

OBITUARY: CROYDON'S HONORARY ALDERMAN AND FREEMAN, ADRIAN DENNIS



Adrian Stephen Dennis passed away on Friday, 27 March 2020, after a short time in hospital following an operation aged 67 years. He was one of Croydon's finest devotees to civic duty.

Adrian was born on 12 December 1952 in Penzance Cornwall. He studied at Humphrey Davy Grammar School, Penzance and went on to graduate with a BSc Hons Degree in Geography from the London School of Economics in 1974.

He completed Postgraduate studies at the University of North London earning a Diploma in Town Planning, with Distinction in Thesis, in 1978 and became a member of the Royal Town Planning Institute.

Adrian began his working life at Westminster City Council where he was responsible for developing area plans, planning policy and research. In 1980 he moved to Southwark Council as a Town Planner, where his work included the planning of the London Bridge Quarter, London Bridge Station and other major schemes including the Tate Modern extensions. One of his proudest achievements before retirement was fulfilling his role as Lead Case Officer on the London Bridge Tower, now known as The Shard, where he enabled its completion from start to finish. During his time at Southwark he was also UNISON's disabled staff health safety representative at Southwark Council.

He was a Labour Party member and trade unionist through and through. He was elected as a Labour Councillor for Thornton Heath Ward, Croydon, in 1986 having moved there with his family in 1979. As a Councillor he held many important positions, including Labour Chief Whip and Chair of the Planning and Environment Committee. By 1997 he was appointed Deputy Leader of Croydon Council and was Cabinet Member for Planning, Environment and Regeneration between 2000 and 2006. It was during this period that Thornton Heath's £8m, then state of the art, leisure centre was built.

Adrian's commitment to civic duty and contribution to public service was exceptional. This was formally recognised in 2006 when he was made an Honorary Alderman and Freeman of Croydon. The latter is the highest award a Council can give to a resident and Adrian is still only the second Labour Councillor to achieve this accolade in the 130 years since Croydon obtained its royal charter.

In recent years Adrian worked as a planning consultant and was a formidable opponent in planning hearings. Adrian gave freely of his time organising Thornton Heath's annual street festival. He became a Trustee of CACFO UK, a Thornton Heath based charity with a Day Centre for the elderly and school for pupils excluded from mainstream education; and was Chair of Croydon Disability Forum. He championed the rights of excluded and disadvantaged groups to his last.

Adrian loved his family dearly. He is survived by his wife Flim Dennis; daughter Nening Dennis; son Philip Dennis; and brothers Robert and Martin Dennis. His funeral is currently being arranged but will be a small, private affair, given limitations on the size of gatherings due to the Corona-virus crisis. Nevertheless, a memorial service is planned for when the crisis passes. A date will be announced in due course.