

Bus Strategy for Shropshire 2011 – 2016

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SUMMARY

Shropshire Council faces difficult decisions in the short and medium term as financial pressures increase on the budget for the provision of subsidised local bus services, associated services and the funding of Community Transport.

Many of the people who use public transport in Shropshire are reliant upon the service to be able to get out and live their daily lives. Lack of transport especially in rural areas, contributes to social exclusion. This is particularly true of people who are elderly, disabled, young, or people on low incomes.

It is vital therefore, that Shropshire Council has a robust bus strategy for Shropshire clearly defining the principals and priorities on which the local bus network and associated services in Shropshire will be provided over the next five years that helps meet the Council and Communities overall objective of a flourishing Shropshire.

This report sets out a draft Bus Strategy for consultation and development over the winter 2010/2011 with a view to final approval by Cabinet in early spring 2011.

Recommendations

That Cabinet approve the Draft Bus Strategy for Shropshire for consultation.

REPORT

Introduction

Background

1. Many of the people who use public transport in Shropshire are reliant upon the service to be able to get out and about and live their daily lives. Lack of transport especially in rural areas, contributes to social exclusion. This is particularly true of people who are elderly, disabled, young, or people on low incomes.
2. The provision of bus services in Shropshire plays an important role in making the most effective and efficient use of road space, helping to reduce congestion and pollution, improve accessibility and road safety and encouraging social inclusion.

3. The 1985 Transport Act de-regulated the bus market. This has led to a situation where commercial operators provide services on profitable routes, and transport authorities subsidise services deemed 'socially necessary' services that are not commercially viable. The transport authority cannot subsidise any services which could be deemed as running in competition with a commercial service, but can formulate local agreements with operators to improve quality.
4. There has been significant increase in the costs of operating bus services in recent years. This has increased contract costs for subsidised services and also reduced the number of services which are operated commercially. This has resulted in a greater demand for subsidy from Shropshire Council to retain services, and created further budget pressures.
5. Shropshire Council has sought to minimise the impact of increased costs by effective competitive tendering and by removing subsidy from expensive routes. This 'capping' practise, whilst clear does impact disproportionately on rural routes where journeys are longer and passenger numbers are smaller. The cap does not reflect the need for a service in meeting the objectives of public transport and solely reflects cost and demand.
6. Pressures on the subsidised local bus services budget are expected to increase in the short term, as operating costs continue to increase. The Comprehensive Spending Review has reduced the grants and reimbursements available directly to commercial operators. This means that further services will no longer be commercially viable and fall to the council to potentially subsidise at a time when local authority funding reducing.

Draft Strategy Headline Proposals

7. The strategy seeks to inform and complement the capping practise and define the key principals on which the subsidy and support for local bus services will be based. This will define services by type and will cover those that are commercially operated or with subsidy from Shropshire Council. This will ensure that Shropshire Council has a clear policy on which services it will subsidise to meet the stated aims and objectives without unduly penalising any community. This can then be overlaid by any affordability criteria – typically defined via the previous cap per passenger journey.
8. The strategy details other components and options for service delivery related to public transport including fares & ticketing, vehicle quality and emission standards, bus priority measures and the potential for implementing quality bus partnerships.
9. The following framework defines a minimum level of service that Shropshire Council will seek to maintain to ensure that those people who are reliant upon public transport can continue to access essential; services and amenities upon which they are reliant. The overall public transport network will then be built upon this minimum level of service.
10. The market town principles that form the structure of the Local Development Framework and Local Transport Plan have been taken as the guiding methodology in the development of the bus strategy to ensure policy consistency.

11. The sixteen market towns have been grouped with others that are a similar size, and have similar patterns of transport demand.

| Group 1 | Group 2 | Group 3 | Group 4 |
|------------|----------------|-----------------|---------------------------|
| Shrewsbury | Oswestry | Shifnal | Broseley |
| | Bridgnorth | Wem | Cleobury Mortimer |
| | Market Drayton | Ellesmere | Craven Arms |
| | Ludlow | Church Stretton | Bishops Castle |
| | Whitchurch | Much Wenlock | Prees |
| | | | Minsterley and Pontesbury |

Interurban services

12. Interurban services provide a network of journeys that link the sixteen main market towns of Shropshire and offer links to other main attractors within Shropshire and neighbouring authorities. The strategy proposes;

Where demand is sufficient and capacity allows the inter urban services will normally deliver a minimum frequency of;

- **Every 60 minutes Monday to Saturday between 6.30am & 9am and 3pm & 6.30pm.**
- **Every 120 minutes Monday to Saturday between the hours of 9am & 3pm.**

Local Town Services

Local town services are those that operate in full or for the majority of their route within the main urban area of a defined town.

Group 1 Shrewsbury

13. The key principles of the group 1 town services are to;
- Provide suitably timed public transport services to and from a central location to allow and encourage connections with inter urban bus services and the wider public transport network including coach & rail services.
 - Provide access to and from major residential areas and other key destinations including but not limited to major employment centres, education establishments, and healthcare facilities.
 - Provide residents of Shrewsbury with a bus service from a bus stop within approximately 400m of their house or chosen destination.

Where demand is sufficient and capacity allows, within Shrewsbury the town service bus network will normally deliver, as a minimum, a bus network that provides the following level of service:

- **Every 30 minutes on Mondays to Saturday between the hours of 7.30am and 6.00pm.**

Group 2 Market Towns

14. Services are designed to link the main residential areas with the town centre and other attractors such as health care facilities, education and employment opportunities and leisure centres.
15. Within group 2 market towns two service types have been identified;
 - Primary routes – generally operated Monday to Saturday on a consistent timetable providing journeys during and between peak periods.
 - Secondary routes operate less frequently than daily and in some cases only on one or two days each week. These services generally operate outside main peak periods.

Where demand is sufficient and capacity allows, within group 2 towns the town service bus network will normally deliver, as a minimum, a bus network which provides the following level of service;

- **Primary routes – Every 30 minutes Monday to Saturday between the hours of 7.30am and 6.00pm**
- **Secondary routes – Every 60 minutes on a minimum of two days each week between 9am and 3pm.**

Group 3 Market Towns

16. Of the group 3 towns Wem and Ellesmere are served by dedicated town services and the others by interurban services.

Where demand is sufficient and capacity allows, within group 3 towns the town service bus network will normally deliver, as a minimum, a bus network which provides the following level of service;

- **Every 60 minutes on a minimum of two days each week between the hours of 7.30am and 6.00pm.**

Group 4 Market Towns

17. None of the group 4 market towns have a specified town service. Transport needs within these towns are met by the interurban services which provide access to other larger towns or within the group 4 town itself.

Other Fixed Route Services

18. There are currently a number of fixed route services which exceed the minimum levels of service described. These can broadly be categorised in to the following service types;

- Sunday Services
- Evening Services
- Services predominantly carrying non-entitled school children
- Services predominantly arranged for tourism and leisure.
- Park & Ride

19. The strategy looks at each of these service types in more detail. In summary the strategy proposes that

Shropshire Council will not subsidise Sunday & Evening services or services predominantly carrying non-entitled schoolchildren within the minimum network.

The outcomes and benefits accrued from tourism and leisure services are wider than those usually gained from public transport funding support. For this reason, the Shropshire Hills Shuttles will be considered a medium priority for funding subsidy.

20. Park & Ride schemes currently operate in Shrewsbury and Ludlow and are a key service as part of the wider Shropshire parking strategy. The services help to reduce congestion and the associated environmental impact and the demand for town centre parking. The strategy proposes that

Shropshire Council will continue to subsidise Park & Ride services through on street parking charge income and will look at options for the implementation of additional services where appropriate.

ShropshireLink & Community Transport

21. Shropshire is a very rural area and presents unique challenges in providing rural residents with access to essential services and facilities using public transport. The introduction of ShropshireLink in November 2008 has greatly assisted in meeting these travel needs. All rural areas of the county can access their nearest market town on a minimum of two days each week.
22. The financial pressures facing the council over the next few years is likely to result in a reduction in availability of fixed route local bus services in some rural areas. ShropshireLink will be key to ensuring that people living in rural areas are able to continue to access services and get to their nearest market towns.
23. ShropshireLink is only a small part of a package of measures in ensuring that rural residents are able to access services and do not become socially or rurally isolated. However, ShropshireLink and other demand responsive forms of transport should not be seen as a means of providing regular public transport to employment or education or as a way of encouraging modal shift. Where regular flows of larger numbers of passengers are experienced, other methods will be considered.
24. There are a number of community transport and community car schemes in the County. These services provide essential journeys for anyone where public

transport is either unavailable or unsuitable. Often elderly people with mobility problems these passengers need a higher level of service to that provided by conventional public transport.

25. Community transport is often supported and run by volunteers and the local community. As such, they can provide a responsive high quality value for money service. This approach fits with the drive towards localism and the strategy will explore how the council can best support and develop community transport schemes to meet local need.
26. The strategy proposes that

ShropshireLink and Community Transport are priority services for Shropshire and that regular reviews will be undertaken to ensure the service is operated as effectively and efficiently as possible.

That the council continues to work with and support community transport providers to deliver high quality, value for money transport opportunities.

Local Bus Services – Further considerations

27. The delivery of an attractive quality public transport network is reliant upon a number of factors and is more than just the availability of a bus. The bus strategy details the other elements that make up the complete package of services and options for delivery. This includes;
 - Fare structures and ticketing
 - Smart ticketing systems
 - Vehicle quality and emission standards
 - Bus Priority
 - Service Quality and Customer Satisfaction
 - Quality Bus Partnerships
 - Performance Management.
 - Bus information, marketing and promotion

Capital Investment

28. Capital investment is essential in delivering a quality public transport service. This includes improvements to bus stops, investment in vehicles and other associated schemes. The strategy looks at the advantages of capital investment and how this can and should be targeted to achieve longer term efficiencies.

Consultation

29. It is proposed that the draft Bus Strategy for Shropshire is issued for consultation during December to March. A report on consultation responses and a final Bus Strategy will be submitted to Cabinet in April 2011. Enterprise and Growth Scrutiny Committee has established a Task and Finish Group to comment on the Strategy and oversee the consultation process.

Implementation & Financial Implications

30. Shropshire Council will face some difficult decisions in the short and medium term as financial pressures increase on the budget for the provision of subsidised local bus services, associated services and the funding of Community Transport. This will be done against a backdrop of changes in national policy which will also affect the levels of income currently received by local bus operators including a 20% reduction in Bus Service Operators Grant (BSOG) and a decrease in fare reimbursement for concessionary travel. This will affect the delivery and sustainability of local bus services, whilst public expectation remains high. The draft and final strategy will be used to inform financial decisions going forward.
31. The 2011/12 budget strategy for Shropshire Council proposes savings of approx £716,000 from the public transport and concessionary fares budget. If the decision was taken to reduce the public transport network to the minimum defined in this strategy initial estimate suggest a further £300,000 could be saved. However, the potential savings could be reduced if the changes set out above impact on the viability of services in the minimum network that are currently commercial.
32. In previous years, as an operational principal, an arbitrary limit of council subsidy of £4 per passenger trip has been used as a way of identifying which services need to be monitored and possibly reviewed. Likewise a lower limit of £1 per passenger trip has been used as a means of identifying those services which have the potential to become commercially viable if modifications were made, for example, the fare levels.
33. While it is important to continue to monitor cost per passenger head the focus of the bus strategy is to identify those service which the council feels are socially necessary and where the cost per passenger head is not the sole consideration.

Conclusions.

34. The draft strategy seeks to balance the provision of a viable public transport system that meets economic and social need with competing and increasing financial pressures. This remains a difficult balance to strike, as the impact of removing public transport on socially disadvantaged members of the community can be disproportionate to those with other means of transport.
35. Protecting against this social isolation, particularly in rural areas, must remain a key consideration in determining service provision and needs to be considered alongside passenger and journey costs when determining the core network.

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| List of Background Papers (This MUST be completed for all reports, but does not include items containing exempt or confidential information) |
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| Human Rights Act Appraisal |
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| The recommendations contained in this report are compatible with the provisions of the Human Rights act 1998 |
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| Environmental Appraisal |
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| n/a |
| Risk Management Appraisal n/a |
| Community / Consultations Appraisal Consultation document to be issued following Cabinet decision. |
| Cabinet Member Martin Taylor Smith |
| Local Member All |
| Appendices Appendix A - Bus Strategy for Shropshire 2011 – 2016 Draft |

Appendix A

Draft Bus Strategy for Shropshire 2011 – 2016

Introduction

- A1. Shropshire Council has a statutory duty to produce a bus strategy. The strategy establishes the principals and priorities on which the Council and other partners will develop and sustain the local bus network.
- A2. The strategy encompasses not only fixed route local bus services, but also demand responsive and community transport services which have an increasingly important role in providing bus services for rural communities across Shropshire. The bus strategy therefore outlines the Councils approach to the provision of road based passenger transport across Shropshire.
- A3. The strategy forms part of the Shropshire Local Transport Plan and should be read in conjunction with the 'Rail in Shropshire' report and Shropshire Councils Policy on School Transport to form a complete view of the Council's passenger transport policy.
- A4. The bus can play an important role in making the most effective and efficient use of road space, helping to reduce congestion and pollution, improve accessibility, road safety and encourage social inclusion. A key objective of the Bus Strategy is to ensure that the development and management of the bus network helps deliver the communities priorities. Simply spending more money on supporting increasingly expensive services and automatically supporting any previously commercially operated services is not sustainable. The challenge is to develop a strategy which will define an equitable and sustainable public transport network within the available budget.
- A5. The strategy is intended to be a working document, to be regularly reviewed and changed to ensure it meets the views and requirements of Shropshire's community.

Background

- A6. The 1985 Transport Act legislated for the de-regulation of the bus market. It gave commercial operators the ability to register and operate public bus services for commercial gain with no subsidy from the Passenger Transport Authority. On these commercial services operators are able to determine routes, timetables, frequencies, fares and the type of vehicle to be used. This has left transport authorities with the remit of providing subsidised services where the commercial market is not providing services in line with the stated aims of the Council. The transport authority is prevented from subsidising any services which could be deemed as running in competition with a commercial service but can formulate local agreements with operators to improve quality.
- A7. Monitoring and enforcement of all registered local bus services is undertaken by regional Traffic Commissioners. The Traffic Commissioner has the powers to fine or ultimately withdraw an operator's licence should they consistently fail to

- provide services to the required standard including timekeeping, route violations, poor vehicle maintenance and other matters of vehicle quality.
- A8. Shropshire Council monitors the subsidised network and is able to terminate the financial support it offers to bus operators, if they should fail to provide bus services to the required standard. Even when a service is operated under contract to the Council, the registration of the route (the legal right to operate) is retained by the operator.
- A9. The county of Shropshire has a population of 283,200 with 122,157 households, 34% of which are deemed to be in a rural area. The proportion of older people is higher than both national and regional averages and is set to rise further; the number of people aged over 60 is 73,794. The county has relatively high levels of car ownership, with only 8% of households having no access to a car.
- A10. Many of the people who use public transport in Shropshire are reliant upon the service to be able to get out and about and live their daily lives. Lack of transport especially in rural areas, contributes to social exclusion. This is particularly true of people who are elderly, disabled, young, people on low incomes or those in households where the only car is not available to them.
- A11. An accessible public transport network for is key to addressing social isolation. Community Transport providers and ShropshireLink have a key role to play in ensuring those most at risk of social isolation can continue to access the services and facilities they require to go about and enjoy their daily lives.
- A12. For a rural county Shropshire has a relatively comprehensive bus network provided by a combination of fixed route services operating on key corridors and within the main market towns, and a network of demand responsive rural bus services (ShropshireLink). The bus network including the Shrewsbury & Ludlow Park & Ride services currently provides over 6 million passenger trips each year. In recent years Shropshire has performed better than many other areas of the Country in sustaining overall patronage. However there has, over several decades, been a steady decline in public transport use as levels of car ownership have risen. This overall trend has only been halted in recent years through the introduction of the English National Concessionary Travel Scheme (ENCTS) giving free local bus travel for eligible disabled and older people.
- A13. The increasing cost of operating bus services has reduced the number of services which are operated commercially in the County. This has resulted in a greater reliance on and an increase in the demand for subsidy from Shropshire Council to maintain the service provision. This increase in operating costs has also resulted in higher costs to the Council on the contracts it already subsidises through inflationary increases and the cyclic re-tendering of services.
- A14. The current pressure on the budget for subsidised local bus services is expected to increase significantly in the short term. In parallel with the increasing costs involved in operating transport services generally it is reasonable to expect that there will be a need to make decisions on the continuation of services within the existing network. This may be due to the de-registration of current commercial services; the increasing costs of the subsidised network through the cyclic

tendering or increases in inflation; the need to review the costs of the network as a whole due to a reduction in the available budget for subsidised services.

- A15. This strategy will define the key principals on which the subsidy and support for local bus services will be based, define services by type and will cover those which are currently operated commercially or with subsidy from Shropshire Council. This will ensure that Shropshire Council has a clear policy on which services it will subsidise to meet the stated aims and objectives.
- A16. In addition to regular fixed route and demand responsive bus services Shropshire Council also fund a number of specialist services through the public transport budget. These bus services are intended to provide access to key services and facilities within Shropshire for those who are unable to use public transport either as a result of unavailability or special mobility requirements. This includes ten Community Transport schemes and a number of Community Car schemes which will be considered within this strategy
- A17. Shropshire Council is a Travel Concession Authority (TCA) and therefore has a statutory responsibility to provide free travel for eligible disabled and older people through the English National Concessionary Travel Scheme (ENCTS).

Policy Objectives

- A18. Policy drivers for the provision of a subsidised network reference wider strategies and corporate aims of Shropshire Council. These include broad support of the economy generally, to include specified growth points and the day and night time economies of Shrewsbury and the other County market towns.
- A19. The key aim of the subsidised network is to provide access to key services and facilities these include but are not limited to;
- i. Employment & Education opportunities
 - ii. Health Care Facilities
 - iii. Food & Non-food retail
 - iv. Leisure Services
- A20. The strategy recognises the importance of Modal Shift, Carbon Reduction, Passenger Choice, Economic Development and Leisure & Tourism. The minimum level of service defined within the strategy may not meet some of the requirements of these wider policies. Enhancements to the minimum retained local bus network could be considered to meet the requirements of these wider strategic aims where the strategic aim offers appropriate additional funding for this.
- A21. The provision of bus services in Shropshire plays an important role in making the most effective and efficient use of road space, helping to reduce congestion and pollution, improve accessibility and road safety and encouraging social inclusion.
- A22. The bus strategy contributes to achieving the following draft Local Transport Plan objectives;

- Provide opportunities for good access for all while seeking to enhance sustainability – provision of sustainable transport solutions available to everyone including people without access to a car.
- Have reliable and resilient transport networks – by helping to reduce the number of private cars in towns and prevent congestion.
- Facilitate and accommodate growth in a sustainable way – by providing sustainable travel options.
- Manage and develop the transport network in a way that increases attractiveness, supports communities and enhances quality of life – by providing a communal means of transport which enables social interaction.
- Reduce transport related carbon emissions – by providing a lower carbon alternative to private car use.
- Minimise the negative impacts and enhance the positive benefits of transport on our environment – by helping to reduce the number of vehicles on the road and tackle air pollution
- More people travelling by active modes more often – bus journeys usually start and end with a walk, contributing to levels of physical ability.
- Reduce the risk of death or injury due to transport accidents – Bus travel is safer than travelling by private vehicles
- More community involvement in the design, provision and management of transport – supporting community involvement in providing transport services.

Constraints

A23. There are a significant number of constraints to Shropshire Council’s ability to deliver the aims defined within the Strategy. It is therefore critical to fully explore and understand these prior to implementing any changes. The table below summarises the main constraints;

| Constraints | |
|--|--|
| The Constraints and Effects of the Constraints | |
| Constraints | Effects of the Constraints |
| The majority of bus services within Shrewsbury (and to a much smaller extent elsewhere) are provided by bus operators on a commercial basis and bus operator’s focus, therefore, on profitable routes and times of day. The Council do not have any control over these services. | The commercial bus network is limited in its scope and does not meet the travel needs of people outside the core commercial routes or operating hours. This reduces the attractiveness of bus services both to existing and potential users. |
| Current legislation allows bus operators to withdraw or change bus services with 56 days notice. | The short timescale for altering a service can create an unstable network and difficulties informing existing and potential users of service changes. The resulting uncertainty can deter |

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| | <p>people from travelling by bus.</p> <p>The Council has difficulty in planning a high quality bus network. This can make it difficult to justify investment in bus infrastructure in some locations.</p> |
| Bus operators often focus the provision of new high quality, accessible buses to the most profitable / core routes. | Leads to use of older buses on other routes constraining the development of a consistent high quality and accessible bus network. |
| Current Statutory Concessionary Fare Policy offers free travel to those eligible. Given that this and any other local enhancements are ultimately funded through the Council, pressures on both this and contract revenue funding must be considered together. | As a significant proportion of journeys across the network, any changes in national policy will have an appreciable effect on the levels of patronage and income across the network. |
| The availability of financial resources to the Council is limited. In particular there are limited resources available to provide revenue support for tendered bus services and to provide minimum levels of service. | Limited financial resources constrain the ability to achieve to develop a comprehensive high quality bus network. The bus network cannot therefore fully meet <i>all</i> of the travel needs of or offer an attractive transport option to existing and potential users. |
| New developments and potential bus user destinations are not always placed easily or at a convenient location within the existing network. | Developer contributions under section 106 agreements are usually time limited giving finite support for a service that must achieve a commercial level without ultimately burdening the Council with the need for extra support. (There may be positive developments in this area however under developments moving toward the Community Infrastructure Levy) (note that CIL will not provide revenue funding-will still be via s106 agreements) |

A24. These constraints will continue to put pressure on the current network as well as having a limited effect on the maintenance of any revised network.

Setting Priorities

A25. One of the key aims of the Bus Strategy is to define the priorities of Shropshire Council when considering which services to support. Within the Bus Strategy the priorities are defined as follows;

- High Priority – services which are a statutory requirement or are essential in providing access to local services and amenities and are fundamental in meeting the Council and Communities overall objective of a flourishing Shropshire.
- Medium Priority – services which contribute towards the key aims and objectives of the Bus Strategy but are not essential to meeting the overall targets. .

- Low Priority – services which are currently subsidised but do not contribute towards the key aims and objectives of the Bus Strategy. Shropshire Council will not generally support low priority services and will work with the commercial market to identify alternatives.

Framework

Interurban fixed route bus services

- A26. Inter urban bus services link together the main towns in Shropshire and other neighbouring urban centres including Wrexham, Chester, Stoke-on-Trent, Telford, Kidderminster and Hereford. These services generally operate at an hourly frequency. Currently, some are operated on a commercial basis whilst others are subsidised by Shropshire Council.
- A27. These services operate Monday to Saturday, start as early as around 6:00am and operate until around 7 pm. Peak time journeys are timed to arrive in Shrewsbury and the larger market towns at around 8.30 am to provide travel choice for workers, pupils and students. Some key interurban services operate later in the evening and on Sundays, although at a reduced frequency.
- A28. The services link the main market towns, carry relatively large numbers of passengers and provide the core network onto which other services are built. They have seen a number of improvements in recent years including improved timetables, an increase in frequency and capital investment in new easily accessible vehicles and bus stop infrastructure. The services are of high quality and aim to encourage modal shift by encouraging people to use these services rather than the private car.
- A29. During peak periods the services are generally used by people wishing to access employment and secondary & further education opportunities. These passengers are restricted to the times they need to travel.
- A30. Maintaining a high quality, convenient and frequent bus service is key to retaining these passengers, encouraging new passengers and maximising fare revenue for longer term sustainability of the services.
- A31. Outside of peak times users are generally less confined to travelling at specific times and can alter their behaviour around the availability of public transport services.
- A32. The key principles of the interurban services are to;
- Provide suitably timed services between town centre transport hubs (and other key attractors) to enable travel for access to employment, education and other town centre services.
 - To connect with local town services at a convenient location to provide opportunities for onward travel to access other services within the town not served directly by the inter-urban bus routes.

- Operate Monday to Saturday at a suitable frequency to provide a convenient service and encourage modal shift.
- A33. The inter-urban services form the core of the local bus network and provide a significant number of passengers with access to key services and amenities. It is considered a high priority to maintain these services. Where demand and frequency allow consideration could be given to limiting the service frequency during off peak periods although this will impact upon service quality.
- A34. Where demand is sufficient and capacity allows the inter urban services will deliver a minimum frequency of;
- Every 60 minutes Monday to Saturday between the hours of 6am & 9am & 3pm & 6.30pm
 - Every 120 minutes Monday to Saturday between the hours of 9am and 3pm
- A35. In exceptional circumstances and to reflect local conditions consideration can be given to altering the timescales for which the stated frequencies are relevant. Such conditions would include but would not be limited to where a significant demand exists for transport to or from a major employment area.
- A36. The introduction of clock face, direct, hourly services on these main interurban routes has resulted in some becoming entirely commercially viable in recent years. These opportunities will continue to be explored and maximised where it is felt investment in the network could make the service viable from passenger revenue alone.
- A37. Shropshire Council has a good record of working with key stakeholders to ensure interurban services continue to meet the demands of the travelling public this includes working with service providers including schools, colleges, hospitals and major employers. We will continue to do this and publicise and promote services where appropriate.
- A38. We will continue to work with planners and local developers to ensure that public transport and accessibility are key consideration when looking at sites for development within the County.

Local Town fixed route services

- A39. Local Town services are those which operate in full or for the majority of their route within the main urban area of a defined town. These services typically operate at a higher frequency than inter-urban services because of the relatively short distances and the higher numbers of passengers.
- A40. In order to establish a consistent approach across the county it is proposed that each town will be grouped with others that are a similar size, and have similar patterns of transport demand.
- A41. The table below shows the proposed groupings. This approach is consistent with the Parking Strategy.

| Group 1 | Group 2 | Group 3 | Group 4 |
|------------|----------------|-----------------|-------------------------|
| Shrewsbury | Oswestry | Shifnal | Broseley |
| | Bridgnorth | Wem | Cleobury Mortimer |
| | Market Drayton | Ellesmere | Craven Arms |
| | Ludlow | Church Stretton | Bishops Castle |
| | Whitchurch | Much Wenlock | Prees |
| | | | Minsterley & Pontesbury |

A42. Appendix 1 gives details of the services currently operating within these towns.

Group 1 Shrewsbury

A43. Within Shrewsbury demand for public transport is such that the majority of the local town services are operated commercially by Arriva with no subsidy from Shropshire Council. To bolster services outside of core times i.e. evenings and Sundays, Shropshire Council do currently subsidise some journeys.

A44. Capital investment by Shropshire Council and Arriva has enhanced the quality of many of the vehicles being operated within Shrewsbury.

A45. At present the town services are operated at varying frequencies depending upon demand. The most frequent services operate every 12 minutes commencing at 6.30 am and finishing at 11pm, frequencies on evening services are reduced. At a minimum level some services operate at an hourly frequency because demand is not sufficient to justify greater capacity. These services are subsidised by Shropshire Council.

A46. Inter-urban services help to bolster the town network providing access to key employment areas including Battlefield Enterprise Park, Shrewsbury Business Park and the Royal Shrewsbury Hospital (RSH).

A47. Department for Transport (DfT) guidance recommends that in urban areas residents should be able to access a served bus stop within 400m of their house or chosen destination. Within Shrewsbury, with only a few exceptions, the majority of the town and residential areas are within 400m of existing bus stops.

A48. The key principles of the group 1 town services are to;

- Provide suitably timed public transport services from a central location to allow and encourage connections with inter urban bus services and the wider public transport network including coach & rail services.
- Provide access to and from major residential areas and other key destinations including but not limited to major employment centres, education establishments, and healthcare facilities.
- Provide residents of Shrewsbury with a bus service from a bus stop within 400m of their house or chosen destination.

A49. Where demand is sufficient and capacity allows, within Shrewsbury the town service bus network will deliver, as a minimum, a bus network which provides the following level of service:

- Every 30 minutes, Monday to Saturday, between the hours of 7.30am and 6.00pm.

A50. The provision of Evening and Sunday services will not be a priority although it will remain an aspiration for the Council.

Group 2 Market Towns

A51. The majority of bus services in Group 2 market towns are subsidised by Shropshire Council.

A52. The routes are designed to link the main residential areas with the town centre and other sites including health care facilities, colleges and leisure centres. The times of services allow passengers to travel at peak times and during the day. Sunday and evening services do not currently operate in any Group 2 market towns.

A53. Two types of service have been identified;

- Primary routes generally operate Monday to Saturday on a consistent timetable providing journeys during peak periods and through out the day.
- Secondary routes operate less frequently than daily and in some cases only one or two days each week. These services tend to operate outside on the main peak periods.

A54. A more detailed summary of the services within each town is given in Appendix 1

Group 2 Market Towns – Key Principals

A55. Where demand is sufficient and capacity allows, within group 2 towns the town service bus network will deliver, as a minimum, a bus network which provides the following level of service:

- Primary routes - Every 30 minutes on Mondays to Saturday between the hours of 7.30am and 6.00pm.
- Secondary routes – Every 60 minutes on a minimum of two days each week between 9am and 3pm.

Group 3 Market Towns

A56. Of the group 3 market towns Wem and Ellesmere have dedicated town services. The public transport needs of the remaining towns are provided by the inter-urban services. Details of these services are given in Appendix 1.

A57. Where demand is sufficient and capacity allows, within group 3 towns the town service bus network will deliver, as a minimum, a bus network which provides the following level of service:

- Every 60 minutes on a minimum of two days each week between 9am and 3pm.

A58. This minimum level of service reflects the policy of provision in the wider rural areas of Shropshire as defined within the Rural Transport Strategy; this is limited to a minimum of two days each week and will make use of interurban services where appropriate.

Group 4 Market Towns

A59. None of the smaller market towns defined within Group 4 currently has a specified town service. Passengers within these towns generally look to their closest larger market towns for access to services and amenities. The inter-urban bus network meets the requirements of local and wider travel.

Bus Service Types by Function – Enhanced Service Levels

A60. The specified minimum levels of service as described above may be exceeded if;

- A bus operator provides services above the minimum level at their own commercial risk (including approach mileage)
- Commercial/retail or residential developments make available funding for enhanced services as part of the planning agreement process.
- Funding is available through existing Shropshire Council budgets and a robust business case is made for the enhancement.
- There is a justifiable social need within a specific area such as low car ownership, high levels of unemployment and low levels of household income.

Subsidised services exceeding minimum desirable service levels – current network

A61. There are currently a number of fixed route services that exceed the minimum levels described. These can broadly be categorised into the following areas;

- Sunday Services
- Evening Services
- Services predominantly carrying non-entitled school children
- Services predominantly arranged for tourism and leisure.

These will be discussed in more detail below;

Sunday and Evening Services

- A62. In recent years behaviour has changed such that people are looking to be able to access services and leisure opportunities 7 days a week and over a larger proportion of the day. With this “24/7” lifestyle the expectation that public transport will also be available during these traditionally quieter times has also increased not only from passengers looking to access these facilities but also from those who are employed in their provision.
- A63. Shropshire Council currently subsidise a number of contracts which provide Sunday and evening journeys. In 2009/10 subsidised Sunday and evening services accommodated a total of 27,700 and 59,800 passengers respectively. There are also a small number of Sunday and evening services on these routes which are operated commercially.
- A64. Within Shrewsbury a number of the town services operate in the evenings and on Sundays. These services are currently provided through a mixture of subsidised and commercially viable services.
- A65. Demand for key services such as health care facilities, employment opportunities, retail and education establishments are reduced on Sundays. Therefore the provision of subsidy for Sunday and Evening services is a low priority in the overall context of which services Shropshire Council should support.

Services predominately carrying non-entitled school children

- A66. Under the school transport policy Shropshire Council provide school transport to pupils attending their nearest or catchment school where the home address is over three miles, for secondary aged pupils. For primary school children this distance is two miles. In more recent years parents have been able to express preferences for schools other than their local one. The most popular secondary schools now have substantial numbers of children attending from outside their catchment areas who are not entitled to free school transport.
- A67. Where parents make a preference for a school which doesn't fall within the catchment area it remains a parental responsibility to ensure their child's attendance at school. All transport arrangements and other associated costs are not the responsibility of the council.
- A68. A number of subsidised local bus services are contracted purely to provide services for school children who are attending schools from outside the catchment area. Therefore these pupils are not entitled to free school transport. Indirect support is being granted in subsidising local bus services to transport non-eligible pupils through the passenger transport budget.
- A69. This is not consistent with the Councils School Transport Policy and therefore such services will not be subsidised where patronage data shows little or no usage outside of school travel.
- A70. In implementing this policy it is proposed to give a minimum of 12 months notice to the schools and parents to allow them time to make alternative arrangements. Shropshire Council will continue to provide services for pupils who are entitled to free school transport .

A71. A number of schools within the County already provide privately contracted buses for children attending from outside the catchment area. Parents are asked to contribute to the cost of providing this service by purchasing termly bus passes through the school. Shropshire Council will provide advice and assistance to any schools or parents wishing to establish a bus service to transport pupils to out of catchment schools.

Services arranged predominantly for tourism and leisure

A72. The Shropshire Hills Shuttles network has been in operation for the last six summers covering The Long Mynd, Stiperstones and Clun Valley areas of the South Shropshire Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). The main aims of the Shuttles network are to reduce car based transport around this environmentally sensitive area and support the local economies.

A73. From its creation, the service has been funded by a partnership of local bodies and organisation including Shropshire Council. This partnership takes a very active role in the ongoing promotion and marketing of the service. The service is hosted by AONB Partnership board. Major funding partners of the service, apart from an annual Shropshire Council grant include; The National Trust and Natural England plus funding from the AONB partnership itself. Smaller funding support is also found through some local Parishes. As part of the overall annual income to the service, Shropshire Council grant funding accounts for around 1/3rd.

A74. In addition to the tangible benefits of a reduction in traffic around the AONB areas roads, a recent study by the University of Central Lancashire institute of Travel and Tourism (UCLAN) concluded that the spin off tourism passenger spend in the area was in the region of £62,000 for a season.

A75. The outcomes and benefits accrued from the current Shropshire Hills Shuttles service by the Council are wider than those usually gained from Public Transport funding support. For this reason, the Shropshire Hills Shuttles should be considered a medium priority funding obligation.

Park & Ride

A76. The Shrewsbury Park & Ride service is operated from three sites located in Harlescott, Oxon and Meole Brace. The car parks can accommodate a maximum of 677, 500 and 672 cars respectively giving a total capacity of 1,849 cars. The buses link the sites directly with the Town Centre every 10 minutes through the day, Monday to Saturday, commencing at 7.30 am with the last bus departing the town centre at 6.30 pm. All of the buses are specifically branded, are low floor and easily accessible. The service carried just over 600,000 passengers during 2009/10 (1,206,688 passenger trips).

A77. From February 2011 the frequency of the Shrewsbury Park & Ride service will be reduced to a bus every 15 minutes from each site between the hours of 11am and 3pm Monday to Friday. During peak periods and on Saturday the bus will continue to operate at a 10 minute frequency.

- A78. At busy times Shropshire Council also provides additional capacity on the Park & Ride services. This includes late night and Sunday shopping during the lead up to Christmas and additional service provision for the Shrewsbury Flower Show.
- A79. The fare structure for the Shrewsbury Park & Ride service will be kept under review to ensure that Park & Ride remains a more financially attractive option for users to parking in Shrewsbury whilst maximising fare revenue on the service.
- A80. The Ludlow Park & Ride service is operated from a car park located at the Ludlow Eco (business) Park. The single car park can accommodate approximately 120 cars.
- A81. The Shrewsbury Park & Ride scheme uses dedicated vehicles which operate directly between the car park and the town centre without calling at any intermediate stops. In contrast the buses which serve the Ludlow Park & Ride site also provide the local 'town' bus services to other areas of the town.
- A82. The Shrewsbury Park & Ride service and Ludlow Park & Ride / Town service are subsidised in part using revenue received through the respective on street parking schemes. This revenue does not fully cover the cost of providing these services; the remaining subsidy comes from the passenger transport budget.
- A83. It is a high priority to continue to provide Park & Ride services in Shrewsbury and Ludlow.
- A84. We will continue to develop options to ensure the Park & Ride schemes are able to operate within the available budget. An example of this is the reduction in service frequency during off peak periods on Shrewsbury Park & Ride.
- A85. In parallel with demand management measures, including car park management and pricing, park & ride services will continue to be developed in Shropshire. As defined within the Parking Strategy new sites will be explored to serve other group 2 market towns within the County. Options for the relocation of the Harlescott site and the development of a fourth site in Shrewsbury will also be developed although it is unlikely that a fourth Park & Ride site will be established within the short to medium term.

Demand Responsive Transport - ShropshireLink

- A86. ShropshireLink is an innovative demand responsive local bus service, operating in all rural areas of Shropshire on a minimum of two days each week. Designed to enable rural residents to access key services and facilities in their local market town the service also connects with the fixed public transport network for travel to destinations further a field.
- A87. ShropshireLink was launched in November 2008 as part of the wider Rural Transport Strategy for Shropshire. The service is built on the success of localised demand responsive services initially funded through the Rural Bus Challenge scheme, and to emulate the best practice in service style and customer care as demonstrated within the Community Transport sector.

- A88. ShropshireLink is operated across 9 defined zones covering all rural areas of the County. There are 9 vehicles in service, one per zone, Monday to Saturday. Within these areas are further sub zones that allocate a vehicle to an area on a minimum of two days each week. The integration of dedicated school transport services, provided by ShropshireLink outside the core operating hours, means school children, particularly with its new modern buses; and the education service also benefits from reduced costs generated by integrating two key rural services.
- A89. The service is available to all residents and visitors subject to days & times of operation and availability. The service uses established bus stops and muster points in villages, hamlets and deeper rural locations and also provides door-to-door pick up based upon a passengers requirements..
- A90. Prior to the launch of the service just 57% of rural households in Shropshire were able to access a conventional or flexible bus service to get to their nearest market towns on a minimum of two days each week. With the launch of ShropshireLink this has risen to 97%.
- A91. The service was launched with the simultaneous withdrawal of subsidy from a number of one day a week 'market day' services. ShropshireLink was designed to replicate these trips if required, but new patterns of travel on ShropshireLink have emerged suggesting that the previous services were not always meeting peoples access or transport requirements.
- A92. Since the launch of the service there has been an average 89% increase in the use of ShropshireLink and over 157% increase when compared to patronage on the previous fixed rural bus services. A recent review of the service has found that 89% of passengers were satisfied or very satisfied with the service overall.
- A93. The service continues to develop in response to consultation and feedback. Shropshire Council has also expanded the network in partnership with neighbouring Staffordshire County Council to improve levels of accessibility for residents in border areas and to increase travel options for Shropshire passengers. Other recent developments also include a change to a number of the operating zone areas to reflect passenger demand and comments, an improvement to the publicity and marketing material and a number of local promotions to further encourage greater use of the service.
- A94. External recognition of the results achieved by Shropshire Council has been recently demonstrated at the National Transport Awards 2010 when the service was awarded the Dedicated to Access award at the National Transport Awards.
- A95. It is a high priority for Shropshire Council to continue to operate ShropshireLink on a minimum of two days each week in all rural areas of the county.
- A96. In order to facilitate the provision of ShropshireLink and to continue to increase patronage we will;
- Continue to regularly review the operation of the service to ensure it meets with the requirements of existing and potential passengers.

- Look at available technologies such as smart ticketing to make the service more efficient.
- Develop the marketing and promotional strategy to inform passengers of availability and encourage modal shift.

Community Transport

- A97. Community Transport schemes are available to people for whom conventional public transport is not available or not suitable. This can be for the reasons of frailty, disability or rurality to enable passengers to access essential services. Even with the provision of ShropshireLink and the fixed local bus network there is still a need for an additional layer of community transport to provide essential transport on days when the DRT services are not available, and to cater for people with significant mobility problems who are unable to use ShropshireLink, and urban residents unable to use the conventional town bus services
- A98. The Community Transport (CT) sector in Shropshire is long established (many operating groups have 10 or more years of operating history), and is part of the vibrant Voluntary and Community sector. Although some of the larger organisations retain paid staff in key positions, the vast majority of roles, admin and driving, are undertaken by volunteers.
- A99. Groups are established either as charities or not for profit companies limited by guarantee and typically:
- Locally initiated and locally / independently managed. Much less than 100% of Shropshire served by a CT scheme as a result
 - Owning and using accessible 8 seat MPV type vehicles up to 16 seat minibuses
 - Operating a mixture of group type outings and door to door Ring & Ride style services
 - Operating a fare structure based on either individual fares or a rate per mile dependant on the service style
 - Volunteer drivers, and on some services volunteer escorts as well.
 - A requirement for users to be a member (based on the operating legislation in force), either at nominal cost or free
 - Where agreed by Shropshire Council, concessionary pass holders can travel for free.
 - Providing services in rural areas in particular those that are complementary to the ShropshireLink network.
- A100. As a sector, there is a long history of diverse funding support obtained from a wide range of organisations both local (Parish Councils) and national (The National Lottery). In combination with income generated by the groups themselves (fares and charges, promotions and specific fundraising events), there are at the present time 10 groups operating within the County. These groups range in size from single bus operations with a handful of regular volunteers and users, to large multi bus operations (up to 6, 16 seat vehicles in service at any one time) offering a service to all passengers through operating a registered local bus service. In 2009/10 the community transport scheme in Shropshire undertook a total of approximately 64,400 trips.

- A101. As part of the service equalisation at the inception of the unitary authority Shropshire Council incorporated 100% fare reimbursement for Concessionary travel pass holders. Previously this was limited to schemes in South Shropshire.
- A102. Shropshire Council support the Community Transport groups using a funding formula that derives funding allocations from levels of activity based upon passenger trips, bookings, mileage etc. This funding formula was developed in agreement with the sectors representative body, the Shropshire Community Transport Consortium and provides a rationale for the levels of funding agreed on an annual basis. Funding is released under an annually renewed Service Level Agreement. Strong efforts are also made at all times to observe the guidance in the Voluntary Sector Compact when dealing with the CT groups. In all instances, Shropshire Council base grant funding constitutes less than 50% of turnover.
- A103. Despite some of the restrictions on Community Transport operators under their current national operating licence and permits, many have taken the opportunity over the last few years to enter onto the Councils register of approved operators. In doing so they have satisfied the Councils basic terms and conditions (insurances, vehicle maintenance schedules, driver training and quality), giving them the opportunity to tender as suitable opportunities arise. There are changes that can then be made as necessary to these permits that will allow CT operators to operate a range of contracted services including SEN and Local Bus routes.
- A104. There are a number of existing local bus services that are provided by community transport operators on a commercial basis. However as yet there are no cases where a CT group has successfully tendered to operate a Council supported contract. The fundamental barriers to this remain the availability of volunteers as schedules become dictated by a fixed and enforceable contract, and also the availability of suitable vehicles around what in most cases is an already busy operating week. Furthermore, there are ongoing debates within many of the groups, many being undecided as to whether such contracted work is currently a step change too far in the culture and ethos of such a volunteer organisation, and one that could possibly compromise their main, social and welfare motives.
- A105. Despite these issues, the Council continues to work closely and successfully with the sector on tendering and pricing skills training, and with the Shropshire Community Transport Consortium, and is seeing some change in attitudes as such contracted opportunities may become increasingly important potential sources of sustainable funding for the sector as a whole.
- A106. It is a High Priority for Shropshire Council to continue to work with Community Transport groups and fund them accordingly through the funding formula or other means. We will continue to work with the sector to identify potential opportunities to expand joint service delivery.

Shropshire Community Car Scheme

A107. Shropshire Community Car scheme is operated by a large number of volunteer owner-drivers using their own private vehicles in order to give local residents access to “essential services”. Operated and coordinated, usually at a parish, village or town level, again by volunteers; volunteer drivers receive reimbursement of expenses at 40p per mile. The charging structure requires 52% of this cost to be paid by the users on the day, with the remaining 48% reimbursement in arrears through Shropshire Councils Volunteer Driver Hub in Passenger Transport Services.

A108. In an on-going partnership agreement with Shropshire PCT, where a journey is undertaken to give access to a hospital or clinic site, the 48% reimbursement paid by the Council is recharged in full to the PCT in arrears in acknowledgement of the value that the use of this service gives to the PCT on these occasions.

A109. Anyone can use the Community Cars who; needs to make an “essential” journey, and does not have a car, or has not got access to a car when they need to travel, and is not able to use public transport, either because they can’t get on board or because it is not available.

A110. Example of “essential journeys” include;

- Journeys to Hospital and Visiting friends or relatives in hospital
- Visiting the doctors, dentists, opticians, chiropodist or physiotherapist.
- Transport to hearing aid or ulcer clinics
- Collecting urgent prescriptions
- Shopping, collecting pensions, personal business (e.g. bank, building society, solicitor).
- Transport to a bus stop or train station to catch an onward service.
- Meeting people from the bus or train and taking them home.
- Attending a funeral.

A111. This list is not exhaustive. Other journey requests may be accepted provided they fit within the general guidelines and a driver is willing to take it on.

A112. The current Shropshire Community Car scheme can trace its origins back over 50 years of continual service though a number of previous incarnations. Cited as the longest continually operating community car scheme in England, it is also amongst the very largest with up to 450 active drivers on the register

A113. The schemes operate as an effective “safety net” in the hierarchy of options for public transport users across the County. It efficiently fills the gap where no other conventional public transport option would offer transport (for example, one passenger to a specific appointment) and also formalises and manages within an accepted legal framework, the continuing work of the dedicated local community volunteers.

A114. Given the journeys undertaken in a year, many of which would not be possible in any other way, continuing funding & support for the community car scheme is considered to be high priority.

Local Bus Services - Further considerations

Fare structures

A115. Wherever a service is operated under a Minimum Cost type contract, i.e. the operator provides the service for a flat fee and Shropshire Council receive any fare income, the fare structure is issued and managed by Shropshire Council. Fare levels have in recent years not kept pace with commercial levels; it is proposed under the bus strategy that there will be ongoing six month reviews of fares in the future as a matter of course, with increases made as appropriate with reference to contract costs and commercial fares.

Smart Ticketing

A116. It is an aspiration of the Department for Transport for Smart card ticketing to be rolled out across the UK. Such is the desire for operators to introduce smartcards readers on buses the DfT have made it compulsory for eligible applicants to the English National Concessionary Travel Scheme (ENCTS) to be issued with a smartcard and the Bus Service Operators Grant (BSOG) has recently been altered to give an added incentive for operators to invest in the technology.

A117. The main advantages of using smartcard readers on buses are;

- More accurate data on passenger numbers and travel behaviour.
- Reduction in fraud through the ability to 'hotlist' travel cards.
- Ease of use for operators in submitting concessionary fares claims.
- Reduced loading times on bus assists with punctuality and reliability.

A118. Centro the West Midlands Passenger Transport Executive are currently working with operators in their area to implement smartcard ticketing. This has had a benefit for Shropshire as operators who provide services in both areas do not wish to have two ticketing systems and are planning to upgrade all of their ticket machines. Arriva have indicated that they plan to implement smartcard ticketing early in 2011 on their services in Shropshire.

A119. The Welsh Assembly Government has also invested heavily in smartcard ticketing and a number of Shropshire, operators namely Minsterley Motors and Tanat Valley have benefited from this.

A120. As well as for use with the ENCTS operators or Shropshire Council could choose to implement ticketing schemes for other passengers utilising the smartcards technology this could include scholar's passes or stored value schemes such as those available through the OYSTER scheme in London.

A121. Outside of transport smartcards have many other uses such as Library Cards, electronic school registration cards, stored value for school meal payments or showing entitlement for free school meals, leisure cards etc. There is an opportunity for wider use across the Council.

A122. Due to the costs involved it is unlikely that the smaller rural operators will see any commercial advantage from implementing smart card ticketing machines. In

other areas of the Country the Local Authorities have financially assisted operators in implementing schemes and have acted as brokers for providing the back room services and administration.

A123. We will explore funding mechanisms and other options for assisting smaller operators in implementing smartcard ticketing systems.

Vehicle Emission Standards

A124. Shropshire Council is keen to promote operator investment in modern vehicles and has assisted in the capital purchase of vehicles and provided these to operators for the use on subsidised services. Similarly when tendering services operators are requested to provide costs to Shropshire Council of providing new vehicles for use on core services.

A125. As well as providing benefits to users in terms of improved accessibility and general improvements to quality modern vehicles also meet more stringent vehicle emission standards. At present the highest emission standard is Euro 5 which sets standards for maximum vehicle emission levels of Carbon Monoxide, Hydrocarbon, Nitrogen Oxide, particulate matter and smoke. Further options for improving vehicle emissions based upon a standard diesel engine are available including Enhanced Environmental friendly Vehicle (EEV) systems.

A126. Through the purchase of vehicles and the tendering process for local bus services Shropshire Council has funded the implementation of a number of Euro 5 vehicles. This includes the introduction of 10 low emission vehicles on the Shrewsbury Park & Ride service from February 2011 and on a number of inter-urban services.

A127. It is likely that during the life of this strategy a Euro 6 emission standard will be introduced. We will continue to work in partnership with operators to achieve a more modern operating fleet that meets the highest levels of European emission standards, contributing to the council's aim of reducing carbon emissions and improving air quality. This will be done through direct purchase of vehicles or as part of the contract tendering process

A128. In addition to standard diesel vehicles, Shropshire Council has explored options for the introduction of alternatively fuelled or hybrid vehicles that provide further reductions in emissions. This is yet to come to fruition due to the significant costs involved and the operational risks of introducing relatively untested technology.

A129. As part of the wider carbon reduction program Shropshire Councils Transport Operations Group are looking to pilot the introduction of Liquid Compressed Natural Gas (LCNG) / diesel hybrid vehicles. As part of this study the Council are looking to identify a suitable local bus service which could act as a pilot for the introduction of hybrid vehicles utilising this technology. Initial findings suggest that this could be delivered in partnership with a commercial local bus operator or 'in-house' by the Transport Operations Group.

A130. We will continue to explore the use of low emission, alternatively fuelled or hybrid technology vehicles for introduction on public transport services in Shropshire.

Bus Priority

- A131. In order to retain and attract passengers to local bus services it is important that the services are seen as a real alternative to the private car, including similar or better journey times. In congested areas traffic management including bus priority are essential if services are to progress quickly and smoothly at all times.
- A132. Bus priority can be achieved through a number of techniques and systems. The simplest and easiest to install in congested areas of Shropshire is by giving bus services priority at traffic signals. Buses automatically signal their approach to signalised junctions via radio systems or a coded transponder fitted to the vehicle. The traffic signals then turn to green to give the bus priority through the junction thereby reducing journey times and giving it an advantage over the private car.
- A133. Signalised bus priority can be implemented as part of wider Urban Traffic Management Control (UTMC) systems. These systems use data from various sources including detector loops and bus tracking systems to manage the flow of traffic within a specified area. In its simplest form such systems give priority to traffic going in to an area during the morning peak and out of the area in the afternoon peak although in reality these systems are far more intelligent and can cope with numerous permutations.
- A134. Shropshire Council has investigated a number of options for the implementation of UTMC systems in Shrewsbury and has recently implemented 'intelligent' traffic signals to aid the implementation of this.
- A135. In heavily congested areas signalised bus priority can be accompanied by bus lanes which restrict vehicle access via Traffic Regulation Orders (TRO) to only allow certain vehicle types including buses, taxis and cycles. This allows any authorised vehicle types to bypass congested areas. In Shrewsbury there is an existing bus lane on Castle Gates which by-passes traffic in this area and allows improved access to the main bus stops in the town between specified times.
- A136. Other methods of bus priority include the introduction of bus gates which allow the entry of buses but not other vehicles. This enables buses to penetrate pedestrian areas, business parks, and hospital grounds etc. where other traffic is not able to enter improving accessibility for bus users or allowing buses to make a shorter more direct route.
- A137. Where appropriate we will implement bus priority at signalised junctions in order to aid operators in meeting higher standards of service punctuality and reliability.

Service Quality and Customer Satisfaction

- A138. During November 2009 Shropshire was part of the second round of bus passenger satisfaction surveys, a national programme undertaken by Passenger Focus. With around 1,000 respondents from a targeted sample group broadly representative of operator market share and service frequency, the survey marked satisfaction with all elements of the bus users experience from journey planning, publicity through to the bus stop and the journey itself.

A139. From the results of this survey, current level of overall satisfaction are 85% (very / fairly satisfied). This compares favourably with the average of comparators at 88%.

A140. Within the scope of this Bus Strategy document, those survey areas of particular note are:

- Frequency of services
- Punctuality of service
- Facilities/accessibility of the vehicle
- Value for money

A141. All of these areas were identified in the study as having a significant impact on overall customer satisfaction with the bus network

A142. It is to be noted that many of these areas of service can be targeted in isolation for improvements, but that efforts to do so will by definition draw finite resources away from other areas. For example, the quality /accessibility of a vehicle will generally be improved through the specification of new or newer vehicles. The increase in the cost of a service due to this however can then mean a reduction in the service frequency in order for the overall cost to meet a fixed budget.

A143. Decisions made during the tender and service specification process in taking this strategy forward will be required to balance customer expectations with the funding of a sustainable network in line with the defined minimum retained network.

Quality Bus Partnerships

A144. The provision of commercial services is primarily within the gift of commercial bus operators. However these services still involve the use of the highway, bus stops, bus shelters etc. Consequently the overall product is not entirely in control of any one party. Quality bus partnerships are a means for operators, local authorities and other stakeholders to work together to meet common objectives with the overall aim of raising the quality of the travel experience for passengers on commercial services.

A145. Shropshire County Council used this concept in partnership with Arriva on Service 70 between Oswestry and Shrewsbury. Prior to the introduction of the partnership this service operated every 2 hours and was fully subsidised by Shropshire Council. Under the partnership agreement Shropshire Council agreed to fund the purchase of new vehicles, improve the infrastructure along the route and implement RTPI. In return Arriva provided the service at an hourly frequency on a commercial basis. Individual branding was also developed for the route. As a result of these interventions the patronage has increased by over 100% and Arriva have recently increased the frequency to every 30 minutes.

A146. With the longer term sustainability of this service relatively assured this is obviously a model Shropshire Council will look to repeat. Quality bus partnerships arrangements are most likely to be achieved for services within

Shrewsbury where the majority of commercial services are operated and also provide the greatest opportunity for growth.

A147. The exact specification of any quality contract varies by the individual characteristics of each route. However, the overall aim should be to provide a quality, marketable service attracting new and retaining existing users by encouraging modal shift to make the service sustainable and a real alternative to the car.

A148. Quality Partnerships should include a review and potential improvement of the following;

- Vehicle Standards (including accessibility, fuel type etc.)
- Service Levels including times of operation and service frequency.
- Routes
- Costs (including maximum fares) and ticketing options (through ticketing, smartcards etc.)
- Bus stop facilities and provision
- Marketing & promotion including service branding
- Reliability and punctuality

A149. The 2008 Transport Act gives Local Authorities greater powers to implement quality bus partnerships and makes them enforceable by law where voluntary agreements cannot be reached. These are termed Statutory Quality Partnerships (SQP). This act also explicitly includes the following to be included within a Quality Bus Partnership;

- Frequencies
- Timings
- Maximum Fares

A150. Local authorities can also specify in a SQP restrictions to be imposed on the registration of additional local services which might be detrimental to the SQP. This gives far greater powers to LA's in establishing such schemes and could be seen as the re-regulation of the market in a specific area.

A151. Where financially viable we will seek opportunities with operators to develop new quality partnership schemes to improve service provision. Where operators are unwilling to participate we will instead look to implement a Statutory Quality Partnership.

Performance Management

A152. Service quality including, punctuality and reliability are key for delivering the bus strategy and for ensuring passengers can rely upon public transport services to meet their transport needs. This helps to attract and retain passengers making services more sustainable.

A153. Monitoring and enforcement of all registered local bus services is undertaken by regional Traffic Commissioners, Shropshire is covered within the West Midlands Traffic Area. The traffic commissioner has the powers to fine or ultimately

withdraw an operator's licence should they consistently fail to provide services to the required standard including punctuality, route violations, poor vehicle maintenance and other matters of vehicle quality.

A154. Shropshire Council has no regulatory powers over public transport services. Shropshire Council does however monitor the subsidised local bus network and is able to terminate contracts should the operator fail to provide them to a suitable level of performance. However, even when a service is operated under contract to the local authority, the registration of the route (the legal right to operate) is retained by the operator.

A155. Shropshire Council has a contract compliance team within Passenger Transport Services. This team regularly monitors all contracted transport services including contracted school and public transport to ensure they are operating to all standards within the agreed contract. Where severe concerns arise the compliance team will liaise with the Traffic Commissioner and the Vehicle and Operator Services Agency (VOSA) to ensure they are kept informed.

Concessionary Travel

A156. Shropshire Council is the Travel Concession Authority (TCA) for Shropshire and therefore has a statutory duty to provide free travel for eligible disabled and older people, between 9.30 am and 11.00 pm Monday to Friday and all day at weekends and bank holidays. This is applicable for all English National Concessionary Travel Scheme (ENCTS) pass holders who are boarding a bus within the County. Shropshire Council pays for any passes presented for journeys starting in Shropshire.

A157. In 2009/10 approximately 2,879,000 passenger trips were undertaken under the statutory ENCTS scheme. The statutory scheme is funded by central government through the Revenue Support Grant with an additional special grant received following the expansion to a national scheme in April 2008.

A158. The statutory concession is intended to address the social exclusion of older and eligible disabled people in England by providing improved access to local services and amenities by using local bus services. Under the statutory requirement Shropshire Council will continue to administer and provide the statutory concessionary travel scheme as defined by the Department for Transport.

A159. In addition to the statutory minimum concessionary travel scheme, Shropshire Council elected from April 2009 to offer additional enhancements for Shropshire bus pass holders. In total the ENCTS and discretionary elements of the Concessionary Travel scheme accounted for 3,150,000 trips, which is over 50 % of the total trips undertaken on the Shropshire Local bus network. The 2011 /2012, Budget Strategy proposes that Shropshire Council revert to the English National Concessionary Travel Scheme and thus the strategy does not address this issue.

Bus Information Strategy

A160. To retain passengers and to achieve modal shift to the use of passenger transport services the council recognises the importance of using marketing and promotions cost effectively, supported by timely and accurate information provision. These activities help raise awareness of services, which in turn generate revenue and reduce subsidy.

Brand and Identity

A161. Shropshire Council has developed three distinctive brand identities and design styles for all marketing and information material for the local bus services it subsidises. The Shrewsbury Park and Ride, ShropshireBus & ShropshireLink styles stand out in the market and receive good customer feedback. Individual promotions and services are recognisable and reinforce the overall promotion of Shropshire Council.

A162. A high impact and cost-effective way of promoting the brand is to apply it to all vehicles which have been capitally purchased by Shropshire Council and provided to commercial operators or Shropshire Councils own fleet for use on subsidised services.

A163. We will continue to develop and refine the Shrewsbury Park and Ride, ShropshireBus and ShropshireLink brand and identity, plus related marketing and information messages and design styles.

Public Relations

A164. Shropshire Councils central communications team manages media relations including press releases and responses to media enquiries. Passenger Transport Services or the Passenger Transport Policy team provides the communications team with information about consultations, new services and changes to services. This information is then formulated in to a press release and circulated to local media.

A165. When undertaking public consultation on proposed changes to services or informing stakeholders of changes prior to implementation the Passenger Transport Policy team notify all affected Parish and Town Councils and relevant Shropshire Councillors. This often includes revised timetables, posters and leaflets.

A166. The Marketing and Publicity Team produce a monthly newsletter detailing changes to local bus & rail services, road closures affecting bus services and any other items of interest regarding public transport in the County. This document is made available on line and is circulated via email and in printed format.

A167. We will continue to provide information to the press, passengers, town and parish council and elected unitary members to raise awareness of changes and in undertaking consultations on these proposed changes.

Discounts and Competitions

A168. Discounts and competitions are a useful way of acquiring new customers, capturing user information and building brand awareness and customer loyalty. This approach has worked well in promoting services most successful of which have been on the Park & Ride services and ShropshireLink.

A169. We will continue to use discounts and competitions as a means of retaining and attracting passengers as well as to incentivise the collection of user data.

Website

A170. Shropshire Council provides information about public transport and associated services including Community Transport, concessionary travel scheme, the Park & Ride services and ShropshireLink through the corporate website.

A171. Shropshire Council do not currently provide timetable information on-line but do support and strongly promote the Traveline website. Members of the public looking for timetable information are directed to the Traveline Website using direct links.

A172. When using the Shropshire Council website users are encouraged to comment upon the website and provide automatic feedback through the Govmetric feedback process. Where appropriate this feedback is used to make constructive changes to the website.

A173. We will continue to provide information on all passenger transport and related services through the Shropshire Council website and Traveline.

Printed Timetable Information

- A174. Shropshire Council produces individual timetable leaflets for the principal local bus services for which it provides financial support. These leaflets all carry the ShropshireBus brand. Service timetable leaflets are produced by Arriva for all their commercial bus routes in the County and those that are operated under a minimum subsidy contract, i.e. they keep any fare revenue.
- A175. In a small number of cases Shropshire Council do produce timetable leaflets for services which are currently commercially viable but are on margins due to lack of patronage. In these cases the production and distribution of printed information can help to generate passengers and make the service sustainable over the longer term and prevent costly longer term support.
- A176. With the introduction of ShropshireLink in November 2008, new marketing material was introduced to reflect the new style of service and promote the ShropshireLink brand. Following a review of this publicity the material was reviewed, redesigned and re-released in June 2010. The challenge has been to provide information on a relatively complicated service in an easy to understand and useful format. The new material has received good feedback from passengers.
- A177. A map of Shropshire bus routes is also produced by Shropshire Council. It also contains a list of all bus services and a map of the Shrewsbury local services. Shropshire Council in partnership with Arriva produces a Shrewsbury town map to show local bus services and gives a brief summary of the timetables.
- A178. For Ludlow, Shropshire Council has produced a leaflet to show the availability of specific transport services in the town including the Park & Ride. This leaflet has been very well received by existing and potential passengers. It is proposed that this leaflet format be adopted in other areas where town services operate; we will implement a town service leaflet giving the timetable and route of these services.
- A179. We will continue to publicise public transport services via individual leaflets and we will ensure that this material is clear and concise and kept up to date to ensure confidence in their use and in the use of passenger transport in general.
- A180. There are a number of outlets and individuals in Shropshire who provide timetable information on public transport services or who require a comprehensive set of timetables. Shropshire Council produces a County Public Transport Guide in an A4 folder and issues replacement punched pages each month where services have changed, so that this can be kept up to date.
- A181. The guide is costly to produce and uses significant resources to print and distribute via the post. We will explore options for distributing this information electronically either via email, the web or on CD.
- A182. In addition to town and service specific printed information the Council also produces information about associated and additional services this includes the concessionary travel scheme and Shrewsbury Park & Ride. We will continue to provide accessible information about these associated services to ensure passengers are informed.

Bus Stop Information

- A183. Timetable information is provided by the council at key bus stops in both urban and rural areas. On its commercial services Arriva provides and updates this, on supported services and those provided by smaller operators the provision and updating are undertaken by Shropshire Council. At stop timetables are provided at approximately 30% of the 2500 marked bus stops in the county.
- A184. The provision of timetable information at bus stops is seen as essential to encouraging passengers by giving them sufficient information and security to choose public transport. Where appropriate we will continue to install timetable cases at marked bus stops.
- A185. Timetable inserts are produced to a common style by Shropshire Council using our central timetable database which also provides information to Traveline. The timetable displays are automatically tailored to show departure times of buses by service from that stop. Where space allows times are displayed for other main points along the route.
- A186. We will continue to provide consistent and accurate information at bus stops and bus shelters fitted with timetable displays.
- A187. Outside of Shrewsbury bus stop infrastructure including poles, flags and cases are provided by Shropshire Council. In Shrewsbury the infrastructure, excluding poles which are provided by the Council, is provided by either the Council or Arriva. There are currently a number of different styles and sizes of timetable cases and flags across the County. In recent years we have adopted a minimum standard for both timetable cases and flags to reduce the number of sizes and styles. This has achieved efficiencies and economies of scale in purchasing equipment and spares. We will continue to upgrade and replacing non-standard infrastructure and formalise unmarked stops.
- A188. The formalisation of existing stops or the addition of new stops will be done at the request of passengers, operators, elected members, town & parish councils or as part of these revised improvements. In all cases Shropshire Council will consult with any residents or businesses affected by the installation of a bus stop.

Telephone Information

- A189. Traveline is a national transport information service providing timetable information for bus, rail and various other public transport modes. The service can be accessed via telephone, website and SMS text service. All of the information is provided electronically by the local authorities and is also used for journey planning by Transport Direct and more recently Next Buses mobile phone service.
- A190. Traveline is a national service but administered and provided at a regional level. Information for services in Shropshire are supplied to and provided by West Midlands Transport Information Services Ltd in Birmingham. This regional consortium includes Shropshire Council, CENTRO (the West Midlands

Passenger Transport Executive), Telford & Wrekin Council, City of Stoke-on-Trent Council, Staffordshire County Council, Worcestershire County Council, Herefordshire Council and Warwickshire County Council. These local authorities contribute towards the capital and revenue costs of providing this service based upon a share of the total population and usage of the service. CENTRO provides the greatest share of this funding.

A191. The Traveline contact details are provided on all publicity and marketing material produced by Shropshire Council this includes leaflets, maps, advertisements, roadside information displays and bus stop vinyl.

A192. We will continue to fully contribute to the maintenance and development of the West Midlands Traveline service and provide the relevant information to WMPTIS to populate the timetable database.

Capital Investment

Passenger Waiting Facilities

A193. The bus stop is a key element in providing a quality local bus service. Its major role is to provide a suitable and safe location for the bus to stop to allow passengers to board and alight. Bus stops can be further enhanced to include shelters, lighting and information to improve security and comfort for waiting passengers.

A194. In addition the permanent presence of a bus stop or bus shelter is a clear 'advertisement' for users and non-users that a bus service is available. With the inclusion of timetables at many bus stops they can also be a point of reference for local residents and passengers. The quality and condition of this infrastructure is a direct reflection on the type of service people can expect and can enhance the experience and encourage greater use.

A195. Bus Stop infrastructure is provided through a number of sources. Bus Stop flags, timetable cases and poles are supplied by either the relevant operators or Shropshire Council. It is estimated that there are around 1000 unmarked and informal bus stops across Shropshire. The rural nature of the county may mean it is inappropriate for the installation of a bus stop however where appropriate we will look to formalise unmarked bus stops and install required infrastructure.

A196. Bus shelters are provided through town or parish councils who have the on-going responsibility for cleaning, maintenance and Insurance. Shropshire Council has provided capital grants to parish and town councils for the provision of bus shelters at identified locations in their areas. Shropshire Council currently provides 75% of the cost of purchase and installation on the agreement that the relevant Parish or Town council take over ownership. In some exceptional cases or where the request for improvements comes from Shropshire Council then the unitary authority provide 100% of the cost.

A197. We will continue to provide capital grants to town and parish councils for the installation of bus shelters to help improve the quality and perceived quality of local bus services for users and non-users.

- A198. Other infrastructure, such as hard standing areas, introduction of parking restrictions and raised kerbs to comply with the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) 1995, to provide easier access to low floor vehicles is currently provided at a small number of locations. As a matter of course where we undertake re-surfacing or introduce an area of hard standing raised kerbs will also be implemented. On trunk road services the Highways Agency have installed raised kerbs.
- A199. We will introduce a rolling programme to install raised kerbs and suitable areas of hard standing. This should be done on a route by route basis commencing with the interurban services. Where appropriate bus stop infrastructure will also be updated at these locations.

Vehicle Purchasing

- A200. In the past Shropshire Council has invested heavily in the purchase of new vehicles and supplied these under contract to operators to use on subsidised local bus services. This has been for two main reasons. Firstly to improve the quality of the wider Shropshire vehicle fleet and to improve accessibility from the greater number of low floor vehicles. Secondly the provision of Shropshire Council owned vehicles on subsidised services helps to reduce the revenue cost of these contracts.
- A201. In addition to the above Shropshire Council has also provided vehicles and capital grants, for the sole purpose of purchasing vehicles, as part of a quality partnership. In return for such investment the operators concerned provide a minimum level of service frequency and standards.
- A202. In a small number of cases Shropshire Council has also provided capital grants under contract for the purchase of vehicles to assist in maintaining the viability of a service rather than providing on-going revenue support. In return the operator commits to providing a minimum level of service over an agreed timescale. The council retains the right to claw back any capital should the operator not maintain this standard.
- A203. Shropshire Council has also funded vehicles for use within the Community Transport sector. Many of these schemes were established using funding through the Rural Bus Challenge (RBC) funding stream. Whilst operated and maintained by individual schemes the ownership and responsibility for renewal has been with Shropshire Council.
- A204. A number of these vehicles have come to the end of their operational life and Shropshire Council has felt it reasonable to replace these vehicles for the relevant community transport schemes. This is only for those vehicles purchased under the RBC scheme and will not be repeated beyond this single renewal process. The community transport schemes will be responsible for vehicle depreciation and renewal.
- A205. We will continue to consider purchase of vehicles and the supply of grants to operators for vehicles where there is a financial or other discernable benefit from

doing so. This could include but not limited to vehicle quality, accessibility and reduced emissions.

Other Capital Schemes

A206. Shropshire Council has provided capital funding for a number of schemes and the purchase of equipment to improve the overall quality of public transport provision across the County. This has included the installation of driver to base radio communications on Shrewsbury P&R, the introduction of public transport information boards at bus & rail stations, the purchase of mobility aids for community transport schemes and the introduction of CCTV at a number of railway stations across the County. These schemes have been done at the request of passengers or other partners.

A207. We will continue to work with operators, passengers, town and parish councils to identify suitable schemes which will improve the quality and provision of public transport in Shropshire for delivery through the capital programme.

Appendix 1**The Current Network (26/5/10)****Group 1 (Shrewsbury)**

| Service | Area | Days | Times | Frequency |
|---------|---|--|--|--|
| 1 | Gains Park / RSH ./ Telford Estate | Monday – Friday Saturday Sunday | 0628 – 1704 1704 – 1833 1833 – 2303 0718 – 0818 0818 – 1703 0930 - 1733 | 12 mins 15 mins 30 mins 30 mins 15 mins 30 mins |
| 2 | Castlefields circular | Monday – Friday Saturday | 0900 – 1721 0900 - 1721 | 30 mins 30 mins |
| 3 | | School Days Only | | 2 Trips per Day |
| 6 / 501 | Battlefield Way Circular | Monday - Friday | 0757 – 0917 0917 – 1802 | 40 mins 60 mins |
| 8 | Bus Station – Sutton Farm | Monday – Friday Saturday Sunday | 0745 – 1815 1845 – 2327 0830 – 1745 1745 – 23.27 10.15 – 17.27 | 15 mins 30 mins 15 mins 30 mins 30 mins |
| 12 | The Square – Merlin Road | Monday – Friday Saturday | 0858 – 1641 0858 – 1641 | 30 mins 30 mins |
| 20 | Radbrook Green | Monday – Friday Monday – Friday Saturday Sunday | 0756 – 1857 1857 – 2357 0756 - 1857 1857 – 2357 0945 - 1710 | 30 mins 60 mins 30 mins 60 mins 60 mins |
| 23 | Bus Station – Judith Butts | Monday – Friday Saturday | 0823 – 1740 0823 - 1740 | 30 mins 30 mins |
| 24 | Shrewsbury – Bayston Hill | Monday – Friday Monday – Friday | 0705 – 1850 1850 - 2332 | 15 mins 60 mins |
| 25 | Harlescott – Shrewsbury – Bayston Hill | Monday – Friday Monday – Friday Saturday Sunday | 0647 – 1845 1845 – 2352 0732 – 1815 1815 – 2309 0932 - 1809 | 15 mins 60 mins 15 mins 60 mins 60 mins |
| 26 | Shrewsbury – Harlescott – Meole Village | Monday – Friday Saturday | 0657 – 1840 0657 - 1858 | 30 mins 30 mins |
| 37 | Weeping Cross – Longden Road | Schooldays Only | | 2 Trips per Day |
| 38/39 | Oaklands – Longden Road | Schooldays Only | | 2 Trips per Day |

Group 2 (Oswestry, Market Drayton, Ludlow, Whitchurch, Bridgnorth)

| Service | Area | Days | Times | Frequency |
|---------|-----------------------------|------------------------------|------------------------|---------------------|
| 205 | Whitchurch Town Service | Monday to Saturday | 0710-1901 | 30 mins |
| 206 | Whitchurch Town Service | Tuesdays and Fridays | 0925 - 1509 | 60 mins |
| 701 | Ludlow Town Service | Monday to Saturday | 0730-1800 | 30 mins |
| 702 | Ludlow Town Service | Monday to Saturday | 0735-1705 | 60 mins |
| 703 | Ludlow Town Service | Monday to Saturday | 0720-1750 | 60 mins |
| 704 | Ludlow Town Service | Monday to Saturday | 0820-1810 | 60 mins |
| 401 | Oswestry Town Service | Monday to Saturday | 0710-1850 | 30 mins |
| 402 | Oswestry Town Service | Monday to Saturday | 0700-1835 | 30 mins |
| 403 | Oswestry Town Service | Monday to Saturday | 0917-1517 | 60 mins |
| 404 | Oswestry Town Service | Monday to Saturday | 0830-1533 | 60 mins |
| 405/6 | Oswestry School Services | Schooldays Only | | 2 Trips per day x 2 |
| 101 | Bridgnorth Town Service | Monday to Saturday | 0705-1850 | 30 mins |
| 301 | Market Drayton Town Service | Monday to Saturday | 0700-1820 | 30 mins |
| 302 | Market Drayton Town Service | Monday to Friday Saturday | 0719-1810 0719-1820 | 30 mins 30 mins |

Oswestry

The existing town service in Oswestry consists of 4 town services and a single return trip catering for school children who live within the three mile catchment of the school.

All of the town services are currently subsidised by Shropshire Council although a small number are operated commercially. The services link the 4 main residential areas of Oswestry with Oswestry town centre and other services and amenities including employment and education opportunities.

The network consists of the following services,

- Service 401; commences operation at 7.10am with the last service departing the town centre at 6.50 pm. The service operates Monday to Saturday at a 30 minute frequency utilising a single vehicle.
- Service 402; commences operation at 7am with the last service departing the town centre at 6.35 pm. The service operates Monday to Saturday at a 30 minute frequency utilising a single vehicle.

- Service 403; commences operation at approximately 9.20 am with the last service departing the town centre at 3.20 pm. The service operates Monday to Saturday at a 60 minute frequency. The service currently operates between the peak periods.
- Service 404; commences operation at 8.30 am with the last service departing the bus station at 3.30pm. The service operates Monday to Saturday at a 60 minute frequency. This service does not currently operate during the afternoon peak period. This service combined with the service 403 utilise a single vehicle.

Other key services in the Oswestry town network include a number of inter-urban services which link the town centre with Gobowen Orthopaedic Hospital.

Bridgnorth Town Services

The town network in Bridgnorth consists of a regular Monday to Saturday service and an additional 'market day' service which operates on a Thursday only. Both of these services are fully subsidised by Shropshire Council.

The network consists of the following services;

- Service 101; commences operation at 7.05 am with the last service departing the town centre at approximately 7 pm. The service operates Monday to Saturday every 30 Minutes. The service is operated every 30 minutes. The service also serves the Severn Valley Railway Station and connects this tourist attraction with the town centre.
- Service 492; commences operation at 9.30 am with the last service departing the town centre at 3 pm. The service operates on a Thursday only, to co-inside with the Bridgnorth market day. The service operates approximately every 60 minutes.

Other key services in Bridgnorth include a number of inter-urban services which connect the town with Shrewsbury, Telford, Wolverhampton and Kidderminster. These services also link key services and amenities in Bridgnorth with the town centre and give passenger choice for retail, employment and education opportunities.

Ludlow Town Service / Park & Ride

The Ludlow town service is split into 4 distinct services which link the main residential areas of Ludlow with the town centre and other key services and amenities in the town including the Leisure Centre and Hospital. Three of the town services also serve the Park & Ride site. When combined this provides a bus every 15 minutes from the site.

The majority of the services are operated with subsidy from Shropshire Council although a number of journeys on service 701 are currently operated commercially. The subsidy for the Ludlow town services, in part, is paid from revenue received from on-street parking. This is a model which is looking to be replicated in other market towns through the parking strategy with the development of additional park & ride sites.

Shropshire Council has also provided modern easily accessible vehicles for the provision of these services.

The network consists of the following services,

- Service 701; commences operation at approximately 7.30 am with the last service departing the town centre at 6pm. The service operates every 30 minutes Monday to Saturday.
- Service 702 & 703; commence operation at 7.30 am with the last bus departing the town centre at 5.50pm. The service operates Monday to Saturday and departs every 30 minutes from the Park & Ride site.
- Service 704; commences operation at 7.50 am with the last bus departing the town centre at 5.35pm. The service operates Monday to Saturday and departs every 30 minutes from the Park & Ride site.

Other key services in Ludlow include the inter-urban services which provide services to Shrewsbury, Kidderminster (and connecting services to Birmingham) and Hereford.

Whitchurch Town Service

The town bus network in Whitchurch comprises of a regular Monday to Saturday service and an additional Market Day service which operate on Tuesday and Fridays only. Both services are fully subsidised by Shropshire Council.

The Whitchurch town network consists of;

- Service 205; commences operation at 7 am and operates until approximately 6.30 pm. The service operates Monday to Saturday on a 30 minute frequency. The service is operated with a single vehicle.
- Service 206; commences operation at 9.25am and operates until 3 pm. The service operates on a Tuesday and Friday only at an hourly frequency.

Shropshire Council has recently received funding through a section 106 agreement relating to the development of an Aldi store on Station Road. Under this agreement Shropshire Council has an obligation to provide a regular Monday to Saturday extension to the current local bus service. The proposed timetable is due to commence in spring 2011.

Other key services in Whitchurch include interurban services to Shrewsbury and Chester.

Market Drayton Town Service

The town service in Market Drayton operates Monday to Saturday and is fully subsidised by Shropshire Council. The service commences operation at 7 am with the last bus leaving the bus station at 6.20 pm. The service is split in to two with one loop operating every 30 minutes and the other operating every 60 minutes. This service is provided using a single vehicle.

Group 3 (Shifnal, Wem, Ellesmere. Church Stretton and Much Wenlock)

| Service | Area | Days | Times | Frequency |
|---------|------------------------|---------------------------------------|------------------------|--------------------|
| 208 | Ellesmere Town Service | Tuesday and Friday | 0900-1420 | 30 mins |
| 201/2 | Wem Town Service | Monday, Tuesday, Thursday Saturday | 0915-1451 0915-1623 | 30 mins 30 mins |

Wem and Ellesmere currently have dedicated town services which provide the following levels of service;

- Service 201 / 202; Wem town service operates on a Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday. Both services are operated by the same vehicle and currently operate every 30 minutes. The service currently commences at 9.15 am and operates until approximately 3 pm.
- Service 208; Ellesmere town service operates on a Tuesday and Friday. The service currently commences at 9 am with the last bus departing the town centre at 2 pm.

Shifnal, Church Stretton and Much Wenlock do not currently have a dedicated market town service. As in group 4 towns passengers use inter-urban services to access the commercial centres of larger market towns for essential services and amenities.

Shifnal is served by the 891 / 892 bus service which provides a service every 30 minutes between Wolverhampton and Telford via Shifnal.

Church Stretton is served by the hourly 435 service which provides journeys to Shrewsbury and Ludlow. The service operates the length of the town and connects the residential areas of the town with the town centres. Any changes to the inter-urban network would impact upon bus passengers in Church Stretton.

Shifnal and Church Stretton also have railway stations providing wider access to the public transport network.