

**Notes from the Rural Services Network  
North West Regional Seminar/Meeting  
Kindly hosted by Lancashire County Council  
8<sup>th</sup> October 2018**

**Present**

Cllr Peter Thornton - South Lakeland District Council  
Cllr Alan Smith, Leader - Allerdale Borough Council  
Cllr Matthew Salter - Lancashire County Council  
Andrea Hines, Policy Manager (Economic Growth) - Allerdale Borough Council  
Cllr Aaron Beaver- Chorley Council  
Sean McGrath, External Investment & Funding - Lancashire County Council  
Cllr Richard Sherras - Ribble Valley Borough Council  
Cllr Janet Clowes - Cheshire East Council  
Cllr Stella Brunskill - Ribble Valley Borough Council  
Gemma Johnson, Project Manager – Superfast Broadband, Lancashire County Council  
Cllr Alan Whittaker - Chorley Council  
Daniel Herbert, Group Manager – Highways, Lancashire County Council  
Cllr Cosima Towneley - Lancashire County Council  
Debbie King, Senior Public Health Practitioner - Lancashire County Council  
Cllr Gill Gardner - South Lakeland District Council  
Cllr Bridget Hilton - Ribble Valley Borough Council  
Cllr Alan Schofield - Lancashire County Council  
Cllr Lizzi Collinge – Lancashire County Council  
Daniel Heery – Charge My Street  
Ivan Annibal – Rose Regeneration  
Jessica Selleck – Rose Regeneration  
Andy Dean – RSN

1. **Apologies:** Due to the amount of apologies, these are included at the end of the notes of the meeting.
2. **Introduction**  
Peter Thornton welcomed everyone, setting out the context for the meeting. Each attendee then introduced themselves and outlined their key rural service concerns.
3. **Andy Dean, Assistant Director RSN**  
Andy set out the background to the operation of RSN and the purpose of the regional meetings.
4. **Daniel Heerey – “Charge My Street” innovation and electric vehicles in rural areas**  
Daniel outlined the background to the establishment of the ‘Charge My Street’ initiative which was a response to growing congestion and pollution, low take up of electric vehicles and the prevalence of terraced housing in many rural communities in the Lancashire area where the provision of off-street, home-based charging points was problematic.

The initiative has been established as a Community Benefit Society which managed to raise £39,000 in its first round of installations through a combination of government grant and community finance. Four sites were included in the first round with 3 successfully installed to date.

40% of homes don't have off street parking in major cities and northern towns, meaning that the provision of shared charging points is required to enable more widespread take up of electric vehicles.

The successful use of community shares as part of the finance for the scheme has served to demonstrate the strength of local interest, especially to the public sector. An App is used to enable members to book time slots at each charging point and monthly bills are issued for the power used.

The scheme provides an income stream. For example, in Broughton-in-Furness electricity is generated from photo-voltaic panels mounted on the village hall roof. The village hall sells electricity to Charge my Street who sell this on to the users. Charge My Street has recently received a grant from Innovate UK to help roll the scheme out nationally.

## **5. Ivan Annibal – “Lost in Space” the challenges of accessing rural health services**

Ivan summarised some of the key issues facing health provision in rural areas including the increasingly ageing population, house price affordability, declining services across the public and private sectors, fuel poverty and poor transport provision.

In addition, health services are extremely urban focused. Smaller hospitals find it more difficult to attract staff than urban centres and rural GPs are often difficult to replace when they move on.

Ivan summarised the challenges facing health provision on rural areas as:

- Public transport (distance, time, cost and frequency)
- Online services and mobile connectivity (poor broadband/weak signal)
- Demographic profile (inward migration of older people and outward migration of younger generation)
- Reduction in buses, banks, local shops, post offices, pharmacies and public services
- Workforce recruitment and retention
- Access to determinants of health

A new ‘National Centre for Health & Social Care’ will be launched in parliament shortly. The focus for this Centre will be:

- Data and insight
- Research and development
- Technology
- Workforce

## **6. Issues raised through discussion:**

Specific points raised included the following:

- The average installation cost of an electric charging point varies from around £5000 to £12,000 for a fast charger. Rapid chargers cost around £35,000.
- Charging points need to be checked once per annum and require data connection via either broadband or mobile signal.
- A key issue in relation to expanding the charging point network is the winning of hearts and minds. This has been achieved through the Charge My Street initiative simply through talking to people.
- Parking issues were raised in relation to the location of charge points. Daniel confirmed that parking issues are avoided through using community premises, pubs and other accessible locations. A local authority officer added that local traffic regulations were being put in place to ensure cars only remained at charging point locations for a fixed period.
- Local authorities were encouraged to seek to utilise central government funds designed for this purpose to establish electric vehicle charging networks in rural areas.
- Fleetwood was suggested as an excellent example of greater community engagement in health provision.
- It is clear that specialist health equipment is getting focussed into fewer bigger centres.
- Private health and care providers often cherry pick urban areas as this is where efficiencies and profits are greater.
- There is a feeling that people have lost the idea of how to care for themselves, families and friends. There may be a need for a national programme to promote more self help.

## **7. Suggested actions for RSN**

- RSN should promote the need for carers to come out to rural communities. The model pioneered by Community Catalysts in Somerset is definitely worth exploring in more detail more widely.
- RSN provide secretariat to the All Party Parliamentary Group on Rural Services which is very interested in the challenges of delivering adult social care in deep rural areas. The North West is keen to maintain a dialogue on this topic.
- There are service models being re-modelled now, for example pooling and sharing information across organisations in Ribble Valley, and joint working at a corporate level focussing on wellness rather than medical treatment. Good practice and success should be promoted by RSN.
- RSN should work to ensure that some of the government funds for charging infrastructure are directed to rural areas.
- Rural areas will need a voice if and when 'road pricing' is introduced (as a potential response to decreased revenues from fuel tax). This is clearly linked to climate change. RSN should maintain a watching brief on this topic.
- Many local authorities lack staff capacity to put bids together for opportunities such as the government funds for electric vehicle charging infrastructure. Is it possible to widen availability of these funds to other community organisations who may have this capacity?

- RSN could have a role in promoting successful examples of the co-location of services and other projects: for example the 'Emotional Schools' project in Cheshire East.
- Reductions in rural policing and the closure of related facilities is a significant issue and could be a useful topic for a future meeting.

Lancashire County Council were thanked for hosting the meeting and all members for their attendance and positive contributions.