

Hampshire's new Police and Crime Commissioner looks back on first 100 days in job

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By Jenny Makin

HAMPSHIRE'S new Police and Crime Commissioner is confident he has hit the ground running as he marked his first 100 days in the post.

Simon Hayes said he has already made difficult decisions that could have major ramifications for the taxpayer and the police.

The new commissioner role was the most controversial change to how policing in Hampshire is governed in decades.

The scrapping of the police authority and the creation of an £80,000-a-year Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) caused much debate.

But there was also a wave of apathy as fewer than 20 per cent of people bothered to turn out at the county's polling stations last November.

Now, Mr Hayes, who stood as an independent candidate, has:

- * Defended a decision to spend thousands of pounds of public money by looking to hire a deputy.

- * Revealed that he is considering going against the Government and increasing police officers' starting pay.

Mr Hayes has been busy recruiting a new chief constable, drafting a long-term police and crime plan, attending countless meetings, and has been trying to ingratiate himself with police officers and the public during his first 100 days in the job.

He shrugs off the suggestion that he is still unknown to many residents of Hampshire, and said he is making strenuous efforts to get into communities, meet the people he now serves, and make them understand that he has a mission "to protect people and places, reduce crime, and reduce victims".

Mr Hayes said: "I have always recognised that the vast majority didn't understand what a PCC was about, so I am keen to explain to people as I meet them, what I am doing and what I can bring to the table. People can recognise the priorities that I am talking about, particularly the criminality that comes as a result of drug and alcohol issues, like thefts to feed a habit."

Speaking about his new job, he said: "I feel enormously privileged. I don't feel stressed, I don't feel tired – I just want to get on and do the job."

But he said the past four months, during which he has attended more than 200 meetings, met more than 2,000 people, and travelled in excess of 2,000 miles, have taught him that he can't do it on his own. In the coming months, he will be drafting a job description with a salary that he hopes will attract someone who can deputise at top level meetings.

Meanwhile, the Windsor report to the Government has recommended starting salaries for new officers be slashed to £19,000, which, Mr Hayes said, poses a "big dilemma".

He said: "To put it mildly, it is unfortunate what the Government is proposing and what Tom Windsor's report is recommending. "The constabulary draws a lot of people from the pool of PCSOs who work for them, who could be currently earning four or five thousand pounds more than that.

"I have the right to increase that starting salary and I am seriously looking at doing that because I believe it is the right thing to do."

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