

# Neither a day less... nor a day more

## Russell Beard

High Sheriff of Bedfordshire 2023-24

Serving one's county as High Sheriff brings a multitude of diverse experiences that one can never fully prepare for. From sitting with judges to witnessing first-hand the remarkable work of our police force, from acting as returning officer at an election to meeting members of the royal family, from engaging with schools and colleges to embracing the rich tapestry of cultures across Bedfordshire and so much more – the journey is truly remarkable.

Reflecting on the past year, amid countless memorable moments, it was meeting the numerous charitable volunteers that stands out. Their tireless efforts in aiding those in need, amid prevalent issues like poverty, homelessness, child deprivation and loneliness, are both inspiring and humbling.

The stark realities – such as children arriving late to school due to ill-fitting shoes, the necessity of food and hygiene banks or a young person's meager possessions next to their 'put-me-up' bed in a community hall – paint a distressing picture. Yet the unsung heroes who step up daily to assist these individuals are truly magnificent. I always felt a sense of guilt when leaving after a charity visit as I just wanted to do more to help.

It is now almost forty years on from the Band Aid single which raised millions for those overseas and we could do with Bob Geldof and co. singing in Kenilworth Road right now.

The Office of High Sheriff can only do so much. While efforts such as guiding charities towards potential funding sources,



With Dean Bourke (trustee) and volunteers on a visit to local homelessness charity Emmaus Village Carlton

liaising with support groups and raising awareness through the High Sheriff's office are made, somehow you just never feel you have done enough. Sometimes a simple 'thank you' can provide solace. The impact of the Office should never be underestimated, as recipients of the High Sheriff's certificate for excellence in serving the county are always so pleased to be recognised.

The High Sheriff is always made to feel

very special at every appointment and you hope that the shining of light can prove to be positive.

I have kept in close contact with my successor by sharing diary notes and attempting to hand over email addresses and website details as efficiently as possible.

When I first took office, a former High Sheriff told me that when the term ends you will not want to do a day less and a day more is probably going too far... I now know exactly what he meant!



Bedford's Christmas Tree Festival 2023 raised over £23,000



Presenting a High Sheriff's Award to the pharmacy department at Luton and Dunstable Hospital



With the volunteers of Luton Sikh Soup Kitchen



Presenting long service awards to volunteers at Hospital Radio Bedford