



At a citizenship ceremony in Darlington with Cllr Sonia Kane (Mayor)

Proactive not reactive

Mike Poole JP DL

High Sheriff of Durham 2025-26

I must admit, I did undertake a lot of preparation prior to attending Durham Crown Court on 28 March before His Honour Judge Francis Laird – I was aware I only had one year and wanted to use every single bit of it to promote, explain and use the role and history of the Office of High Sheriff to help and support individuals and organisations across my county.

As Vice Lord-Lieutenant I had already attended several citizenship ceremonies across the county. I wrote to all the registrars across County Durham enquiring why the High Sheriff was never invited to them – this resulted in some 40 invitations covering Hartlepool, Stockton, Darlington and Durham City. They are so special and a great opportunity to explain the role and history of the office – court dress makes such an impression and is great for lots of photographs.

I made contact at the outset with the police, fire and rescue services that cover north and south of my region as I was keen to fix up visits as opposed to awaiting invitations.

The High Sheriff's Award certificates are a great way of acknowledging and thanking individuals and organisations who do such great things within our communities. I am just into month six of my year and so far



At the Legal Service in the cathedral with the Revd Canon Dr Philip Plyming (Dean of Durham) and the Revd Mark Miller (my chaplain)

have presented just under 30 with the expectation to do at least the same in the latter half of my year.

I am a great believer that High Sheriffs should be proactive not reactive – 12 months can pass very quickly.

My legal service was held in Durham Cathedral on 13 July – a lovely day attended by my fellow High Sheriffs in adjoining counties, the judiciary, police and my personal guests. My police cadets did an excellent job guiding attendees to their seats. It was a pleasure to have the Hon Mr Justice Goss there – a great supporter of this service and his last one attending as a judge. As a magistrate I have been involved in the magistrates' mock trials competitions, mentoring a local school. I invited the teacher and several of the students as my guests on the day and was

so lucky to be able to introduce Justice Goss to them; they chatted for half an hour – I was so pleased.

On 17 April, Maundy Thursday, within a few weeks of taking office, I was personally introduced to His Majesty King Charles III after the service in Durham Cathedral – an extremely memorable occasion.

I have visited several charities. One thing that has been very surprising is the fact that a lot of the organisations are not aware of others across the county doing similar or connected activities. The role of High Sheriff has been very useful in facilitating introductions and connections – bringing people together for mutual benefit of the communities they serve.

All in all, a great start to my shrieval year – I feel so lucky to have the opportunity.



Meeting Steve Helps, Chief Fire Officer of County Durham and Darlington Fire and Rescue Service