

Last week was the Annual Council Meeting, formally agreeing the positions of Leader, Deputy, Cabinet and committee chairs. I'm honoured to be continuing as Leader, proud of what we've achieved in the few short years since I took over, and excited about the things still to come.

I'm delighted to say that council also agreed the appointment of Councillor Lynn Clarke as Mayor of St Helens Borough.

Lynn replaces Cllr Sue Murphy who has served as Mayor for two years, attending more than 500 engagements and supporting many fantastic local good causes in that time. Thank you to Sue and her husband Mike for all their outstanding work!

As part of the annual council event it's tradition for the Leader to speak. We're in the second year now of a four year term and getting on with the job of delivering the manifesto we were elected on last year, so I gave a brief overview of some of our achievements from the past year including our work with partners to offer support through the cost of living crisis, our town centre plans, children's services and integrated care progress, and the delivery of several major projects including new schools.

I could have said a lot more, but the afternoon was all about the Mayor, her family, and her chosen charity – the amazing Deafness Resource Centre in Windle.

As her Windle ward colleagues, myself and Cllr Mancylia Uddin were honoured to nominate Lynn for the role.

Lynn is a great colleague and ward councillor, and is also our Armed Forces Champion, and she is extremely proud to hold the role. Our council is a Gold Award holder of the Defence Employer Recognition Scheme – something due in no small part to her tireless work.

Her support for the Forces can clearly be seen in her decision to appoint two Mayor's Cadets – the first time it's been done in St Helens and something I'm sure will become a regular occurrence.

It's going to be a big year for St Helens as we continue to celebrate Borough of Culture, open Glass Futures, begin demolition in St Helens town centre and more. I know Lynn will do an amazing job as Mayor, and myself, Cabinet and my Labour Group are very happy to be getting on with the job ahead.

Best wishes to all Star readers.