

Overview and Scrutiny Policy Advisory Group



Local Transport Plan – Rural Access

Final Report



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Chairman's Foreword

Local transport issues are really important to local people so I was very pleased to be appointed as Chairman of this policy advisory group.

Our review has, of course, been conducted within the context of some uncertainty regarding the funding available to support local transport schemes in the future. While the exact position is not known, it is likely that there will be less money available going forwards; therefore it is extremely important that we target our limited resources in the right way. It is also extremely important that the County Council's approach to rural access takes into account the wide ranging nature of our rural communities and their transport needs. Local elected Members at all levels (County, District and Parish) have a potentially significant role to play in scrutinising the transport needs for their localities and working with officers to find local solutions.

In order to fit in with other work ongoing within the Authority around transport we have had to complete our work within a reasonably short timescale. However, I hope that the conclusions and recommendations we have formed will be helpful to the Cabinet Member as he formulates policy around rural access and transport as part of the wider local transport agenda.

I would like to thank the officers and other witnesses that have helped us to complete our review and to thank all the other Members of the group for their hard work.

County Councillor Len Bloomer
Chairman
Local Transport Plan – Rural Access
Policy Advisory Group



1. Setting the Scene

- 1.1 On the 7th June 2010 all Members were invited to attend a work programme planning workshop to discuss key priorities for scrutiny during 2010/11. Members were provided with a range of performance and other information to help inform their discussion. On the day various groups of Members identified the following issues as ones which they would like to scrutinise:
- rural access to services;
 - access to healthcare; and
 - loss of public transport services.
- 1.2 Following the work programme planning event officers from the Scrutiny and Support Team undertook some further research into the issues which Members had identified in order to identify and 'scope' some key scrutiny projects. Through this research officers identified that there was already work underway to develop a new Local Transport Plan (LTP) for Staffordshire and that the Regeneration and Infrastructure Scrutiny Committee had identified 'urban transport infrastructure' as an item for review on their work programme. It was also identified that the Cabinet Member was undertaking a separate Passenger Transport Review.
- 1.3 As such, a proposal was put to the Corporate Review Committee at their meeting on the 13th July 2010 that they appoint a Policy Advisory Group to look at the transport issues identified at the work programme planning day and by the Regeneration and Infrastructure Scrutiny Committee, but with a view to undertaking the work within a timescale that complimented the development of the new LTP and did not duplicate the work of the Cabinet Review.

2. Scope of the Work

- 2.1 Before we were able to commence our work we needed to agree what, specifically, we wished to consider under the very broad heading of 'transport'. We were aware, both through the Scrutiny Work Programme Planning Event and recent Our Place Our Priorities events that 'transport' was often highlighted by Members as being a significant local issue and one which local people regularly raised with their Councillors. However, in order to make best use of the time available we needed to narrow down our focus. As such, Charles Soutar, Head of Integrated Planning and Transport, provided us with a short presentation highlighting some of the key ongoing work in Staffordshire and some of the significant challenges.
- 2.2 We learned that the County Council was currently in the process of producing its third Local Transport Plan (LTP). Historically, LTPs had been a way to engage with central government and linked directly to funding. However, going forwards these plans will be more locally determined and not linked to any promise of central government funding. Two Members of the Regeneration and Infrastructure Scrutiny Committee, Stephen Sweeney and Barry Mycock, and the Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Infrastructure, Robert Marshall, had contributed towards the development of the new LTP – considering a range of themes: road safety; highway maintenance; accessibility and urban congestion.

- 2.3 We were also informed that a Cabinet Transport Review was being undertaken by Robert Marshall, Cabinet Member for Regeneration & Infrastructure, Matthew Ellis, Cabinet Member for Adults & Wellbeing, and Ben Adams, Cabinet Member for Communities & Culture, with its conclusions being available in December or early January, and flowing through into the LTP.
- 2.4 We then heard about some of the key issues in rural and urban environments.
- 2.5 The issue of ensuring that rural communities have appropriate access to public services is an enduring one. Although the majority of rural households have access to a car there are a significant number who, for a variety of reasons, don't (for example, the elderly, single car families and young adults who are too young to drive). For these groups access to healthcare, social activities, employment and training and after school activities is a particular issue.
- 2.6 Urban Transport Infrastructure is a particular issue in areas where there is likely to be significant population growth in the future. In Staffordshire Stafford, Burton-upon-Trent, Lichfield and Newcastle have been identified as key areas and Stafford and Burton already experience some traffic problems on key urban routes. However, public perception regarding the severity of urban traffic issues is sometimes greater than the problem itself. Going forwards the cost of new infrastructure is likely to be prohibitive so the focus may have to be on making the best use of our existing assets. Future investment is likely to be restricted to schemes linked to significant housing / employment developments.
- 2.7 Having considered and debated the information we decided, taking into account the time available, our personal interests and the view that the PAG should focus its work on issues where it had an opportunity to influence policy direction, to focus on rural transport and its impact on access to services (in particular, health care, social activities and employment) and to develop proposals regarding how access issues could be addressed within the context of a limited budget.
- 2.8 However, we acknowledged the importance of the urban issues and, as such, resolved to recommend that the Regeneration and Infrastructure Scrutiny Committee undertake a piece of work looking at urban infrastructure issues, ideally in time to contribute to the Local Transport Plan.
- 2.9 Prior to making our recommendations we set out to:
- develop an understanding of the key issues affecting access to services in rural communities;
 - understand the County Council's current approach to addressing these issues; and
 - investigate possible solutions to these issues, including those used by other Local Authorities.

2.9 Some of the key questions we sought answers to were:

- What are the key barriers to access which rural communities experience and what is the County Council currently doing to address these issues?
- What are other County Council's doing to address the issue of rural access to services?
- What role can Elected Members play in delivering solutions?
- What is the potential impact of the government spending review and possible reductions in funding for transport and how could this be addressed / mitigated?
- How far should rural access be prioritised vis-à-vis other County Council local transport priorities?

3. Methods of Investigation

3.1 The scrutiny process supporting the preparation of this report involved meetings as follows:

5th October 2010

Members met to agree their terms of reference and approach to the scrutiny review.

2nd November 2010

Members met with:

Dominic Davidson	Transport Projects Manager – background to rural transport issues and examples of projects and schemes to address those issues.
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Gail Edwards	Community Partnerships Officer – Staffordshire Moorlands 'Moorlands Connects'
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Phillip Maskery	Rural Runabout
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10th November 2010

Members considered two case studies of rural areas with differing transport needs (Abbots Bromley and Drayton Bassett). In a workshop style session Members discussed these examples and identified some possible solutions.

4. Membership

4.1 The membership of the Policy Advisory Group was:

County Councillor Len Bloomer (Chairman)
 County Councillor John Cooper (Vice Chairman)
 County Councillor David Billson
 County Councillor Dylis Cornes
 County Councillor Bob Fraser
 County Councillor Geoff Martin
 County Councillor Rex Roberts OBE

5. Findings

Rural Access – The Issues

Defining Rural

- 5.1 People often have quite different ideas about what ‘rural’ is. In most cases it is divided into two categories:
- that which relates to the countryside in which rural areas are defined in terms of size of settlement; and
 - that which relates to the economics of an area, defined in terms of the rurality of the economy and its dependency on agriculture, quarrying, and other industries associated with the countryside such as tourism.
- 5.2 Population thresholds might also be used – e.g. settlements of <3000 population or different rural typologies such as “commuter countryside” (20 miles around major cities); rural tourist areas (e.g. national parks); and “deep” rural areas (e.g. much of Scotland and Wales). The current definition used by DEFRA is based upon housing density.
- 5.3 Based on the DEFRA definition rural areas make up 80% of Staffordshire’s land area and 25% of its population. See appendix one for a map showing Staffordshire’s rural / urban make-up.

Defining Accessibility

- 5.4 Accessibility is about whether people can get to key services at reasonable cost, in reasonable time and with reasonable ease. It depends on several things:
- Does transport exist between the people and service?
 - Do people know about the transport, trust its reliability, and feel safe using it?
 - Are people physically and financially able to access transport?
 - Are the services and activities within a reasonable distance?

Car Ownership in Staffordshire

- 5.5 In 2008/9:
- 9% of rural households had no access to a car (down from 15% in 1995)
 - 40% of rural households had access to one car
 - 51% of rural households had access to two or more cars.
 - 85% of those 17+ in rural areas held a full driving license.
- 5.6 However, it is important to note that within those households with access to a car not all household members will necessarily have access to that vehicle. Another interesting point is that in the lowest income band 20-25% of households in towns have a car, but this figure rises to 43% in rural areas. This may suggest that low income families in rural communities prioritise car ownership over other areas of expenditure as they feel like they must have a car. Indeed, a recent report by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation has found that people in rural areas typically need to spend 10-20 per cent more on everyday requirements than those in urban areas and that “the most important factor in higher minimum rural costs is a lack of adequate public transport, so that most rural households need cars.”

The Changing Nature of Rural Areas

- 5.7 Increasingly rural areas are becoming inhabited by commuters to urban areas with high incomes, high car ownership and high mobility levels. This has contributed to the decline of local facilities and leads to rural transport becoming less commercially viable. An increase in the numbers of rural residents who own and use a car leads to a decrease in the number of people using the buses and thus reduces the commercial viability of services.¹
- 5.8 In these circumstances the provision of regular scheduled services, public bus services as we currently think of them, can be very costly. Increasingly we need to focus on providing services which specifically improve access to services for those who have limited access and to think creatively about the most efficient way of delivering transport to achieve this aim – for example, small scale community transport schemes can increase accessibility at a potentially lower cost than a regular scheduled service.

Staffordshire Solutions and Current Projects

- 5.9 There are many different types of settlement which fall within the DEFRA definition of rural, and the nature of transport and access issues varies depending on this. In Staffordshire, for example, the Moorlands area is very different from and has different needs compared to South Staffordshire rural areas with their close proximity to the West Midlands conurbation. Generally, rural communities falling along the line of inter-urban bus services enjoy a good level of service and most larger villages have direct services to at least one nearest market town. However, the smallest villages, hamlets and isolated settlements tend to have lower levels of accessibility – although the low level and dispersed nature of demand mean that traditional bus services are not always the best / most appropriate solution.

¹ It is estimated that every extra car which is available reduces bus trips by 300 per annum.

5.10 Some examples of current projects in Staffordshire are:

- Wheels to work – established in 2006, this scheme provides assistance with transport to individuals with an offer of employment but who lack the means to access that employment offer. It includes assistance with bus passes, bicycles and moped hire as appropriate for an initial six month period. The cost per client is in the region of £200, which is significantly lower than the economy of a person remaining unemployed. This service is promoted through job centres and the Connexions service;
- Gnosall Ruralink – a fixed route, fixed timetable service operating in the rural area around Gnosall. Originally set up using Rural Bus Challenge fund monies the service uses a small seven seat vehicle with timetable and routes developed in consultation with the local community. It provides passengers with connections from Gnosall to the main 481 Telford to Stafford bus service;
- Border Car – a flexibly routed taxi-bus service operating in the area around Loggerheads and Market Drayton, originally set up using Rural Bus Challenge funding and operating between 7am – 6 pm, Monday – Saturday, with passengers booking in advance by telephone. The service has a seven seat taxi that provides connections to the Hanley to Shrewsbury bus route. This service is administered through Leek CVS.
- South Staffordshire on demand service – enabling individuals to ring and arrange collection by volunteer drivers. The County Council supports this scheme with a grant which pays the volunteer driver’s “dead” mileage, with the individual client paying for the cost of the actual journey. Journeys to and from health and hospital appointments are often given priority and the service is used primarily for these types of journeys. The success and viability of this service is hugely reliant on the ability to recruit and retain volunteer drivers.
- Kinver Community Bus – community group run bus, which is operated by volunteers and supported by a £2K yearly grant from the Council – they raised all the money to purchase the vehicles.

5.11 The County Council currently has a budget of £188,700 per annum for grants to all voluntary/community transport schemes across the County.

Moorlands Connect

5.12 As one of the largest rural transport projects which the County Council has been involved in over the last couple of years we invited Gail Edwards, Community Partnerships Officer, to tell us more about the project.

5.13 Staffordshire Moorlands has both an ageing population and one that is potentially vulnerable to health and well-being issues relating to rural isolation. This can be compounded by infrequent public transport and the lack of access to services. Consultation undertaken by the Moorlands Together LSP, through surveys, events and focus groups, consistently indicated that these two issues, transportation and lack of access to services, were of public concern and ranked highly in terms of local priorities.

- 5.14 In response to these consultation exercises, the Moorlands Together LSP commissioned a specialist transport consultancy, Mott MacDonald, to undertake a piece of work to provide some hard data about: journeys; where people lived; and why and how they travelled. This identified that the Leek rural area was the most poorly served in terms of access to services and transportation routes and thus provided the focus for the Moorlands Connect project.
- 5.15 The new Moorlands Connect service was introduced in September 2010 and is flexible and demand responsive. The service runs two mini coaches of a high specification, including wheel chair access, front loading, floor level access from curb and cycle rack. Individuals are able to phone and book a place up to seven days in advance. They can be picked up from their home or a bus stop. The service covers the Leek rural area as well as journeys to and from the main market towns and connections to other more major bus routes. The service can cater for a wide range of local journeys and operates daily from 7:30am to 6:00pm Monday to Friday and for the first time offers a Saturday service 8:00am to 6:00pm. Group bookings are being encouraged on those days that are quieter in terms of passenger numbers so, for example, rambling clubs can use the service for drop off in one location and pick up elsewhere or simply a group of friends might want to go to a local social activity together. Providing group bookings on quieter days will assist in trying to maximise the use of the resource, increase its sustainability for the local community and offer a better service to visitors. The service also provides home to school transport for two local schools.
- 5.16 The initial capital costs were £200,000 which included the purchase of the vehicles and the computer software to administer the service. The County Council provided £80K of this, with the rest provided by the other partners. Fares are charged at £1.90 for adults and £1.10 for young people. Revenue is also generated through the charge for home to school transport. The daily operating costs are £338 minus revenue. Moorlands Connect has replaced the poorly used commercial, scheduled services (which were subsidised by the County Council) and this money supports the operating cost.
- 5.17 Weekend and evening provision had been explored but could not be delivered within the funding available. Initial figures regarding the revenue generated were not yet available.
- 5.18 Looking to the future it is hoped to develop this service so that, in five years when the vehicles would need replacing, demand would be such that a commercial provider would be tendering to replace them.

Rural Run About

- 5.19 Rural Runabout is a completely different service offering a solution to rural access and transport issues.
- 5.20 The scheme was set up by the Parish Council's of Whitmore, Hill and Chapel Chorlton, Madeley, Keele, Maer and Aston who form a Committee which runs the service. They developed the case for the scheme via consultation with the local population and using this they were able to secure £50K funding from the Countryside Agency to purchase their vehicle; £25K was provided upfront, the

further £25K after two years. They were only able to secure the funding because of the number of partner Councils that were willing to work in partnership. They have utilised further, informal, partnership arrangements to reduce costs further; for example, the vehicle is stored at Madeley Police Station which has reduced insurance costs. In addition to providing a demand led service the vehicle is used by community groups – who often provide their own drivers.

- 5.21 Philip Maskery is responsible for the operation of the scheme, dealing with matters such as insurance, MOT and assessing the drivers. Initially Mr Maskery was the only driver but the number of volunteers has increased (they now have 60) as the community has seen the benefits of the bus. The scheme operates under a Section 19 licence which is the permit under which not for profit/community groups can provide transport, and has recently achieved charitable status. It has recovered all costs - they charge 90p per mile for the first 40 miles, followed by 50p per mile, then 30p etc – which is much cheaper than hiring a vehicle from the private sector or taking a taxi. They now have enough money to purchase a second bus, which they hope to in the future.

Case Studies

- 5.22 To help us understand this complex issue we decided to hold a workshop where officers provided us with some detailed information about two specific areas and their transport and access issues and needs. We purposely chose areas which did not fall within the divisions of Members of the PAG so that we could be objective in our considerations.
- 5.23 Attached at appendices two and three are the detailed village profiles we received for Abbots Bromley and Drayton Bassett. We were also provided with maps showing key local services (e.g. hospitals, schools, GPs and Post Offices) and detailing the commercial bus service routes.
- 5.24 Our consideration of the case studies highlighted the following issues:
- Different age groups have different needs in terms of the types of services they need to access and the method of transportation which is suitable in terms of ensuring that access.
 - People are driving until much later in life, however, they are also living longer so many people will experience a period of time when they are unable to drive, where they previously relied on private vehicles to access services.
 - The County Council's existing bus strategy sets out target minimum service levels as set out below. The County Council will step in and subsidise services if these minimum standards are not being met by the commercial sector.

Settlement Size	Target Minimum Service Levels					
	Monday to Friday		Saturday		Sunday	
	0700 - 1900	1900 - 2330	0900 - 1800	1800 - 2330	1000 - 1700	1700 - 2300
<250	1 return journey per day or demand responsive/community transport provided					
250 – 749	3 return journeys		3 return journeys			
750 -1,499	6 return journeys	2 return journeys	6 return journeys	2 return journeys	3 return journeys	
1,500 – 2,499	Hourly	2-hourly	Hourly	2-hourly	2-hourly	1 return journey
2,500 – 9,999	Every 30 mins	Hourly	Every 30 mins	Hourly	Hourly	1 return journey

- Services will usually be provided on a purely commercial basis for settlements larger than 2500. Any settlement below 1500 the services will be almost entirely subsidised.
- The more people that use a service the lower the cost of the subsidy will be (as revenue will be higher). Set out below are some example bus service costs:
 - Norbury Junction – Stafford, 1 return journey Thursdays, £74 / day (circa £5K / year)
 - Bradley – Wolverhampton, 1 return journey Wednesdays, £102 / day
 - Lichfield – Stonnall – Walsall, 5 return journeys weekdays, £129 / day
 - Pattingham – Wolverhampton, 8 return journeys weekdays, £85 / day (circa £65K / year)

This represents a significant sum of money for the service providers the Council contracts with.

- Where the subsidy per passenger exceeds £2 the service has to be looked at very closely. The subsidy per passenger on the Norbury Junction service is potentially £4 per passenger, however this is the ONLY transport service they receive.
- Overall the County spends £3.4 net per year to support local bus services, which is low in comparison to other Counties of a similar size, for example Shropshire.
- Roughly 75% of the total spent on subsidies is on rural services.
- The total amount of funding available to support local transport schemes is likely to be reduced in future years as a result of the wider cuts to local government finance.
- The County Council does give small grants to voluntary car schemes, usually around £500 – these schemes are reliant on someone volunteering to coordinate and recruit.

Service Quality

- 5.25 We were interested in how the County Council ensured the quality of the commercial bus services it subsidised. As Local Members we had all received complaints from residents about poor quality vehicles and buses running late or not at all. We heard that the County Council must follow strict procurement rules when contracting for services; therefore it is very difficult to exclude a company from a tender process if they have been passed by the regulator (Department for Transport). Attached at appendix four is the tender questionnaire for bus operators.

- 5.26 The Vehicle and Operator Services Agency (VOSA) has the authority to inspect vehicles and operators. However, they cover the whole of the West Midlands, with responsibility for coaches, buses and HGV so are often very stretched. Once the County Council reports a concern about a vehicle it can take up to a month for a VOSA inspector to investigate. The County Council can undertake its own vehicle inspections, however, we only employ one vehicle inspector in Fleet Care. For either VOSA or the County Council to undertake an inspection we have to be informed that there is an issue.

6. Conclusions and Recommendations

- 6.1 Ensuring that Staffordshire's communities are places where people can easily and safely access everyday facilities and activities through the highways and transport networks is a stated priority for the County Council – as set out in the new Strategic Plan. It is evident from our work that particular consideration should be given to the needs of rural communities to ensure fairness and equality of access, as far as possible, across the County.

Recommendation One

- 6.2 It became clear to us quite early in our review that the County Council includes such a diverse range of rural communities, that differ hugely in terms of their transport and access needs, that it would not be possible for us to recommend to Cabinet a single 'policy' in relation to rural transport.
- 6.3 It also became clear that, while the exact position is not known, the funding available to support local transport is likely to be reduced in future years. It is therefore, extremely important that we target our limited resources in the right way.
- 6.4 As such, we **recommend** that the Cabinet/Portfolio Holder, in consultation with Members, develops a common framework which can be used to assess the County Council's commitment to and funding of local transport schemes (whether that be subsidised bus services/community or voluntary schemes). This would enable the County Council to make consistent and fair decisions on support for schemes and to be able to explain such decisions clearly to the public.
- 6.5 While we are of the view that it is for the Cabinet/Portfolio Holder to ultimately decide what such a framework should be, it is our view that it should set out **key** priorities in terms of transport provision. Based on our work we think that any County Council subsidised transport scheme should *primarily* be about:
- reducing / preventing social exclusion of identified vulnerable groups;
 - ensuring access to *essential* services (e.g. health services) for vulnerable people;
 - ensuring access for young people to opportunities and leisure activities; and
 - ensuring access to employment opportunities to support growth.
- 6.6 Any service supported by the County Council should be able to demonstrate that it delivers one or more of these priorities. In assessing one scheme against another value for money also needs to be taken into account.

Recommendation Two

- 6.7 The diversity of our rural communities means that different mechanisms for delivering the same priorities will be required based on the needs of a particular area. The two case studies we considered demonstrated the enormous number and range of factors which influence what the most appropriate local transport solutions might be. The detailed social/economic and transport usage profiles we studied certainly influenced our view of what constitutes suitable provision in an area and we feel that Local Members would benefit from having access to similar information when transport reviews are undertaken within their divisions. Furthermore, Members' own local knowledge about their communities' needs would be a valuable addition to any review.
- 6.8 Therefore, we also **recommend** that the Portfolio Holder ensure that a more robust and thorough system of local member consultation is developed when transport reviews are undertaken in an area – beginning with two scheduled reviews in South Staffordshire and Lichfield. This system should also include some mechanism for seeking the views of District and Parish Members.

Recommendation Three

- 6.9 Both Moorlands Connects and Rural Runabout are innovative examples of how rural transport might be delivered differently and potentially more efficiently. Central to the ethos of both services is that they are demand-responsive.
- 6.10 We discussed in detail the possibility of replacing all subsidised bus services across the County with a Moorlands Connect type demand-led service, as has been done in Lincolnshire and Shropshire. However, we heard that there are a number of reasons why this might not be a viable option for Staffordshire. For example, many of the subsidised routes require larger vehicles than those which are used by Moorlands Connect and, in those cases, it would be a potentially much less cost effective solution. The capital investment required to purchase the vehicles in the current economic climate is also a factor. However, we felt there were areas of the County where a demand-led service had the potential to be the most efficient way to deliver the key priorities outlined in recommendation one. Therefore, we **recommend** that, once the LTP has been agreed by Cabinet, the Regeneration and Infrastructure Scrutiny Committee request this group of Members to undertake an additional piece of work to investigate the potential use of demand-led services within Staffordshire, as an alternative / complimentary service to traditional bus service subsidies. Members may wish to visit another Local Authority that operates such a service as part of this piece of work.

Recommendation Four

- 6.11 Rural Runabout, and a number of other projects we heard about, provide excellent examples of the role that volunteers can potentially play in delivering cost effective solutions to rural transport and access and we **recommend** that the Council continue to support these services, at least in line with the budget that was allocated this year.
- 6.12 Over and above supporting existing volunteer based schemes we think that the County Council and Members specifically could play a really positive role in

actively encouraging the growth of these schemes within their Communities. We **recommend** that the Portfolio Holder write to all Councillors informing them about volunteer transport schemes in their areas and encouraging them to get involved / set them up.

- 6.13 We also **recommend** that the Portfolio Holder liaise with the Mr Ben Adams, Cabinet Member for Communities and Culture, regarding possibly undertaking some work around volunteer transport schemes as part of the wider Volunteer Staffordshire campaign.
- 6.14 Whilst recognising the contributions these schemes can make and fully supporting them, we would stress that these types of schemes cannot provide a sufficient service to replace commercial / professional services.

Recommendation Five

- 6.15 In relation to service quality it is important that the County Council is made aware of any issues in relation to vehicles or service provision. As such, we **recommend** that:
- all Elected Members are contacted with the details of the appropriate person to contact regarding any concerns over bus service provision;
 - that the Portfolio Holder investigate the possibility of requiring bus companies which are subsidised by the County Council to display, inside the vehicles, a number (possibly the County Council's 'one' contact number) which passengers can contact if they have any concerns regarding the service; and
 - that the Portfolio Holder review the number of vehicle inspectors employed by the County Council; taking into account the potential benefit it would deliver in terms of improved service quality, and therefore greater numbers potentially using public transport.

Recommendation Six

- 6.16 As set out above we decided to focus our work on rural transport and access to services. However, we feel that there would be an interesting piece of scrutiny work which could be undertaken in relation to urban infrastructure issues. Therefore, we **recommended** that the Regeneration and Infrastructure Scrutiny Committee undertake a piece of work looking at this, ideally in time to contribute to the Local Transport Plan.

7. Implications

Resources and Value for Money

- 7.1 We have been conscious throughout the review that funding for transport is likely to be reduced in coming years. This fact is at the heart of our first recommendation, that the County Council needs to be clear about its priorities when it comes to rural transport (and indeed all transport across the County) so that transparent and logical decisions regarding how the limited resources should be spent can be made.

Equalities and Legal

7.2 There are no specific legal implications to this report.

The Local Transport Plan includes a detailed Equality Impact Assessment which identifies people living in rural areas as one of the groups most likely to experience barriers when it comes to accessing services, as such our review and recommendations should have a positive impact in terms of ensuring equality of access to services for all communities in Staffordshire.

Risk

7.3 A key risk for the County Council in terms of its delivery and support of local transport schemes is a reduction in funding from central government. As set out above, being clear about priorities now should help to manage this risk.

8. Acknowledgements

8.1 We would like to thank the following officers who supported the Working Group:

Charles Soutar	Head of Integrated Planning and Transport
Dominic Davidson	Transport Projects Manager
Helen Phillips	Senior Support Officer
Lucy Stratford	Scrutiny Officer

8.2 The PAG would like to thank all those officers and other individuals, named in section four of this report, who met with us and answered our questions so fully.

**County Councillor Len Bloomer- Chairman of the Policy Advisory
Group
November 26th 2010**

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List of Appendices/Background Papers

Appendix One – Map of rural make-up of Staffordshire

Appendix Two and Three– Drayton Basset and Abbots Bromley Village Profiles

Appendix Four - Approved Operators Questionnaire for the Provision of Passenger Transport Services

PowerPoint Presentations on:

- The Local Transport Plan (5th October)
- Rural Accessibility and Transports (2nd November)
- Moorlands Connect

‘A minimum income standard for rural households’ – Joseph Rowntree Foundation, 2010