

Scrutiny Report

Bus and Community Transport Provision

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Lead Member's Foreword

Growing up in Wythall, in the most northern corner of Worcestershire, public transport was a vital link for me to stay connected to friends, get to work and university. The subsidised bus service from Wythall to Birmingham was a fundamental part of everything I did and was a lifeline for a teenager. Now, as a councillor, the recognition of the importance of a reliable public transport network is at the forefront of my work. I lead this scrutiny task group to tackle some of the big strategic questions we face as a council in ensuring accessible public transport for all.

This report not only seeks to confront the nitty gritty issues of subsidised bus travel in Worcestershire, but to change the mind-set of how we seek to provide services. It's time to start building bus services up so that buses are seen as an option for everyone, not just those who have no other option, as part of a county-wide strategic approach to address the issues but also to make the most of opportunities. This means changing the way we tender for services, giving incentives to our partners to grow bus usage, improving the perception of our bus services and embracing new technology and platforms to improve confidence and accessibility.

I hope this report and feedback provided will inform the Directorate's ongoing review and acknowledge the real issues and concern for those where services have been reduced or are threatened. We are in challenging financial times, but if we are to meet those national priorities to reduce congestion, car use and improve air quality, we must build up our services rather than let them diminish.

I would like to thank all those who have contributed to the task group and its report and recommendations. In particular, the Passenger Transport team for their availability, expertise and patience during the process. I would like to thank bus operators, Aston's, Diamond and First for their time in speaking to us and the other operators who gave their feedback.

This report is only possible because of the plethora of evidence given or submitted to us by members of the public, parish councils and stakeholder groups who have contributed in person and by email. The insight they have provided in painting a picture of the current level of provision, the good and the bad and their viewpoints on how to build a sustainable service in the future, has been invaluable.

Any report like this requires the dedication of passionate and committed councillors and council officers. I would like to thank Liz, Tom, Paul, Roger and Paul for their time and interest in this topic. This task group has highlighted scrutiny at its forensic best, rooted in the pursuit of facts and to provide the best quality service to the people we serve. Finally, I would like to thank our incredible scrutiny team officers Emma, Alison, and Sam for their support in the production of this report. It is not easy to oversee such an investigation, in terms of scheduling, taking evidence and producing a report in such a small space of time. Without their support, this report wouldn't have been possible.

Councillor Chris Bloore

Bus and Community Transport Provision Task Group

Bus and Community Transport Provision

Background and Purpose of the Scrutiny

1. At its meeting on **13 September 2018**, the Council unanimously agreed the following Motion:

"The Council is concerned at the unexpected cuts in bus services announced by First and Diamond bus companies in August which take effect on 17 and 3 September respectively.

We welcome the undertaking that the Council will carry out a fundamental review of its entire subsidised services which will involve a public consultation exercise.

We ask that this review is supported by an urgent cross-party scrutiny into current bus and community transport provision which should include the availability of transport at crucial times of the day to get to work, to school or college, to medical appointments and for shopping. The scrutiny exercise should be completed by middle/late November to feed into the 2019/20 budget-setting process."

2. The Overview and Scrutiny Performance Board (OSPB) agreed at its meeting on **26 September 2018** that a Scrutiny Task Group led by Councillor Chris Bloore (Chairman of the OSPB) would be set up to scrutinise this issue. The findings of the scrutiny would feed into the Council's review of subsidised services and also into finalisation of the 2019/20 budget setting process.
3. At the time of the Task Group's work, the Directorate of Economy and Infrastructure was carrying out a scoping exercise to ascertain the elements that would be included in its review.
4. The **terms of reference** for the scrutiny exercise were to investigate current bus and community/alternative transport provision including the availability of transport at crucial times of the day to get to work, to school or college, to medical appointments and for shopping.
5. The **scope of the scrutiny** was identified as follows:
 - how bus Services are currently operating, both subsidised and commercial
 - current County Council policy and budget for bus subsidies
 - how the bus service cuts will affect the service users
 - whether the existing bus services meet the needs of bus users across the County
 - the role of community transport and how it is supported
 - how the Service is perceived and experienced by bus users
 - proposals for how the review of subsidised bus services will be carried out.

The Task Group's approach

6. Evidence has been gathered from a variety of sources, including Worcestershire County Council (WCC) Passenger Transport Officers, commercial bus operators, Worcestershire Community Transport Consortium, parish councils, County Councillors, a District Council, User Groups and Members of the Public.
7. Evidence was gathered through meetings in person and by a feedback form. An invitation to address the Task Group was extended to a wider group of people, but given the short timescales involved, it is appreciated that this was not always achievable.
8. The Scrutiny has also received considerable media interest and invited comments from the public.
9. Feedback forms were issued/made available to a wide range of parties (see below) who were invited to submit views on the issues being considered.
 - County Councillors
 - District and Parish Councils
 - User Groups – including the Vale Transport Group, Youth Cabinet, and groups supporting older people and those with disabilities (including Age UK, Mencap, Connect, SpeakEasy N.O.W, Sight Concern)
 - Bus companies
 - Consortium of Community Transport
 - Council and service user groups
 - Members of the Public
10. The Task Group was delighted to receive a total of 126 responses from a wide range of organisations and members of the public. The Members of the Task Group have had the opportunity to read all of the feedback which has been received. The general themes of the feedback are set out later in this report and a detailed summary is also provided.
11. A Schedule of the Task Group's Activity is listed in **Appendix 1**.
12. A list of documents reviewed/received during the scrutiny process is included at **Appendix 2**.

Bus services and how the Council supports services

What is the Council legally obliged to provide for public transport?

13. The Transport Act 1985 places a requirement on local authorities to have regard to the needs of their residents and to provide financial support for local bus services as they see fit to meet those needs. The duty is 'to have regard to the needs', rather than the actual provision of services. In particular, there is a requirement to consider the specific needs of older and disabled people, with powers to provide funding for service

provision, such as community transport. There are also duties under the Equalities Act 2010 as both elderly and disabled residents are covered by protected characteristics.

Bus Subsidies

14. The Council subsidises bus services, with a current subsidy budget of £1.8m, with an additional £500k (approximately) Bus Service Operators Grant (BSOG) from central Government, and a recharge to Children's Services (approximately) £280k dependent on numbers of pupils. The Council provides a strategic grant of £90k to Community Transport. There is also fares and concessionary fares income which fluctuates. The Council's total spend on transport totals approximately £21.8M including subsidies, home to school transport, community transport concessionary fare budget received from central Government and BSOG. A detailed breakdown is shown below:

Bus subsidies	£1,800,000
Bus Services Operators Grant (BSOG)	£500,000
Concessionary fares budget	£5,400,000
Community Transport	£90,000
Home to school transport	£14,000,000
	£21,790,000

All figures are (circa) and open to fluctuation dependent on demand.

NB Some Councillors have also contributed to various public transport services from the County Councillors' Divisional Fund. In the current financial year, as of November, £20,250.00 has been contributed.

15. The allocation of the £1.8m bus subsidies across different bus providers and the geographical spread has been considered in detail. The Task Group requested a breakdown of the Council's subsidies, and whilst this information cannot be shared here for reasons of commercial sensitivity, the way in which the allocations of subsidies varied between bus providers was not in line with the Task Group's expectations. The levels of subsidy are the result of commercial tendering.
16. Having considered the current bus subsidy criteria and the impact on current services, the Task Group felt that the criteria needed to be reviewed, particularly in relation to larger villages (*the equivalent of a Category 1 village in the SWDP*), some of which were no longer receiving a baseline timetabled service. In addition, they felt that the subsidies needed to be used more effectively to contribute to the sustainability of rural villages to ensure that social isolation does not occur and that residents can continue to access their employment and education.

17. The Task Group asked how the Council's subsidy support compared with other similar areas, and this is set out below:-

Comparative Data - Local authority spend on buses in England – source 'website - Your Bus Matters'

County	2010/11	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19
Worcestershire	£5,615,982	£1,952,764	£1,896,709	£1,848,000
Warwickshire	£2,458,046	£2,550,742	£2,400,888	£2,042,942
Herefordshire	£2,360,126	£679,455	£700,231	£677,449
Gloucestershire	£2,980,743	£2,164,374	£1,589,300	£2,138,536
Shropshire	£4,749,540	£2,982,823	£2,983,060	£2,487,130
Oxfordshire	£5,771,495	£944,836	£0	£0
Wiltshire	£7,077,866	£4,593,562	£0	£2,595,500

NB. It should be noted that the figures below have been accessed via an external website and therefore WCC Transport Officers are not able to confirm that all of the local authorities have provided information on the same basis eg. whether BSOG, education funding and rural bus subsidy grants have been included.

18. **Concessionary fares budget** – Worcestershire residents are entitled to a concessionary bus pass if they are a pensioner, disabled or require a companion pass. The concessionary fare budget from the Government is approximately £5m. The Task Group queried whether any underspend could be directed to bus services, however it is understood that variances are low and that in any case, any underspend identified cannot be used to maintain or enhance the local bus network. The budget for concessionary fares reimbursement is not a discretionary subsidy, it is used to reimburse bus operators for actual journeys undertaken. The budget spend will increase or decrease solely on the number of concessionary journeys undertaken.

19. **The figures for the Concessionary fares budget for the previous 3 years are as follows:**

2016/17 - base budget £5.4m outturn £5.5m (*overspend £95,766*)

2017/18 - base budget £5.2m, outturn £5.1m

2018/19 - base budget £5.4m, predicted outturn close to budget

How current services are working

20. There are approximately 130 providers (spanning a range of services including minibuses and taxis) and 2 prominent bus providers (First and Diamond). The Council's Transport Operations Manager explained that in the past, the contracting process involved a price being set which operators bid against and also needed to pass the required criteria. However, the bus operator market today is not a rich environment and market contraction presented a financial risk. Things had changed dramatically in the last 4 years and the lack of new operators and new drivers was a fundamental challenge and a national problem.

21. The Task Group learnt that the Directorate would be looking at how the Council goes to market. They were informed that there needed to be a mechanism in the contract to incentivise operators to invest and to reward quality. With the weighting of 70% for price and 30% for quality, it is possible to reward operators for a good job. In 2014, at a time when there was a commercially stable network, the County Council had carried out a wide consultation exercise to assess subsidised services and find out what was important to the public. The resulting template for services included factors such as viability, sufficient passenger numbers and disability access requirements. The addition of quality Key Performance Indicators (KPI's) in the framework had meant that some stability had been offered to the transport providers at that time. The Council's Passenger Transport Team provided the Task Group with a grid showing the current criteria used. This is included at **Appendix 3**. The current criteria includes weighting against:

- Cost per passenger
- Passengers per journey
- Index of multiple deprivation
- Car ownership
- Primary journey purpose
- Access to other services.
- Percentage of elderly and disabled pass users

22. The bus operators who attended the Task Group highlighted that currently there is a real struggle to remain viable and that the recent negative publicity around bus services had an adverse impact on the remaining services. They advised that they liaised with Council Officers when there was likely to be a need to significantly alter or reduce services, to ensure that all parties were aware of changes in good time. They also, where possible, put forward potential variations to other routes which might lessen the impact of a cut in service. Whilst they did not wish to see services cut, they are commercial businesses and they cannot sustain loss making routes in the long term, unless some form of financial support can be provided.

23. Some of the key issues considered during the Task Group's work have included:

- How realistic the subsidies are and whether they support routes which are nearly profitable or ones in a difficult financial situation?
- How the benefit obtained from the subsidies was assessed
- Whether the bus subsidy criteria are still relevant and viable
- The need for a strategic approach, ensuring that the limited subsidy is targeted to achieve the most benefit.
- The danger that any criteria may direct funds disproportionately towards urban/suburban areas of deprivation and away from large villages
- It was vital to have a baseline, daily timetabled service between larger villages (*the equivalent of a Category 1 village in the South Worcestershire Development Plan¹* (SWDP) and towns.

¹ The South Worcestershire Development Plan is a planning framework that aims to ensure development has a positive impact on the environment. It has been jointly prepared by the three authorities of Malvern Hills, Wychavon and Worcester City. Further information on the Plan can be found on the website: <http://www.swdevelopmentplan.org/> A definition of Category 1 villages can be found in The Village Facilities and Rural Transport Survey <http://www.swdevelopmentplan.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/07/DECEMBER-2012-VFRTS-Report.pdf>

24. In summary, the Task Group has been impressed by the knowledge and dedication of the Council's Passenger Transport Team in supporting bus services, and is also reassured that the responsible Cabinet Member is a committed and involved bus user – nonetheless the instability of the market place, reducing bus services and negative image of bus services is a great concern.

How are bus services perceived by bus users and what are their experiences?

25. A total of 126 feedback forms/letters have been received as follows:

Consultation group	No of responses
County Councillors	13
District Councillors	3
Parish Councils	48
User Groups	22
Members of the public	34
Bus Companies	6

26. All written contributions have been acknowledged and thanked, and contributors will be made aware how they will be able to access this Scrutiny Report. It is expected that the feedback received will prove to be very useful to the Directorate as a crucial up to date source of information on bus services which can inform their own wider review of subsidy provision.

27. The Task group was pleased that a wide range of User groups were able to contribute their feedback, which meant that the views of many vulnerable groups in society were represented in the process. The feedback has been very helpful in providing an insight into the issues that are causing real difficulties for people in everyday life throughout the County. The range of organisations that contributed included, Age UK, Autism West Midlands, Bromsgrove and Redditch Welcome Refugees, Bromsgrove Forum for Older People, Connect Worcester/ Malvern /Bromsgrove, Fortis living, Speak Easy, Learning Disability Partnership Board, Comet Group Malvern, Mencap, Our Way, Sight Concern and Youth Cabinet.

28. A summary of key themes from the feedback is shown below and the wider detailed information is included in **Appendix 4**.

29. **Gaps identified in the current provision – main themes from survey feedback**

- Impact of recent cuts and reductions in services has been huge, major impact on people's lives.
- Rural areas, some have very severely limited services, others no service at all.
- Widespread lack of services in the evenings and on Sundays.
- The loss of off-peak services and services finishing too early in the day.

- Whilst noting that all single level buses should be 'low floor' to comply with current regulations, feedback has been received to indicate that accessible buses for those with restricted mobility are not always available.
- Impact on journeys to work, too restricting for people to rely on them (times and regularity). Concern that when bus services are cut, people have no way of getting to work and may potentially lose their jobs.
- The importance of easily accessible bus stops for older people and those with mobility problems, especially near sheltered housing or supported living schemes.
- Bus stops often too far for villagers to access or involve crossing a very busy road.
- Lack of integrated services cross border. Additional fares required to reach transport hubs to access main destinations.
- Community Transport schemes do play a key role, but we have had feedback that concessionary passes are not able to be used on some schemes. Pre-bookable service is not always convenient for some journeys.

30. **Problems identified with current services – main themes**

- Lack of consistency, reliability, regularity, cancellations.
- Difficulty getting to hospital appointments, fitting around available bus services.
- Lack of communication as to why buses are late/cancelled.
- Social isolation for older and vulnerable people. Residents being cut off from family and friends due to cuts in services. The bus provides a lifeline. Once bus service is removed, only option is taxis and these are too costly.
- People are missing out on social interaction and events that others take for granted.
- Buses don't run to schedule, services are randomly withdrawn, especially at non-peak times. No information is provided. Timetables don't fit with school times.
- Poor driving techniques, lack of understanding of people with disabilities, not waiting for passengers to be seated. Refusing to lower front of bus to allow mobility access. Lack of good English skills. Training for drivers required to ensure vulnerable clients feel more secure to use the services.
- Are drivers registering all of the OAP passes?
- Poor quality of buses and overcrowded buses, too many people standing. Defective doors and poor ventilation. Lack of seatbelts. Regular break downs of buses.
- On rural routes, buses are too large, more practical and economical to have smaller buses.
- Concerns regarding short consultation carried out with respect to the Diamond No 2 services over the summer and then the services being taken away altogether. Assumption that a community transport provider would step in to fill the gap.
- Restrictions on use of bus passes means customers have to pay to access early appointments. Also problems with issuing of companions passes.
- Lack of proper signage/timetables at bus stops. Advertising/publicity is not good enough. Some bus stops lack seating.
- Problems accentuated with adverse weather conditions, effect on people's health, especially the elderly and vulnerable.
- Bus fare prices increase regardless of the fluctuation of petrol prices. Unreliable ticket apps.
- Subsidised fares for young people should be considered, especially those still in in education.
- Council subsidies should be issued to ensure that all rural areas are supported.

31. **Groups who would use bus services if they were available/accessible**

Older people

- Barriers to participation - access to regular and affordable bus services is crucial. From recent Age UK engagement sessions with older people, transport issues/concerns are the main barrier cited as preventing them from playing an active role in their community.
- Importance of accessibility of bus stops, taking into account reduced walking abilities and the difficulties of steep sloped areas.
- Off peak services have been lost even in areas which have expanding residential areas.
- Unreliable services a real problem for older people, causes concern and uncertainty.
- Lack of co-ordination between buses, allowing little time to complete activities in town.
- If there were more services midday to mid-afternoon particularly back from Worcester and other main towns.
- Reduced services lead to a sense of social isolation and also mental and other health problems.
- The bus provides a lifeline for elderly residents.
- Service reduction impacts on older residents, particularly with access to health care.
- Some older residents have encountered problems using their concessionary passes when they cross the border to other areas, even though Transport officers have advised that under the English National Concessionary Travel Scheme (ENCTS), they should be able to use them in all areas after 9.30am and all weekend.
- A shuttle service linking to key hubs would be useful.

People with mobility problems/physical disabilities or learning disabilities

- Vulnerable people left isolated when commercial services are cut altogether, eg.in rural villages and sometimes in towns, such as recently in the Habberley Estate, Kidderminster. *(In respect of the Habberley estate, the Task Group learned that a CT provider had stepped in to offer a limited service on a trial basis).*
- Accessibility issues especially for disabled residents and the blind. Issues for wheelchair users with unhelpful drivers, lack of space on board.
- Bus drivers need training as to how to communicate with bus users with disabilities. A sign could be used to indicate that a driver is experienced in supporting vulnerable users, so they can recognise that a secure place is offered.
- Rural areas – an evening service would be welcomed as would a bus service on Sundays and Bank holidays.
- Restriction on times disabled bus ticket holders can use public transport, appointments before 9.30am are therefore costly to attend for user and companion.
- Buses to County Hall now sometimes terminate at the 6th Form College, causes issues for those with mobility problems.
- Timetables not easy to understand, user friendly format is needed. If no access to internet, changes to timetables not easily or quickly picked up.
- People with learning disabilities have been left isolated after the bus cuts. They have been encouraged to develop their independence and then the means to use this has been taken away.
- Companion passes not always supplied, which causes difficulties in supporting vulnerable people to gain confidence with bus use.

Commuters including those connecting with railways

- Concerns regarding cutbacks and changes in timetables which have led to the last buses arriving too late for starting work and leaving much earlier.
- Where there are buses for commuters, they don't allow for flexible working hours.
- Reliable options for commuters to access main towns and business parks. Also more services to link in with train stations to commute further afield.
- Importance of enabling workers to use buses to reduce vehicle emissions and parking congestion.

Young people

- Reduced services restrict choice for post -16 options and employment and sporting activities/leisure later in day.
- Demand for later services from main centres like Worcester in the evening and especially at weekends.
- Some young people have reported problems caused by a lack of cross border concessionary arrangements when accessing education across county borders. Would simplify journey and reduce stress for vulnerable young people.
- Danger that young people have to move away from small towns due to the lack of transport to be able to access employment.

Others potential users and general issues

- General leisure use eg. Those wishing to access towns on an evening, especially at the weekend; holiday makers in caravan parks/tourists; accessing the countryside for walks.
- Seasonal employees trying to reach farms and orchards.
- Spiral of decline - when buses are cut from services, it forces some people to make alternative arrangements and further reduces usage on remaining buses.
- Services would need to be reliable, efficient and regular if bus users can rely on them and therefore make use of them in their daily lives
- Users not aware that they can receive a free bus pass. Sometimes trouble in accessing the bus passes.
- The rebuilding of Kidderminster station – lost opportunity as original plans for a bus interchange were dropped.
- Some positive comments particularly about the fast services linking major towns.
- Positive feedback from a group supporting those with learning disabilities about the bus passes being well used, that users obtain great benefit from them.
- Park and Ride – if local bus routes linked in, could have a future.
- Role for car sharing, 'Uber' like mini-bus service and such schemes
- More integrated approach to transport network could benefit many more users.

Bus providers

32. As part of the Scrutiny Review, the Task Group has met with **three bus providers in the County namely, Diamond Buses (Rotala), First Bus and Aston's Coaches**. Key findings and information obtained about their current services included:

- Commerciality – passenger numbers are decreasing and costs (wages, fuel etc.) are continually increasing.
- Reliability – regularly affected by unexpected roadworks (where they haven't been notified) and heavy congestion.

- Some of the bus services which are currently subsidised, would cease if the subsidies were withdrawn, as they would no longer be commercially viable.
- Communication with WCC could be improved, especially when timetable changes are being considered. All options should be considered and timely information provided to the public on any changes agreed.
- Bus lanes and other measures to restrict cars would assist with the flow of bus services and encourage more usage. Important to ensure they are enforced.
- Concessionary travel reimbursement is important, but routes cannot be sustained just on this basis.
- Scholars Travel payment is vital to some bus companies, enabling them to retain other services.
- Technology such as real time information at bus stops/Apps to track buses is seen as positive and should be expanded to other areas, although it is important the technology works and people are aware of it.
- The types of contract with bus operators vary, with some fixed rates and others subsidized income from fares – in fixed contracts, how are bus companies incentivised to increase passenger numbers?
- Quality of bus stock and recent investment in this area.
- Bad publicity in the County deterred potential users and had a detrimental effect on other operators.
- Some capacity for additional services in the 10am to 2pm slot between school runs.
- All passengers needed to be able to access clear timetables which were widely publicised.

Community Transport

33. To gain a greater understanding of the current community transport (CT) arrangements, the Task Group met with the Chairman of the Consortium of Community Transport providers, who was representing the majority of CT schemes across the County. At a later meeting, the Task Group also met with the Council's Community Transport Officer.
34. The Task Group learned that Community Transport is very much seen as an integral part of the Council's Passenger Transport function, and is supported by one part-time member of staff. Across 18 schemes (13 of the larger ones come together in the Worcestershire CT Consortium) there are 165,000 journeys a year (provided by voluntary car schemes, Dial-a-Ride minibuses and Community Buses) and around 500 volunteers. Financial support from local authorities is an important source of support, and WCC provides a strategic grant, this year it has been £90,000, currently allocated to 10 partner schemes. Cost was a factor in developing new schemes and maintaining vehicles. Overall funding varies between schemes, but all rely on fares and donations to keep them afloat.
35. Whereas a few years ago CT was seen as the 'poor relation,' local and national work had improved accessibility; the sector is very 'up for it' and proud. However, whilst CT provision is extensive, it should not be viewed as a replacement for regular, timetabled public transport provision. The providers cannot provide an 'on demand' service, with the majority of rides being pre-bookable, although we learned that there are two types of service (S19 which has to be pre-booked and S22 which enables drivers to take members of the public also). Some providers had moved to operating a service which could also pick up members of the public, something which was more effective in urban areas.

36. CT was for anyone who could not travel by other means and was not means tested – this could be due to being unable to drive, due to mobility, or just a lack of car or alternative bus, for example, a parent with a young child who needs to make an essential journey but there is no suitable bus or access to a bus. Some users only use CT for activities where help is required e.g. supermarket shop if help is needed to carry bags.
37. Whenever bus services were removed, CT would look at whether a scheme could be set up. Examples of leaflets were circulated e.g. Habberley estate (where a new twice weekly scheme is being trialled) and Malvern Link. Member knowledge of the local area and their input was very valuable, also the use of divisional funds e.g. printing surveys, timetables etc.
38. All the schemes rely heavily on volunteers for their operation, and the CT Officer was struck by the fact that many drivers got as much out of it as they put in, in terms of social connections and fulfilling a role.
39. A few schemes benefit from being awarded contracts for transporting vulnerable persons, and also school routes, and these are crucial to the survival of those schemes. However, the Government is consulting on changes to S19/22 legislation which may mean that in the future, local authorities can no longer award contracts to CT providers.
40. The varied delivery of CT by individual operators and a lack of public understanding about what the CT schemes offered were seen as a deterrent to some potential users. The Task Group felt this might be an area that the County Council could offer support. While the Consortium provides an umbrella of support, the strength of each CT group is very much in their independence, although a single telephone number was being considered to signpost enquirers.
41. The Council offers a discretionary add-on to the national Concessionary Fare scheme of £1 per person per journey to users of CT. Malvern Hills DC offers an additional £1 per passenger per journey to its residents. The CT Officer observed that generally those with no other transport did not mind paying, although less so if they were used to a free bus pass. Customers are almost always very pleased with the personal service, once they have adjusted.

Others who attended the Task Group

42. The Task Group heard from **SpeakEasy N.O.W**, which is a self-advocacy charity for people with learning disabilities. Some of their concerns were as follows:
 - The impact of cuts in bus services in Malvern Vale
 - Cuts in bus services could lead to isolation and affected people's mental health
 - Taxis were too expensive for most people to consider using
 - Short notice of changes caused problems for people who were supporting people with learning disabilities, needing time to work through the impact with those involved
 - Encourage bus use by reducing fares and allowing bus pass use before 9.30am. Also review fares for children.

43. The Task Group heard from **Vale Public Transport Group** which works with bus and train operators and local authorities, aiming to protect, maintain and improve public transport services serving the towns of Evesham and Pershore and surrounding villages. Their key issues were as follows:
- Young people accessing education was an important issue
 - Older people need a regular and reliable service from the villages to Pershore and Evesham, i.e. a further three services a day, in addition to school services.
 - Services to rural villages had been cut with very little warning
 - Rural isolation and impact on mental health was a concern
 - Lack of joined up thinking between bus companies was an issue
 - Regular Hopper idea was seen as the way forward to provide service between the villages and Evesham/Pershore
 - Lack of bus information/bus stop signs in villages caused problems
 - A regular reliable service is more important than cost, taxis are very expensive and hard to get.
 - Volunteer initiatives were an option, but they were not always suitable and there were not enough volunteers. Volunteers are getting older and there are plenty of less stressful volunteering opportunities available. In addition for a regular scheduled service, expensive additional training is needed to obtain the correct licence.
44. The Task Group contacted each of Worcestershire's **District Councils** to enquire about any recent or planned work about buses.
45. **Wychavon District Council** had recently agreed to consider budget provision for specific initiatives as part of the 2019/20 budget process. A Councillor group (led by Cllr Eyre who is also a member of this Task Group) had completed a report in January 2018 on Worcestershire's non-commercial rural transport arrangements.
46. The Wychavon (councillor and officer) representatives who met the Task Group highlighted the importance of buses in rural areas for young people to access education, work and for socialising. A subsidy for 16-18 year olds may help as free travel ends at 16. Also highlighted were bus links to key employment sites (Worcester 6, Vale Park) which also reduced congestion and could sometimes be subsidised by private companies.
47. The potential of volunteer groups was raised where commercial services were not sustainable, although support and guidance was needed to support development, and importantly, to overcome hurdles which can stop projects getting off the ground. Partnership working would help, which WCC could help with.

Issues and opportunities identified for further consideration

48. The Task Group has identified a number of areas, issues and opportunities which it believes require further consideration, as set out below. These points are intended to contribute to the Council's review of subsidised services and also into the 2019/20 budget setting process.

49. **Bus subsidies** - the Task Group is very concerned that criteria used to determine bus subsidies may result in funds being directed towards urban/semi urban areas of deprivation, at the expense of larger villages (*the equivalent of a Category 1 village in SWDP*). They felt that it was important that large villages retain a baseline timetabled service to link them with nearby towns. The feedback had demonstrated the huge impact that bus cuts/reductions were having on residents in rural areas, leading to social isolation of vulnerable and older people and creating difficulties for residents to get to work and college. They wanted to investigate whether the bus subsidies could be used more effectively to enhance rural sustainability.
50. **Potential for services in between school runs** - many of the school buses are under-used when not on school runs while drivers may be employed full-time. The Task Group felt that options should be explored for providing additional services for other users during the 10am to 2pm period. This opportunity came to light during our discussions with one bus operator, whose representatives expressed a keen interest in this potential idea. If this was workable, the feedback indicated that this could make a big difference to those residents who wish to access local services during the day, but for whom the current provision does not allow for this.
51. **Roadworks and Bus lanes** - the Task Group had obtained evidence that unexpected roadworks and abuse of bus lanes were having a significant impact on bus reliability. Members queried whether the Council's permit scheme could be refined, so that where work on utilities was planned on bus routes, that this is indicated on the permit to alert contractors. With regard to sample checking of permits, it is understood that the current sample is selected on a mainly ad hoc basis and the Task Group queried whether the sample could prioritise bus routes?
52. In respect of bus lanes, it was clear that more effective policing of these routes was needed and offenders needed to be dealt with. A clear commitment to action would ensure that other drivers were not tempted to abuse the bus lanes in the same way.
53. **Planning Process** – Section 106² and CIL³ (Community Infrastructure Levy) contributions. The opportunity to gain monies for bus services through S106 of planning applications and CIL contributions was highlighted to us by several councillors. Several Task Group members have experience of planning committees and did not recollect bus services being raised at all. The Task Group felt that all Members and District Council Planning Committees needed to be aware how they can engage with the planning process to ensure that maximum benefit can be obtained for their areas when development is taking place.
54. **Community Transport** – The Task Group was very supportive of the community transport provision across the county and appreciated the very valuable role that it plays. It was also acknowledged that in some areas residents find the service confusing or difficult to access. The Task Group were keen to support the CT providers and felt the following might be ways in which they could do this:

² Planning obligations under Section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended), commonly known as s106 agreements, are a mechanism which make a development proposal acceptable in planning terms, that would not otherwise be acceptable. They are focused on site specific mitigation of the impact of development. S106 agreements are often referred to as 'developer contributions' along with highway contributions and the Community Infrastructure Levy – Local Government Association Planning Advisory Service

³ The Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) is a planning charge, introduced by the Planning Act 2008 as a tool for local authorities in England and Wales to help deliver infrastructure to support the development of their area

- Helping to improve the public's understanding of CT schemes and how to access them with additional publicity
- Clarification on the legal requirements for Volunteer drivers in CT schemes – to ensure volunteers weren't deterred from coming forward and to help schemes get off the ground.
- Making more contracts available for CT providers to tender

The Task Group also received evidence as to how vital the Council's financial support was to the schemes and they wanted to ensure that this was continued and enhanced whenever possible.

55. **Car share arrangements**, this was an area that one of the Task Group had gained experience of through 'Carshare Cornwall' which users access via an app and provided a valuable resource for a wide range of social journeys. The Scheme was an organised form of lift giving where volunteers use their own vehicles to provide door to door transport and there was a rate per mile charge to cover the volunteer's expenses. Members felt that this scheme could be looked at to see whether a similar scheme would be viable in Worcestershire.

Recommendations

56. **Recommendation 1: Worcestershire County Council should take a long-term, strategic approach to public transport**

That a long term proactive strategic approach to public transport issues should be agreed, underpinned by Officer capacity and Member involvement. This approach will involve working in partnership with the District Councils and needs to:

- Reflect the desire to grow public transport provision to meet future as well as current need
- Address the issue of social isolation across the County
- Ensure that residents with disabilities or mobility issues are helped to live independent lives
- Have a positive impact on environmental issues
- Seek to reduce congestion, for example in Evesham
- Take advantage of opportunities available through the planning process including S106 and CIL
- Where a development is planned above 50 houses, a contribution should be routinely considered towards public transport
- Contribute to the mental and physical health of all age groups
- Review the County Council's current spend on public transport and how it can be used more effectively (not including rail)

57. **Recommendation 2: Review Bus Subsidy Criteria**

That the criteria used when the Council allocates bus subsidies be reviewed with a view to:

- Ensuring that the Council is not subsidising failure or excessive profits
- Ensuring that a minimum baseline daily timetabled service is provided to all Towns and larger villages (*the equivalent of a Category 1 village in the SWDP*)
- Joining up policies to ensure that there is a focus on:
 - rural social isolation, rather than deprivation, in rural areas
 - deprivation and social isolation in urban areas

58. Recommendation 3: Confidence in the Brand

Confidence in the infrastructure and brand of Worcestershire's bus services needs to be addressed by improving quality issues including:

- Improved marketing and publicity
- Ensuring timetabling information is accurate, reliable and readily available, and explores partnership approaches to funding
- Modernising the service, including the expansion of contactless payment
- The practical issues concerning buses, bus stops, partnership working in relation to bus shelters, reliability of drivers, accessibility etc. – these areas were raised through feedback and should be discussed with the bus companies and the County Council and actioned as a matter of priority.

These issues go hand in hand with the underpinning principle, in the Foreword and Recommendation 1, of working differently to grow awareness of the brand and usage.

59. Recommendation 4: Working with Bus Operators

That the Council ensures effective liaison with bus providers and appropriate action on the following:

- That in the Council's liaison with bus providers, attempts be made to address some of the major concerns with services/routes raised in the feedback
- Opportunities be explored for using the school transport buses more effectively in the 10am to 2pm slot, in order to provide a service to meet the needs of socially isolated communities
- Ensuring that the permits to contractors are altered to ensure that they are required to notify bus companies of any disruption to bus routes in advance of the work
- Seek enforcement of bus routes to ease the pressure on bus journeys at times of peak congestion
- If a bus company is considering removing a commercial service, discussions take place, at the earliest opportunity, with the Officers and local Councillors for the areas affected, so that alternative, innovative solutions and public/private partnerships including financial incentives, can be investigated, with a view to sustaining and growing the usage.

60. Recommendation 5: Governance and Tendering

- That the Council should, as part of its governance and tendering processes, ensure the transparency and accountability of the allocation of subsidies should be further improved.
- The Council should ensure that the skills of negotiators are sufficient to ascertain the degree of profit the provider is achieving due to Council subsidies.

61. Recommendation 6: Community Transport

In respect of the work of Community Transport schemes, the Council should:

- Continue to work closely with Community Transport providers as they carry out their valuable work and offer any appropriate assistance with co-ordination and publicity issues to encourage and ensure more widespread use of the service
- Offer support if CT schemes consider operating a car share scheme such as Cornwall Connect, which has a safeguarding and legal framework, with approximately 4000 users and is supportive of access to college for 16-19 age group, access to work and tourism
- Continue to offer financial support to CT schemes in the form of subsidies and ensure that CT schemes are made aware of any transport contracts that they could tender for
- Ensure that the annual grant payments to CT providers (current year £90,000) be accompanied by a requirement for minimum standards to benefit its users, such as adequate website/flyer communications

62. Recommendation 7: Concessionary Fares Budget

Scrutiny members should meet with Members of Parliament to ask them to support amending the Concessionary Fares scheme to avoid unintended consequences.

Conclusion

63. The Task Group has recognised the crucial importance of bus services to a wide range of people in the County who rely on the services for accessing work, education, health services, social and shopping facilities. It's clear that the market is very fragile, and when services are cut or reduced, the extensive feedback received, has shown this has a major disruptive impact on people's lives and leads to social isolation, particularly amongst the elderly and vulnerable.
64. The Task Group have agreed that in going forward the Council needs to take a positive, strategic approach to ensure that bus services are developed and improved to meet the future needs of all residents. They have set out a range of proposals which they hope will improve services in the short term and also establish new ways of working for the future.

Appendix 1 – Schedule of Activity

Date	Event
10 October 2018	Meeting with Paul Smith, WCC Transport Operations Manager
24 October 2018 (AM)	<p>Meeting with representatives of Diamond Buses: Simon Dunn, Chief Executive of Rotala and Bob Baker, Director of Diamond Buses</p> <p>Meeting with representative of First Bus: Nigel Eggleston, Managing Director of First Bus West Midlands</p>
10 – 22 October 2018 24 Oct – 15 Nov 2018	<p>Surveys issued to Councillors, parishes, user groups and publicised in local media</p> <p>Feedback from surveys considered by the Task Group</p>
24 October 2018 (PM)	<p>Meeting with user groups:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SpeakEasy N.O.W – Holly Yuille, Project Co-ordinator and Sam Sinderberry, member of Worcestershire People’s Parliament • Vale Transport Group – Helen Whitwell, Secretary <p>Meeting with Councillors:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wychavon District Council representatives: Cllr Bradley Thomas, Portfolio Holder for Planning, Transport and Infrastructure and Shawn Riley, Inward Investment Manager • County Councillors: Anne Hingley, Charles Hotham, Matthew Jenkins, Fran Oborski and Liz Tucker
29 October 2018	Review of Feedback and discussion of issues which have arisen to date.
31 October 2018	Meeting with David Muggeridge, Chairman of Consortium of Community Transport Providers.
7 November 2018	<p>Meeting with representatives of Astons Coaches – Richard Conway (Managing Director) and Jon Elsdon (General Manager)</p> <p>Meeting with Paul Smith (WCC Transport Operations Manager) and Stuart Payton (WCC Transport Network Development and Commissioning Manager)</p>
14 November 2018	<p>Meeting with Madeleine Sumner (WCC Community Transport Officer)</p> <p>Discussion of emerging themes with the Cabinet Member for Highways, Cllr Alan Amos</p>
21 November 2018	Meeting to consider draft final report

Appendix 2 -Documents received by the Task Group

Document
WCC Worcestershire Local Transport Plan
WCC Local Transport Plan 3 – Transport Accessibility Policy
WCC Performance Indicators relating to subsidised bus routes
WCC Consultation Report – The proposed withdrawal of subsidised bus services in Worcestershire Spring 2014
WCC Economy and Environment Panel report on Community Transport Operations - 9 May 2018
A report for Wychavon District Council's Rural Panel on Worcestershire's non-commercial rural transport arrangements. Cllr Liz Eyre - January 2018
Hanley Castle High school Local Democracy Day - presentation

Appendix 3 Bus Subsidy Criteria

Worcestershire Performance Indicator				
Category	Category Information	Score	Weighting	Revised Weighting
Cost Per Passenger Score	<£1	5	4	2
	£1.00-£1.99	4		
	£2.00-£2.99	3		
	£3.00-£3.99	2		
	£4.00-£4.99	1		
	>£5.00	0		
Passengers per Journey Score	>20	5	1	2
	15-20	4		
	10-15	3		
	5-10	2		
	1-5	1		
	0	0		
Index of Multiple Deprivation Average for Wards Served by Contract	Lowest 20%	5	3	3
	20-40%	4		
	40-60%	3		
	60-80%	2		
Average of Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) Decile	80-100%	1		
Car Ownership Index Average for Wards Served	Highest 25% of households without access to a car	6	2	1
	25%-50%	4		
	50%-75%	2		
	Lowest 25% of Households without access to a car	0		
Primary Journey Purpose Index	To main centres of employment	5	2	4
	To essential shopping	5		
	To educational facilities	5		
	To health facilities	4		
	To secondary centres of employment	3		
	To non-essential shopping	2		
	To leisure/tourism facilities	1		
More than one purpose (2)	6			
Access to Other Services Index	No other services in period	6	3	4
	<20%	5		
	20-40%	4		
	40-60%	3		
	60-80%	2		
	>80%	1		
	Standards met in period	0		

Appendix 4 – Summary of issues referred to in feedback where there are particular concerns about the removal, reduction or lack of bus services.

For ease the comments have been grouped into District Council geographical areas.

Bromsgrove

- S3 service serving rural areas including Hillcrest Caravan Park in Portway, St Mary's and other park home sites where there is a concentration of older people. Concerns regarding the future of the service. Vital link as no other services available to them.
- Wythall - Discontent about proposals by Transport for West Midlands and WCC in South Wythall and Majors Green areas if the S3W services route is modified to terminate at Becketts Farm, missing areas further south. Many residents use service to link to Birmingham via Maypole, and Shirley and Solihull including links to Whitlocks End Station.
- Wythall – regular complaints about the reliability of current service from Diamond buses including not running to time, not keeping to timetable and speeding to make up time.
- Concerns regarding the proposed changes to the S3 service to Wythall, which would impact on volunteers and visitors at the Transport Museum, Wythall.
- Lack of community transport provision in Bromsgrove area, including Wythall, Alvechurch, Hagley and Stoke Prior.
- Section 106 monies for the new housing development in Wythall, should be used to safeguard the S3/S3W services
- Barnt Green – only 1 bus a day from Barnt Green to Redditch, but 3 trains a day. Free travel not available for pensioners on Worcestershire railways. No known evidence of demand for improved bus services. The 145 and 145A from Barnt Green to Bromsgrove; normally an hourly service, but gap in afternoon provision, should continue to be hourly.
- Better bus station in Bromsgrove needed.
- Different restrictions relating to the use of bus passes, currently different times when the passes can be used in Bromsgrove and Redditch.
- No current service between Cofton Hackett and Kings Norton. Also no direct connection with Longbridge station.
- Services to Solihull, Redditch and Birmingham from Hollywood should be half hourly.
- The 145 service terminates at Cofton Hackett, whereas previously it went into Birmingham city centre
- Cofton Hackett – bus service to Kings Norton covering Cofton medical centre and West Heath Hospital would be welcomed. X20 service very welcome but very limited evening service to Birmingham City Centre.
- Beoley not served by any public bus service since 2017.
- Services from Bromsgrove to Kidderminster and Redditch are very limited on Sundays and they finish early evening. The buses also finish early to Birmingham and Worcester (except Friday and Saturday). A shuttle bus to Rubery hub would be useful.
- Concerns regarding the 147, 138 and 144 services from Bromsgrove.
- Lickey end to Marlbrook. No stops near new shops on Birmingham Road, Bromsgrove.
- Residents at Lickey End have to walk at least a mile to catch a bus to go to

Birmingham.

- Timetables mean that clusters of buses arrive together in Bromsgrove e.g. 145/202 145/318 42/43 and the 93/99.
- Evening services linked to trains arriving at Barnt Green would be useful.
- Lickey and Blackwell – no evening service to Blackwell from Bromsgrove after 7pm. Young people and the elderly particularly disadvantaged by limitation of current services.
- Stoke Prior is a rural community on the outskirts of Bromsgrove with approximately 1000 households and a large proportion of elderly residents living in housing trust accommodation – at the moment there are regular buses to transport children to school and other residents to town, which gives access to other bus and rail links, but to lose these services would devastate and isolate the community.
- Catshill and North Marlbrook – A direct train to the station would be useful, rather than changing in Bromsgrove. Also a more reliable 147 service to Halesowen and Dudley is needed as are buses linking Catshill to the supermarkets by BDHT Housing site and on Birmingham Road. The 144 service is vital for Catshill and villages along the A38.

Malvern Hills

- Malvern Wells – problems reaching medical appointments, work etc. Causing isolation for the elderly. A regular service, at least Mon – Fri should be returned, servicing the town centre and the train station. Also additional services at the start and end of day for workers/students.
- The bus service in Malvern for the X43 has been drastically cut to 2 in the morning and 2 in the afternoon. No weekend or evening buses. With just 4 buses per day it's gone from having 4 per hour to 4 per day. The bus in the afternoon which serves mainly schoolchildren is often bursting at the seams and we can't use because it's full anyway.
- People with learning disabilities have been encouraged to become independent and then when some of us try to do this we are stopped from not having the means to go anywhere.
- Malvern – bus stops no longer in use, but no notice on them to indicate this.
- Ripple ward, Malvern Hills – request for Tewkesbury to Worcester bus to divert through villages. Twice weekly bus from Ripple parish into Tewksbury and Worcester would be useful.
- Little Witley – scale of new housing has increased pressure on roads, bridges etc. Wish to see County Council actively promoting public transport options and for County and District to work together to improve infrastructure solutions.
- Little Witley – lack of services in evening and mid-afternoon from Worcester. Community transport could link to bus stops, allow people to make more use of the services
- Martley – No services to Worcester in the evening. Last bus from Worcester is 17.40. Travel to hospitals in Worcester and Malvern requires a change of bus and can take most of the day.
- Hanley Castle – lack of services except school services. A direct service to Malvern and Saturdays services to Worcester would be helpful as would a service allowing for access to doctors at Upton.
- Hanley – only bus service is for students, want to ensure that it is retained.
- Service depleted in Hallow area, concern with accessing medical facilities outside of main commuter hours.
- Hallow – services recently cut back and they are further reduced outside of the University term time. No direct service to Worcester Royal from Hallow.

- DRM buses have unilaterally ceased operating Worcester bound services via Little Green Broadwas.
- Bus service Broadwas to Worcester – every 2 hours – concern for the future
- Earls Croome – only 1 bus a day – too big a gap in Worcester for return journey. No return from Upton late afternoon.
- Buses needed in to Worcester from Earls Croome area for students to access education options.
- Problems caused by significant reduction in services on the Upton to Worcester route and no services at all from Upton to Malvern or Upton to Tewkesbury routes. A limited pre-bookable Dial a Ride service to Malvern is available.
- Upton – concerns if people can't get to work that they will move away to areas with better services, taking younger people out of the town or not being able to work at all. Students also find difficulty accessing education opportunities in Worcester.
- Lack of regular bus services to Upton, difficult to fit with working hours in Worcester. No buses on evenings and one bus a day at the weekend. Real concerns for the future.
- Upton – low income families hardest hit with lower level of car ownership and less ability to help their children with the high cost of driving lessons/car ownership.
- Elderly people have their freedom restricted with fewer services increasing social isolation. Those living in the sheltered housing units at the Graftons and Thomas Morris House want more services including an increase of buses into the centre of Upton.
- Feels like Upton is becoming a forgotten town that only caters for car owners and festival goers.
- Encouraged to use buses to cut congestion and improve environment, yet very limited services available.
- The bus times in Upton offer no consideration to the commuter, restrict you visiting neighbouring towns, offer no connections to other services, trains etc. and are based on timetables they know will fail, so they can then withdraw the service.
- Bus from Upton to Malvern Retail Park would be useful.
- Standing room only by the time the Upton bus reaches Worcester yet they say services not being used!
- More regular service from Tenbury to Hereford and other towns on a weekend would be helpful.
- Reduced services restrict choice for post -16 options and employment. Also for recreational activities for this age group. Local petition regarding a request for a service bus from Teme valley to Hereford.
- Severn Stoke – just one bus a day, does not fit with work or college hours. An extra bus with timings adjusted would cover needs of more people.
- Longdon – there has been no commercial bus services for a long time and community transport no longer runs through the village; residents therefore have to make their own arrangements.
- Kenswick and Wichenford – buses are not regular enough, last buses back too early. No evening service.

Redditch

- The 70 bus to Redditch doesn't run after 7pm. No Sunday service for Astwood bank. Infrequent bus service 350 to Worcester from Astwood bank
- Service from Astwood Bank often doesn't run to timetable or bus fails to appear.
- Feckenham – only 2 services a week- totally inadequate. The Redditch to Astwood Bank service could be extended to Feckenham at hourly frequency.

Worcester City

- Rainbow Hill division, Worcester, where bus service was removed 3 years ago. Residents live uphill from remaining services, causes real difficulties.
- The last bus from the City Centre to St Peters is too early, at about 7pm.
- Reduced services on the First Bus No 36 route between Crowngate and Worcester Royal and Blackpole. Services, now only hourly, but start too late in the morning and finish too early in the afternoon.
- LMS Travel bus 39, Blackpole and St Johns, starts earlier in day which is good, but no evening service.
- Barbourne to Worcester hospital via Blackpole.
- No 37 bus Claines to Worcester. The gap in provision on a morning for the No 37 bus between 7.55am and 9.30am is too large. Also the last bus leaves Worcester at 17.15 which is too early for many workers.
- The new Cherry Orchard estate has hundreds of new homes, residents will use the 37 bus too, so why reduce services at this point?

Wychavon

- Drakes Broughton – difficulties for the elderly to access basic needs in Pershore. Service to Worcester, too long to wait for return bus. Access to X50 uphill walk, elderly can't access. Bus stop also at poor location on bend.
- No buses from Drakes Broughton to Pershore on a morning and only one to Worcester. Some residents struggle to get to the B4054 to catch the X50.
- Drakes Broughton – services to link the X50 at Pershore (rather than cross the busy B4054). Currently no buses from Drakes Broughton to Pershore in the morning and only one to Worcester. No regular service going through the village.
- Services through Pinvin and Wyre Piddle.
- Concerns regarding the No 17 Droitwich service in terms of disabled access and getting to and from hospital appointments.
- Offenham – difficulties to access connecting travel for Worcester and Redditch hospitals. Request for bus route to be deviated to allow use of new bus shelter on opposite side of the road.
- Evesham – traffic congestion causes buses to be frequently late. Information at bus stops is poor. Some routes could be extended to connect with the rail station.
- Evesham Retail park has no direct bus connection.
- Evesham needs a direct connection to Cheltenham.
- Where services have been centralised for example specialist stroke rehab. Families struggle to visit relatives as there are set visiting times and not always a service that runs either regularly or at all. Rural areas are a particular issue but this is a county wide issue as all specialist stroke rehab is centralised in Evesham with patients coming from all over Worcestershire.
- The National Express stop in Merstow Green should be relocated to either the main bus station or the rail station.
- The loss of off-peak services to and from the Vale villages.
- Concerns regarding cutbacks which have led to the last buses leaving Worcester much earlier, e.g. X50 last bus from Worcester to Evesham is 17.10 and the last No.37 service leaves Worcester at 17.15.
- Charlton parish – only school services remain.
- Charlton – serious concern regarding rural isolation, particularly for older residents, leading to medical issues with social and financial costs. County Council should ensure consistent provision for all residents, accepting that some loss making routes

through rural villages are compensated by profitable routes.

- Lack of buses from Charlton area to Worcester/Evesham/Pershore. The existing X50 bus could divert through Cropthorne and Charlton before returning to the B4084.
- Cropthorne – no bus stop provided at New Inn, Cropthorne on X50 route.
- Fladbury, Charlton and Cropthorne - no bus service, except at school time (term time). A daily off peak to Evesham/Pershore needed.
- Pershore – young people would like a late evening service to Worcester particularly at weekends. Recent cuts in First Midland Red 50's buses have left large villages such as Fladbury, Wyre Piddle and Charlton with no off peak buses at all and an extremely restricted service for others such as Eckington, Defford, Norton and Littleworth, causing serious inconvenience for journeys into Pershore and adds to growing isolation of local villages. A 50% reduction in bus services in the north of the town is particularly affecting residents in major new housing developments in Station Road and Wyre Road. This fast growing part of town now has virtually no direct bus services at off peak times to/from Worcester and Evesham.
- Limited buses to Pershore and surrounding villages e.g. Pinvin, Malvern and Upton.
- Wickhamford – Gap in provision for workers wishing to travel into Evesham from Wickhamford before 8am. Buses to allow shopping in Evesham important.
- Norton Juxta Kempsey – infrequency of current service – only 3 buses a day to Worcester and no service to Pershore. Why can't services to St Peters Drive, Worcester be extended to cover this parish? Basic social need to have bus service, subsidies should be used where necessary.
- First Midland Red Services – recording of passenger numbers does not reflect the full picture of where passengers board and alight.
- Broadway – would want a more direct service to Worcester and Redditch for hospitals and also a link to Worcester University.
- Cleeve – would like a direct route to Stratford and Warwickshire area. Currently have to change at Bidford and service is sporadic.
- Tibberton – service to Droitwich missed. Also evening service to Worcester.
- Eckington – no late service from Pershore. Hopper service limited to 3 days a week. No early evening return from Worcester to suit workers. Confusing bus stops in Church Street – 2 operators. Good links to the X50 in Pershore will encourage usage.
- More balance in the bus times required e.g. Last bus to Eckington from Pershore leaves at 14.23, but only on 3 days a week.
- Harvington – X18 service ends too early – between 6 -7pm. No easy routes to Worcester or Redditch. Recent neighbourhood plan showed clear demand for later buses in evening from Stratford and Evesham. Also wanted a direct bus route to Alcester, Studley, Worcester and Redditch.
- Wadborough – no return bus except the school bus. No buses from Worcester or Pershore for workers. Access to Pershore to Worcester bus is a 1.5 mile walk along the main road. Feeder services of smaller buses would help.
- Following alterations to the 53 route, no service from Wadborough to Pershore on morning except for school bus at 7.25am.
- Extend the coverage of the cross country route to Stratford upon Avon.
- Parishes would use a local bus service to Droitwich or Worcester.
- Residents in the villages close to the A38 who don't have access to a car.
- Hindlip and Salwarpe – new developments either side of the A38 in Salwarpe and Martin Parishes would benefit from a local service to Droitwich or Worcester. The park and ride at Six Ways should be re-opened with a service to Worcester and Droitwich with stops along the way. Also the park and ride at Perdiswell was useful to serve the Worcester schools and shoppers needs.

- Rous Lench – not aware of unmet need, acknowledged that provision of bus subsidy enables services to run.
- North and Middle Littleton – totally inadequate current bus service. Very poor service off the main road through the village.
- Ombersley and Doverdale – Lack of bus service to Droitwich. Concerns regarding reliability of service. With new houses being built away from amenities, public transport needs greater priority.
- Sedgbarrow – happy with current service. Important that service continues on Main Street through the village as older residents use the bus stops in that location.
- Crowle – lack of bus to Worcester late morning and early afternoon. Would be helpful if the bus that comes back to Crowle at 13.56 could take people back to Worcester as there is a large gap in the timetable at that time.
- Tourist potential of Hopper services, yet some have no service on a Sunday.

Wyre Forest

- Cookley – issue with Diamond bus – passengers have to alight at Wolverley school then re-board as the bus exits the school. Problems with cancellations, buses breaking down, etc.
- The County Service 9/9A is an excellent service. Could be even better if destinations were reviewed, especially with a link to the train station and extending hours. New homes at Lea Castle need linking in. Morning rush hour not serviced or after 6pm.
- Service 9/9A – service does not currently visit Kidderminster/Blakedown railway stations. Current service finishes at 6pm and not at all on Sunday.
- Commuter bus routes to connect directly with trains stations at Kidderminster and Bromsgrove.
- Concern over the future of 2 and 2A service (Kidderminster to Bewdley). No. 2 bus services cut from Habberley estate, Kidderminster, with little notice, (and consultation over the summer period) has caused major problems. All services have been removed, whereas previously there were services every half hour into town. No discussion and assumption that community provider would fill the gap. A community bus is operating on a trial basis two days a week for a circular trip starting at 10.30am but local members are concerned about potential social isolation for the workforce, students and older people.
- No 3 service – Kidderminster to Stourport. How is frequency and later operating of this service justified in comparison to other routes in Kidderminster?
- Route 133 covering Rushock and other villages – service has been reduced from 5 to 3 days a week.
- Rushock – late start/early finish of route precludes use of bus travelling to work or college. Saturday service recently cancelled.
- Rock village – current bus service does not meet the needs of employees working standard hours.
- Kidderminster Foreign – vital service for rural community. No shops in parish therefore trips to nearby towns are essential. Bus service is partially funded by Shropshire Council. Liaising with Shropshire too?
- Churchill and Blakedown – Reliability and regularity are essential, the current bus service is too infrequent with big gaps in the afternoon service. Possibility of a discount for more than one person travelling together? Ports of call round supermarket would be more viable.

