



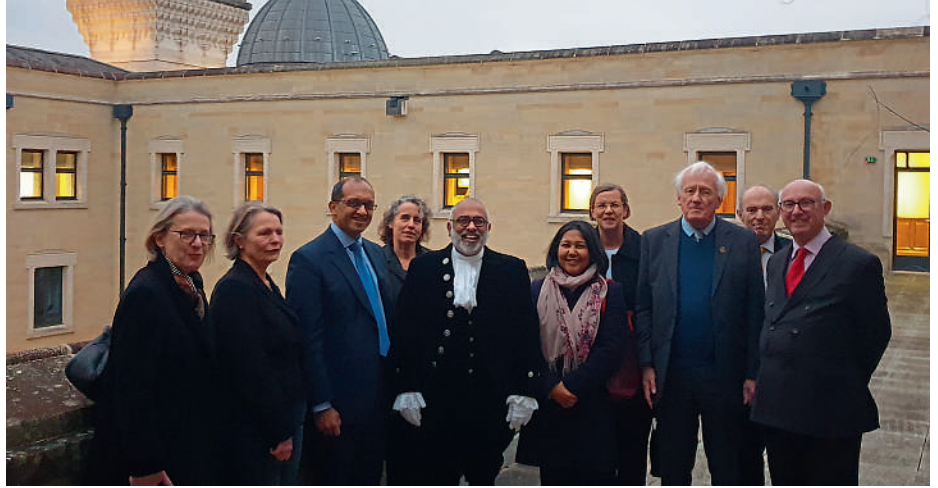
Be yourself

I'VE HAD a brilliant year as High Sheriff. My tweets have been seen over half a million times and my highest performing video has been viewed over 20,000 times. My daughters inform me I'm the first High Sheriff on TikTok too! It's been a huge honour to have represented one of the most creative, dynamic, and beautiful counties in our country – Oxfordshire.

My daughters have helped make my social media content sharper, more attractive and more engaging. They were my best helpers and critics. When recording my video messages, I would often make them three to five minutes in length – 'that's too long, Dad!' would be the refrain. The maximum length should be no more than 70 seconds: the shorter, the sharper, the better!

'Being myself' meant that I appointed seven High Sheriff's Chaplains, each representing one of seven of the major faiths – and therefore communities – in Oxfordshire. This rich diversity of faiths and cultures was beautifully captured in the launch video for my year, expertly put together by the comms team at Oxfordshire County Council. It also demonstrated my love, commitment, and passion for bringing communities together – these appointments, for the first time and in a concrete sense, brought into the shrieval orbit communities who might have had little engagement or awareness of the Office of High Sheriff in the past. Many of those present, especially the judiciary at the Legal Service for Oxfordshire which was held at the magnificent Christ Church Cathedral, were deeply moved by the blessings delivered by the chaplains in their vernacular and in English at the conclusion of the service.

I was torn on the question of hospitality: should I invite a small group from those attending the Legal Service to dinner or all? Numbers had been restricted due to Covid-19 but nonetheless remained sizable. 'Be yourself' came to my aid. I decided to



With members of the local judiciary at the Oxford Centre for Islamic Studies in honour of the visit of Mr Justice Choudhury and Lady Choudhury to Oxfordshire



At a community barbecue in East Oxford organised by Oxford Community Action

invite all attending the Legal Service to dinner and, in addition, the heads of charities and different communities from the county. Following the main course, I invited individuals to speak for a couple minutes to share something about what they, their communities or charities/voluntary groups do in the county. This was fun and informative – it was especially appreciated by Mr Justice Bryan and Lady Bryan. One of the guests informed me that in 30 years, he'd never been to a dinner which included such a rich cultural mix of people.

Due to Covid-19 restrictions, my Declaration ceremony was held virtually. In hindsight, although initially I was disappointed, this was providential.

I decided to invite as many charity and voluntary leaders from across the county as I could; Oxfordshire Community Foundation was most helpful in this respect. As a result, just under 350 people joined me for the ceremony and as one retired judge commented, 'That was the best ever shrieval appointment ceremony – and I have been to many over the years!'

Thank you to everyone who has helped to make my year so enjoyable and such a huge success.

Imam Monawar Hussain
MBE DL
High Sheriff of Oxfordshire 2021-22