



RMTG Clerks Advisory Panel meeting
Online via Zoom
10:30am-12pm, Thursday, 4th March 2021

Agenda

1. Matters Arising from the last RMTG Clerks Advisory Panel meeting.
(Attachment 1)

Notes from RMTG Clerks Advisory Panel meeting which took place on Monday, 30th November 2020.

2. Current Membership. (Attachment 2)

RMTG from a regional perspective.

[Please click here to view the RMTG page](#)

3. RMTG Officer Steering Group.

We have recently established a group of 10 Officers to act as an Officer Steering Group to enable us to be more productive as a group. In establishing this Group, we have taken in consideration both geographical spread and the size of respective market town.

Contact with members of the RMTG Officer Steering Group will be more frequent than with Clerks (with Clerks it will mainly be through our RMTG Clerks Advisory Panel meeting). However, if you have issues you wish to bring forward between meetings, feel free to get in contact with us at admin@sparse.gov.uk.

For your information, please see the list of officers who are part of our RMTG Officer Steering Group:

Town/Parish	Area	RMTG Officer Steering Group	Role in Respective Council
Bicester Town Council	South East	Samantha Shippen	Chief Officer
Bridport Town Council	South West	Will Austin	Town Clerk
Buckingham Town Council	South East	Paul Hodson	Town Clerk
Caistor Town Council	East Midlands	Helen Pitman	Town Clerk
Earby Town Council	North West	Katie Jeffreys	Town Clerk
Faringdon Town Council	South East	Sally Thurston	Town Clerk
Halstead Town Council	South East	Sarah Greatorex	Town Clerk

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Penrith Town Council	North West	Carol Grey	Economic Development Officer
Saxmundham Town Council	South East	Rosalind Barnett	Town Clerk
St Austell Town Council	South West	David Pooley	Town Clerk
Westerham Town Council	South East	Angela Howells	Town Clerk
Wisbech Town Council	South East	Terry Jordan	Clerk (and Responsible Financial Officer)

4. **Review of Government's (1) Town Fund and (2) Future High Street Fund Criteria and Allocations.** (Attachment 3)

Attached is a report undertaken by Graham Biggs MBE, Chief Executive and RSN staff. It outlines the way Government approached the question of establishing towns that should be considered in relation to the bidding process and the criteria adopted in relation to community identification. Although there was some limited allocation to communities in rural areas, most of the consideration and allocation was towards larger and more urban towns. This analysis is considered a good starting point for the Group. It is essential that if Rural/Market Towns are going to achieve more support in the future, the current thought pattern of Government must be fully understood. The Group will then need to persuade Government of the merits of wider rural inclusion.

5. **Rural Market Town Group Survey – Rural Transport outcomes.** (Attachment 4)

At the first RMTG meeting of Councillor Representatives the group asked to be surveyed on rural transport, see if there were immediate discernible trends across the group in relation to transport cutbacks and the impact on rural towns. In an exercise of this nature, it is inevitable there will be variation of outcomes because we are dealing with differing communities. Although this has been an exercise that required Councillors in many ways to give a best guess, as opposed to statistical information, the overall picture.

6. **Revitalising Rural: Realising the Vision.**

Our Revitalising Rural campaign launch took place this past Monday, 1st March 2021.

[Click here to read the Revitalising Rural chapters](#)¹

We would like to strongly advise you to look into two specific chapters most relevant to this group:

- [Parish Councils and Rural Community Action](#)²
- [Rural Town Centres and High Streets](#)³

¹ <https://www.rsnonline.org.uk/revitalising-rural>

² <https://rsnonline.org.uk/images/revitalising-rural/parish-councils-rural-community.pdf>

³ <https://rsnonline.org.uk/images/revitalising-rural/rural-town-centres.pdf>

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7. [The National Innovation Centre for Rural Enterprise](https://ncl.ac.uk/nicre/about/)⁴ (NICRE).

The NICRE initiative which will be spun over a 3-year period. It will involve three universities: Newcastle (where a physical centre will be established), Warwick and Gloucestershire, all working together to foster and assist Rural Enterprise across England. This is an important initiative and having been one of the supporters of the funding bid that allowed it to proceed, RSN will be looking to work with the initiative wherever possible. We hope that some of this work will relate to Rural Market Towns and to the RMTG.

8. A RMTG Rural Information Exchange.

At the first RMTG meeting of councillor representatives, we were asked to look at ways the RMTG could facilitate exchange of information and best practice between group members across the RMTG. This is a matter RSN officers wish to take forward as soon we are able, and it is something we wish to give a future high priority to. As with all networks there is a need for people to work consistently with them acting as facilitators. We have had discussion with the RMTG Officer Steering Group members about this and we feel the creation of an efficient way to exchange information and good practice will considerably assist this initiative.

9. Extra expenditure occasioned by local councils because of the pandemic and the sheltering of vulnerable people. (Attachment 5)

Attachment outlines St Austell's correspondence exchange with the Ministry.

We discussed this at the last meeting of this group and David Pooley (St Austell Town Council) agreed to provide details of their position in relation to extra expenditure in their town. Clearly there has been additional expenditure and loss of income, particularly in rural areas by both local councils and Principal Councils. Our preliminary view is that we do not feel MHCLG have currently taken full account of this. However, if we are to seek to pursue this matter in anyway, we will need evidence could facilitate the ongoing discussion with the Ministry. Subject to the views of this meeting we will be surveying all members on this matter.

10. Planning Gain

One of the items discussed, by a recent meeting of the RMTG Officer Steering Group, was the lack of correlation between infrastructure and other community benefits promised on the back of outlined planning applications and the resultant outcomes from a series of smaller and incremental planning applications made by developers on the back of the original outline planning consent. It was felt that there may be merit in a survey across the group on this topic to establish whether this pattern was widespread.

We would like to kindly request views from the RMTG Clerks Advisory Panel.

11. Items for the RMTG meeting of Councillor Representatives.

⁴ <https://ncl.ac.uk/nicre/about/>

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RMTG meeting will take place from 4:30pm to 6pm on Monday, 29th March 2021. We have already circulated the invitation to relevant appointed representatives (and clerks where there was no appointee made).

Please encourage your representative to register.⁵

Please note that some items discussed at this meeting, will also be discussed at the RMTG meeting on the 29th of March. However, we are open for further suggestions from Clerks for possible items for this meeting.

12. Any Other Business

⁵ <https://rmtgmeeting2021march.eventbrite.co.uk>

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RURAL MARKET TOWN GROUP



**Minutes of the RMTG Clerks Advisory Panel meeting
Online via Zoom
Monday 30th November 2020
10:30am-12noon**

Present:

Sheila Atkinson (Newport Shropshire Town Council) (SA)
Will Austin (Bridport Town Council) (WA)
Tara Ball (Penistone Town Council) (TB)
Christin Barnes (Kirkby Stephen Town Council) (CB)
Ann Bean (New Alresford Town Council) (AB)
Graham Biggs MBE (Rural Services Network) (GB)
Rosemary Bridges (Belper Town Council) (RB)
Valerie Bright (Verwood Town Council) (VB)
Karen Chapman (Great Torrington Town Council) (KC)
Richard Cliffe (Penzance Council) (RC)
Claire Commons (Shaftsbury Town Council) (CC)
Tina Cunnell (Thetford Town Council) (TC)
Julie Debbage (Leominster Town Council) (JD)
Christopher Drake (Launceston Town Council) (CD)
Maureen Gibbins (Oxted Parish Council) (MG)
Holly Goring (Uckfield Town Council) (HG)
Sarah Greatorex (Halstead Town Council) (SG)
Carol Grey (Penrith Town Council) (CG)
Catherine Hibbert (Clare Town Council) (CH)
Paul Hodson (Buckingham Town Council) (PH)
Angela Howells (Westerham Town Council) (AH)
David Inman (Rural Services Network) (DI)
Ginette James (Lechlade-on-Thames Town Council) (GJ)
Tina Jeffery (Uttoxeter Town Council) (TJ)
Katie Jeffreys (Earby Town Council) (KJ)
Terry Jordan (Wisbech Town Council) (TJ)
Vanessa Lowe (Alcester Town Council) (VL)
Chris Maclean (Church Stretton Town Council) (CM)
David Martin (Corsham Town Council) (DM)
Jenny Morcom (Saxmundham Town Council) (JM)
Penny O'Hagan (Wern Town Council) (POH)
David Pooley (St Austell Town Council) (DP)
Karyn Reid (Harley Wintney Parish Council) (KR)
Gwilym Rippon (Bishop's Castle Town Council) (GR)

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Sam Shippen (Bicester Town Council) (SS)
Emma Smith (Belper Town Council) (ES)
Ellen Tims (Barkham Parish Council) (ET)
Lucy Waller (Market Rasen Town Council) (LW)

Bethan Aldridge (minute taker) (BA)

Apologies:

Deborah Barlow (Warsop Parish Council), Rosalind Barnett (Saxmundham Town Council), Carolyn Baynes (Arundel Town Council), Alison Benfield (St Ives Town Council, Cambs), Wendy Davies (Harworth & Bircotes Town Council), Steve Fletcher (Mablethorpe & Sutton Town Council), Paula Heath (Clevedon Town Council), Julie Holden (East Grinstead Town Council), Helen Hunter (Cheadle Town Council), Liz Johnson-Idan (Chard Town Council), Tracey Mangold (Guisborough Town Council), Carol Mobbs (Lutterworth Town Council), Philippa Page (Rothwell Town Council), Louise Powell (Thornbury Town Council), Nicola Powell (Ampthill Town Council), Angela Price (Ledbury Town Council), Keith Shelley (Wendover Parish Council), Frances Simpson (New Alresford Town Council), Karen Tarburton (Harworth & Bircotes Town Council), Sue Templeman (Ackworth Parish Council), Sally Thurston (Faringdon Town Council), Viv Tunnadine (Penrith Town Council), Andrea Vincent (Olney Town Council), Lynda Walker (Keswick Town Council), Alison Webber (Lechlade on Thames Town Council), Nicola Young (Ledbury Town Council), Swineshead Parish Council

Graham Biggs MBE, Chief Executive and David Inman, Corporate Director of Rural Services Network welcomed everyone to the first meeting of the Rural Market Town Group (RMTG) Clerks Advisory Panel.

GB and DI discussed the brief for the RMTG, the Revitalising Rural: Realising the Vision Campaign and the initial recruitment process for the group. There are currently nearly 150 members of this group.

Please see the links below for further information:
[Please click here to view the RMTG Good Practice Survey.](#)
[Click here to read the Revitalising Rural chapters](#)

Action: Regarding the proposed RMTG online meeting schedule, it was agreed that the Clerks Advisory Panel would meet once a year to raise/discuss issues and that this would define the agenda for the two subsequent RMTG meetings that year.

Covid-19 and its impact on the roles/work of the local councils was also discussed. It was agreed that if anyone was able to provide evidence to support the impact, financial or otherwise, then GB would look into this further and may be able to use this in discussions with other rural organisations and key policy makers and influencers.

Action: DP raised his concerns re loss of income and will provide DI with itemised supporting evidence on this.

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The group also discussed the type of local support they receive, and it showed quite a variance. Some showing quite a high level of support from their County/District down, and others receiving little or no extra support. It was agreed that it would be beneficial to have an informal support network to offer help/advice, project support etc from within the group.

Action: RMTG would look into setting up a Linked-in group (or equivalent) to support such an activity.

DI would welcome everyone's opinion on the RMTG Information page on the RSN website and any feedback/suggestions would be very welcome.

[Please click here to view the RMTG page](#)

DI and GB explained the structure of the Rural Services Network and how its membership enables it to raise rural issues, argue for rural proofing policies and the influence it has through its APPG on Rural Services, Rural Fair Share Group of MPs, Peers Panel on Rural Issues and its work through the Rural Coalition.

Under Any Other Business, TJ raised the issue of not being able to apply for Government COVID Support grants and WA raised the issue of climate emergency being endorsed by councils, but no funding allocated to deliver this.

DI asked the group if they could supply any supporting evidence on the issues already raised and any others as it helped Rural Services Network to argue that particular rural case.

DI and GB thanked everyone for attending today and that they would go through the meeting chat to pick up on any other themes. If anyone would like to contact them directly with any concerns/issues, then that would be very welcome.

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RURAL MARKET TOWN GROUP

Town/Parish Council	Local Authority Area	Local Authority Area 2	Region
Bakewell Town Council	Derbyshire County Council	Derbyshire Dales District Council	East Midlands
Belper Town Council	Derbyshire County Council	Amber Valley Borough Council	East Midlands
Chapel en le Frith Parish Council	Derbyshire County Council	High Peak Borough Council	East Midlands
Clowne Town Council	Derbyshire County Council	Bolsover District Council	East Midlands
Ripley Town Council	Derbyshire County Council	Amber Valley Borough Council	East Midlands
Ashby de la Zouch Town Council	Leicestershire County Council	North West Leicestershire District Council	East Midlands
Earl Shilton Town Council	Leicestershire County Council	Hinkley & Bosworth Borough Council	East Midlands
Lutterworth Town Council	Leicestershire County Council	Harborough District Council	East Midlands
Market Harborough Town	Leicestershire County Council	Harborough District Council	East Midlands
Bourne Town Council	Lincolnshire County Council	South Kesteven District Council	East Midlands
Caistor Town Council	Lincolnshire County Council	West Lindsey District Council	East Midlands
Crowland Parish Council	Lincolnshire County Council	South Holland District Council	East Midlands
Mablethorpe and Sutton Town Council	Lincolnshire County Council	East Lindsey District Council	East Midlands
Market Rasen Town Council	Lincolnshire County Council	West Lindsey District	East Midlands
Sleaford Town Council	Lincolnshire County Council	North Kesteven District Council	East Midlands
Swineshead Parish Council	Lincolnshire County Council	Boston Borough Council	East Midlands
Daventry Town Council	Northamptonshire County Council	Daventry District Council	East Midlands
Finedon Town Council	Northamptonshire County Council	East Northamptonshire Council	East Midlands
Oundle Town Council	Northamptonshire County Council	East Northamptonshire Council	East Midlands
Rothwell Town Council	Northamptonshire County Council	Kettering Borough Council	East Midlands
Bingham Town Council	Nottinghamshire County Council	Rushcliffe Borough Council	East Midlands

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Warsop Parish Council	Nottinghamshire County Council	Mansfield District Council	East Midlands
Oakham Town Council	Rutland County Council		East Midlands
Uppingham Town Council	Rutland County Council		East Midlands
Middleton-in-Teesdale and Newbiggin Parish Council	Durham County Council		North East
Sildon Town Council	Durham County Council		North East
Alnwick Town Council	Northumberland County Council		North East
Hexham Town Council	Northumberland County Council		North East
Hetton Town Council		Sunderland City Council	North East
Knutsford Town Council	Cheshire East Council		North West
Frodsham Town Council	Cheshire West and Chester Council		North West
Brampton Parish Council	Cumbria County Council	Carlisle City Council	North West
Cleator Moor Town Council	Cumbria County Council	Copeland Borough Council	North West
Dalton with Newton Town Council	Cumbria County Council	Borough of Barrow-in-Furness	North West
Kendal Town Council	Cumbria County Council	South Lakeland District Council	North West
Keswick Town Council	Cumbria County Council	Allerdale Borough Council	North West
Kirkby Stephen Town Council	Cumbria County Council	Eden District Council	North West
Penrith Town Council	Cumbria County Council	Eden District Council	North West
Burscough Parish Council	Lancashire County Council	West Lancashire Borough Council	North West
Carnforth Town Council	Lancashire County Council	Lancaster City Council	North West
Clitheroe Town Council	Lancashire County Council	Ribble Valley Borough Council	North West
Earby Town Council	Lancashire County Council	Pendle Borough Council	North West
Garstang Town Council	Lancashire County Council	Wyre Council	North West
Longridge Town Council	Lancashire County Council	Ribble Valley Borough Council	North West
Billinge Chapel End Parish Council		St Helens Council	North West
Birtley Town Green		Gateshead Council	North West
Charnock Richard Parish Council		Wigan Metropolitan Borough Council	North West

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Buckingham Town Council	Buckinghamshire Council	Aylesbury Vale District Council	South East
Chalfont St Giles Parish Council	Buckinghamshire Council		South East
Wendover Parish Council	Buckinghamshire Council	Aylesbury Vale District Council	South East
Soham Town Council	Cambridgeshire County Council	East Cambridgeshire District Council	South East
St Ives Town Council	Cambridgeshire County Council	Huntingdonshire District Council	South East
Wisbech Town Council	Cambridgeshire County Council	Fenland District Council	South East
Ampthill Town Council	Central Bedfordshire Council		South East
Sandy Town Council	Central Bedfordshire Council		South East
Peacehaven Town Council	East Sussex County Council	Lewes District Council	South East
Rye Town Council	East Sussex County Council	Rother District Council	South East
Uckfield Town Council	East Sussex County Council	Wealden District Council	South East
Coggeshall Parish Council	Essex County Council	Braintree District Council	South East
Great Dunmow Town Council	Essex County Council	Uttlesford District Council	South East
Halstead Town Council	Essex County Council	Braintree District Council	South East
Hullbridge Parish Council	Essex County Council	Rochford District Council	South East
Maldon Town Council	Essex County Council	Maldon District Council	South East
Ongar Town Council	Essex County Council	Epping Forest District Council	South East
Saffron Walden Town Council	Essex County Council	Uttlesford District Council	South East
Alton Town Council	Hampshire County Council		South East
Hartley Witney Parish Council	Hampshire County Council	Hart District Council	South East
Hedge End Town Council	Hampshire County Council	Eastleigh Borough Council	South East
New Alresford Town Council	Hampshire County Council	Winchester City Council	South East
Petersfield Town Council	Hampshire County Council	East Hampshire District Council	South East
Ledbury Town Council	Herefordshire Council		South East
Leominster Town Council	Herefordshire Council		South East
Bovingdon Parish Council	Hertfordshire County Council	Dacorum Borough Council	South East

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Biddenden Parish Council	Kent County Council	Ashford Borough Council	South East
Cranbrook & Sissinghurst Parish Council	Kent County Council	Tunbridge Wells District Council	South East
Edenbridge Town Council	Kent County Council	Sevenoaks District Council	South East
Faversham Town Council	Kent County Council	Swale Borough Council	South East
Luddesdown Parish Council	Kent County Council	Sevenoaks District Council	South East
Minster Parish Council	Kent County Council	Thanet District Council	South East
Swanley Town Council	Kent County Council	Sevenoaks District Council	South East
Tenterden Town Council	Kent County Council	Ashford Borough Council	South East
Westerham Town Council	Kent County Council	Sevenoaks District Council	South East
East Grinstead Town Council	Mid Sussex District Council	West Sussex County Council	South East
Olney Town Council	Milton Keynes Council		South East
Diss Town Council	Norfolk County Council	South Norfolk District Council	South East
Downham Market Town Council	Norfolk County Council	King's Lynn & West Norfolk Borough Council	South East
Holt Town Council	Norfolk County Council	North Norfolk District Council	South East
Hunstanton Town Council	Norfolk County Council	Borough Council of Kings Lynn and West Norfolk	South East
Redenhall with Harleston Town Council	Norfolk County Council	South Norfolk District Council	South East
Thetford Town Council	Norfolk County Council	Breckland Council	South East
Bicester Town Council	Oxfordshire County Council	Cherwell District Council	South East
Faringdon Town Council	Oxfordshire County Council	Vale of White Horse District Council	South East
Wallingford Town Council	Oxfordshire County Council	South Oxfordshire District Council	South East
Clare Town Council	Suffolk County Council	West Suffolk District Council	South East
Hadleigh Town Council	Suffolk County Council	Babergh District Council	South East
Saxmundham Town Council	Suffolk County Council	East Suffolk District Council	South East
Stowmarket Town Council	Suffolk County Council	Mid Suffolk District Council	South East
Chobham Parish Council	Surrey County Council	Surrey Heath Borough Council	South East

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East Horsley Parish Council	Surrey County Council	Guildford Borough Council	South East
Normandy Parish Council	Surrey County Council	Guildford Borough Council	South East
Oxted Parish Council	Surrey County Council	Tandridge District Council	South East
Ledbury Town Council	Telford & Wrekin Council		South East
The Gorge Parish Council	Telford & Wrekin Council		South East
Arundel Town Council	West Sussex County Council	Arun District Council	South East
West Chiltington Parish Council	West Sussex County Council	Horsham District Council	South East
Barkham Parish Council		Wokingham Borough Council	South East
Midsomer Norton Town Council	Bath and North East Somerset Council		South West
Camelford Town Council	Cornwall Council		South West
Launceston Town Council	Cornwall Council		South West
Penzance Town Council	Cornwall Council		South West
St Austell Town Council	Cornwall Council		South West
Axminster Town Council	Devon County Council	East Devon District Council	South West
Bideford Town Council	Devon County Council	Torridge District Council	South West
Bovey Tracey Town Council	Devon County Council	Teignbridge District Council	South West
Crediton Town Council	Devon County Council	Mid Devon District Council	South West
Great Torrington Town Council	Devon County Council	Torridge District Council	South West
Holsworthy Town Council	Devon County Council	Torridge District Council	South West
Moretonhampstead Parish Council	Devon County Council	Teignbridge District Council	South West
Okehampton Town Council	Devon County Council	West Devon Borough Council	South West
Seaton Town Council	Devon County Council	East Devon District Council	South West
South Molton Town Council	Devon County Council	North Devon Council	South West
Tavistock Town Council	Devon County Council	West Devon Borough Council	South West
Totnes Town Council	Devon County Council	South Hams District Council	South West
Bridport Town Council	Dorset Council		South West

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Sherborne Town Council	Dorset Council		South West
Swanage Town Council	Dorset Council		South West
Verwood Town Council	Dorset Council		South West
Cirencester Town Council	Gloucestershire County Council	Cotswold District Council	South West
Lechlade on Thames Town Council	Gloucestershire County Council	Cotswold District Council	South West
Stroud Town Council	Gloucestershire County Council	Stroud District Council	South West
Wotton-under-Edge Town Council	Gloucestershire County Council	Stroud District Council	South West
Clevedon Town Council	North Somerset Council		South West
Burnham on Sea and Highbridge Town Council	Somerset County Council	Sedgemoor District Council	South West
Chard Town Council	Somerset County Council	South Somerset District Council	South West
Minehead Town Council	Somerset County Council	Somerset West and Taunton District Council	South West
Somerton Town Council	Somerset County Council	South Somerset District Council	South West
Wells City Council	Somerset County Council	Mendip District Council	South West
Sodbury Town Council	South Gloucestershire Council		South West
Thornbury Town Council	South Gloucestershire Council		South West
Corsham Town Council	Wiltshire Council		South West
Marlborough Town Council	Wiltshire Council		South West
Bishops Castle Town Council	Shropshire Council		West Midlands
Church Stretton Town Council	Shropshire Council		West Midlands
Clun Town Council with Chapel Lawn	Shropshire Council		West Midlands
Wem Town Council	Shropshire Council		West Midlands
Barlaston Parish Council	Staffordshire County Council	Staffordshire Moorlands District Council	West Midlands
Biddulph Town Council	Staffordshire County Council	Staffordshire Moorlands District Council	West Midlands
Cheadle Town Council	Staffordshire County Council	Staffordshire Moorlands District Council	West Midlands
Uttoxeter Town Council	Staffordshire County Council	East Staffordshire Borough Council	West Midlands
Newport Town Council	Telford & Wrekin Council		West Midlands

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Atherstone Town Council	Warwickshire County Council	North Warwickshire Borough Council	West Midlands
Alvechurch Parish Council	Worcestershire County Council	Bromsgrove District Council	West Midlands
Tenbury Town Council	Worcestershire County Council	Malvern Hills District Council	West Midlands
Balsall Parish Council		Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council	West Midlands
Brewood and Coven Parish Council		South Staffordshire District Council	West Midlands
Snaith and Cowick Town Council	East Riding of Yorkshire Council		Yorkshire & Humber
Epworth Town Council	North Lincolnshire Council		Yorkshire & Humber
Easingwold Town Council	North Yorkshire County Council	Hambleton District Council	Yorkshire & Humber
Knaresborough Town Council	North Yorkshire County Council	Harrogate Borough Council	Yorkshire & Humber
Malton Town Council	North Yorkshire County Council	Ryedale District Council	Yorkshire & Humber
Pickering Town Council	North Yorkshire County Council	Ryedale District Council	Yorkshire & Humber
Richmond Town Council	North Yorkshire County Council	Richmondshire District Council	Yorkshire & Humber
Ripon City Council	North Yorkshire County Council	Harrogate Borough Council	Yorkshire & Humber
Skipton Town Council	North Yorkshire County Council	Craven District Council	Yorkshire & Humber
Tadcaster Town Council	North Yorkshire County Council	Selby District Council	Yorkshire & Humber
Whitby Town Council	North Yorkshire County Council	Scarborough Borough Council	Yorkshire & Humber
Ackworth Parish Council		Wakefield Metropolitan District Council	Yorkshire & Humber
Addingham Parish Council		City of Bradford Metropolitan District Council	Yorkshire & Humber
Guisborough Town Council		Redcar and Cleveland Borough Council	Yorkshire & Humber
Otley Town Council		Leeds City Council	Yorkshire & Humber
Penistone Town Council		Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council	Yorkshire & Humber
Wetherby Town Council		Leeds City Council	Yorkshire & Humber

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RURAL MARKET TOWN GROUP



Review of the Government's (1) Towns Fund and (2) Future High Street Fund Criteria and Allocations

Part 1: Towns Fund

1.0 GENERAL

Looking at the £3.6bn Towns Fund (which includes £325m for the Future High Streets Fund)

- Through the £3.6bn Towns Fund, 101 towns were announced that will work toward a Town Deal (part of the government's plan to level up the regions)
- The 101 towns were invited to develop proposals for a Towns Deal, with the establishment of Town Deal Boards, with investment priorities and project proposals then set out in a locally owned Town Investment Plan.
- Proposals would drive long term economic and productivity growth through investment in connectivity, land use, economic assets including cultural assets, skills and enterprise infrastructure.
- Capacity funding allocation per town has been set out (funding provided to unitary councils, metropolitan borough councils, and district councils, to assist with the development of proposals)
- The 101 towns were selected from 1,082 towns in England (populations from 5,000 to 225,000, not including any towns within Greater London). Using the ONS measure of deprivation at town level, the less needy half of towns were excluded from being eligible. Officials gathered information on the 541 eligible towns, using different indicators of need, opportunity and alignment with other government priorities. These were then grouped into high, medium and low priority categories. All high priority towns were selected, and ministers selected the remaining towns using the information provided and their own judgment. **(detail of the selection process below)**
- The Towns invited to develop proposals as part of the Towns Fund programme have been divided into Cohorts, with each Cohort progressing through the Towns Fund programme at different times.

Attached as Appendix A is the list of towns selected.

A quick analysis shows the following regional spread (compared to all 1,082 towns):

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	Towns invited, by region	All towns, by region	Proportion of all towns within each region
East Midlands	15	131	12%
South West	8	136	13%
East of England	13	150	14%
Yorkshire and The Humber	18	121	11%
North West	19	169	16%
West Midlands	16	91	8%
South East	5	214	20%
North East	7	70	6%
	101	1082	

And the following classification spread:

	Towns invited, by rurality	All towns, by rurality	Proportion of all towns within each classification
Predominantly Rural	18	405	37%
Urban with Significantly Rural	13	209	19%
Predominantly Urban	70	468	43%
	101	1082	

The number of towns invited to develop proposals for a Towns Deal apportioned to the classification of their local authority shows a marked disconnect between those invited and the proportion of all towns within each classification.

[A Towns Fund website](https://townsfund.org.uk/)¹ provides further information on individual Town Investment Plans and timeframe for delivery.

2.0 THE SELECTION PROCESS

The following is an extract from a National Audit Office report which 'sets out the facts about the process by which the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government chose the 101 towns in England it invited to develop Town Deals.

The Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government's (the Department's) officials (officials) assessed there were 541 towns across England potentially eligible for Town Deals. Officials took as the starting point all 1,082 towns across England as designated by the Office for National Statistics (ONS). These were defined as built-up areas with a minimum area of 20 hectares (200,000 m²), with individual settlements separated by at least 200 metres, and with a population between 5,000 and 225,000. Towns

¹ <https://townsfund.org.uk/>

do not necessarily mirror established administrative areas, such as local authorities. Officials ranked all towns by income deprivation, **[RSN NOTE: INCOME DEPRIVATION USES ALL HOUSEHOLD INCOME AND NOT JUST INCOME EARNED IN A LOCALITY AND IS VIEWED AS URBAN BIASED]** an indicator the ONS had estimated for all 1,082 towns and published in July 2019. The Department regarded income deprivation as the most relevant of the few town-level indicators available at the time. Officials identified the 541 towns with an income deprivation above the median value as potentially eligible for Town Deals.

Officials scored and ranked the 541 eligible towns across England using a weighted formula across multiple criteria. In each region of England, officials scored and ranked towns based on a formula that combined scores against seven criteria chosen to reflect local need and growth potential: income deprivation, skills deprivation, productivity, EU Exit exposure, exposure to economic shocks, investment opportunity and alignment to wider government intervention (Figure 1 overleaf). The first four criteria were drawn from official statistics and the remaining three were based on officials' assessments. Officials differentially weighted the separate criteria to give greater significance to those they determined to be based on more robust data at town level geographically.

Figure 1

Criteria used to assess towns' need and growth potential.

Officials combined seven criteria to give an overall score for each town.

Metric	Measure	Geography	Sources	Year	Weight
Income deprivation	Income component of the Indices of Multiple Deprivation	Town Level ¹	MHCLG (the Department)/ Office for National Statistics (ONS)	2015	3
Skills deprivation	Proportion of the working-age population with no qualifications at National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) level	Local authority	ONS	2018	1
Productivity	Gross value added per hour worked	NUTS3 ²	ONS	2017	1
EU Exit exposure	Gross value added of sectors identified as 'at risk' by the Bank of England with respect to a "no deal, no transition" EU Exit ²	NUTS3 ²	The Department/ ONS/Bank of England	2017	1

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Exposure to economic shocks	Significant economic shocks in the town's recent history (qualitative)	Town level	The Department	2019	1
Investment opportunity	Opportunity for investment Signaled by significant current or upcoming private investment(qualitative)	Town level	The Department	2019	1
Alignment to wider government intervention	The presence of other government funding or programming with which the Towns Fund could have additionality andsynergy (qualitative)	Town level	The Department	2019	2

Notes

- Office for National Statistics, *Understanding towns in England and Wales: an introduction*, July 2019, available at: www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/populationandmigration/populationestimates/articles/understandingtownsinenglandandwales/anintroduction.
- NUTS (*Nomenclature des unités territoriales statistiques*) is a standard for referencing subdivisions of countries for statistical purposes. In England, NUTS3 areas correspond to counties, unitary authorities or districts, or in some cases, groups of these.
- The sectors identified as most 'at risk' by the Bank of England with respect to a "no deal, no transition" EU Exit were: chemicals, food and agriculture, cars and transport goods, and construction.
- For the qualitative criteria (exposure to economic shocks, investment opportunity and alignment to wider government intervention), each town received a score of 0, 0.5 or 1 on each criterion, before weighting was applied.
- For the quantitative criteria (income deprivation, skills deprivation, productivity and EU Exit exposure), towns received a score of between 0 and 1, where 1 was assigned to the highest-ranked town and 0 was assigned to the lowest-ranked town, before weighting was applied.

Source: Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government

In addition to these seven criteria, the selection process included a regional element, with the aim of focusing funding on the regions with higher need. A town's prospects are affected by the wider region it sits within.

Officials therefore applied a needs-based regional allocation formula which incorporated Local Enterprise Partnership-level (LEP-level) data on: productivity, income, skills, deprivation and rural/urban classification (with rural areas assumed to have greater need). Officials calculated a

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recommended number of deals, from the planned total of 100 towns, for each of the eight English regions (Figure 2). The Greater London region is excluded because it does not contain towns as defined by the ONS.

Recommended number of towns per region to be invited to bid for Town Deals.

Officials recommended how the 100 towns should be distributed across regions.

Region	Recommended number of towns
North West	21
Yorkshire and the Humber	19
West Midlands	18
East Midlands	14
North East	11
East of England	6
South West	6
South East	5

Source: Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government

Officials divided the 541 eligible towns into high-, medium- and low-priority groups.

- High-priority towns: The Department placed 40 towns in the high-priority group. Within each region, officials categorised 40% of the number of recommended towns as high priority, so that high-priority towns were spread across the regions in proportion to the total number of recommended towns (Figure 2). These towns were those with the highest scores within each region, scored highly across most criteria, and for which officials found that using different formula weightings resulted in only small changes to their scores and rankings. They were not the 40 towns with the highest scores across the whole of England because the aim was to identify high-priority towns in each region of England.
- Low-priority towns: Officials categorised 181 towns as low priority either because they were among the 15% lowest-scoring towns in

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their region or **because they were small (fewer than 15,000 inhabitants, or fewer than 10,000 in the South West region, unless they formed part of a cluster of small towns that made up one economic unit).**

- Medium-priority towns: Officials designated the remaining 380 towns as medium priority.
- Officials made recommendations to ministers regarding their selection of towns from the three priority groups:
- High-priority towns: Officials recommended to ministers that all 40 high-priority towns be selected to bid for funding, and that no additional explanation for their selection was required.
- Medium-priority towns: Officials recommended that ministers select up to 60 medium-priority towns, depending on how many low-priority towns they chose, to bring the total number of selected towns to 100 (ministers ultimately selected 101 towns). They were asked to provide a brief rationale for their selection in this category.
- Low-priority towns: Rather than ruling them out entirely, officials left it open for ministers to select towns for Town Deals from the group of 181 low-priority towns. Officials recommended that ministers choose relatively few low-priority towns and record a strong rationale for any selected.

Officials provided ministers with additional suggestions on other factors they might consider in their selection. This included:

- Disqualifying the largest towns, or towns with a City Deal. Officials suggested that ministers should consider ruling out places which were in principle eligible to benefit from City Deals (another policy for supporting local growth). Officials provided ministers with a list of the 15 largest towns (as defined by the ONS) to illustrate which ones might be ruled out if the largest towns were disqualified.
- Clustering towns. Officials suggested that clusters of small, nearby towns that function as a single place could be offered the opportunity to bid for a single, shared Town Deal.
- Aiming to spread Town Deals across and within LEAs. Officials suggested that ministers might aim for a spread of towns across LEA areas, in addition to the spread of towns across English regions. It also suggested a mixture of larger and smaller towns within each LEA.

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Consulting with mayors on town selection. Officials suggested that in metropolitan areas with directly elected mayors, ministers might want to consult with these mayors before settling on their final selection of towns

PART 2: FUTURE HIGH STREET FUND

As at 26th December 2020, 15 areas across England had been awarded a confirmed £255 million from the Future High Streets Fund. A further 57 areas had received provisional funding offers totalling up to £576 million. This makes 72 in total.

The 15 places who are receiving full funding are:

1. Tamworth Town Centre – Tamworth, £21,652,555
2. Sunderland City Centre – Sunderland, £25,000,000
3. Sutton – Sutton, £11,346,704
4. Bishop Auckland – Durham, £19,856,853
5. Blyth Town Centre – Northumberland, £11,121,059
6. Kidderminster – Wyre Forest, £20,510,598
7. Old Kent Road – Southwark, £9,605,854
8. Swindon – Swindon, £25,000,000
9. Stockport – Stockport, £14,500,000
10. Winsford – Cheshire West and Chester, £9,980,000
11. Sheffield High Street – Sheffield, £15,817,001
12. Blackfriars, Northern City Centre – Worcester, £17,939,000
13. Birkenhead – Wirral, £24,581,011
14. Brierley Hill High Town Centre – Dudley, £9,985,689
15. Stretford – Trafford, £17,605,674

The 57 places receiving provisional funding offers are:

1. Leamington Town Spa, Warwick (Warwickshire) – £10,015,121
2. Nuneaton Town Centre, Nuneaton and Bedworth (Warwickshire) – £13,362,736
3. Wolverhampton City Centre – £15,760,196
4. Walsall – £11,439,967
5. Newcastle-Under-Lyme – £11,048,260
6. Stafford – £14,377,723
7. Tottenham, Haringey – £10,019,648
8. Woolwich Town Centre, Greenwich – £17,150,964
9. Wealdstone, Harrow – £7,448,583
10. Putney Town Centre, Wandsworth – £1,058,706
11. Elland Town Centre, Calderdale (West Yorkshire) – £6,310,812
12. Northallerton, Hambleton (North Yorkshire) – £6,085,013
13. Rotherham – £12,660,708
14. Halifax – £11,762,823
15. Barnsley Towns Centre – £15,624,456

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16. Scunthorpe – £10,675,323
17. New Ferry, Wirral – £3,213,523
18. Wigan – £16,633,691
19. Crewe – £14,148,128
20. Rochdale (Greater Manchester) – £17,080,458
21. Farnworth, Bolton (Greater Manchester) – £13,306,817
22. Oldham – £10,750,237
23. Kirkham Town Centre, Fylde – £6,290,831
24. Maryport Town Centre, Allerdale – £11,527,839
25. Carlisle City Centre – £9,129,874
26. Plymouth City Centre – £12,046,873
27. Barnstaple, North Devon – £6,548,876
28. Newton Abbot, Teignbridge – £9,199,364
29. Paignton, Torbay – £13,363,248
30. Kingswood, South Gloucestershire – £12,555,464
31. Salisbury City Centre – £9,355,731
32. Penzance, Cornwall – £10,403,112
33. Trowbridge, Wiltshire – £16,347,056
34. Yeovil – £9,756,897
35. Taunton, Somerset – £13,962,981
36. Loftus, Redcar and Cleveland – £5,833,628
37. Middlesbrough Centre – £14,170,352
38. Stockton – £16,543,812
39. South Shields – £5,959,187
40. Derby City Centre, St Peters Cross – £15,034,398
41. Sutton-in-Ashfield (Nottinghamshire) – £6,279,872
42. Grantham, South Kesteven (Lincolnshire) – £5,558,818
43. Grimsby (North East Lincolnshire) – £17,280,917
44. Nottingham City Centre, West End Point – £12,523,981
45. Heanor, Amber Valley – £8,592,837
46. Northampton – £8,442,730
47. Buxton, High Peak – £6,608,223
48. Dover Town Centre and Waterfront – £3,202,226
49. Newhaven, Lewes – £5,004,939
50. Chatham Town Centre, Medway – £9,497,720
51. Ramsgate, Thanet – £2,704,213
52. Commercial Road, Portsmouth (Hampshire) – £3,122,375
53. Fratton, Portsmouth – £3,858,489
54. High Wycombe – £11,886,876
55. St Neots, Huntingdonshire – £3,748,815
56. March High Street, Fenland – £6,447,129
57. Great Yarmouth – £13,774,430

14 High Streets are in Predominantly Rural authorities, 12 in Urban with Significantly Rural and 46 in Predominantly Urban. As proportions of total schemes, that's 19%, 17% and 64% respectively.

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This is in comparison to the proportion of all authorities in these classifications of 28%, 17% and 56% respectively. So, the distribution of schemes is thus far, skewed towards Predominantly Urban local authority areas, at the expense solely of Predominantly Rural. A second round with new assessment criteria was mentioned within the initial prospectus.

Looking at the total value of the projects per head of population within the classifications, Predominantly Rural has funding of £37.99 per head, Urban with Significantly Rural has £67.00 per head, and Predominantly Urban has £53.24. So, in addition to the funding distribution already being skewed towards Predominantly Urban (for whatever reason that may be), the funding that does get awarded in Predominantly Rural is smaller per head of population.

The funding guidance states:

“We expect bidding local authorities to put forward a single, transformative submission covering one high street or town centre in their area”.

However, it also states that:

“authorities with populations significantly higher than the national average are able to submit more than one expression of interest to the Future High Streets Fund”.

A breakdown of how many bids each authority is able to submit to the Future High Streets Fund was provided.

Taking West Devon as an example, it has below average population for a local authority and so can only submit a single bid. However, it has two towns as defined by ONS, Tavistock and Okehampton, approximately 15 miles apart. Any transformative effect of a successful bid in one of the towns, is going to have minimal positive impact on the residents or businesses of the other town. Looking therefore at the number of bids possible for each classification and applying it to the geographical area covered by the classification nationally; if every bid were successful, a project in a Predominantly Rural local authority would have to have transformative effects covering 80,460 hectares, where as a scheme in a Predominantly Urban authority would cover 7,380 hectares.

Looking at it another way, if a project had a significant transformative effect spanning a 5-mile radius of the funded high street, Predominantly Urban population would benefit significantly from multiple schemes (taking the situation based on classification averages and all bids being successful), in that a population greater than that of all Predominantly Urban authorities nationally could benefit from projects successful in that classification of authority)

The competition took place over two phases. Phase 1 was a light-touch process calling for Expressions of Interest from Metropolitan and Unitary Councils, London Boroughs and Shire Districts.

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Phase 2 Business Cases were assessed by HM Treasury Green Book methodologies (with the urban bias therein). Phase 2 revenue funding to support development of project plans was available. Expressions of Interest were required to indicate the level of revenue funding needed, but the full amount was not guaranteed.

The question exists of whether Shire Districts (and rural authorities in general, given their historic underfunding) would have the same capacity as their single tier, urban neighbours to develop robust project plans, given full capacity funding would not be guaranteed, and is a significant consideration to the fairness of the competition.

The prospectus also states that "We expect projects to be co-funded by public and private sector additions". Are rural areas in an equal position to be able to offer public and private sector finance in their bids, or is it a financial hurdle that precludes them from developing bids of sufficient value to ensure rural residents get their fair share of Government funding locally, and to create the transformative change that Government expects, and rural residents deserve?

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APPENDIX A: THE LIST OF 101 TOWNS

Town	Local Authority
Barrow-in-Furness	Barrow-in-Furness
Bedford	Bedford
Birkenhead	Wirral
Bishop Auckland	County Durham
Blackpool	Blackpool
Bloxwich	Walsall
Blyth (Northumberland)	Northumberland
Bolton	Bolton
Boston	Boston
Bournemouth	Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole
Bridgwater	Sedgemoor
Brighouse	Calderdale
Burton upon Trent	East Staffordshire
Camborne	Cornwall
Carlisle	Carlisle
Castleford	Wakefield
Cheadle (Greater Manchester)	Stockport
Clay Cross	North East Derbyshire
Cleator Moor	Copeland
Colchester	Colchester
Corby	Corby
Crawley	Crawley
Crewe	Cheshire East
Darlington	Darlington
Darwen	Blackburn with Darwen
Dewsbury	Kirklees
Doncaster	Doncaster

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Dudley	Dudley
Glastonbury	Mendip
Goldthorpe	Barnsley
Goole	East Riding of Yorkshire
Grays	Thurrock
Great Yarmouth	Great Yarmouth
Grimsby	North East Lincolnshire
Harlow	Harlow
Hartlepool	Hartlepool
Hastings	Hastings
Hereford	Herefordshire
Ipswich	Ipswich
Keighley and Shipley	Bradford
Kidsgrove	Newcastle-under-Lyme
King's Lynn	King's Lynn and West Norfolk
Kirkby-in-Ashfield	Ashfield
Leyland	South Ribble
Lincoln	Lincoln
Long Eaton	Erewash
Loughborough	Charnwood
Lowestoft	East Suffolk
Mablethorpe	East Lindsey
Mansfield	Mansfield
Margate	Thanet
Middlesbrough	Middlesbrough
Millom	Copeland
Milton Keynes	Milton Keynes
Morley	Leeds
Nelson (Lancashire)	Pendle
Newark-on-Trent	Newark and Sherwood
Newcastle-under-Lyme	Newcastle-under-Lyme

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Newhaven (East Sussex)	Lewes
Northampton	Northampton
Norwich	Norwich
Nuneaton	Nuneaton and Bedworth
Oldham	Oldham
Penzance	Cornwall
Peterborough	Peterborough
Preston	Preston
Redcar	Redcar and Cleveland
Redditch	Redditch
Rochdale	Rochdale
Rotherham	Rotherham
Rowley Regis	Sandwell
Runcorn	Halton
Scarborough	Scarborough
Scunthorpe	North Lincolnshire
Skegness	East Lindsey
Smethwick	Sandwell
Southport	Sefton
St Helens (Merseyside)	St. Helens
St Ives (Cornwall)	Cornwall
Stainforth (South Yorkshire)	Doncaster
Stapleford (Nottinghamshire)	Broxtowe
Staveley (Derbyshire)	Chesterfield
Stevenage	Stevenage
Stocksbridge	Sheffield
Sutton in Ashfield	Ashfield
Swindon	Swindon
Telford	Telford and Wrekin
Thornaby-on-Tees	Stockton-on-Tees
Tilbury	Thurrock
Todmorden	Calderdale

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Torquay	Torbay
Truro	Cornwall
Wakefield	Wakefield
Walsall	Walsall
Warrington	Warrington
West Bromwich	Sandwell
Whitby	Scarborough
Wolverhampton	Wolverhampton
Worcester	Worcester
Workington	Allerdale

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“Rural Transport Survey” 2021

Report to the Rural Market Town Group

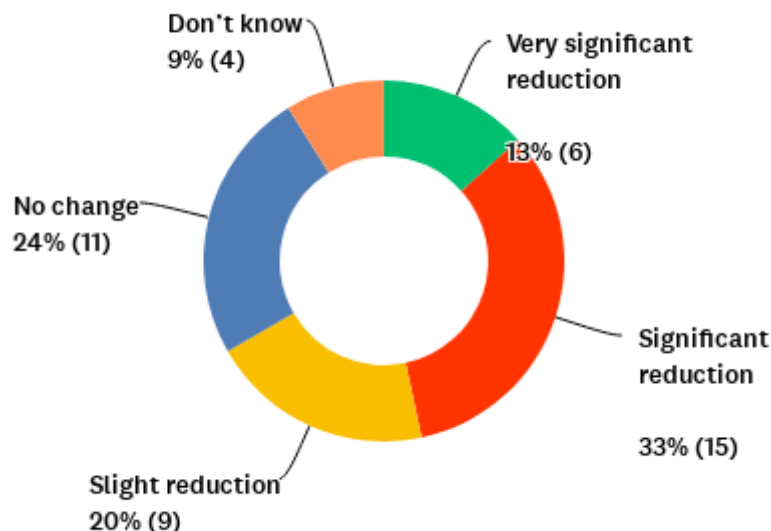
Background

During the inaugural meeting of the RSN’s Rural Market Town Group held on 9th November 2020, members in attendance requested to be surveyed on rural transport. Members highlighted the important role of their respective towns as service hubs for rural residents in their areas and that the vitality of their towns is detrimentally impacted by reductions/removal of bus service. To establish the position on rural transport across the Group's membership, we agreed to carry out this short survey.

At the time of this survey over 160 RMTG members were requested to provide feedback on this issue and 45 of our RMTG members from all over England shared their views on the rural transport situation in their area. A 28% response rate to any survey is very good.

Bus Service Provision

Q1 Do you think that over the last 3 years there has been a significant reduction in bus services from your surrounding rural areas into your rural/market town ‘hub’?



According to survey results 46% of RMTG members have noted a ‘very significant’ or ‘significant’ reduction in bus service provision from their surrounding areas to their respective local rural/market town ‘hub’.

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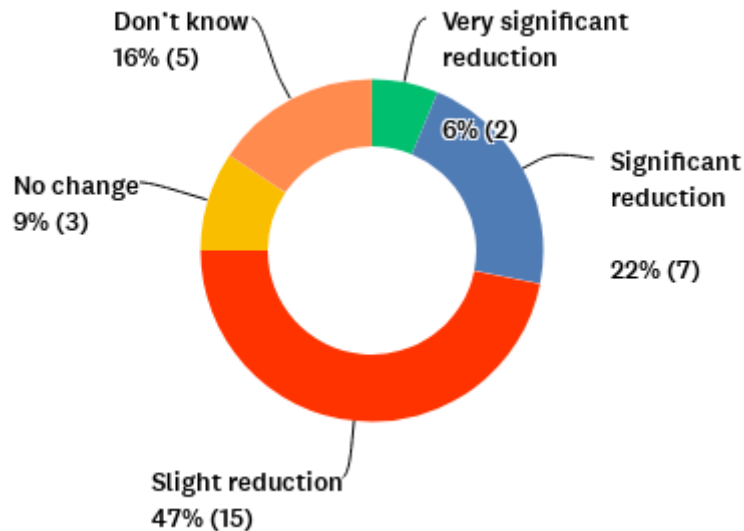
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Impact on the rural market hub town

Q2 As a result of lack of rural transport, do you think there has been a significant reduction in the number of people using rural market town / rural 'hub' town shops and services?



A smaller number of respondents (32) answered the question on the impact of the lack of transport services on their rural market town businesses and other services, with most stating that they have noted only a 'slight reduction' in the usage of local rural business and services in their respective rural market towns and just 9 indicating a significant or very significant impact.

Other Outcomes

Data & evidence showing any decrease in trade due to reduction in bus services.

No respondents provided or were able to provide any data or evidence to show the value of any decrease in trade due to the reduction in local bus services. Several reasons about the lack of data in their local area were provided instead:

- The impact of collecting such data in the current Covid-19 pandemic will inevitably heavily skew any relevant data due to people preferring to use private modes of transport (cars, bicycles) due to health & wellbeing reasons.
- No available data in their area (for example, County Councils not monitoring/collecting and making such data available anymore).

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- The overall visible signs of local shop closures on their respective high streets due to lack of footfall.

Spotlight

It is worth noting that in each area of Derbyshire, Lancashire, and Suffolk two local town/parish council members per area, have highlighted that they have been experiencing 'very significant reduction' & 'significant reduction' of bus service provision in their areas.

Q1 on Bus Service Provision	Q2 on Impact on rural market 'hub' town	County/Area	RMTG Member
Significant reduction	Significant reduction	Barnsley	Penistone Town Council
Significant reduction	Significant reduction	Bath and North East Somerset	Midsomer Norton Town Council
Very significant reduction		Cambridgeshire	Soham Town Council
Significant reduction	Very significant reduction	Cornwall	St Austell Town Council
Significant reduction	Slight reduction	Cumbria	Penrith Town Council
Very significant reduction	Significant reduction	Derbyshire	Bakewell Town Council
Significant reduction	Don't know	Derbyshire	Bakewell Town Council
Very significant reduction	Significant reduction	Devon	Great Torrington Town Council
Significant reduction		Durham	Middleton-in-Teesdale and Newbiggin Parish Council
Significant reduction	Don't know	East Sussex	Uckfield Town Council
Significant reduction	Slight reduction	Gloucestershire	Wotton Town Council
Significant reduction	Very significant reduction	Herefordshire	Leominster Town Council
Very significant reduction	Slight reduction	Lancashire	Charnock Richard Parish Council
Very significant reduction	Significant reduction	Lancashire	Earby Town Council
Significant reduction	Slight reduction	Leicestershire	Earl Shilton Town Council
Significant reduction	Significant reduction	Shropshire	Wem Town Council
Significant reduction	Significant reduction	Somerset	Chard Town Council
Significant reduction	Slight reduction	Staffordshire	Uttoxeter Town Council
Significant reduction	Don't know	Suffolk	Clare Town Council
Significant reduction	Slight reduction	Suffolk	Saxmundham Town Council
Very significant reduction	Slight reduction	West Yorkshire	Wetherby Town Council

Conclusion

Despite the impacts of Covid-19 and the lack of local evidence/data available to members, **all 45 respondents highlighted that over the past 3 years, 66% of RMTG members have seen either a 'very significant', 'significant or 'slight' reduction in bus services connecting them to their nearest rural market & 'hub' towns is a worry and shows a clear issue with rural transport provision.**

Providing a voice for rural communities and service providers

Rural Services Network

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**Rural Services Network
Note on funding for Parish Councils**

The Government is committed to the creation of unitary authorities and to the devolution/localism agenda. The combination of these policies has meant that in recent years Parish and Town Councils have taken on a much broader role in service delivery and have become an increasingly important part of local government.

Traditionally, Central Government has identified a number of priorities and projects and offered funding to only principal authorities. There has been a tendency with a number of funding streams to use the definition of local authority included in Section 23 of the Local Government Act 2003 which excludes Town and Parish Councils.

This practice has been repeated with the compensation payments provided in connection with the Coronavirus pandemic. Central Government has provided a number of specific funding streams relating to functions of principal authorities and in addition has compensated principal authorities for losses of income experienced as a direct result of the pandemic. This compensation scheme is explained in a guidance document published on 24th August 2020 entitled "Local Government Income Compensation Scheme for Lost Sales, Fees and Charges". This allows principal authorities to claim compensation for irrecoverable and unavoidable losses from sales, fees and charges income generated in the delivery of services in the financial year 2020/21. The scheme provides for a 5% deduction to be absorbed by the local authority and then provides compensation of 75p in the £ of the balance of the loss which simply has to be certified by the Section 151 officer.

Mixed messages have been received from the Government and principal authorities with regard to hardship funding. The Minister for State suggested that principal authorities should pass on hardship funding to Parish and Town Councils (see letter attached). Very few have done this. No funding has been provided direct to Parish and Town Councils in relation to the pandemic other than through the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme. As local authorities, Parish and Town Councils do not qualify for any relief or assistance linked to business rates.

Cornwall Council is one of a few principal authorities that have implemented a hardship scheme for Parish and Town Councils although, to date, it has only provided assistance to 9 Town and Parish Councils who applied and could demonstrate that they had lost income or incurred additional costs in the period up to the 30th September 2020. Cornwall Council has recently decided to extend this scheme to cover the remainder of this financial year which is of course very welcome.

With the growing role of Town and Parish Councils the element of risk borne by each Council is likely to increase. Many now earn income from their services and are very reliant on it. St Austell Town Council has an annual budget spend of

£1.1m and commercial income funds approximately 30% of that figure. The precept only accounts for in the order of 70% of expenditure. Padstow Town Council in Cornwall is funded 100% from income earned and has no precept. Such authorities would benefit significantly from a scheme such as the Income Compensation Scheme which applies to principal authorities.

In conclusion, Central Government needs to recognise the growing role and importance of Town and Parish Councils and to introduce funding mechanisms which reflect those roles. This will most likely require direct funding for Parish and Town Councils by Central Government in relation to some functions and initiatives.

David Pooley
Town Clerk
St Austell Town Council

23rd February 2021