

Shropshire crime tsar to create paid community posts

Shropshire's crime tsar is to create six taxpayer-funded posts to help “improve” police relations with communities across the region.

Up to £15,000 will be set aside by Bill Longmore, West Mercia's Police and Crime Commissioner, for a new 'community co-ordinator' as part of a plan to 'sustain and develop' links with local people.



There will also be five 'area ambassadors' – including one each in Shropshire and Telford & Wrekin – who will receive a smaller allowance which is to be decided at a later date.

Although the post holders will be volunteers, they will be given an allowance recognising potential loss of earnings and any personal costs.

Mr Longmore, who is on a £75,000 salary but who gave away £20,000 of that to support victims of crime, has visited more than 300 community groups with his £50,000-a-year deputy Barrie Sheldon since being appointed in November.

But he said help was needed to continue finding out exactly what the public expected from their policing service.

The move comes as West Mercia strives save just over £20 million in the next four years due to budget cuts.

But Mr Longmore maintained they were remaining “cost conscious”.

He said: “Since my election I and my deputy have visited over 300 individuals and community groups to learn about their local policing needs.”

Mr Longmore added: “This level of engagement has proved invaluable, particularly when putting together my first Police and Crime Plan.

“We thought long and hard before deciding on a figure that would enable us to attract the right candidate, whilst taking into account the tough financial challenges we are facing.

“I feel it is also worth highlighting that the allowance we have agreed upon is considerably less than ambassadors or advisors appointed by other Police and Crime Commissioners.”

He added: “We remain very cost-conscious and even with this post we have reduced the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner budget by £300,000 this year – which is around a 20 per cent reduction.

“We will be expecting a great deal from the successful candidate including exceptionally strong skills, experience and knowledge in a number of different areas.”

Mr Longmore said: “Covering the whole of West Mercia area, they will be fundamental to help us make the area even more vibrant and safe.”

The successful candidate will be asked to commit up to 10 days a month and once appointed the five Community Ambassadors will be installed.

For more information go to www.west-mercia-pcc.gov.uk