



Greater Manchester 2012-13

My year has been a busy and exhilarating one, especially with the many events surrounding Her Majesty's Diamond Jubilee celebrations. I would like to thank all those who have helped me, especially my wife Elizabeth.

While Greater Manchester is a relatively small geographical area, it has a highly diverse population of some 2.6 million people, who between them speak well over 100 different languages. However, alongside the many new and exciting developments in the county, there are still deep-rooted problems, marked by high unemployment, a large number of disadvantaged residents and crime.

Early in my year, I met senior officers of Greater Manchester Police at their new headquarters, when I was able to discuss my role with them and how this could integrate with their crime prevention activities. Our discussions covered designing out crime in the built environment, through to the wide range of community educational and support programmes they adopt, and the varying levels of success they have achieved.

To support these activities, I considered one of my main roles was to network and encourage community engagement and a greater degree of partnership working, as far too many groups appeared to be working in isolation. As a result, I was privileged to meet some really wonderful and highly motivated people from both the statutory and voluntary sectors, who are actively engaged with people in the community to improve the quality of their lives.

I was particularly impressed with the work undertaken by many of the organisations helping young people to prepare for the responsibilities and challenges of adult life and make a genuine contribution to society, as well as those who are working with people who have fallen into criminal activity and been involved with the law and the



High Sheriff and Mrs Almond at the High Sheriff's Day – Manchester Crown Court.

rehabilitation services, such as the youth offending teams and Nacro. I also supported the valuable work undertaken by Crimestoppers and Victim Support.

My role also enabled me to gain a valuable insight into the work of our judicial system and the efforts of the magistrates and judges, along with those

in the wider caring services, to ensure that justice is delivered fairly and wisely and that a balance is maintained between rights and responsibilities. As well as attending both criminal and civil courts with a number of High Court Judges, I was also able to meet many of them at less formal dinner parties at my home, and attended a number of functions they very kindly hosted, as



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well as two of the District and Circuit Judges' Mess Dinners.

However, the saddest and most poignant events I attended were the two memorial services held in Manchester Cathedral for Greater Manchester Police Constables, Nicola Hughes and Fiona Bone, who were shot as they responded to a call in Mottram, Greater Manchester on 18 September 2012. This was a horrendous incident, but the worldwide support and expressions of sympathy were truly incredible, and thousands of police officers and members of the public lined the streets of Manchester as the cortège processed towards the Cathedral.

Fundraising for various charities involving young people has also featured heavily during my year, including a 250m zip wire run across the Manchester Ship Canal with the chief constable, county fire officer and other supporters, a baroque musical evening in the 15th-century Baronial Hall at the renowned Chetham's School of Music in Manchester, and an educational project for 50 children and their parents/carers involved with Barnardo's in Manchester. This involved a visit to the educational farm at Tatton Park in Cheshire to learn more about the countryside and farming, resulting in an agreement to introduce a



High Sheriff with members of Manchester's M13 Youth Project.

smallholding at the Barnardo's centre in Manchester to develop the youngsters' learning and understanding even further. Funds were also raised for the Prince's Trust.

Throughout the year I also met numerous members of the minority and faith communities in the county, to learn more about their cultures by being involved in some of their many activities.

So the year has been an extremely busy and wide-ranging one. While it has been a fulfilling experience for me personally, more importantly I hope that the help and support that I have been able to offer the organisations with which I have had dealings has been useful. □

George Almond CBE DL
High Sheriff of Greater Manchester 2012-13