

Citizenship Ceremony

Deputy Superintendent Registrar, Fellow Citizens, families, friends and most importantly of all, New Citizens, who I am delighted to now be able to address directly.

As High Sheriff of Surrey, it is my great pleasure to speak to you today and to officially welcome you all to our county. The role of High Sheriff has been part of our history and tradition for at least one thousand years, when the 'Shire Reeves', as they were then called, protected the Monarch's interests in the county, in particular the collection of taxes and the enforcement of Law and Order. The High Sheriff used to have very extensive powers indeed, but nowadays is an independent, non-political Royal appointment for a single year. The modern role involves attendance at Royal visits, supporting Her Majesty's judiciary and providing encouragement to the police, emergency services, probation and prison services and to other agents involved with crime prevention, particularly among young people. The High Sheriff also plays an active role in promoting the wide range of voluntary work within our county. It is this final focus that provides an astonishing insight into the wonderful people right across Surrey who work tirelessly, often unseen and unsung, to help those who are not as fortunate as themselves. I am sure that our new citizens here today will also find many ways to become similar pillars of our community and we look forward to you playing an active part in everyday life, in whatever form that takes - whether it is something as small as joining your local library, or something larger, like volunteering at your local school or charity. Each of you brings your own unique talents and experience to our county, and in doing so you enrich the lives of the communities you are joining, and contribute to this county's future. We also encourage you to take part in our democratic process and exercise your right to vote.

And what a county you have chosen! Surrey truly has something for everyone. Walkers and nature lovers (and many, many cyclists!) are drawn to Surrey's Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty - Leith Hill, our highest point, Frensham Ponds and Newlands Corner, are but a few of the stunning beauty spots. Also that famous venue for the Olympic cycling in 2012, Box Hill, has the oldest untouched area of natural woodland in the UK, and is indeed one of the oldest in Europe.

Those with a passion for history flock to Surrey's stately homes such as Polesden Lacey, all steeped in our colourful past. We have a long tradition of protecting our countryside, preserving its heritage and continuing to celebrate our culture, as the forward-looking county you would expect us to be.

Surrey is renowned for its excellence in education. Our schools are some of the highest performing in the country, whilst the Universities of Surrey and Royal Holloway are outstanding international institutions with world-wide reputations for excellent teaching and research. Our colleges too are fine examples of the breadth of teaching, learning and training opportunities available for all of our people, young and old alike.

Our county is home to over 1.1 million people across our eleven Boroughs and Districts (hence the eleven points on the High Sheriff's badge of office), and we are home to more Organisation and Company Head Quarters than any other county, outside of London itself.

Your County Council, in whose offices we gather, looks forward to providing you with the services that bring you quality of life; to listening and responding to your needs; and to working alongside you with shared values, and the common goals of tolerance and respect.

This is a proud moment for you, your families and friends - it also gives me great pride to be one of the first official representative to offer greetings - 'You are All Very Welcome to the County of Surrey'!