



## High Sheriff at high speed

IT HAS been a huge privilege to be linked so closely with all the law and order organisations in Surrey. Clearly this area links with the original role of the High Sheriff and I have appreciated the opportunity to visit prisons, courts, the police, probation and other support agencies. I went out with the Surrey Police in an unmarked car and became involved in a 140mph chase up the A3 to Wimbledon looking for a suspected burglar, whom we found. We followed our suspect into a side road where his path was blocked so my police driver had to do the arrest alone, but we knew that backup from the Met was only a minute behind. I had a front row seat in real cops and robbers! The whole experience demonstrated great team work and some of the difficulties presented, since I had not understood that the two police forces worked on different systems. The prisoner was taken back to Staines Police Station and I was subsequently told that he was interviewed for offences in Surrey, collected by Kent for seven suspected burglaries and there was a warrant out for his arrest in Croydon.

One of the highlights of my year was the annual Judicial Service which took

place on 2 October at Holy Trinity Church in Guildford. We processed from the Guildhall, up the High Street, to the church with trumpeters heralding us. I was very pleased to have my local primary school singing at the service and to base the service around my theme for the year: supporting rehabilitation of offenders, families and young people. I subsequently gave a dinner for all the Surrey judges and senior magistracy, using the Clink Charity outside events service. Two ex-prisoners working for the Clink spoke about their lives and the support and training they had received.

I have visited 20 of the projects supported by the High Sheriff's Youth Awards in Surrey this year. This small charity offers grants to projects for young people aged 9-18 and is aimed at making Surrey safer, so support is concentrated on areas of deprivation and need. Although Surrey has much wealth it also has pockets of deprivation hidden within affluent areas. The projects supported included help for youth clubs, providing mobile classrooms, and sporting and arts activities. Participation by the High Sheriff is not a requirement at a visit but is often encouraged: this led to my trying out one of the paddle boards we paid for



**Above:** Leatherhead Youth Project – presentation of the High Sheriff's Youth Award certificate for the Girls Blazes evening



**Above:** Opening Surrey and Sussex Care Showcase



**Above:** Presentation of the High Sheriff's Youth Award certificate to Brockham Youth Café

at Godalming Canoe Club and, yes, you guessed it – I fell into the river!

We were particularly lucky to have so many royal visits and I've met most of the senior members of the Royal Family. Surrey would not function well as a community without its volunteers and I am delighted to have visited many inspiring voluntary and charitable organisations, as well as some great schools including special schools. Visiting Surrey University was a highlight, particularly to understand something of its leading research projects such as the 5G Innovation Centre (mobile and wireless communications research) and Surrey Satellites (weather forecasting and disaster monitoring).

Surrey is a great county to live in.

◆ Elizabeth Kennedy  
*High Sheriff of Surrey 2015-16*