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POINTS OF VIEW

IT'S very hard in politics to find something that we can all agree on. There are always at least two sides to every position, every discussion, every issue.

While at times that can be frustrating, it's also extremely important to be able to listen to other people's opinions, to try to understand the world from someone else's perspective and to realise that there is usually more than one way of achieving a goal, and indeed that there are often several - sometimes competing - goals.

Which is probably a strange way of saying that I think there is one thing that we can probably all agree is true: Britain is very good at pomp and ceremony.

Now, that doesn't mean to say we all have to like it, but as a nation with an incredibly rich history of pageantry and tradition, I think it would be hard to deny that we're pretty good at it.

Just think back to things like Queen Elizabeth II's funeral, or King Charles III's coronation. The displays of splendour and brightly-coloured costumes, many of which are centuries old, are arguably second to none in the world.

I remember sitting down to watch the late Queen's funeral procession on the TV, thinking I'd go and do something else in a few minutes' time, but a couple of hours later I was still mesmerised not just by the parade, but also by the almost unbelievable amount of meticulous planning and attention to detail that had obviously gone into the event, despite the date not being known very far in advance.

Obviously, it's the sort of thing that had been planned for years, but that still doesn't make it any the less impressive.

And on a much more local level, we're pretty good at it too, although you might not necessarily be aware of some of it.

Take, for example, the High Sheriffs' Awards. First of all, who or what is the High Sheriff?

Well, the High Sheriff of Essex is the monarch's official representative in the county for law and order, by which I mean people including the police, magistrates, judges, prison and probationary services, local authorities and emergency services.

We're currently on our 843rd High Sheriff of Essex, which is a role that lasts for one year.

The current High Sheriff is Charles Bishop, shown in the traditional outfit in these photos at the High Sheriffs' Awards which took place last week.

The High Sheriffs' Awards are an annual event that rec-



Chelmsford homelessness charity Sanctus won the Essex County Council Bowl, presented by the High Sheriff of Essex
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Dan Skeates of Cool to be Kind



Donna Hance of Broomfield Village Hall Charity



Luisa Di Marco and Ronnie Matthews of Keep it 100 Youth



Nichola Grieves and Charlie Newton of North Avenue



Lora Draper, of The Change Project

Special award recognises charity's wonderful work helping city's homeless

ognise some of the fantastic work going on across the county by the voluntary sector. Alongside monetary awards to help these amazing organisations continue their great work, there are five much-coveted awards for truly outstanding work in a particular field.

Although nominees were from all over Essex, I'm delighted that there were several Chelmsford-based organisations nominated for awards this year, and especially thrilled that the fabulous local charity Sanctus won the

Essex County Council Bowl. This is a very special award because it recognises voluntary organisations that go above and beyond to work in partnership with other organisations, creating truly joined up and integrated services.

I've featured Sanctus in this column before.

It does some truly wonderful work supporting individuals who are homeless in Chelmsford.

You can find out more about what Sanctus does at <https://sanctus-home.com>.

A special shout out goes to all the other Chelmsford voluntary sector organisations that were mentioned on the night, including Cool to be Kind, Broomfield Village Hall Char-

ity, Keep It 100 Youth, The Change Project and North Avenue Youth Centre.

And of course, none of these organisations would exist without the truly amazing volunteers who give up so much of their time to make things happen.

I hope they enjoyed their evening, hosted by the High Sheriff of Essex, with support from BBC Essex who compered the awards.

It was a lovely local example of pomp and ceremony but with a very worthy audience getting rewarded for making our communities better and stronger.

Before I finish, it wouldn't be right not to mention the fabulous work that Essex Community Foundation

does in supporting the voluntary sector through administering grants and helping voluntary organisations find the funding they need.

Find out more about its work at <https://www.essexcommunityfoundation.org.uk/>.

As I have said before in this column, the voluntary sector does vital work in our community.

The awards ceremony was a time to relax and enjoy the ceremonial occasion that we do so well in this country and recognise that we also do charity and volunteering extremely well. Long may that continue.

Thank you to everyone who gives up their time to help others.

Marie

None of these organisations would exist without the truly amazing volunteers who give up so much of their time.