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by Rob Parsons

NEW police officers in West Yorkshire will all be paid the maximum allowed by their force despite radical Government reforms which have seen starting salaries cut by £4,000.

Home Secretary Theresa May ruled earlier this year that forces could pay new recruits a minimum of £19,000, less than many trainee managers at McDonald's. The proposals, based on recommendations by the ex-rail regulator Tom Winsor, prompted anger from rank and file police, who said the reforms would lower morale.

However, under plans announced by West Yorkshire's police and crime commissioner Mark Burns-Williamson, new starters to the county's force will get a salary of £22,000, the maximum allowed under the reforms.

Fourteen new officers starting this week will be paid the revised amount and 30 officers who start in November will be paid £22,221 thanks to a one per cent pay rise from next month.

Mr Burns-Williamson said: "I believe the best way to ensure we continue to attract high calibre candidates is to pay people accordingly."

The reforms allow forces to pay new officers with no policing experience £19,000 and those with experience as a special constable, PCSO or volunteer nearer £22,000.

West Yorkshire's decision means there will be no scope to make this distinction, but it is understood that any new recruits who meet the selection criteria would have relevant experience. North Yorkshire and Humberside pay between £19,000 and £22,000 depending on experience and qualifications.

Nearly 400 applicants applied to become one of 44 new police officers, a move funded by a rise in the council tax precept to replace officers who have left or retired.

Ned Liddimore, vice-chairman of West Yorkshire's Police Federation said: "It is very positive and it is recognition for our new officers by the chief constable. While we have some savings to make it is not at the expense of attracting the right people to the job.

The expectation on each police officer is that from day one they will fulfill the full role of constable. It is not like any other profession, where you have a learning curve."

West Yorkshire Police has to make £112.6 million in savings between 2010 and 2015.



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