

COUNTY COUNCIL MEETING – 20 MAY 2021

**Question to David Williams
Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport**

By Cllr Edgeller

Question

The people in South East Stafford Division have suffered greatly from the loss of Bus Services and I would imagine many other rural areas are also in that category. In one area alone, I have approximately 1000 homes with no service. These homes are approximately 3 miles from the town centre and their lack of access to public transport will have a negative impact on the town centre's businesses. Additionally, a lot of these houses will have a high elderly population who cannot walk the ½ mile to the nearest bus route, to which we can add the mental anguish, loneliness and isolation to compound Mental Health issues this problem creates. This Friday I, along with our MP Theo Clarke, have arranged a meeting with Chaserider to discuss the bus issues. Will the Leader and Cabinet give their support to help our citizens to regain their bus service lifeline?

Reply

We support your conversation with one of the main local bus operators, D&G, to discuss potential opportunities for new commercial services in your area. Prior to the Covid-19 pandemic, more than 95% of the local bus network in Staffordshire was operated on a commercial basis by bus operators. Public transport locally and nationally has been drastically impacted by the pandemic, and in line with government advice service levels were reduced due to lack of demand during national lockdowns.

The government and the authority have financially supported our local bus companies throughout this challenging time to ensure that they remain sustainable and in the medium to long term. Since April 2021 service levels have returned to pre pandemic levels in most areas of the county although patronage levels are still only 60% of pre-pandemic figures.

We continue to work closely with bus operators through the Staffordshire Bus Operators Forum and are currently considering what impact and benefits there will be for our residents following the recent publication of governments National Bus Strategy.