

Overview & Scrutiny Recommendation Response Pro forma

Under section 9FE of the Local Government Act 2000, Overview and Scrutiny Committees must require the Cabinet or local authority to respond to a report or recommendations made thereto by an Overview and Scrutiny Committee. Such a response must be provided within two months from the date on which it is requested¹ and, if the report or recommendations in questions were published, the response also must be so.

This template provides a structure which respondents are encouraged to use. However, respondents are welcome to depart from the suggested structure provided the same information is included in a response. The usual way to publish a response is to include it in the agenda of a meeting of the body to which the report or recommendations were addressed.

Issue: **Bus Services and Rural Transport including Mobility Hubs**

Lead Cabinet Member(s): **Cllr Gareth Epps, Cabinet Member for Transport**

Date response requested:² **19 June 2026**

Response to recommendations:

Recommendation	Accepted, rejected or partially accepted	Proposed action (if different to that recommended) and indicative timescale (unless rejected)
1. That the Council should explore pilot shuttle or feeder bus services in rural areas to improve connectivity between smaller settlements and main bus corridors, where this would reduce isolation and improve access to services.	Rejected	Following the withdrawal of bus service support by a previous Administration in 2016, several community transport organisations were established which serve areas of lower demand – and some of these, for example Our Bus Bartons and West Oxfordshire Community Transport, already provide feeder

¹ Date of the meeting at which report/recommendations were received

² Date of the meeting at which report/recommendations were received

Overview & Scrutiny Recommendation Response Pro forma

		services to the main network at Steeple Aston and Eynsham respectively and could be considered as existing pilots. There have also been other previous attempts at such services, such as between Watlington and Lewknor, and a Rural Bus Challenge pilot service connecting to the Oxford – Banbury bus service, which have not been successful. The County Council is also working with developers to explore the potential for such services between Heyford Park and Heyford station, and between Chipping Norton and Kingham station. The County Council invests £1.2m per annum of its own budget in rural and community transport services, in addition to other services already funded by other means. This supports 30 local bus services across the county, plus a grant scheme which this year is expected to deliver £150,000 of support to community transport and voluntary car schemes. As a result of this investment, since 2024 every parish in Oxfordshire with a population of more than 500 has benefited from a scheduled bus service of some form, with most parishes under this figure also being served. The County Council works with community transport organisations to maintain services and develop ticket products which can be used on both feeder and main service routes. We are mindful not to establish competing services, but the capacity of community transport operators to expand (for example to all day operations) is limited.
--	--	---

Overview & Scrutiny Recommendation Response Pro forma

		Many areas of the county which were previously public transport deserts have been improved, for example the villages north of Bicester on routes 81/82 which now enjoy the best level of service they have had for many years. The County Council's public transport team regularly review the network for improvement opportunities within the available funds, and all such funds are currently fully committed. As a result of funding reductions from central Government, the situation is challenging but the County Council continues to work to identify suitable opportunities and develop them where it is sensible, practical and affordable to do so. In addition, the County Council is currently undertaking an accessibility review of rural transport, which will consider gaps in the network and identify how these could be filled. We expect to receive this report soon.
2. That the Council should review the terminology and communications used for “mobility hubs” including consideration of adopting clearer, more accessible language such as “transport hubs”.	Partially accepted	An updated version of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) was published in August 2026. The NPPF does use terminology such as “transport hubs”. At this stage, there is no intention to update the Mobility Hubs strategy, so the terminology needs to remain until it is, which is likely to be post Local Government Reorganisation (LGR). However, when describing or promoting projects and schemes, we will ensure suitable narrative/explanation rather than just ‘mobility hub’ is used.

Overview & Scrutiny Recommendation Response Pro forma

3. That the Council improves communication and engagement to ensure residents, particularly in rural areas and vulnerable groups, are aware of available bus services and how to access them.	Partially accepted	The emerging Oxfordshire Bus Enhanced Partnership Plus will strengthen the connections between the County Council and operators, with a greater focus on marketing and promotion of services. Since 1985, the County Council's role in information provision has been lessened as this has primarily been the role of commercial bus operators, who are responsible for providing information for their services. However, several major improvements have been made to this area in recent years, including the production of new bus maps and timetables which are available here. A county map is available, plus individual town maps and a diagram of connections to Oxford hospitals. A new Enhanced Partnership website, which also contains details about service changes and bus initiatives, has also been developed to enhance information provision. The County Council hosts a triannual Parish Transport Representatives (PTR) online meeting, which is usually attended by more than 30 people from across the county. Key bus service projects and changes are discussed at this meeting and PTRs are encouraged to disseminate this information within their respective areas. The meeting also includes a 'surgery' where individual parish issues can be discussed with officers. We are also involved in various forums such as the IMPACT group for disabled people, which meets regularly to discuss transport-related issues. The key stakeholders in these
--	---------------------------	--

Overview & Scrutiny Recommendation Response Pro forma

	discussions are also in contact with officers directly for advice and engagement at other times. The County Council is not responsible for printed bus stop information, which is undertaken by the bus operators. The larger bus operators in the county are proficient at this and ensure that coverage is universal and up to date, however this is more difficult with smaller operators who often lack the resources to do so – despite this, almost all marked bus stops in rural areas have a timetable display. Improvements to bus stops being undertaken by the County Council will often include adding route numbers and destinations to flags, which aid awareness of which services call at which points. The County Council endeavours to make parish councils aware of bus services in their areas, particularly when they are changing, but unfortunately this is dependent on resources and has not always been possible in the past. Some parish councils have made real time bus information available on their website, and there are resources such as the Council's Oxontime system and bustimes.org, where it is possible to search by place name and live tracking of buses is available. Our two principal bus operators have dedicated marketing teams to promote their services and ticket products, including for services funded by the County Council – there are various provisions in contracts for this to be done, including through printed leaflets on some services. The County Council's public transport team has collaborated with these stakeholders and with
--	---

Overview & Scrutiny Recommendation Response Pro forma

		our internal marketing colleagues on promotional material and videos, for example for the MyBus tickets following their launch in 2024.
4. That the Council continues to prioritise improvements to accessibility of bus stops and routes, including footways, crossings, and dropped kerbs, as part of the Bus Service Improvement Plan and capital programmes.	Accepted	The County Council has allocated significant elements of its Bus Grant capital allocation from Government to bus stop improvement and will continue to do so over the current funding period to March 2029. Current projects include enhancements to stops on routes 75/76 from Banbury to Shipston and service X40 between Wallingford and Reading, amongst many others. The bus stop audit, which has covered more than 4,000 locations, has now been completed and is being used to identify improvements which can be taken forward with available funding. As part of the Section 106 Acceleration Programme, an additional officer has been recruited for six months in the public transport team to further develop plans to utilise held developer funding for bus stop infrastructure. As part of our commitments in return for Bus Grant funding, the County Council is required to complete a Bus Network Accessibility Plan in the 2026/27 financial year. Funding for this work has been identified, but further guidance from the Government is awaited on their expectations.
5. That the Council should consider options for more granular assessment of demand	Partially accepted	Most of Oxfordshire's bus services are provided on a commercial basis by operators, who do so based on their own assessments

Overview & Scrutiny Recommendation Response Pro forma

for bus services, to complement population-based analysis and inform future service planning.		of demand against available resources. The County Council has traditionally not undertaken such analysis, as its role has primarily been to provide subsistence levels of bus service to areas not served by the commercial market. However, it is acknowledged that over time this role has changed and the County Council now has greater oversight and influence of the network through the Enhanced Partnership and its deeper relationship with bus service providers. In addition, the targets set by the County Council's Local Transport Plan and the DfT's Outcomes Framework will require us to maximise patronage growth on key corridors. The County Council has explored the use of specific software to assist with bus service network development, but to date has not invested what would be a significant sum into its deployment. Given that public transport functions could potentially transfer to a future Mayoral Strategic Authority, the County Council will consider whether such an investment would be value for money.
6. That the Council should ensure that Movement and Place Plans and section 106 priorities clearly reflect local transport needs, including bus services and active travel, alongside strategic infrastructure.	Accepted	As part of the Movement and Place Plans programme process, significant data in reference to local travel demands is collected to inform each plan thereby it can be tailored to specific needs. Key active travel improvements and LCWIP interventions in each area are always incorporated into MAPs. The County Council is highly successful at obtaining Section 106 funds and spends more than £5m per annum on supporting bus routes as a result. Our current approach in this regard works and will continue to be adopted in the future, but LGR and devolution will present significant challenges and risk over receipt, collection

Overview & Scrutiny Recommendation Response Pro forma

		and transfer of funds which will need to be overcome to continue this success.
7. That the Council should accelerate progress on key transport and interchange schemes, including interim improvements at Oxford railway station and integration with wider corridor and rail strategies.	Accepted	A key part of delivering OxRAIL 2040: Plan for Rail is improving interchange facilities at key railway stations across the County and ensuring that the proposed five new stations – Oxford Cowley/Oxford Littlemore/Begbroke/Ardley/Wantage and Grove – are designed from the outset with best-in-class active travel facilities/connectivity. The comprehensive/phased redevelopment of Oxford railway station will be presaged by the proposed delivery of a 'Passenger Improvement Programme' from April 2027 covering major refurbishment of the main eastern concourse – larger gateline, new toilets, repositioned CIS screens, more seating – and proposals for forecourt improvements including new bus shelters/real time information and additional cycle parking are currently being progressed with the rail industry. Significant improvements have been made to interchange at Banbury station, with new bus stops on the forecourt and regular services from Bodicote and Chipping Norton. Work is ongoing through the review of local bus contracts to identify further improved connections, and the Town Centre Masterplan will consider options to improve the facilities at the station. We are also working on enhancements at Oxford Parkway and at Didcot Parkway station focussed on interchange between rail and bus. The ambitions for improved interchange are also a key theme of the emerging OxBUS 2040: Plan for Bus, which is

Overview & Scrutiny Recommendation Response Pro forma

		complementary to the rail plan and will contain similar emphasis on interchange and integration. The Council remains committed to the progression of such schemes in advance of LGR.
--	--	--