

Divisions Affected – All

CABINET

16 September 2025

Hire Bike and Scooter Update

Report of Performance and Corporate Services Overview & Scrutiny Committee

RECOMMENDATION

1. The Cabinet is **RECOMMENDED** to —
 - a) Note the recommendations contained in the body of this report and to consider and determine its response to the Performance and Corporate Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee, and
 - b) Agree that relevant officers will continue to update Scrutiny for 12 months on progress made against actions committed to in response to the recommendations, or until they are completed (if earlier).

REQUIREMENT TO RESPOND

2. In accordance with section 9FE of the Local Government Act 2000, the Performance and Corporate Services Overview & Scrutiny Committee requires that, within two months of the consideration of this report, the Cabinet publish a response to this report and any recommendations.

INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

3. The Performance and Corporate Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee considered an update report on Hire Bikes and Scooters in Oxford at its meeting on 18 July 2025. One aspect it did not address, however, was road safety, which is expected to be raised by the Place Overview and Scrutiny Committee at a future meeting.
4. The Committee would like to thank Cllr Andrew Gant, Cabinet Member for Transport Management, Cllr Dan Levy, Cabinet Member for Finance, Property and Transformation, Paul Fermer, Director of Environment and Highways, Meg Hopkins, Senior Transport Planner, and Joanne Fellows, Place Planning Manager (Central), for attending the meeting and responding to questions.

SUMMARY

5. The Cabinet Member for Transport Management introduced the report, highlighting the different legal foundations for the e-bike and e-scooter hire schemes in Oxford, with e-bikes being road-legal,¹ whilst e-scooters were not outside a trial being run by the Department for Transport (DfT). The differing foundations meant consequent differences in management and operation between the two. Both schemes were lauded by the Cabinet Member for their success in providing greater choice and enhancing the transport network within the city, whilst at the same time the challenges around street space and the need for responsible riding were recognised.
6. In response to the introduction, the Committee began its questioning. Topics explored by the Committee included: parking issues, options for enforcement action against providers, expected future developments for the national e-scooter trial, whether e-bikes and e-scooters afforded significant health benefits, and the opportunities and challenges of integrating e-bikes and e-scooters into the wider transport network.
7. The Committee makes five recommendations which seek to garner more or earlier information from the DfT, improve the evaluation of the impact of e-bike and e-scooter hire schemes, and to explore ways of improving availability without inconveniencing pedestrians.

RECOMMENDATIONS

8. Permission to operate e-scooters legally on Oxford's roads has existed since 2021 as part of a national-level trial by the DfT. Outside of this trial, e-scooters are not legally permitted to use public roads. At present, the trial is due to end on 31 May 2026, although it has already been extended on multiple occasions. Knowing whether and on what basis the DfT expects to extend the trial is crucial to the Council's ability to undertake procurement and forward planning to allow mitigations of e-scooter related problems, as well as devising improvements.
9. The Committee appreciates that the decision on whether to extend the trial is out of the Council's hands as, ultimately, is the timing of when it is announced. However, there is little to be lost in actively demonstrating the Council's interest in the project and its commitment to finding ways of improving it whilst drawing the link between those improvements and receiving a steer from government on the future of the trial.

¹ <https://www.gov.uk/electric-bike-rules#:~:text=You%20can%20ride%20an%20electric,be%20registered%2C%20taxed%20or%20insured.>

Recommendation 1: That the Council writes to the Department for Transport to request an earlier decision regarding the continuation of the e-scooter trial beyond May 2026.

10. The DfT is currently undertaking an evaluation of the impacts of the e-scooter trial at a national level. However, the timeline for this evaluation is not known. The Committee expects the conclusions of the DfT on the impacts of the e-scooter trial to form an important data point for informed local transport policy in the future and wishes to see its consideration be built into relevant forthcoming decisions. As such, the Committee requests that the Council seek information from the DfT on the timelines for the national evaluation of the e-scooter trial.

Recommendation 2: That the Council seeks information from the Department for Transport about the national evaluation timeline for the e-scooter trial, and that the Council share the evaluation results of the e-scooter trial with the Committee once available

11. As part of its involvement in the national e-scooter trial the Council will participate in all necessary evaluation. However, in Committee it was confirmed that the Council had not commissioned any local studies to understand the impact of hire e-bikes and e-scooters on the wider transport network, particularly bus usage.
12. In the view of the Committee, this is important as the potential impacts of e-bike and e-scooter availability are unclear. It is possible that the greater flexibility afforded by the existence of hire e-bikes and e-scooters would make bus travel more attractive. Bus travel becomes a more reliable and practical option if, instead of waiting for a connection, one can simply get on an e-bike or e-scooter if the connecting bus will take a while. Equally, e-bikes and e-scooters are able to travel fairly long distances at reasonable speed and could, therefore, tempt bus-users to switch to them as alternatives, thereby cannibalising existing non-car transport. Just as easily, e-bikes and e-scooters could have little impact on bus-use whatsoever, with those who are happy using buses continuing to do so, and e-bikes and e-scooters appealing to a different demographic.
13. All the above scenarios are plausible, and it is vital that the Council understands how and where each scenario is likely to hold true if it is to address congestion within Oxford and support modal shift. Understanding the impact of the availability of e-bikes and e-scooters for hire will help inform the Council's broader transport policy. Accordingly, the Committee encourages the Council to undertake its own research to understand the impact of e-scooter and e-bike rental schemes on modal shift and the wider transport network.

Recommendation 3: That the Council conducts its own analysis of the e-scooter and e-bike schemes to understand their impact on modal shift and the wider transport network.

14. A striking statistic shared with the Committee concerns the level of latent demand for e-bikes and scooters: the number of missed trip attempts outnumbers the number of completed ones. In view of the level of unsupplied demand and the desirability of encouraging modal shift the Committee devoted significant time to exploring options to increase the supply of e-scooters and e-bikes.
15. The Committee was advised by officers that additional parking sites would, in particular, enable greater supply of e-bikes and e-scooters. In response to this, the use of park and ride sites and other transport interchanges to create additional space for more e-bikes and e-scooters was discussed.
16. The Committee appreciates that there are complexities associated with extending supply. Suitable sites (including a number of the park and rides) may be outside the operating area of the schemes and some are owned by third parties. Furthermore, the Council is required by the terms of vehicle special order allowing it to run the e-scooter trial to engage with consultation with the districts should it wish to extend its area of operation.
17. The Committee recognises that these are certainly challenges, but in view of the degree of latent demand which exists the Council should seek to increase supply of e-bikes and e-scooters nonetheless.

Recommendation 4: That the Council explores the possibility of integrating e-scooters and e-bikes with park and ride sites and other transport interchanges, and that the Council considers increasing the supply of e-scooters and e-bikes to meet the latent demand.

18. As referenced above, one of the key blockers to providing capacity to meet the latent demand for e-scooters and bikes is having the physical space to park them in areas which do not hinder pedestrians. The Committee welcomes the interest of the Cabinet member and officers in exploring whether on-street parking can be developed as a means to increase capacity whilst addressing some of the negative impacts of footway parking, and it adds its voice in support.

Recommendation 5: That the Council investigates the feasibility of on-street parking for e-scooters and e-bikes to alleviate issues with footway parking.

FURTHER CONSIDERATION

19. The Committee does not have this item scheduled, at present, to return. However, the Place Overview and Scrutiny Committee is expected to review road safety aspects of these schemes at a future meeting.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

20. Under Part 6.2 (13) (a) of the Constitution Scrutiny has the following power:
'Once a Scrutiny Committee has completed its deliberations on any matter a formal report may be prepared on behalf of the Committee and when agreed by them the Proper Officer will normally refer it to the Cabinet for consideration.
21. Under Part 4.2 of the Constitution, the Cabinet Procedure Rules, s 2 (3) iv) the Cabinet will consider any reports from Scrutiny Committees.

Anita Bradley
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Annex:	Pro-forma Response Template
Background papers:	None
Other Documents:	None
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