

Full Council – 31 January 2018

Councillor Brenda Warrington tribute to Councillor Kieran Quinn

To be appointed as the Executive Leader of the Council is an honour and a privilege. But it is also tinged with sadness given the need for a new leader was caused by the tragic death of our colleague Kieran Quinn. To follow as Leader a man of Kieran's integrity and skill makes the honour and privilege all the greater.

I want to take this opportunity to pay tribute to Kieran the leader, the politician, the man – my colleague, my comrade and my friend.

But before I do that I should say again that our thoughts go out to Susan, Matthew and Liam, who were at Kieran's side when he died. I know this will have been a great comfort to Kieran as foremost he was a family man. The enormous number of people from a range of different backgrounds who attended the funeral last week, and the many hundreds of tributes, are a testament to how many lives Kieran's work touched and how well he was respected. I hope that knowledge has been some comfort to Sue, the boys and their wider family at this difficult time.

In a time when people are often cynical about politics and politicians, the way Kieran conducted himself and interacted with people did so much to counteract that view. In all his roles he worked tirelessly for everyone in the community, especially those most vulnerable and in greatest need of a helping hand. When we look back on his time in public service – not just as a councillor but as a community leader – it is that which we will see as his legacy.

From an early age Kieran was active in local politics and the trades unions, particularly the Communication Workers Union through his work with the Post Office. He first came onto the Council in 1994 and has left a near quarter century legacy of ambition and achievement. That was the thing about Kieran he didn't just 'say' he 'did', putting in place what was needed to support people to grow, thrive and better themselves. He was ambitious for local people and passionate about his community. He had a strong vision and a clear strategy as to how to make Tameside a better place for everyone and a determination to make that happen – despite austerity and the inordinate budgets cuts the Borough faced.

On becoming the Executive Leader of the Council, he led the authority through the most challenging period in its history and yet achieved so much. He had a strategic mind and possessed the natural leadership skills and integrity to bring people together to achieve the best outcomes for all.

His legacy is truly transformational, he led major redevelopment of town centres – including new opportunities for education, business, transport and leisure – that will improve the life chances for residents for generations to come.

Kieran was a key architect behind Greater Manchester rediscovering its voice through the Combined Authority, the new Mayor and the ground breaking devolution deals.

He was Chair of the Greater Manchester Pension Fund which under his leadership experienced record growth and is now the biggest Local Government Pension Scheme in the UK. He led the way on the national debate about pension fund and using investment to drive growth. The building we are in now being just one example of that.

Kieran has been at the forefront of our work to integrate health and care services so that local people are able to access the support they need, when they need it and in the most appropriate setting for them, often in their own home – completely changing the way we think about health and care services.

These are just a few examples of the wide range of areas in which Kieran led from the front. They highlight the full extent of his knowledge of public service and his recognition that to improve we have to change. He understood and fought for investment in public services, alongside that the necessary reforms needed to ensure we got maximum impact for every penny invested. It is that tough, pragmatic approach founded on the principle of care and concern that for me set Kieran apart as a true visionary and an inspirational leader.

It is no coincidence that during Kieran's time as Leader of the Council and Chair of the Greater Manchester Pension Fund both organisations won prestige awards – Council of the Year and Pension Fund of the Decade. National recognition of what we already knew here in Tameside. But awards, titles and buildings aren't why we will remember Kieran. We will remember him for his humour, his integrity, his passion and his unending belief that we must do everything we can to enable people of all ages and from all backgrounds achieve their potential.

Over the years many of you will have worked with him directly, and for some he will have become a friend not just a colleague. In the time I worked with him in the Cabinet we didn't always agree on everything. But Kieran had the intellect that meant he didn't shy away from hearing different viewpoints and letting a lively discussion take place. And in those discussions he ensured everyone treated each other with the greatest respect so that we could come together to a collective agreement. That is a measure of both the man and the politician.

However you knew him, I know Kieran will be greatly missed by his many friends and colleagues at Tameside Council.

Kieran was an absolutely superb leader of the Council, the pension fund and the community of Tameside. He was full of energy and good ideas, was innovative, passionate and a hard worker. He didn't expect anyone to do something he wasn't prepared to do himself and I admired that in him. He was the ultimate politician and an exceptional man. I believe he would expect us to follow his example and continue his good work and do the very best for Tameside.

Thank you.