

# What a year!



Above: With Ravaun Jones from charity Off the Streets fitting a knife amnesty bin and bleed kit outside Thorplands community hub

Below: The *Knife Angel* at the All Saints' Church plaza, Northampton



## Crispin Holborow DL

High Sheriff of Northamptonshire 2022-23

Unlike, I am sure, other High Sheriffs, I hadn't set up much before my year started so it was wonderful to be invited to celebrate the *Knife Angel's* arrival in Northamptonshire in early April. Present were council leaders, senior officers from the emergency services and representatives of many of the great charities involved in crime prevention, so I was able to build relationships and organise meetings that may otherwise have taken many weeks to arrange. The *Knife Angel* is made from over 100,000 blades that have been handed in around the country, some used in actual crimes. Counties now have to bid to host it and its arrival is followed by a month of anti-knife crime action. As it moved around the county to Wellingborough and Corby I was able to meet community members who had been impacted by knife crime and see the catalysing effect it had on new and existing

initiatives. So, a great start and an issue which became a key focus during the year.

From the outset I have benefitted enormously from a close relationship with the Northamptonshire Community Foundation. They have saved hours of time researching groups to visit and support, and have been a great source of guidance for our High Sheriff's Initiative Fund which donates significant sums to specific projects in the area of crime prevention. One joint focus has been to highlight issues facing our rural community. I am excited to be able to represent them in the future and to continue working with volunteer and charity groups across the county.

One of the most enjoyable elements of the year has been engaging with volunteer groups dealing with law and order. The First Responders is one such group – utterly professional and yet very passionate individuals doing a wonderful job at a time never more needed given the issues facing the ambulance service.



The cold spell before Christmas coincided with a late Saturday night visit to another two impressive groups, the Street Pastors and Guardians in Northampton. The Street Pastors have been active in the town for 14 years and are a positive and friendly presence supporting party goers and emergency services alike. The Guardians were celebrating their first anniversary and took over in the small hours with the provision of a 'snow bus', a van located right in the centre close to the night clubs. On the night I visited it was much needed for warmth and refuge and was hardly ever empty, doubling up as a provider of hot drinks to the homeless.

It has been a busy season in the courts and four High Court Judges sat in Northampton. The most action-packed visit was to the Coroner's Court where at one stage we feared for the safety of both one of the witnesses and the coroner herself who showed enormous sangfroid dealing single-handedly with a highly emotional issue.

The cost-of-living crisis has led to charting the increase in food banks and larders in our area, the latter targeting rural communities. They provide not only a vital source of cheap food, but also a community hub and the ability to check on friends and neighbours during the winter months. The volunteers seem to benefit as much as those who use the larder.

In 2023 we have seen the opening of a new prison in Wellingborough and the commencement of a campaign from both our prisons to get prison leavers back into work. The role of High Sheriff can have a positive effect, acting as a convenor and introducer, joining employment boards with local businesses and coordinating the many excellent charities in this area.

Too many experiences to record in a few words but I have learned so much and am so proud of the county and to have met so many amazing volunteers.



With a traditional dance group to celebrate Diwali



The Street Pastors of Northampton and Kettering

## The Royal British Legion Poppy Appeal

High Sheriffs intending to lay wreaths during the Armistice period can order these with the High Sheriffs' badge in the centre from The Royal British Legion Poppy Appeal.



Orders should be placed (quoting stock code H0018) by calling the Poppy Appeal on **01622 717172** and speaking to a Regional Organiser.

Please order in good time.

