

**Title: Bus and Passenger Services Task
 and Finish Group - Final Report**

Meeting: Environment and Sustainability Scrutiny Committee

Meeting date: Monday 21 September 2026

Report by: Statutory Scrutiny Officer

Classification

Open

Report purpose

To provide the Environment and Sustainability Scrutiny Committee with the final report of its Bus and Passenger Services Task and Finish Group.

Background

1. The Environment and Sustainability Scrutiny Committee agreed as a priority for its work programme to set up a task and finish group to scrutinise bus and passenger transport services in Herefordshire. The group's work programme has been completed, and concludes with an agreed final report to the Environment and Sustainability Scrutiny Committee.

Meeting objectives

2. To note the final report of the Bus and Passenger Services Task and Finish Group.
3. To agree the group's recommendations to the executive.

Report information

4. At its meeting on 16 December 2025, the Environment and Sustainability Scrutiny Committee agreed to set up a task and finish group to scrutinise bus and passenger transport operations and strategy in Herefordshire.
5. The review sought to examine:
 - a. How Herefordshire Council currently uses its powers and responsibilities to shape bus provision.
 - b. How other rural authorities deliver passenger transport.
 - c. Whether funding is being used effectively.
 - d. Delivery of the Bus Service Improvement Plan.
 - e. The effectiveness of Enhanced Partnership arrangements.

- f. Opportunities arising from the Bus Services Act 2025.
- g. Cross-county and cross-border connectivity.
- h. The role of the Marches Forward Partnership.
- i. Community transport opportunities.
- j. Demand Responsive Transport opportunities.
- k. Future funding and delivery models.

6. The group's final report to the committee is attached as Appendix 1. The report makes a number of recommendations for the committee to consider:

a. Strengthen Public Transport Data and Evidence

The council should strengthen the collection, analysis and sharing of transport data across the passenger transport network, making full use of existing fleet technology, real-time vehicle tracking and ticketing systems to improve performance monitoring, compliance management and evidence-based decision-making. This should include information on passenger demand, reliability, punctuality, subsidy levels, rural travel patterns and SEND transport pressures, enabling greater accountability, more effective targeting of investment and stronger long-term transport planning.

b. Strengthen the Enhanced Partnership

The Enhanced Partnership should develop a more structured approach to performance monitoring, accountability and data sharing, and should include structured engagement with Community Transport Providers as part of partnership discussions and future accessibility planning. Regular reporting and agreed performance measures will help support evidence-led decision-making, collaborative problem solving and continuous improvement across the network.

c. Improve Passenger Information and Minimise Service Disruption

The council and operators should improve real-time information, disruption communications, timetable information and digital journey-planning tools. Highway works should be planned and coordinated to minimise impacts on bus reliability and ensure passengers receive clear and timely information during service disruptions. Establish a single, council-led point of contact for passenger feedback, complaints and service suggestions to improve accountability, identify recurring issues and provide greater oversight of network performance.

d. Timely BNAP Integration

The council should ensure that future transport contracts, network planning and investment decisions align with the requirements of the Bus Network Accessibility Plan and actively involve disabled passengers and community transport providers in its development.

e. Improve Integration Between Bus and Rail Services

The council should work with bus and rail operators to improve connections at interchange points, particularly Hereford, Leominster and Ledbury stations, through better timetable coordination, passenger information, wayfinding and journey planning. Improved integration will make public transport more convenient and attractive for longer journeys.

f. Strengthen and sustain not for profit operators including those licensed as community transport operators

The council should recognise not for profit operators as a strategic component of Herefordshire's passenger transport network by strengthening its representation within the Enhanced Partnership, ensuring meaningful involvement in Bus Network Accessibility Plan development and wider accessibility planning, maintaining appropriate financial support, and supporting long-term organisational sustainability through fleet renewal, volunteer development and capacity building. Community transport should be fully integrated into wider transport planning as a key contributor to accessibility, social inclusion and independent living.

g. Develop a Long-Term Integrated Transport Strategy as part of the daughter documents of the Local Transport Plan

The council should prepare a long-term strategy for passenger transport that brings together network development, rural mobility, integration across transport modes, accessibility, decarbonisation, technological innovation, funding, governance and regional collaboration. The strategy should provide a clear framework for future decision-making, investment, workforce challenges, vehicle flexibility and alternative operating models, ensuring that Herefordshire's transport network remains sustainable, inclusive and responsive to future opportunities and challenges.

h. Adopt an Evidence-Led Approach to Rural Mobility Innovation

The council should explore more appropriate supply to rural transport and other emerging rural mobility solutions only where there is clear evidence of passenger demand, value for money and compatibility with existing transport provision. Any future initiatives should be subject to robust evaluation.

Consultees

7. The groups and people consulted by the task and finish group are included in the group's final report, which is attached as Appendix 1.

Appendices

Appendix 1 Bus and Passenger Services Task and Finish Group - Final Report

Background papers and resources

None identified