

**From the Basingstoke Gazette: Thursday, October 15, 2015 at 4.30pm**

**AN OFFER of £60,000 to pay for a village beat officer has been rejected by the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC).**

As previously reported in The Gazette, villagers from Upton Grey and the Candovers offered to pay the money to keep PC Andy Reid as their dedicated officer, after the PCC proposed to relocate him as part of cutbacks.

PC Reid has covered the beat for 10 years.

Simon Hayes, PCC, held a meeting with representatives from the area to discuss the changes to rural policing following £80million of centrally imposed government cuts to Hampshire Constabulary's budget.

A statement from the office of the PCC said it has now been agreed that there will be two dedicated neighbourhood police officers for the Basingstoke Rural South neighbourhood, one of whom will be the lead officer for dealing with neighbourhood priorities in Upton Grey and the Candovers.

It added: *"The neighbourhood will also be supported by a team of police community support officers, in line with the constabulary's operational change programme across Hampshire and the Isle of Wight, which - as stated in the PCC's police and crime plan - ensures that neighbourhood policing remains at the heart of communities, based on strong relationships with the officers serving those areas. The arrangement will not require any private funding contribution to be made and it will be reviewed in six months to assess effectiveness."*

Mark Ruffell, borough councillor for Upton Grey and the Candovers, told The Gazette: *"Obviously we are disappointed with the decision but at the same time we understand that Hampshire Constabulary has to find huge savings in order to balance its budget. Clearly the high level of policing that we have enjoyed is something we wish to maintain and we will continue to discuss with the PCC ways of funding our existing level of policing in the future."*

He said although PC Reid will still cover Upton Grey and the Candovers, he will be part of a team covering a much wider area, which stretches out to Whitchurch.

He said discussions will continue with the PCC, adding: *"Police forces up and down the land have started to accept alternative methods of finance from insurance companies, from private finance and sponsorship in these difficult times."*

Mr Hayes will invite feedback on how the arrangement is working.

The statement from the office of the PCC added: *"In responding to the concerns of residents, the Police and Crime Commissioner has been clear that the provision and funding of policing services across Hampshire and the Isle of Wight needs to be equitable."*