough and did a marvellous job of turning the thing around, with Tony Hartney and others. It was a fitting tribute at the end of his time in the Council that all secondary schools in the east of the borough had been rated good or better. Cllr Rice added that, on a personal note, in about 1999 when he lost both of my parents within two weeks of each other, George had been an absolute tower of strength, asking his parish priest to offer prayers for his family in such a difficult time and always treated him with great love and affection and he was grateful for that. George's vocation as a public servant in the role of the Council was tinged with sadness over the Baby P affair, and Cllr Rice felt that that if it weren't for what happened there, he would have received national honours. He said that the esteem in which George was actually held by the community at large, and the local government community in particular, manifested itself at his funeral. There were people from all walks of life, all distinctions in life, and some with none, who came to say farewell to their brother George.

George Meehan was a towering figure in local government, fearless as a lion and he defended and stood for what he believed in with great vigour and passion. At the end of most Council and group meetings, Cllr Rice said that he used to give George a lift home, and certainly he and others who lived in the east of the borough, along Lordship Lane, used to have a little competition as to who was going to take him home. The reason, not wanting to be unkind, was that you ended up having the meeting all over again in the car, when you wanted to get home. Cllr Rice said that he

took him home, the last occasion on which he attended a meeting in the Council, and that he kept very quiet along the way, hardly said a word, he couldn't understand what was going on. At the end of the journey he said to him in his usual affectionate way, 'Good night, young Reg'. Cllr Rice had said 'Goodnight George' and he left the car and walked quietly away into the night. May he rest in peace.

Cllr Mitchell spoke, and said that it was with very mixed emotions that he found himself making his first contribution to a Haringey Council meeting. He was delighted to have been elected and to have the opportunity to serve Woodside ward but was also deeply saddened at the circumstances of the by-election and the loss of a long serving and highly respected councillor, George Meehan. George was a towering figure in Haringey politics for an incredible period of time and an outstanding example of what public service is all about. He left a huge void not just in this Council chamber but throughout the local community and especially in Woodside ward, which he'd represented in recent years with much distinction. Cllr Mitchell said that canvassing in Woodside ward with George really brought home how he was admired and respected across the political spectrum and that knocking on doors with George was a real masterclass in how to campaign. His experience and his knowledge was missed hugely when he wasn't able to join the latter stages of the General Election campaign.

Cllr Mitchell said that he always knew that George was a hard working councillor, a diligent councillor, but that campaigning for the by-election really demonstrated just how many people George had helped over the years. There was one day when his sons came out canvassing with him - they hadn't known George but it wasn't long before they felt they knew an awful lot about him, they were hearing all these stories; 'George solved this problem for us', 'George solved that problem', about how George used to walk around the ward frequently, looking out for issues that needed his attention. After a while of this, his oldest son had said to him 'Are you sure you want to do this? It sounds like George did an awful lot.' Cllr Mitchell said that George did do an awful lot and was going to be a tough act to follow. He set high standards of public service for all of us to try to follow. Cllr Mitchell said that it had been a real privilege to have known George, to have worked with him locally and that it was a great honour now to try and follow in his footsteps in Woodside ward.

Cllr Basu spoke and said that he had known George for more than 25 years, though he had been councillor for just over 21 years. He said that people may ask how could he have known him so long - before that, he said he used to come as a labour activist, and that before he was a councillor he was the secretary of his ward. He had come as a journalist to make a report, and at that time the opposition was Tory, there were no Lib Dems at all – the way Cllr Meehan shouted, he had said to himself 'Who is this gentleman, is he the leader?' He wasn't leader at that time, he was deputy leader or chief whip, something like that. But to hear him talk, so forceful, like a bullet, at the opposition – he looked like a leader, to be honest, he behaved like a leader. Cllr Basu said he had once said to his former ward councillor Fred Knight 'Fred, people are talking about the leadership election, what do you think?' and he had said 'What? George is the heavyweight!' He used that word, heavyweight. As Cllr Rice had mentioned, after meetings there was a competition as to who would take him back home because he did not drive.

Cllr Basu said that often he took him, sometimes Lorna, sometimes Kaushika, sometimes Reg. To be honest, sometimes he was very, very, tough, but he was also so soft when he spoke about personal things, especially when he spoke about his granddaughter. He had said 'Dhiren, my granddaughter dictates to me', and Cllr Basu had said 'What? You are the leader - or is she the leader?' He said 'I don't know, Dhiren, but she dictates to me'. This showed how soft he was outside, although he could be very fierce. Cllr Basu said that he was a dynamic leader, he looked like a leader and he behaved like a leader. On a personal note, Cllr Basu said that he and Cllr Meehan had got on well. They had spoken about Cllr Basu's community newspaper which he had been running for 26 years, and Cllr Meehan was interested to know how it was going, how he managed, and had been concerned for him when he had heard that he was making a loss at his own personal expense. Then, when Cllr Basu was the Executive Member for organisational development and performance, Cllr Meehan had said 'Dhiren, the whole Council performance depends on you, do you know that? What are you doing about it?' Cllr Basu said that he had had to outline what he was doing, and explain that it was not an easy job.

Cllr Basu said that he had also been interviewed once by the BBC or ITV regarding the Baby P tragedy and that first he had got the call from Gideon Bull who had said 'Dhiren, I did not know you were so diplomatic'. The second call he had received was from George, who had said 'Dhiren, you were very good,' Cllr Basu had said 'You forget my profession, I work in this, I know how journalists work' and Cllr Meehan had said; 'You're boasting now'. Cllr Basu also added that he was once very annoyed, as the opposition at that time had written something in the local paper and he had said 'George, this is libellous, what is in the paper' and had said he was going to sue. Cllr Meehan had called him and said 'No, listen to me, if you stay quiet, after some time it will die down, if you go on it will carry on.' Cllr Basu remarked on what great advice this was, because he had been very angry and had lost his temper, and Cllr Meehan had said 'don't do that'. Cllr Basu said that even if he spoke all night he could not say everything. He would just say he was a great leader, he looked like a leader, he behaved like a leader, and that he may be gone but that people live through their good works and that Cllr Basu felt that Cllr Meehan was still living through his good works - he delivered 40 years within Haringey and the community, he was a great politician, great man and he had a great soul. The personal advice he had given him, he had followed. At the end Cllr Basu said that life is short, everybody has to go, we have to move on, not look back, try to do something good so that we will be remembered. Cllr Basu said that George will be remembered because he delivered.

Former Councillor Jean Brown spoke and said that when she was elected to the Council, Cllr Meehan was the deputy leader and fairly soon afterwards he took the leadership. It wasn't an easy time, but he led through these difficult times with such calmness and determination it was admirable. He led it to the point that it became, when she left in 2006, a very different Council, much more self-confident and was beginning to take leadership again in Council issues. As far as George himself is concerned, she said that she would remember him for a number of things. He worked tremendously hard, he got up every morning and went to work at 7pm and was always in the Council. He never missed a meeting. As other people said, he heard and understood so much of everything that was going on, he was always on top of the papers, and so on. He walked his wards and he represented 4 different wards and he walked them all, all the time, and he knew them. Above all, she said that she noticed

very early that he put his commitments and the people of Haringey, especially the young, first, and not himself.

Ms Brown recalled that George Meehan for a time took the Education Cabinet Member post instead of the Leadership, and that she was at that time the Chair of Education Scrutiny, but that he also knew that she had for a long time been Chair of the Vale School for children with disabilities. She said that he rang her up one day and said 'Jean, tell me about inclusion'. She said she took a deep breath, was a bit surprised because she was in the middle of doing something at home, but that fortunately she knew the answers, it took about 10-15 minutes and he was absolutely silent through it. When she had finished – she had told him about the scheme of inclusion they'd done, the principles that went through it, what underpinned the way in which they'd done it, and so on – he had said 'thank you, that's fine' and put the phone down. The next thing, a couple of weeks later, as Chair of Education Scrutiny she had received a request that they should look into inclusion. They agreed to do it, did a six month review and sent it into the executive about what should be done and what had happened? It was implemented. For that reason, of this borough's children with disabilities there isn't one that can't go to a mainstream school in an inclusion model. Ms Brown didn't think there is another authority in the country that could say that, and that it was down to George. That was the way that George operated, he didn't mince words, he just got on with it. It was all about those children, it wasn't about anything else really, and that's what she admired most about him. George was a politician through and through but what was special about him was that his ambition was all about the others and not for himself. He couldn't be replaced, but he could and should be a lesson for everyone on how to really serve your community. She said that he was a lesson for her, and that he was a great loss. She offered her condolences to George Meehan's family.

Cllr Amin paid her own personal tribute to George, who had been a very dear colleague and friend. She said that she would always remember George as a very decent and fair man and that she remembered the countless times she had rung him for advice on a whole range of matters. He always listened carefully and impartially, and his advice was always based on fairness and what was right to do. In the last few months she had really missed the benefit of his advice and counsel. He was absolutely committed to the Council and had very strong and passionate views about how to serve the community. Even now she could hear his voice saying 'Kaushika, we're here to serve Joe Public, not what you think or what you want'. He had an indelible impact on the Council, and his impact would be very much missed.

Former Cllr Alan Dobbie addressed the meeting and said that he was grateful to have the opportunity to join everyone tonight and to say a few of his own memories of George. He first got to know George in the early 1980s when he was then active in the Labour Young Socialists and George was in his first stint as Council Leader and that may have something to do with the reason why he always called him Young Alan. Mr Dobbie said that even into his mid to late 40s, he called him that. He said that everyone would have their own memories of the political George in the chamber, when he was opposing either the Conservative or Liberal Democrat opposition in debates, and the way he would be able to get all the Labour Group behind him with the emotion he would bring, but never with malice. If George ever held a political or personal grudge it was never open or evident. Mr Dobbie said that even in his

wayward last years as a councillor there was still his friendship towards him, and that indeed George was one of those people that, when he temporarily left labour, he felt that he had personally let down.

Mr Dobbie recalled that what he would always enjoy most was when, after labour Group or a Full Council meeting, George and himself would walk home together down Lordship Lane and have their private chats, whether about politics, sport or home life. Haringey Labour had been hit by some sad losses in the last year or so, Ron Blanchard, Jeannie Brown from White Hart Lane, Judy Bax, Pat Egan, Pat Tonge, Denise Marshall in Noel Park, and of course, George. He imagined that somewhere there was a special Labour Group meeting going on at that moment, debating what was happening today. He said that there are some things and moments that would never be replaced and George would never be replaced. Mr Dobbie thanked Mary, Michael and Martin and all the family, for sharing George with him, and for sharing George with Haringey.

Cllr Bull said that he first came onto the Council in December 2000. George had already been a councillor for about 25 years when he came on the Council with all these big ideas; he knew how to run the Council, he knew this, he knew that. It didn't take long for him to go on a collision course with George on a whole host of things. He said that when George was the leader he had certainly had plenty of collisions with him, but it was never personal, it was never malicious. He had had a brief stint in the Cabinet in the days when the Cabinet used to be elected – he suspected that if George was leader and picking his Cabinet then he would be the last person he'd have put in the Cabinet – but he had a year in the Cabinet and that was challenging, to say the least. It was an experience. He remembered coming to one Council meeting, and officers had thought it was a good idea to have a sign-language, someone from the BSL who could sign, and George was in full flow. You have never seen a pair of hands going as fast as this pair of hands, you wouldn't believe it. He said that he had never seen BSL again after that, they never came to another meeting, they never wanted to sign again. When he was in full flow, you couldn't stop George. He said that he had got much closer to George when he stopped being Leader and was just George Meehan the local councillor, and that he had learnt a lot from him.

Cllr Bull said that George Meehan had a passion for Woodside in the same way that he had a passion for White Hart Line. They used to sit together as Chair of Scrutiny and Chair of the old General Purposes, and then Corporate Committee and they'd chat about various things. He remembered going out campaigning with George for the General Election back in February and he had noticed that he wasn't on top form, he had a woolly hat on and he'd never seen him with a woolly hat on. But he was still out and about, and they sat on the front bench and he had thought 'I need to make George laugh, I need to get a laugh out of him', so he said 'George, do you remember Pat Arrowsmith?', and he said he did, so he said 'What you want to do is watch Jim Callaghan's acceptance speech in Cardiff South in 1979, and Pat Arrowsmith was heckling Callaghan all the way through, George, and when Callaghan got up to give his acceptance speech he said 'that's the first time I have ever done a duet as an acceptance speech and it's not a very tuneful one''. He had got a roar of laughter out of George, and that had made him feel really good. They were out campaigning in Woodside, and they got to this door, he had knocked on the door and this guy had

opened and he had said 'Lord, strewth, it's Joe Mangel' so George was going through the canvass sheet, looking for Joe Mangel, and the bloke had turned round and said 'No, it's Mark Little'. And he had thought, 'Does George not know who Joe Mangel is? Has he never watched neighbours, and does he genuinely not know who Joe Mangel is?', but he had a smile on his face. Cllr Bull said it was hard to come to Council meetings and not have George here - he had an opinion on everything and his opinion was insightful in both senses of the word. You couldn't help but love him, quite frankly, and he was going to be sorely missed. He said that he would like to pay his own condolences to his family, and to those who knew the battles he had with George - it was never personal, their commitment to the Labour Party was the same, their commitment to making Haringey better was the same, and he would like to say 'God bless you, George, you are going to be sorely missed'.

Cllr Goldberg noted that the meeting had heard what a giant personality George was, what an absolute giant of Haringey and what an absolute giant of local government. Reflecting on what other people had said, he added that George was leader for more than the years that he actually sat in the leader's chair in this Council – he had led as a committee chair, as a backbencher, as a politician, as a member of his family, as a human being. George summed up commensurate humble leadership and, as opinionated as he was, behind that veneer for people who knew him, he agonised over every decision he made, and that every time it went wrong, every failure we all make as politicians, really punished him more than many others. He said that too often in politics it was easy just to say yes, to make the easy speech, the easy argument, to shy away from difficult challenges, to not deal with the truth and reality of the situation and the responsibilities. That was not George Meehan and not the George Meehan that he was absolutely privileged to serve. He had said about Pat and would say it about George as well, that their likes would not be seen again. To give 40 years of your life and to serve in one borough and one authority was just an incredible commitment, not just to a people and a place that he passionately believed in, but to a purpose that he held absolutely true and dear. He did that, not with anger, not with passion all the time, though to be clear you wouldn't want to be caught between him and Alex Ferguson or to be on the wrong side of them at the same time, and he'd certainly give Alex a very good run for his money on the hairdryer treatment if he was managing Man United, but actually when it comes down to what drove him was a real understanding of fundamentally what the Labour Party was about. He did not believe in false hope, he did not believe in false promise.

Councillor Goldberg noted that Cllr Rice had talked about the Rates strike, and that he was only in short trousers at that time, and had only found out about George's role in the rates strike, which was something he had read about at university, about three or four years into his service and had mistakenly asked George about it and got a good one hour lecture about the history of the Haringey Labour Party. George wasn't a drinker, but if he did they'd have been there for another two hours talking about it. But what really came across to him about his role in that real moment in labour party, in local government history, was that he understood that Haringey had made its point and that then was the time to make the right decision for the people of Haringey and to set a legal budget. He had lost his leadership because of that decision and because of that integrity. It affected his career deeply and if that had not happened George would have gone on to much bigger and much better things, but he also would have lost his integrity and that would have hurt George more. From that moment on, when

he had found out about that, George became even more of a hero for him. Because in these times, he understood that the role of the labour party was not to offer people false promises, not to do gesture politics, not to take the easy way out, what he understood the labour party was about was making sure that working class people had a voice and were able to stand up on their own two feet. It's what drove him in his life very clearly, it's why Tony spoke about the role of education being so important and why time and time again in this chamber and in Group he had said never to underestimate the role we as politicians have and the decisions we make that have an effect on the real people that live in this borough, never to talk down the progress made because of the decisions we've made and lastly and not leastly, understand that the things that we do, we do to try and improve people's lives and make sure that they have a voice.

Cllr Goldberg had looked at what George said on his own entry – councillors all have to write something – he didn't know how much thought George had put into it, and he didn't know what his own said on Haringey's website currently, but George's said: 'I believe in quality public service and I feel it is really important that local people are involved in making the decisions that affect their everyday life'. There is no doubt that George was quality public service. The last thing he said was that it was all very well to be principled and to have those principles, but it was even more impressive to have the humanity behind that as well. He said that when he saw George, he didn't see angry George, he didn't see tub-thumping George, he saw smiling George. Having heard about young Alan, young Reg, he said that he was also young Joe, and then became Little Joe, to really take sarcasm to its full end. Nothing made George happier than spending time with his family – Olivia days became longer and much more enjoyable for him and it was what made George a very real character. George talked about his family all the time and Cllr Goldberg said to all his family that were present that they'd always been a part of the council because he'd always got to go home to Mary, got to go home to Olivia, got to go to Michael's, because they were always his priority in his personal life. He said it had been an absolute privilege to serve with George, his like would not be seen again.

Cllr Adje recalled that one of his abiding memories of George was his signature greeting – Hello Everybody - always said with a smile as he walked into a meeting room. This was typical of the man, always down to earth and inclusive, even when dealing with difficult, delicate political challenges. George was a shrewd and skilled politician, always willing to listen to both sides of a debate. People may think that George and he didn't get on, but actually they got on very well. They talked a lot about how Haringey had changed, how to ensure they served the people of the borough – a number of speakers have talked about that – so there was consistency in terms of the man, George. They agreed on many things, including how policy matters should be dealt with and how the ruling party sets out the policy framework for officers. George had a passion for the party and he walked the walk and talked the talk. Again, consistency. It shows that George is well known and respected by all. Cllr Adje said that some of his constituents in White Hart Lane came to him when their landlord threatened to move them and convert the property into self-contained rooms, from a four bedroom flat. He had asked the lady, 'How did you get into White Hart Lane?' She had said 'I was in Wood Green and Cllr George Meehan helped me and my four children'. The man, George, has helped a lot of people in this borough, has served a lot of people in this borough. It was his passion to serve the people and he was

consistent in terms of what he was doing, that was one of the reasons he became a politician - Sean Fox had talked about his social values and his trade union beliefs, which links in with that. He said that he also loved the way he tore into the opposition - that was a treat, when he started. He noted that a number of colleagues had talked about that, the leader of the opposition, obviously, appreciated that and she mentioned it. He said that George would be missed hugely and his memory and legacy would, without doubt, live on in Haringey for many years to come. He thanked George, and paid homage to his family as well.

Former Cllr Liz Santry said that when she first became a councillor in 2002 she was somewhat in awe of George. He had been a very strong, very purposeful figure – an exceptional leader, clear about what he wanted to achieve. He wanted to achieve a Council that provided the highest quality services to the people of Haringey. He had very high standards and expected the same of councillors and of officers and this enabled the council to raise its game. As she came to know George better, she appreciated what a kind and supportive person he was. She had worked most closely with him during that most difficult of times for Haringey when little Peter Connelly, Baby P, died. It went on for well over a year and was an incredibly difficult time and George felt it to be the hardest of times in his long years of service. During that time, George never lost sight of the tragedy of the child's death, it was always on his mind. He was constantly asking questions, and constantly urging officers, repeatedly, to admit to any failings or mistakes. When the publicity was at its most intense, George was very worried about the effect on his own family, but throughout all that time she had found him unfailingly supportive and she was truly grateful for the support he gave her during that time. She added that in recent years, George and she were governors at Conel.

Ms Santry commented that as had been said, George was a passionate believer in the power of education to change lives, and the growing success of the college was a source of pride for him. She too used to give George a lift after the meetings and he would update her on the Council, the group and the grandchildren – not necessarily in that order. Sadly her first inkling that George was not well was when she was in a meeting at Conel, a governors meeting, and somebody made an assertion or a proposal and she had thought to herself, well, there's absolutely no way that George is going to let that one go. Sadly he did let it go, and it was so unusual that it made her think there was something wrong. She thought George was the best kind of politician. He lived his political beliefs, he was unbelievably hard working, he was modest, never boastful and always working to improve the lives of others, firstly in his ward and then more widely in the borough. She said that she would miss him greatly.

Cllr Strickland said that he first came to know George in 2007, when he moved to London and became active in the Noel Park branch and was branch secretary. They started having joint meetings with Woodside and so for the first time he was confronted with the giant we've discussed, George Meehan. He was absolutely struck by those early memories, and struck that George was this local government machine – he'd never seen anything like it. In the branch meetings, residents would say in the Councillors' question time 'I'd like to raise an issue about some dumped rubbish' George would say '23 Perth Road, it's done – they moved it this morning.' 'Thank you Cllr Meehan, but you wouldn't have spotted that lamppost...' 'Number 13, Dunbar Road, I've called them, they're doing it tomorrow.' George had this ability to know

absolutely everything, every single thing, that was going on in every street in his ward, nothing was ever raised in those meetings that he didn't already know about, and hadn't already fixed. Just astonishing.

Cllr Strickland said that when he became a candidate in Noel Park, George was incredibly warm and incredibly supportive. He had no truck with instructions from the Labour party, nobody told George how to campaign. He remembered saying – he was working full time at the time – ‘I’m very stressed, George, because we’ve got these incredibly big targets, we have to speak to 60% or 70% of people in the ward.’ George said ‘These targets are nonsense, there are 8,000 households, speak to every single one of them.’ A good lesson for everyone, there. But what had struck him, and what inspired him as a young candidate was that George was absolutely passionate about Woodside, passionate about getting things done for people and what it taught him was that by dealing with those things that can actually seem quite small in the wider scheme of politics, actually they are the things that matter, because that’s what makes a difference to people’s lives, that’s what people remember, that what makes a difference to this borough. The second big set of memories that he had – a theme was emerging about these famous walks and lifts home, which he was also subjected to but enjoyed a great deal – was that the end of George’s street was close to the end of his street so he would either walk home with George or Lorna would give them a lift, and these street corner conferences would then take place. He remembered on one occasion - they would stand outside the kebab shop on the end of Eldon Road and the kebab shop owner would give him a wink, because he was there yet again, talking to George – they would talk about the Council, and politics and what had been happening, and George was very generous and would give advice about how to handle this and how to handle that, which was really fantastic, but he said that it was also fantastic to meet more of George’s family because he felt so well-briefed on the goings on in the Meehan family. He spoke about his family with such pride that it was just fantastic to hear. He said he knew lots about Irish football and Irish politics, on which he was thoroughly briefed, on all of these occasions. And he was standing there on one of these occasions, with the kebab shop owner giving him a look and he said ‘George I really do need to go home ’and George had said ‘Oh, are you okay?’ and he said ‘It’s just that I got to the Council at 9 o’clock this morning and it’s half eleven now, George, and it has been snowing for an hour’. George was in full flow and would not be stopped. The third thing he remembered about George was his fantastic challenge, he was very passionate about the borough he was absolutely determined, as other colleagues have explained, that they would make the right decisions, that they would make the right choices, that they would really think about what they were doing. This advice was delivered in characteristic style – having worked with George locally for a few years, when he joined the Cabinet he thought this would be good, he would be fine with George. His first ever meeting as a Cabinet member was with George - inevitably he insisted that he had the first meeting in the diary -and he turned up and he knew he was in trouble, because God had fitted George with an early warning system and when George wasn’t happy, he was often bright red in the face, then you knew you were in trouble. On this occasion, purple is the word he would use. He had reeled off this huge list of questions, ‘Why are you doing this? Why are you doing that? I’m worried about this, I’m worried about that’, and I thought ‘I’m never going to get this through’. He had explained why he wanted to do all of these things, and at the end of it George had said ‘Fine, we’ll do it, let’s talk about how to get it through the Labour Group.’ He had said ‘I really don’t understand’, and George said ‘Look, I

challenged you, I had these real worries, but you gave a good account of yourself so let's get on with it.'

Cllr Strickland commented that George could be tough, he could be very challenging, but actually what was really clear was that there was no act about George, there was no falsity, he wasn't doing this to throw his weight around – when he wasn't happy about something it was because he was genuinely worried about whether that was the right thing to do. If you could convince him it was the right thing then he would stand behind you and support you, and that was a great testament to him. So he finished by saying thank you to George, thank you for being such a friend and thank you for being such a great mentor to him and many of the other Members who had spoken in the chamber this evening. He thanked him for his advice, however loudly delivered on some occasions, and he felt that this chamber seemed emptier without George Meehan. The Council building had lost a great talent, a great public servant, and this borough had lost a great man. He would miss George very much indeed, and sent condolences to his family.

Cllr Jogee thanked the Mayor for calling him to pay tribute to George Meehan and noted that he, like everybody in this room, had heard warm words about a colleague and comrade that he knew for most of his life. Like many in this chamber, he remembered stuffing envelopes with George in the 2001 General Election - Mary would come to Middle Lane in the Vauxhall and those thousands of leaflets would be delivered within 48 hours, no mean feat when everyone else was spending weeks doing so. He recalled being promoted to knocking on doors with George in Wood Green in the 2005 election and subsequently wishing that they'd won that. He remembered, too, the 2010 election and wishing they'd won that as well. He remembered how supportive George was in the campaign this year in Hornsey and Wood Green and how pleased he was to see them win. In thinking about his remarks tonight, he looked back to the 2006 edition of Haringey People. Back in 2006 he was a pupil at Highgate Wood School and spent his week-long work experience as George's shadow, a week he had never forgotten. They criss-crossed the borough on the bus, and he recalled that the 41 was the premier mode of transport - he couldn't drive, so he couldn't offer a lift - George made sure he had lunch and wasn't hungry, he made sure he was able follow what was going on in the meetings and events they visited. He made him, a spotty and eager young person, feel part of the team. It was no surprise to him that George took to being Grandpa like a duck to water. A few months later he was elected the leader of Haringey Youth Council and was speaking at an event with George at Alexandra Palace. The then Education Chief, Liz Santry, and George were rightly very proud of Haringey's Youth Council, so much so that when explaining what he was doing at the event, George described him as a mini George Meehan and so shouldn't be messed with. He was not sure to this day who came out of that best.

Cllr Jogees also commented that George's commitment to social justice, formed in the towns and villages of Donegal, weren't just restricted to Haringey. This borough was instrumental, through the work of George, Bernie Grant and others, in the British fight against apartheid. George was the longest serving representative on the local authority action for southern Africa, the heir to the anti-apartheid movement. They would be holding a minutes silence to honour George's service and life at the next meeting on October 23rd and he was proud to now be Haringey's representative in his

place. The labour party does comradely very well indeed, and each of the target wards in the election of 2014 were allocated a buddy. As the Mayor had noted, the Hornsey three were very fortunate to have George allocated to them. He was a reassuring and supportive presence, who calmed the nerves of many a new candidate. In his tribute to Pat Egan last year, he had described George and Pat as the Haringey version of the Chuckle Brothers. Their deaths had left a big hole for many in this chamber and across the borough. He would miss George, his wisdom and guidance, and he would miss his friendship too. The Council had lost its longest serving member, Woodside had lost a dedicated and selfless champion, the Meehan family had lost its head and the labour party had lost a true comrade and everyone was the poorer for it.

Cllr Reith said that her first encounter with George was back in the 1980s, long before she was a councillor and long before she was a member of the labour party. George was Chair of the housing committee and she had been an elected tenant representative from the tenants movement in the borough. They were on opposing sides, she had been there to lobby for a rent reduction and I think George was there to make sure they didn't get it. On that particular occasion they had won - they were unusual times, it was unusual circumstances - but she had to say it was with some trepidation when she was elected as a councillor that she was coming across George again. Actually George was always a pragmatist, always, as people have said, someone who would argue but not on a personal attack level. In fact what they discovered was that they did work well together, they discovered that they had a mutual respect and that they shared a lot of politics and a lot of their political outlook. Whether that's because he'd changed over the years or whether she had, she didn't know, but she became deputy leader to George as leader. They didn't always see eye to eye, but they didn't fall out either - what they did was come to appreciate each other's strengths and they had become close friends. For her, George was the very essence of public service, he believed in the public sector, he believed in collective provision, he believed in a properly paid, well-trained and well looked after workforce, and he believed in local democracy and in democratic accountability.

Councillor Reith commented that George had understood the importance, particularly of education and housing, for working class people to thrive. His big passion was education and he understood its transformational power. One of his most important legacies was the work that he did on the BSF programme. Cllr Reith said that she had ended up implementing that programme, but that without George there would have been nothing to implement. This was a £220m investment, part of which was the building of Heartlands School, part of which was the improvement of all of our secondary schools, and that investment was part of what has ensured that all the borough's secondary schools are either good or outstanding rated by Ofsted. But it was his understanding of finance - he may not have had a university education, he was self-taught in many ways - but he understood finance and he understood, with that BSF programme, the way in which to construct it, which meant that as a local authority Haringey were able to carry out that programme when other local authorities never got that opportunity, the Government pulled the ground from under them and they never got that investment from their schools. That is a legacy for George, if it hadn't been for him, his self-taught financial expertise, Haringey wouldn't have that. People will know that finance was another big concern for him, because he understood that if you don't have the money, you might have a great idea but it won't

be sustainable, which is why he was pretty tough with everyone during that big discussion within the group about how to make the accounts balance. He learned that, he learned that in the hard way back in the 80s, he learned that to make things sustainable you had to have the money there. People have talked about his dedication to his ward, to walking the streets, to knowing what was going on, to talking to local people; you could never say 'There's a politician out of touch with reality.'

Councillor Reith also commented that George was the man on the street, he knew what was going on. She said that one thing that did create difficulties, referring to the Baby Peter tragedy, was that if it was a Council service, say refuse collection or housing repairs, George would know whether what he was being told by Council officers was accurate or not, because he would talk to residents, he would know what was going on, he would know if what he was being told wasn't the case. With child protection you didn't have that way of finding out what is going on, you were reliant on officers and the way that George handled things during that period – he was distraught at the death of the child, but he also had the integrity to know that he needed to step down from his position, which is what he did. That was the mark of the man, that integrity. The final thing she added was that people had talked about how George referred to his family and the strength he drew from that family and the way he would say 'Mary thinks this', or 'Martin thinks that', or 'I discussed that with Michael', not to mention all the antics that Olivia got up to, and she wanted to say thank you to his family, because although George would have been a great politician without the family, they made him much more of a great politician – a lot of what he was able to do was because of the strength of that family behind him and he knew that. For him the family was that bedrock who enabled him to do what he did for Haringey and for the residents of this borough.

Cllr Morton said that he wouldn't speak with the insight or the eloquence of a lot of the people who had gone before him, but would simply say a couple of things. As a new councillor last year, he had found George to be unstintingly kind and generous with his time and with his advice, and he knew a lot of other people in this room would say the same. Likewise as a Cabinet member, if George didn't agree with a policy being brought forward or something you were doing, he would tell you, you would know it, he would tell you in a detail that was equally generous. But he was generally always right, and after he told you, he would then tell you how to fix it and how to make it right. He had found that, after he had told him, he would try it, and invariably it would turn out to be right, because if you've served the borough for 40 years, you know a thing or two. He said that that was how he felt to serve on the council for only a year with George. He was something else.

Cllr Adamou addressed the meeting and said that she had known George for the last 25 years and had found him very generous. As a new councillor when she first joined the council he was very supportive and if any of the new councillors needed anything, she used to go to George because she found he was approachable, more than, she was sorry to say, the leader at the time. She said that she really got to know George when we shared a Director – when Housing and Social Services were together, she was the Chair of Social Services and he was the Chair of Housing and they used to have the same Director and after their meetings they used to discuss other things and that's when she learned how much they had in common. When he first came to London, his experience of that was a lot hers, he was telling me that London at that time they had signs, people renting accommodation would say no black people, no

dogs and no Irish. His experience in London was very similar to hers, because even though she had come with her family in the 60s as a young girl, her experiences were very similar.

Councillor Adamou said that they had shared a lot of stories about London and their experiences there. She came to understand later on why he had this passion for all the communities in Haringey the community centres, the front line services, the voluntary sector, because he believed in the community, that ordinary people who come to London should be welcome, should have access to advice and so on. She understood that. He was a great, great councillor, a great friend. When her husband died, he was very kind to her. She said that she had a lot of kind thoughts for his family, she knew how they felt because her family experienced the same things. All she wanted to say was that George Meehan was a great councillor, but most of all he was a great human being.

Cllr Sahota spoke and said that, like Peter Mitchell, he was a new councillor so didn't get to know George as well as he would have liked to. He recalled one of his memories of George, but before he did that he said that, as a new councillor, one of the saddest things about the first year in office had been the loss of three exceptional individuals, Pat, Denise and George and it was a real shame that he, and all of those who were new to the labour benches didn't have more time to spend with them. He said a few short words about his abiding memories of George; one of the first meetings he had attended George was chairing, and there were some proposals that he had to listen to, he listened to them with as much patience as he could muster and he then he pronounced that the ideas that had been canvassed he'd heard before, they'd been suggested before, they'd been tried before, they didn't work then, they wouldn't work now. All delivered in his characteristic trenchant style. But what really impressed him was the knowledge and experience which backed up those opinions, knowledge and experience that he'd accumulated over 40 years in local government, knowledge and experience that is lost now with his passing and one of the reasons that his passing is so tragic is that, as others have said, it's difficult to imagine how that knowledge and experience is going to be replaced. It's clear tonight that he's going to leave a long shadow, his passing is a loss to everyone, it's also a loss to those who didn't get to know him as well as others and didn't get the chance to benefit from his wisdom, his experience and his counsel.

The Mayor thanked everybody for their heartfelt and touching contributions for this extraordinary man and outstanding politician and public servant. She invited Cllr Kober to move the resolution that was detailed in the summons and advised that this would be formally seconded by Cllr Engert.

Cllr Kober advised that she was sure she spoke for everybody when she said how nice it had been to listen to the many tributes this evening, it certainly brought a few memories back for her and she had learnt a few things. Like so many people this evening, she could barely remember a time in her political life when George was not around and wasn't part of it. She first came across him as a young party activist in the late 90s and it was immediately clear that this man was a force of nature. He'd bound into GC meetings on a Wednesday evening, having run across the road from this place, and he would then deliver this report, then as deputy leader and subsequently as leader. His reports were always positive, he would start by telling everyone it had

been a great month for the borough, they were always comprehensive and they were always ten minutes too long. But in moving the motion there were a few things she wanted to say. The first, as you would expect from a man who always spoke for a little longer than was necessary or was called for, he was always full of energy, his energy was boundless. In all the time that she knew him, he never seemed tired, she never saw him yawn, even when he'd been in the Council for 12 hours, he still had the energy to push it that bit further, to do that bit more. He was also always immaculately turned out – she had been discussing this the other week with Cllr Waters – there was never a dress-down George, he always looked immaculate, you always knew the days he'd gone into central London for London Councils because he was wearing a suit, but other than that he was always utterly immaculate. He never took a day off, aside from a trip to Ireland, he was here, he was a presence. He certainly never turned up to a meeting late, as he taught Cllr Engert that lesson. He also never turned up to a meeting unprepared, he had always read the agenda pack, even when it stretched to some 600 pages. He would never leave loose ends at the end of a meeting, no matter how long the meeting had gone on for, the phrase 'And there's one more thing we should talk about' is something his colleagues will all remember with varying degrees of fondness. He was, after all, perhaps the keenest meeting attendee anyone had ever known.

Cllr Kober commented that on a personal note, following George as leader, one of the things that had followed her over the years was George's ability to wander through River Park House and get things done. Half of the door of the leader's office is obscured, but George was just of a height, about two inches taller and she knew the days when George really wanted to talk to her, after she'd seen his head for about the 30th time passing the door. It was always great whenever George came in for a chat, sometimes they'd last a bit longer than you had time for, but she missed that so incredibly – she missed it when George was ill and she missed it now, she missed the fact that he was not there. Everyone has talked seriously about the fact that in 40 years George made an unparalleled contribution to this borough. It's not just about the roles that he took, although it's clear that in his time he did just about every major role on the council. It was, as others have said, that he was a man who lived and breathed the borough, the council and the labour party. He was also somebody who, although incredibly busy, always had time for people and many have reflected on that this evening. His presence and his dependability were something that many of us relied on and she spoke for councillors and for officers of the council when she said that. It was only during his illness that she realised how often she used to call him to get his take on something, to get some advice on dealing with an issue, or simply to understand the background or why someone was reacting a certain way. His advice was always helpful, even when you didn't take it – he helped many over the years steer away from elephant traps, often of their own making.

She said that she relied on him because he was loyal and he was supportive, but more than that he was honest and he would tell you when you were doing the wrong thing as well as when you had it right.

Councillor Kober commented that there's little in politics that he didn't see, a man of that experience, he just had incredible political judgement and insight. Another thing that was clear to her was that George wasn't about Wood Green or about Tottenham, he was about the whole borough. He had represented a number of wards in the borough, he had regard for all the people of the borough, regardless of where they

lived, he cared about Hornsey, he cared about Tottenham, he cared about Stroud Green, Wood Green, Muswell Hill, Highgate – it really was always One Borough for George Meehan. As others have also said, he did his politics like he lived his life, with a high level of personal integrity, respect for everybody including his political opponents and a lifelong commitment to social justice. Above all, she believed that he understood where he came from and who he was here to serve. Many people had talked about canvassing with George and it was one of the abiding memories that she had – it was earlier in the year, a cold morning in February, that she last canvassed with George in his ward. The thing that struck her that morning was the same thing that struck her whenever she canvassed with George, he knew not just by sight, but often by name, so many of the people that we encountered on the streets and the doorsteps. It wasn't that he knew only their names, he knew where they lived, he knew their families, he knew their stories and he'd often know them because he'd done casework for them or he'd know them through the church or he'd know them from the Irish centre or he'd know them just by the fact that he'd walked between Eldon Road and the Council several times a day for so many years. There are few politicians who have that breadth or depth of relationship with the community that they serve. George was the sort of politician who was stopped in the street and who was thanked for the work that he was doing, but more than that, he was a politician's politician. He was as interested in the mechanics of politics, in the numbers, as he was in effecting positive change to improve people's lives. He was wise, he was intuitive and he was deeply pragmatic. She lost count of the number of times that he reminded her that politics is the art of the possible. It was important also to say, and others had said it, that he had a wider ambition for Haringey and its communities. He was truly the best kind of local politician – totally committed to the borough, principled, courageous and caring. But as those who were close to him will know, he was prepared to do difficult things, sometimes at significant personal cost. Like everyone, she would miss his encyclopaedic knowledge of all things Haringey, of all things the council, his unwavering commitment to education and decent housing, and just his presence around this place. She finished by saying she was honoured to move this motion, and she knew that he would live on very long in everyone's thoughts.

Councillor Kober formally **MOVED**:

'That this Council formally places on record its heartfelt thanks and appreciation to Councillor George Meehan who died on 16 July 2015.

This Council wishes to record the enduring care and diligence with which Councillor George Meehan undertook his duties during his term of office spanning 40 years, from 1971, serving Green Lanes Ward from 1971 to 82, then for Tottenham Central Ward from 1982 to 1986. Councillor George Meehan was re-elected as a councillor in 1990, and serving Coleraine Ward from 1990 -98, and then Woodside Ward from 1998 to July 2015.

We remember his time served as Leader of the Council for three periods, from 1983 to 1985; 1999 to 2004 and from 2006 until 2008, as also Deputy Leader of the Council in 1978-79 and 1996-99, and in serving as a school governor in a number of local schools.

We remember, as those who had worked with Councillor George Meehan would be well aware, that Councillor Meehan believed passionately in delivering quality public services and in involving local people in the decisions that affect their everyday lives. We recall his strong advocacy of the power of education in helping young people to fulfil their potential, and that it was this commitment to education that saw the state-of-the-art new community school Heartlands High open during Councillor Meehan's leadership, alongside countless improvements to the borough's existing secondary schools thanks to his determination to bring significant Building Schools for the Future funding to Haringey.

This Council also recognises the contribution that Councillor George Meehan had made to the Labour Group, Labour Party, and Borough as a whole, and that he will be remembered fondly by Councillors - both past and present from both political groups, and in extremely high esteem and regard, and from many officers of the Council, and local residents.

This Council also formally passes its condolences to Councillor George Meehan's wife Mary, his children Martin and Michael, his daughter in law Debbie , his grandchildren Olivier and Gabriel, his brother, and his extended family, at the loss of such a wonderful and great man.'

Cllr Engert formally seconded the **MOTION**.

On a vote the **MOTION** was passed unanimously and it was:

RESOLVED

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The Mayor advised that this brought an end to the business of the meeting, and invited all present to partake of refreshments in Committee Rooms 1 and 2 after the meeting.

The meeting closed at 20.50hrs.

Councillor Jennifer Mann
Mayor

Signed by Mayor

Date