



## Shining light

HAVING LIVED and worked in the West Midlands all my life, it has given me enormous pleasure to shine a light on the countless individuals, communities and businesses whose innovation, talent and creativity make the county so great.

I am sure that all High Sheriffs have heard their fair share of inspirational stories this year but few can match that of Stephen Sutton.

For those who are unaware, Stephen hailed from the West Midlands and his story has been something of a global phenomenon. The 19-year-old sadly died in May after launching an appeal in aid of the Teenage Cancer Trust, which remarkably has raised almost £5m. I organised an awards event in July to recognise those who have inspired local communities and it seemed the least I could do was pay tribute to Stephen posthumously. His mother Jane has had to contend with a great deal of pain, yet despite this she attended the event, along with representatives of Teenager Cancer Trust, for which I will always be grateful.

Stephen, of course, was not alone in showing determination and courage and I have been overwhelmed by the sheer number of people who volunteer their time to help others. It would be almost impossible for me to congratulate all of them individually, but one initiative that has helped me recognise as many as possible has seen



**Declaration Ceremony.** From left to right back row are: HHJ James Burbidge QC, HHJ William Davis QC – (now Mr Justice William Davis), Mr Justice Leggatt, HHJ Murray Creed, HHJ Richard Bond, Mrs June Watts (front row), The High Sheriff of the West Midlands, Dr Tim Watts DL (front row)

me feeding into all the charities supported by each of the seven Lord Mayors and Mayors in my shire. I have made it a priority to attend mayoral events and have taken the time to hear about their own charity appeals, for which I have been happy to make a donation via my own fundraising.

I have attended a huge array of events and met some wonderful people. I have also been privileged to play a part in a number of truly ground-breaking schemes that will bring a whole host of benefits to the West Midlands for many, many years to come. The one that springs most to mind is a plan by Aston University to develop a new medical school to support local trainee doctors with scholarships. The school will cater for 100 students each year, including those from hard-to-reach communities. What a pleasure it has been to help launch something that will create doctors for the local area as well as improve the health and wellbeing of West Midlands communities.

I could list the many events in which I have participated – from welcoming to the county both HRH The Duke of Cambridge and HRH The Princess Royal, to playing bingo with the people of Sandwell and raising the flag in support of our armed forces – but there really are too many to mention.

It has been a humbling experience to date and I look forward to the remainder of my year in office with great excitement.



**Awards ceremony.** From left to right: The High Sheriff of the West Midlands, Dr Tim Watts DL, Mrs Jane Sutton, Mrs June Watts, Debbie Adams (Teenage Cancer Trust)

◆ Dr Tim Watts DC  
*High Sheriff of West Midlands 2014-2015*