It is my pleasure to welcome you here today for your British Citizenship Ceremony. We are delighted that you have chosen Surrey as the venue for this important event.

Having been appointed as High Sheriff of Surrey by King Charles III on 12th March this year, it is my honour, on his behalf, to congratulate you on becoming our country’s newest citizens. I represent the oldest public office in the country other than the monarchy itself. There have been High Sheriffs for over 1,000 years representing the King or Queen in each County. I am the 804th known named High Sheriff of Surrey. Originally, we were in charge of keeping law and order and raising taxes and armies, but today we have more pleasant duties to perform, such as presiding over this ceremony today.

Surrey is a county of outstanding beauty, with busy urban regions such as the historic towns of Guildford and Farnham contrasting with beautiful rural areas such as the Surrey Hills and the rivers Thames, Wey and Mole. We have the benefit of the country’s two largest airports on our borders and excellent access into London by train, but perhaps surprising we are the most wooded county in the whole of England with almost a quarter of our area covered by trees helping to give us our own separate identity. We have wonderful schools, a wide variety of arts and cultural venues and an abundance of sporting and outdoor pursuits to enjoy.

Our community is of great importance to us in Surrey. It is the ‘beating heart’ of the county, whether it be in a busy town or a rural village. A close community offers support and encouragement to others and values each and every person. You may already be involved in schools, community groups and places of worship, and we would encourage each of you as a new citizen to continue to engage with your community. Embracing and sharing the values and beliefs of each other’s cultures, allows us all to become a more tolerant and welcoming society.

Similarly, our charities and voluntary organisations play an important and integral part in helping to make our communities thrive in a safe environment. Please get involved and support these organisations to continue to make Surrey an inclusive and caring place to live; where nobody gets left behind. And as we drive forwards to meet the challenges of the future, we will value each of you as a member of our ‘Surrey Family’ and we will appreciate the contribution you make to our county.

It is therefore my privilege today to welcome you as new citizens to both the County and the Country. You are no longer visitors; you are citizens of the United Kingdom and we welcome you with open arms.