**Uniformed Protective Services stud – Passing out Speech.**

**June 2025**

**The High Sheriff’s Speech – Mr Peter Cluff.**

Good afternoon, I am delighted to be here with you for the passing out celebration today of Activate Learning’s Uniformed Protective Services students.

It is also most appropriate that I am here recognising the importance of public service, as the High Sheriff is the oldest public office in the country with the exception of the Monarchy itself, dating back over 1,000 years. The word sheriff is derived from the Anglo-Saxon Shire Reeve, the person in charge of law and order in the Shire. After the Norman invasion they continued the role of sheriffs, endowing them with more powers including raising armies and taxes across the County, so my predecessors were not welcomed as warmly as I have been today!

High Sheriffs of Surrey are mentioned in the Domesday Book, witnessed the sealing of the Magna Carta and (whisper it quietly) signed the death warrant of our first King Charles. When the present King Charles confirmed me as High Sheriff on March 21st this year I became the 804th known named High Sheriff of Surrey.

The duties of a High Sheriff these days are much more pleasurable and include escorting members of the Royal Family when they visit the County, thanking the many charities and voluntary organisations across the County for the incredible work they do, and most importantly supporting the Judiciary and all who uphold the King’s Peace including, judges, magistrates, prison officers, the police and other emergency services; which is why I am delighted to be here today; meeting perhaps future upholders of the King’s Peace.

Hopefully your studies will have shown you that uniformed protective services are crucial in the UK for many, many reasons including upholding law and order, emergency response, national defence, community safety, upholding human rights, promoting equality and diversity; and for the high level of discipline and professionalism that is necessary to maintain public trust and credibility.

But also hopefully you have discovered that there are tremendous career prospects to be had, offering opportunities for personal growth, challenging work and career progression within a variety of public service roles.

Prior to becoming High Sheriff, in one of my previous roles I used to occasionally lecture MBA students at Exeter University on entrepreneurship and I used to conclude my lecture by passing on advice to the students as they looked to set out on their future careers and that advice I hope is just as relevant to those of you passing out today perhaps looking for a role in the Protective Services.

The advice stemmed from there supposedly being seven traits, or life skills, which will give you the best opportunity to succeed in life and enhance your future career prospects and they are:-

1. Tenacity – you have already demonstrated in passing out today that you have perseverance and determination; life is an ultra-marathon and how you respond to set-backs and overcome obstacles will be important steps in your personal journey
2. Passion – have a drive to solve problems, clearly something you must have demonstrated to be here today; much depends on your attitude to tackling problems, my father used to tell me there are no such things as problems, just challenges
3. Tolerance of Ambiguity – this is an ability to withstand worrying over things you cannot directly control. Just focus on what you can do, deal with what is on front of you, and do not be distracted by things that may never happen
4. Self-belief – trust yourself and your judgement, not be arrogant but self-confident
5. Vision – lift your eyes from your daily life to spot opportunities for you and for others, to see beyond the present
6. Flexibility - be prepared to adapt; pause, consider all sides of an argument so you can see where others are coming from, and then act accordingly
7. Rule breaking - not literally, I could hardly advocate that as High Sheriff, but be prepared to defy conventional wisdom by exploring different approaches to the challenges you face and find new solutions

But I will conclude with my favorite piece of advice; which I actually have as a poster on my wall which I look at every morning when I get up. It is from arguably the greatest boxer of all time, Mohammed Ali and it simply says:-

**Don’t count the days, make the days count!**

You have clearly been adhering to this mantra by successfully passing out today, but also carry it forward with you wherever your future may lie.

***Peter Cluff,***

***High Sheriff of Surrey 2025/26.***