

Doing it differently (again)

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High Sheriff of Rutland 2024-25

I am in a 'fairly' unique position having served as High Sheriff during the Covid pandemic and back then titled my magazine article 'Doing it differently' as circumstances forced us to engage via Zoom, letter-writing and occasional socially-distanced meetings in car parks when conditions allowed.

I was honoured to be nominated to serve again but would my previous experience make me better prepared second time around? In terms of how I planned and prepared, I do not think so, but regarding how I communicated, I knew that social media would be key to extending my reach across the county.

Many of my fellow High Sheriffs choose a theme or focus for their year but I decided not to. I wanted to be open to everyone in Rutland as these remain tough times for many in our community and the traditions of our role can offer reassurance.

A key aim for me was to engage, listen to people's stories and thank them for what they contribute to make the lives of those around them better, to know that their acts of kindness are recognised and valued.

Wherever I went, I used social media to cast a light on the good things that the people I met are doing. I also used it and the volunteer network of Citizens Advice Rutland to invite people to identify their own local heroes; this enabled me to recognise more people than I would otherwise have been able to do. I was



Walking the beat with officers from the Rutland beat team

delighted to present several High Sheriff's Awards on their behalf.

I was fortunate to visit our local police force on many occasions and was always in awe of their commitment to serving our communities. A personal highlight was walking the beat with a number of local officers which gave me a real insight into the challenges that they face daily but, equally, the huge rewards they get from what they do and the impact that they have. An extra special bonus is to have the support of a police cadet; my cadet has been a fantastic ambassador for young people throughout.

In fulfilling our traditional role of supporting the maintenance of law and order, encouraging public sector agencies and voluntary sector organisations – especially those involved in crime reduction and social cohesion – I am hugely grateful

for the time they so generously gave me to get a real understanding of their work.

It has been great fun to celebrate the success some of our brilliant young people whether on school visits, presentation evenings, art, drama or sports events. I joined all our local primary schools when they went to Warning Zone in Leicester where they experienced the learning zones that teach key life skills and safeguarding messages to 10- to 11-year-olds. The zones help them make safe decisions and choices in their everyday lives and online.

I have been humbled by the generosity of so many selfless, good and caring people. I hope I have listened well to their stories and positively encouraged them; I hope they feel that I have taken the time to show interest, recognise, empower and thank them for whatever they do.

I would offer the following advice to future High Sheriffs: be careful in the selection of your theme to be sure that it will resonate with the most people possible in your county rather than a niche personal interest; be open to everything that comes your way; take what you do seriously but never yourself and always do it with a smile.



Joining the Honda Goldwing Owners Club at their national gathering in Oakham



With members of the school council at Catmose College, Oakham



Presenting a High Sheriff's Award to Matt Basey of Leicestershire Fire and Rescue Service