

# Settling into a rhythm

## David Hurst DL

High Sheriff of Essex 2024-25

I started my year with a map of my county being framed and hung on my office wall. I bought some red dots and with each visit I marked where I had been. As Essex has 500 miles of coast the sea gave me the opportunity to jot down some totals of my adventures.

By the time my tenure finishes I will have clocked up 300 engagements across the county. I have settled into a rhythm – after an event I make an entry in my diary and this copy I then use along with a photo (or logo if photo not appropriate) on social media to inform where I have been and to promote the organisation I've visited. I start with X (Twitter) as it provides a news feed for the High Sheriff of Essex website and visitors can see details of all my visits as well a monthly post. Then comes Instagram where I will use more photos if I have them, additional description and links. Next up is Facebook with slightly different wording, photos and links and then I finish off with LinkedIn – a photo, tweaked words and links.

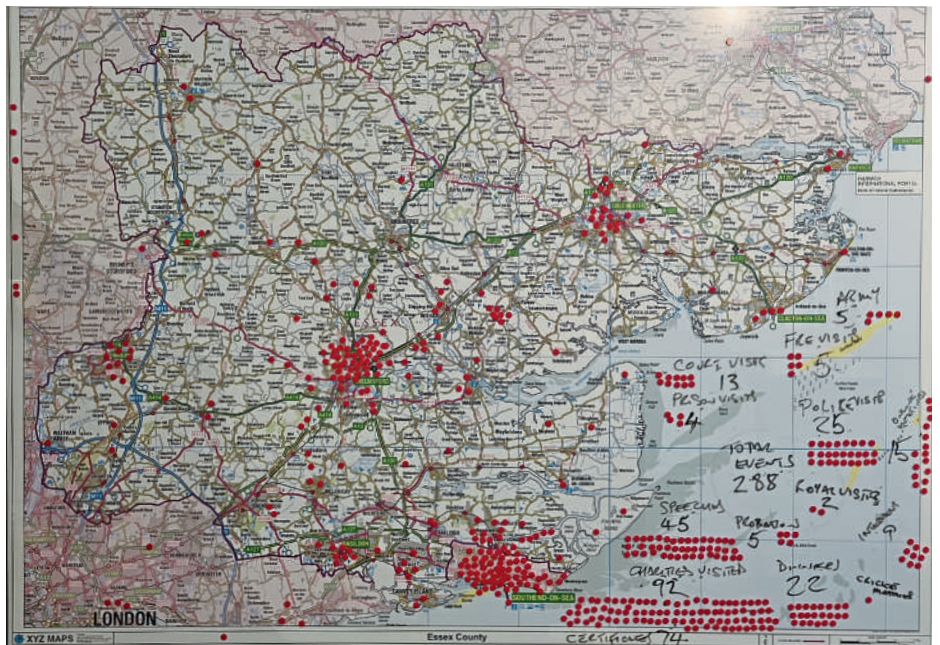
The whole process is done in less than 10 minutes. I saved photos to a file and every two months have had a book printed as a personal record of my year.

'Is social media worth it?' I hear you cry. Well, I will give you just one example. *The Knife Angel* visited the city of Southend and I participated in the welcoming ceremony. I posted photos on social media together with a comment on its powerful positive presence. Just on LinkedIn that post was viewed by 8,000 people.

I have one success I am particularly proud of. When visiting Southend Magistrates' Court I was shown round by the head of the Southern Bench and we sat for a while in Court 4. I wrote in my diary afterwards that the fabric of the building wasn't worthy of the people who worked and volunteered there. The seats had foam bursting out of them where they were so worn; a blind high up in a large window had a massive hole in it that I could have put my head through. I asked who was responsible for the upkeep and the clerk of the court shrugged their shoulders – 'It's always been like this.' So I sent a letter to the Ministry of Justice and – cutting a long story short – two months later I received a text from friend who is a magistrate: 'Blimey, Dave, they've fixed the chairs in Court 4!'



With Colin Ansell (CEO Southend Council), Clive Knowles (CEO of the British Ironwork Centre), Cllr Ron Woodley (Mayor of Southend) and Ben-Julian Harrington QPM (Chief Constable of Essex Police) in front of *The Knife Angel* in Southend



My year has included two royal visits, 25 police events, 13 court visits, four prison visits, 92 charities visited, 45 speeches and, thankfully, just one parking ticket.

The highlights: distributing £162,000 to 30 charities at the High Sheriff's Awards; hearing 'Jerusalem' sung by a full choir and 350 guests at my Justice Service in Chelmsford Cathedral; and presenting a High Sheriff's

Award to a lady for diligently supporting asylum seekers and refugees, who was, I think, determined not to like me due to her politics and views on the monarchy but who afterwards said she wouldn't mind me as a neighbour.

No doubt, like all High Sheriffs, I have anecdotes for dinner parties to last a lifetime. It has been an honour and a privilege.