

# Building a better future together

## Professor Jaydip Ray DL

High Sheriff of South Yorkshire 2023-24

It is hard to summarise such an eventful and enjoyable year in brief, but I'll try...

The courts have provided a fascinating lens into society. It was most interesting to observe the special roles of the criminal, family, civil, employment, magistrates' and coroner's courts, and reassuring to see the principles of fair justice applied universally to uphold the rule of law and to protect our freedoms.

Increasing homelessness, drug-fuelled violence, knife crime, domestic violence and child exploitation are serious concerns. Many charities and voluntary organisations do extraordinary work to address them and their interactions with the courts and the probation services are immensely valuable. I have had the privilege of recognising South Yorkshire's Community Foundation, Sheffield Wednesday FC Community Programme, Roundabout, the Archer Project, Military Community Veterans Centre and the Samaritans, to name but a few, for their work in tackling these challenges. It was most humbling to join a pre-Christmas breakfast shift at the Archer Project which provides support to the homeless in Sheffield.

The police, fire and ambulance services do a great job with limited resources. Visiting various arms of these services be it public order, road policing, serious crime or A&E, or at graduation events, offered great opportunities to thank many of these unsung heroes. Joining a dawn raid to find Class A drugs was quite illustrative



With Cllr Duncan Anderson (Civic Mayor), Cllr Ros Jones (Mayor), Damian Allen (Chief Executive of Doncaster Council), Alison Clark (Bench Chair, South Yorkshire Magistrates) and others with recipients of a High Sheriff's Award at Doncaster Mansion House



Pre-Christmas breakfast shift at Archer Project for the homeless

of the risky nature of their jobs. Visits to the Yorkshire Air Ambulance made me appreciate their critical support to the community which is reliant on charitable support.

My theme was 'Building a Better Future Together' through our younger people. Supporting the cadets was therefore crucial. The cadet movement provides a unique opportunity for many to develop knowledge, skills, aptitude and confidence which not only enhances their career prospects but has a great positive influence on their peers. They were recognised with the Cadet Awards. Similarly the Public Bravery Awards and the Court Awards recognised the civilians who have taken enormous risks to protect others.

To encourage young entrepreneurs, we ran a High Sheriff's 'Building a Better Future Together' competition in conjunction with the Work-wise Foundation. Twelve schools signed up. Groups of students age 13 and under met industry leads and then came up with innovative projects from 'solar-powered first responder drones' to 'self-sorting garbage vans' to 'floating airports using green energy'. A total of £1,000 was given out in prizes.



On a visit to Yorkshire Air Ambulance



Students gathered for the High Sheriff's Work-wise 'Building a Better Future' competition

Many individuals from various walks of life provide extraordinary services to industry, education, government, healthcare and youth engagement through selfless sacrifice. It has been a privilege to recognise them for their huge contribution and concerted effort working in synergy to deliver many of the community revival and regeneration projects. The Market Street at HMP Doncaster (Marshgate) does impressive work on offender rehabilitation through skilling-up for future jobs. The CVP (cloud video platform) link to remote courts was also run efficiently and professionally.

On the cross-cultural side, visits to the Hindu Temple for festivities were always very warm. Joining the community for 'breaking the fast' (Iftar) at the Madina Mosque with some of the local consultants and community leaders was thoroughly enjoyable. The Hospital Service at the Sheffield Synagogue is a unique local event where I joined other civic dignitaries including the local mayors. Others had a more social and frivolous touch, for example, the classical and Bollywood singing in Rotherham Civic Theatre with the all-women Rotherham Sangeet and Choir Group and the ushering in of the Chinese New Year with the Dragon Dance were great fun.

The culmination of the wonderful year came with the Legal Service held at Sheffield Cathedral followed by a drinks reception and lunch at the historic Cutlers' Hall. We were joined by neighbouring Lord-Lieutenants, High Sheriffs, High Court judges, The King's Remembrancer, the Recorder and senior judiciary as well as senior police and civic dignitaries. However, the cadets and the police horses stole the show. The cathedral choir and the South Yorkshire Police Brass Band created the right environment with their lovely music enjoyed by all the guests.

Overall, a wonderful, varied, fulfilling and enjoyable experience.