

Divisions Affected - All

DELEGATED DECISIONS BY CABINET MEMBER FOR TRANSPORT MANAGEMENT

11 DECEMBER 2025

Proposed Changes to MyBus Oxfordshire Ticketing Scheme Report by Director of Environment and Highways

RECOMMENDATION

The Cabinet Member is RECOMMENDED to:

- a) Retain the price of the MyBus day tickets at current levels in response to analysis of their usage and benefits.**
- b) Approve a price increase for the MyBus weekly tickets from 11 January 2026, or as soon as practical thereafter, as follows:**
 - From £25 to £30 for an adult week ticket**
 - From £14.50 to £17 for a young person week ticket**
- c) Approve the reallocation of £1,895,857 to the MyBus scheme in 2025/26 from other bus related projects detailed at para 27: £240,000 from Oxfordshire County Council (the Council) internal funding and £1,655,857 from the Department for Transport (DfT) Bus Grant allocation.**

Executive Summary

1. MyBus Oxfordshire tickets, launched in July 2024 and funded by the Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) Bus Grant, provide one day or one week's unlimited travel on nearly all local bus services in the County. The tickets present a simple, joined up and good value bus ticket solution to bus passengers.
2. The scheme has experienced strong uptake, particularly among young people. This popularity, combined with increased operator costs, has resulted in demand and reimbursement costs exceeding the original £700k budget for 2025/26. Monthly sales and reimbursement figures can be seen at Annex 1.
3. The current forecast indicates a potential funding deficit for 2025/26 of between **£1,434,981** (best case) and **£1,964,857** (worst case). This paper outlines the financial position, options considered, and a recommended approach to ensure the scheme's sustainability while supporting the council's strategic transport objectives and benefits to bus passengers.

4. Keeping the day tickets at the current pricing levels will ensure that funds are directed toward a product that delivers the greatest impact on overall bus usage, while maintaining affordability for most users. The recommended course of action therefore combines higher weekly ticket prices with reallocating funds from other projects to close the funding gap.
5. Uncertainty remains regarding funding beyond this financial year; the DfT is expected to confirm future Bus Grant allocations by the end of 2025. A comprehensive review of the scheme will be undertaken to assess its future beyond March 2026.

Background and Context

6. The MyBus scheme has to date been funded by the Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) Bus Grant from the Department for Transport. Use of the grant for this purpose was approved at Cabinet on 19 October 2021 and via a [Cabinet Member Decision on 27 March 2025](#).
7. The initiative was developed by merging two BSIP schemes along with their associated funding: one focused on providing a discounted youth fare product and the other was to introduce a county-wide day ticket usable across multiple operators.
8. Since its launch, the MyBus scheme has continued to grow in popularity, becoming a highly successful and well-established ticket offering. The rise of the National Fare Cap from £2 to £3 in January 2025 amplified this success, driving further growth in demand and sales. The adjustment to the National Fare Cap impacted MyBus costs in two primary ways:
 - (a) Tickets became comparatively better value than purchasing single fares in many cases, leading to higher demand and increased sales; and
 - (b) Reimbursement costs rose because operators received reduced payments from Central Government under the revised fare cap scheme.
9. As a result of the above, the scheme has far exceeded original forecasts creating significant cost pressures at an estimated overspend of between **£1,434,981** and **£1,964,857** for the full financial year 2025/26.
10. The current prices of the MyBus Oxfordshire tickets are outlined in the table below:

MyBus Ticket Prices	Day Ticket	Week Ticket (7 days)
MyBus Adult	£6.50	£25.00
MyBus Young Person (ages 5 to 18 inclusive)	£3.50	£14.50

11. Passenger feedback was collected via an e-survey conducted between 28 August and 26 October 2025 and received 110 responses. The results confirm that the scheme has had a clear positive effect on encouraging bus travel with half of respondents reporting that MyBus tickets have increased their use of bus services. The most valued features of the tickets were cost savings (56%), flexibility to use multiple bus companies (49%) and convenience (39%).

Bus operator participation in the scheme

12. 12 local bus operators, including some community transport operators, participate in the MyBus scheme selling and accepting MyBus tickets. This enables passengers to use the tickets on almost all bus services in Oxfordshire (over 150 services) including many services crossing into neighbouring authority areas.
13. All local bus operators who can comply with the technical aspects of the scheme are able to participate in the MyBus scheme.
14. Operator participation is based on a 'no better nor worse off' financial position. The Council have agreed 'top up' reimbursement rates for each ticket sold with each operator which reflects the difference between buying a MyBus ticket and buying the operator's own products, or buying a single journey under the National Fare Cap scheme. The income from the sale of tickets is distributed to operators according to usage and is calculated by an independent third party. Therefore, each month operators receive top up reimbursement for tickets they have sold and they will get a proportion of the sales revenue as a whole.

Options Considered

15. The table at Annex 2 presents six options that were reviewed, along with their principal advantages and disadvantages. These were:
 - (a) Maintain the current position (do nothing)
 - (b) A fare increase (in isolation)
 - (c) Redirect funds and maintain current pricing
 - (d) A hybrid approach combining a fare increase with redirection of existing funds
 - (e) Temporary scheme suspension for the remainder of the financial year
 - (f) Scheme termination or commercial transition
16. Option D is the recommended choice.

Justifications for, and impact of, the ticket price increases

17. Officers believe a price increase is needed to reduce the 2025/26 deficit and to manage the rising costs.
18. Increasing the prices of all ticket types was considered but rejected in order to minimise the negative impact on passengers, particularly while other funds exist which could be utilised in the short term.
19. An increase to the weekly tickets alone is thought to be the best course of action at this time for the following reasons:
 - (a) The survey responses indicate that day ticket holders are more likely to report that MyBus tickets have increased their bus use.

- (b) The weekly tickets are thought to abstract from existing single operator products whereas the day ticket offers something unique in the market.
- (c) The cost to the Council per ticket sold for the weekly ticket is significantly more than the daily ticket.
- (d) The number of individuals who utilise weekly tickets is relatively low; consequently, the impact of any price increase would affect a smaller group of people.

20. The proposed increases will be as follows:

Ticket Prices	Current	Proposed	Increase (£)	Increase (%)
Adult Day	£6.50	No change	£0	0
Young Person Day	£3.50	No change	£0	0
Adult Week	£25.00	£30.00	£5.00	20
Young Person Week	£14.50	£17.00	£2.50	17.24

- 21. The proposed increase reflects a balanced adjustment that continues to support young people, consistent with the original intent of the funding and aligned with the Council's broader objectives to provide discounted products for this demographic. The proposal also takes into account the pricing of comparable ticket products currently available.
- 22. It should be noted that for those affected it will not necessarily mean an additional cost of £5 or £2.50 each week. There will in some cases be a cheaper alternative product, for example the Oxford Smartzone weekly ticket for young people is £15 (via operator apps), which will now be a more attractive proposition for applicable users.
- 23. The price increases are expected to save approximately £69,000 for the rest of the financial year. More importantly though, it is anticipated that this move will help manage ticket growth, ensuring reimbursement stays at more sustainable levels going forward.
- 24. Further impacts to bus passengers on the proposed increase are detailed in the EQIA at Annex 3.

Justifications for, and impact of, the funding reallocations

- 25. The recommended reallocation of £1,895,857 to the MyBus scheme from other bus related projects comprises of £240,000 from the Council's internal funding and £1,655,857 from the DfT Bus Grant allocation.
- 26. In considering the alternative funding available to redirect to MyBus in 2025/26, the following principles were applied:
 - (a) Only funding designated specifically for buses was considered; as a result, other sources like income from the congestion charge were excluded.

- (b) Capital funding was excluded as it is not permitted to be used for this purpose.
- (c) Any forecasted underspends on BSIP schemes or any uncommitted BSIP funding or schemes should be utilised first.
- (d) Whenever feasible, any undelivered schemes in-year will be given priority for BSIP/Bus Grant funding in 2026/27, so that the benefits to passengers are postponed rather than eliminated.

27. The table below shows the proposed funding amounts for redirection to MyBus, along with the expected impact. It is important to note that in all cases there is an associated opportunity cost i.e. utilising this funding on MyBus means these resources will not be available for the other bus improvement projects.

Funding Reallocations			
Value	Scheme	Funding Source	Comment and Impact
£240,000	DRT Pilot Scheme	Internal funding REVENUE	This project is still at the accessibility assessment stage and a pilot is not possible this year. £10,000 is being retained to complete this work.
£165,000	29/H5 Bicester - Arncott/Headington	BSIP Bus Grant (DfT) REVENUE	Service being funded by Section 106 (developer funding) instead. Opportunity cost in terms of longevity of funds for extending the service.
£50,000	H5 Bicester - Headington	BSIP Bus Grant (DfT) REVENUE	Service being funded by Section 106 (developer funding) instead. Opportunity cost in terms of longevity of funds for extending the service.
£60,000	Countywide bus stop audit	BSIP Bus Grant (DfT) REVENUE	This is the estimated underspend on this scheme. No impact.
£7,000	Targeted marketing and promotion initiatives	BSIP Bus Grant (DfT) REVENUE	These are the uncommitted funds on this scheme. Reduces the scope of work that can be delivered this year.
£20,000	Using the bus support & education scheme pilot	BSIP Bus Grant (DfT) REVENUE	Scheme will be deferred to 2026/27 where possible. Delayed benefits to scheme users.
£75,000	Countywide pinch point analysis	BSIP Bus Grant (DfT) REVENUE	Scheme will be deferred to 2026/27 where possible. No impact as was already scheduled for May 2026.
£28,720	Asylum seekers bus pass scheme	BSIP Bus Grant (DfT) REVENUE	This is the underspend on this scheme. No impact.
£110,000	Reduced Sunday fares in December	BSIP Bus Grant (DfT) REVENUE	Scheme will be deferred to 2026/27 where possible. Delayed/reduced benefits to passengers.
£160,000	Uncommitted funds for bus service support (various)	BSIP Bus Grant (DfT) REVENUE	Uncommitted BSIP funding on bus service schemes. No impact this year, may reduce the length of time that some services can be funded for in future years.

£980,137	Committed funds for bus service support in 2026/27 (various)	BSIP Bus Grant (DfT) REVENUE	In 2026/27 the funds for these services will instead be paid for with held BSOG and/or new BSIP funding. There may be a longer-term impact of this in terms of the length of time that some services may be able to be supported for, however it is intended that held BSOG will be spent by April 2028.
£1,895,857	TOTAL		

28. The values stated in the table above are minimum allocations; further underspends may be identified closer to year-end and could therefore be used for MyBus if needed. In the event that not all the funding is required for MyBus, some of it may be retained or carried over into 2026/27.

Corporate Policies and Priorities

29. The MyBus scheme strongly supports Oxfordshire's Local Transport and Connectivity Plan (LTCP) by advancing its core objectives of reducing car dependency and making public transport the natural first choice. By offering affordable, unlimited travel across multiple operators on a single ticket, MyBus simplifies fare structures and improves accessibility, particularly for young people. Early evidence shows significant uptake and increased bus use, demonstrating its role in supporting LTCP objectives.

Financial Implications

30. The original BSIP grant allocation to fund the costs of MyBus for 2025/26 is £700,000. At the time of determining the grant allocation this was a reasonable estimate. However, following the change to the National Fare Cap and more recently the trend in the increase in all MyBus ticket type patronage, the predicted costs for this year are now significantly greater than the original grant funding allocation.
31. Based on the current trend in spend, it is forecasted that the total cost of the scheme, for the full year, is likely to be between £2.135m (best case) and £2.665m (worst case). Leaving a current funding deficit of between £1.435m and £1.965m.
32. The actions as recommended in this report are based on the worst-case scenario. The spend is monitored monthly and if the actual costs at year end are less than the worst-case forecast, the value of the repurposing of the 2025/26 BSIP grant will be reduced to ensure we outturn at a breakeven position. Please see the table below.

2025/26	Worst Case scenario	Comments
	£'000	
Original Budget	700	

Estimated total cost	2,665	
Deficit	+1,965	
Part in-year benefit of price increase	-69	The full year impact of this change is estimated to be - between £429k and £621k
Uncommitted BSIP Grant funding 2025/26	-676	
Repurpose of 2025/26 BSIP Grant funding that was earmarked for committed services in 2026/27	-980	If the best-case scenario is realised the repurposing of the grant could reduce to - £450k
Uncommitted in-year revenue funding for the DRT Pilot Scheme	-240	
Net position	0	

33. The cost pressure of the MyBus scheme will continue into 2026/27 and it is anticipated that the new BSIP grant allocation will be used to support this increased cost. If the new funding does not fully fund the predicted future costs of the scheme, a further paper will be needed to consider the options available to the authority.

Comments checked by:

Rob Finlayson, Strategic Finance Business Partner
rob.finlayson@oxfordshire.gov.uk

Legal Implications

34. These proposals represent changes to the Council's BSIP Delivery Plan submitted to the DfT in 2025. Whilst there is no requirement to update that BSIP Delivery Plan, the Council is confident that the changes recommended in this report continue to comply with the terms in the DfT's Memorandum of Understanding ('MOU') applying to the administration and delivery of the 2025-26 Bus Grant for Local Authorities grant.
35. The terms of the Oxfordshire Countywide Multi-Operator Ticket Scheme state that ticket prices are set by the County Council, and that at least one month's written notice will be given to operators of any changes to ticket prices. The Council intends to comply with this requirement.
36. Whilst the Council has powers under the Bus Services Act 2017 to impose an Advanced Ticketing Scheme, and enforce membership by operators, the MyBus scheme has been set up under a voluntary arrangement in keeping with the Enhanced Partnership model.

Comments checked by:

Staff Implications

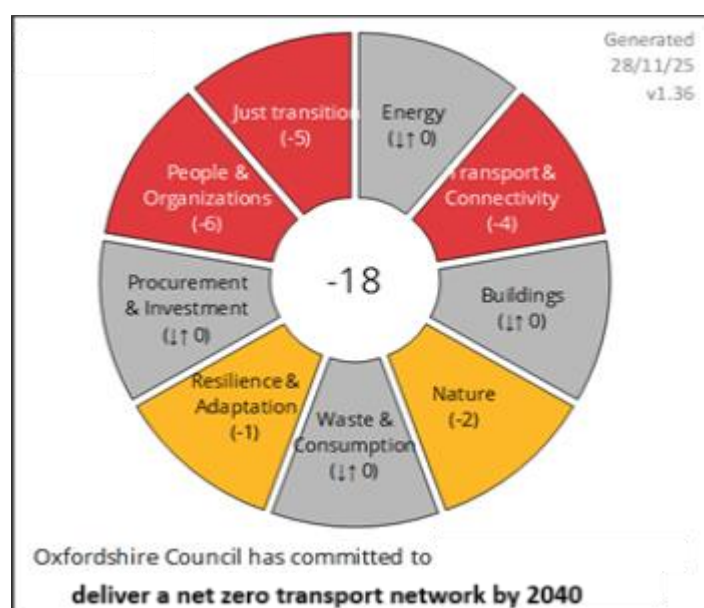
37. There are no anticipated impacts on staffing.

Equality & Inclusion Implications

38. The Equalities Impact Assessment (EQIA) for the proposed changes to the MyBus Oxfordshire Ticketing Scheme indicates that there likely to be adverse effects on several protected and vulnerable groups. The full assessment can be found at Annex 3.
39. Groups most affected include younger people, women (including those pregnant or on maternity leave), Black, Asian and minority ethnic communities, those on lower incomes, rural residents and carers. These groups are statistically more reliant on bus services and may be disproportionately disadvantaged by fare increases. Groups that are able to benefit from a concessionary bus pass, such as older and disabled people, will be less affected.

Sustainability Implications

40. The Climate Impact Assessment (CIA) for the proposed changes to the MyBus Oxfordshire Ticketing Scheme indicates an overall negative climate and social outcome, with a total score of -18 points. The full assessment can be found at Annex 4.



41. While the scheme remains highly valued for supporting bus use and providing cost-effective, flexible travel options, the recommended price increases and reallocation of funds are likely to have adverse effects.
42. Key negative impacts include a potential shift from bus to private car use, reduced public transport and active travel, diminished access to green spaces, and increased challenges for vulnerable groups. The changes may also hinder progress towards climate and ecological objectives by creating obstacles to behavioural and systemic change, reducing health and wellbeing benefits, and exacerbating inequality.
43. As a result of more affordable MyBus tickets subsidised by the DfT, bus operators are benefitting from overall bus market growth. The scheme operates under a "no better nor worse" financial position, therefore as part of the upcoming review of the scheme, discussions will be advanced by the Council on how bus operators can foster the financial sustainability of the scheme, particularly focusing on affordability and the potential growth that affordable fares can produce for the benefit of all parties.
44. Although some mitigations are planned – such as prioritising deferred schemes for future delivery and maintaining day ticket prices – the overall assessment underscores the need for ongoing review and further action to align with Oxfordshire County Council's climate commitments.

Risk Management

45. The key risks and mitigations are listed in Annex 5.

Consultations

46. An online survey using bus operator mailing lists was conducted from August to October 2025, and gathered feedback from 110 bus users across Oxfordshire to assess the impact and user experience of the MyBus ticket scheme.
47. Half of respondents reported increased bus usage due to MyBus tickets, which are valued for cost savings (56%), convenience (39%), and flexibility to travel across multiple operators (49%). The tickets were primarily used for commuting, education, leisure, and shopping. A full report has been included at Annex 6.
48. The Citizens' Assembly convened by the Council aimed to gather public perspectives on improving the county's transport system. Participants expressed a desire for a transport network that is affordable, reliable, inclusive, and environmentally responsible.

Paul Fermer
Director for Environment & Highways

Annex 1: MyBus monthly sales and reimbursement figures (July 2024 to September 2025)
Annex 2: Options considered
Annex 3: Equalities Impact Assessment (EQIA)
Annex 4: Climate Impact Assessment (CIA)
Annex 5: Risks and mitigations
Annex 6: MyBus survey results report

Background papers: The Oxfordshire BSIP Delivery Plan for 2025/26:
<https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/sites/default/files/file/roads-and-transport/OxfordshireBSIPDeliveryPlan2025-26.pdf>

More information on the MyBus scheme for passengers:
[Find out about MyBus Oxfordshire tickets](#)

Contact Officer: Katharine Broomfield, Technical Lead Bus Service Improvement, 07523800079
katharine.broomfield@oxfordshire.gov.uk

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