

Supporting courts and the police in Kent

Nadra Ahmed CBE DL

High Sheriff of Kent 2023-24

The privilege of being selected to undertake the role and responsibilities of a centuries-old office is daunting in itself, but the Declaration ceremony gives you the sense of the enormity of it. The tradition and the splendour will be unique in each county, but the sense of responsibility is the same, I'm sure.

I'm not really sure that all the conversations you have with predecessors and others truly prepare you for it but the best advice I had was to do it 'your way'! Having chosen my priorities and, taking those into account, I have had a great six months already. It has been great to work so closely with our Lord-Lieutenant too, the Lady Colgrain, who has been an incredible support along with her husband Lord Colgrain, one of my very distinguished predecessors.

My very first event was to attend the Vaisakhi Festival in Gravesend with an attendance of several thousand and a two-mile procession which started at the Gurdwara. It was fantastic to see all the lovely people in their colourful national dress making the most of the day which included a fairground next to the site. The people lining the streets looked astonished at the sight of a High Sheriff who also happened to be Asian.

Within the first few weeks I was able to meet with the members of the judiciary and the Chief of Police, who were incredibly supportive. We worked out some plans as to how we were going to enable my role to support the court system and the police force. I attended the swearing in of new magistrates with the Lord-Lieutenant



and awards ceremonies with the police force. It is incredible to see and hear the amazing work that goes on which you cannot really appreciate in everyday life.

I have also used every opportunity to get to know the less well-known smaller charities in the county with the help and support of Josephine and her team at Kent Community Foundation. Visits to some of the charities have already taken place and we have a great many others booked in through the rest of the year. The volunteers who support the charities are exceptional and it is good to speak to them about their motivation.

There have been so many highlights already that it is difficult to choose specific events to focus on. The garden parties

Below left: With Chief Constable Tim Smith at Kent Police Passing Out awards ceremony
Below right: With two of the residents at an open day at Rockdale Housing Association, an assisted living residence in Sevenoaks

At a Remembrance Day service with the Very Revd Dr Philip Hesketh (Dean of Rochester), Kelly Tolhurst MP, the Lady Colgrain (Lord-Lieutenant), Cadet Sergeant Owen Gehrke de Rose (Kent Police Cadet), Cdre Rob Bellfield CBE ADC RN and Cllr Nina Gurung (Mayor of Medway)

are always a must to thank the people who contribute so much to the county. The one held at our historic dockyard was especially lovely as the sun shone and we heard about the filming of *Call the Midwife*. Another was held in the foremost lavender fields in the country where I learnt quite how many varieties of lavender there are and how essential oils are made.

The excitement created by royal visits to our county cannot be underestimated – we have had a few and are looking forward to others. These are essential for the organisations visited as they highlight all that is good in our county and also underline the importance of the role we fulfil on behalf of our monarch.

