



PLACE OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MINUTES of the meeting held on Wednesday, 22 April 2026 commencing at 10.00 am and finishing at 3.00 pm.

Present:

Voting Members:

Councillor Liam Walker - in the Chair
Councillor Bethia Thomas (Deputy Chair)
Councillor Thomas Ashby
Councillor Chris Brant
Councillor Laura Gordon
Councillor Emily Kerr
Councillor Lesley McLean
Councillor Susanna Pressel
Councillor Leigh Rawlins

**Other Members in
Attendance:**

Councillor Liz Leffman, Leader of the Council;
Councillor Andrew Gant, Cabinet member for Transport
Management
Councillor Judy Roberts, Cabinet member for Place,
Environment, and Climate Action

Officers:

Michael Adcock, Deputy Chief Fire Officer;
Hannah Battye, Head of Place Shaping
Matthew Case, Team Leader: Applications
Cathy Champion, Operations Manager:
Civil Enforcement
Paul Fermer, Director of Environment and Highways
Melissa Goodacre, Sustainable Transport Manager
Mark Gregory, Team Leader:
Behavioural Change and Travel
Dave Harrison, Team Leader: Public Transport
Eric Manners, Technical Lead: Active Travel
David Periam, Planning Development Manager
Neal Richmond, Team Leader: Enforcement
Nicola Riley, Cherwell District Council's
Assistant Director: Wellbeing and Housing Services
Robin Rogers, Director of Economy and Place
Jason Sherwood,
Head of Regulatory Planning Enforcement
Charlotte Simms, Team Leader:
Minerals and Waste Policy
Ben Smith, Strategic Transport Manager
Aron Wisdom, Programme Lead: Central
Richard Doney, Scrutiny Officer (whole meeting)

The Committee considered the matters, reports and recommendations contained or referred to in the agenda for the meeting and decided as set out below. Except

insofar as otherwise specified, the reasons for the decisions are contained in the agenda and reports, copies of which are attached to the signed Minutes.

10/26 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND TEMPORARY APPOINTMENTS

(Agenda No. 1)

There were none.

11/26 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

(Agenda No. 2)

At the beginning of item 8, Cllr Thomas declared an interest as Leader of the Vale of the White Horse District Council. She considered it most appropriate to withdraw from the room for that item.

12/26 MINUTES

(Agenda No. 3)

The minutes of the meeting on 04 February 2026 were **AGREED** as a true and accurate record, subject to substituting "Oxfordshire Liveable Streets" for "Oxfordshire Liverpool Streets."

13/26 PETITIONS AND PUBLIC ADDRESSES

(Agenda No. 4)

The Committee heard the following public addresses on the Minerals and Waste Planning item:

Rita Atkinson of Sutton Courtenay Parish Council requested that the Committee recommend Cabinet commission an independent review of Minerals and Waste planning processes, citing long running impacts on Sutton Courtenay and Appleford from Minerals and Waste operations. She highlighted frustration with repeated section 73 applications extending site lifespans, delays in application determination, and the difficulty for communities in understanding original intents. She argued that an independent review would support more meaningful community engagement and reduce cumulative impacts.

Greg O'Broin of Appleford-on-Thames Parish Council also spoke about the Minerals and Waste Policy item. He raised concerns about the repeated use of section 73 applications to extend permissions beyond agreed end dates, distorting the planning system and undermining public confidence. He cited ongoing non compliance with planning conditions and section 106 agreements, limited enforcement action, and insufficient staffing for monitoring and enforcement. He asked the Committee to seek an independent review of processes, enforcement practice and resource adequacy.

Robin Draper stated that parish council concerns regarding the Minerals and Waste function related to processes, procedures and culture rather than individual officers. He criticised delays, multiple consultations on section 73 applications, limited

enforcement action and a perceived lack of supervision and accountability. He urged the Committee to challenge performance and recommend an independent review to examine why statutory timescales and enforcement powers were not being used more robustly.

Councillor Peter Stevens endorsed the parish councils' concerns and supported their request for an independent review. He argued that multinational operators were able to exploit the system, resulting in repeated extensions and uncertainty over restoration outcomes. He called for clearer restoration visions, stronger enforcement powers, defined end dates, and greater alignment with neighbourhood plans and future infrastructure proposals.

At the opening of item 11, the Committee heard public addresses on the Congestion Charge Monitoring Scheme Reporting.

Richard Parnham asked the Committee to request improvements to how congestion scheme monitoring data is reported, stating that current presentations lacked context and made it difficult to identify trends, localised impacts and significance across different roads. He argued that benefits appeared to be fading in some locations, with traffic displacement disproportionately affecting areas such as Cowley and routes serving the hospitals. He raised concerns about gaps and inconsistencies in reported data, including bus journey time impacts and their absence from recent analysis.

Geoffrey Sutton, of Reconnecting Oxford, argued that the congestion charge had separated the city centre and hospital catchments without sufficient understanding of their distinct travel patterns, disadvantaging access to the hospitals. He questioned the accuracy of the Oxfordshire Strategic Model, stating that missing data had undermined forecasts and contributed to unanticipated impacts on bus operators and journey times. He asked the Committee to scrutinise governance, risk management, performance metrics (including accident rates), and the lack of effective monitoring of business and hospital impacts.

Bernadette Evans, of Oxford Business Action Group, stated that small businesses had been adversely affected by the congestion charge and that promised monitoring of footfall and spend in key shopping areas had not been delivered. She said business owners felt let down, having undertaken informal monitoring themselves after official data sources proved unreliable. She urged the Committee not to sign off the report until robust business impact monitoring was in place and business voices were properly reflected.

Copies of the addresses submitted are attached to these minutes.

14/26 COMMITTEE ACTION AND RECOMMENDATION TRACKER (Agenda No. 5)

The Committee **NOTED** the action and recommendation tracker.

15/26 RESPONSES TO SCRUTINY RECOMMENDATIONS (Agenda No. 6)

The Committee **NOTED** the Cabinet response to the report on Infrastructure Funding Statement and s.106 and the one on Movement and Place Plans.

16/26 COMMITTEE FORWARD WORK PLAN
(Agenda No. 7)

The Committee **AGREED** the proposed work programme, recognising that additional items would be scheduled once the membership of the Committee for the upcoming municipal year was confirmed.

17/26 MINERALS AND WASTE PLANNING
(Agenda No. 8)

Councillor Thomas withdrew for the duration of this item.

Councillor Judy Roberts, Cabinet Member for Place, Environment and Climate Action, attended to introduce a report providing an overview of the Council's statutory responsibilities as the Minerals and Waste Planning Authority. She was accompanied by Robin Rogers, Director of Environment and Place, Jason Sherwood, Head of Regulatory Something, David Periam, Matthew Case, Team Leader: Applications, Charlotte Sims, Team Leader: Minerals and Waste Policy, and Neal Richmond, Team Leader: Enforcement.

The report explained that Minerals and Waste Planning was a specialist function, distinct from district planning responsibilities, and was delivered through three inter related functions: Minerals and Waste Policy and Strategy, Minerals and Waste Development Management, and Minerals and Waste Monitoring and Enforcement.

Members noted that Minerals and Waste planning differed significantly from other planning functions owing to its scale, operational complexity and long term nature, with development sites often operating over several decades. It was highlighted that decisions had to operate within national planning policy and enforcement frameworks, and that failure to determine or enforce decisions lawfully and in a timely manner could have exposed the Council to appeals and potential intervention.

Officers gave a presentation to provide context on the range and distribution of Minerals and Waste sites across Oxfordshire. This included quarries, recycling and waste transfer facilities, landfill and restoration sites, sewage works, energy recovery facilities, and examples of restored mineral workings returning land to agriculture, nature conservation or other beneficial uses. Examples of enforcement action were also described, including the use of temporary stop notices and subsequent resolution through planning applications.

Members discussed the adequacy of resourcing across Minerals and Waste functions. Concerns were raised regarding reliance on temporary and agency staff, vacancies within specialist roles, and the sustainability of current arrangements in light of the requirement to prepare a new Minerals and Waste Plan within a statutory 30 month timetable. Officers advised that the number in the team was supplemented with temporary and agency support to respond to workload pressures, and that

further recruitment and reorganisation proposals were being developed to stabilise and strengthen the service.

The Committee discussed workforce culture and capability. Officers advised that the team comprised highly specialised officers, that demand and complexity were significant, and that there was an ongoing need for recruitment, succession planning and skills development to maintain service resilience. Members acknowledged the challenges posed by hard to fill specialist roles and constraints across partner organisations.

Members considered monitoring and enforcement arrangements. It was noted that there were currently no nationally prescribed performance indicators for Minerals and Waste site monitoring and that developing meaningful KPIs was challenging due to the variability and complexity of cases, particularly where voluntary resolution was pursued or where enforcement action was subject to appeal. Officers confirmed that work was ongoing to identify proportionate and useful measures.

The Committee discussed liaison arrangements for major sites. Officers explained that liaison groups were generally informal and varied from site to site, with some secured through planning obligations and others operating voluntarily. Members raised concerns about inconsistency in arrangements, the degree of operator control over meetings, and the level of support available to councillors chairing or attending liaison committees. It was suggested that there might have been scope to strengthen liaison requirements through planning obligations in future.

Members discussed landfill and waste disposal. Officers advised that landfill use had reduced over time and that a significant proportion related to inert waste used for restoration of mineral workings, rather than disposal. Members noted that updated waste needs evidence would be prepared to inform the new Minerals and Waste Plan.

Members requested clearer reporting on enforcement outcomes. Officers advised that, while many cases do not result in formal action, it would be possible to reinstate regular reporting on enforcement activity, including where notices have been served, to the Planning and Regulation Committee.

The Committee agreed to make recommendations to Cabinet under the following headings:

1. That the Council should develop and implement proportionate and meaningful KPIs for Minerals and Waste monitoring and enforcement activity, recognising case complexity, and report back on the proposed measures and reporting arrangements.
2. That the Council should ensure that its ongoing organisational reorganisation and workforce planning explicitly assess whether Minerals and Waste planning functions are adequately resourced, including succession planning for specialist roles, to meet statutory duties and the 30-month plan-making timetable.

3. That the Council should strengthen and standardise liaison arrangements for major Minerals and Waste sites, including where appropriate through planning obligations, and improve officer support and briefings for councillors who chair or attend liaison groups.
4. That the Council should reinstate regular reporting of formal Minerals and Waste enforcement activity and outcomes to the Planning and Regulation Committee, to support effective oversight of this non-executive function.
5. That the Council should review and update its online information on Minerals and Waste planning responsibilities, policies and enforcement arrangements, to improve accessibility and clarity for members and the public.
6. That the Council should consider commissioning an independent review of Minerals and Waste planning processes, including a sample review of enforcement practice, the use of extensions and section 73 applications, and the adequacy of resources to discharge the Council's statutory responsibilities.

18/26 SCHOOL STREETS

(Agenda No. 9)

Cllr Thomas resumed her place.

Councillor Andrew Gant, Cabinet Member for Transport Management, attended to introduce the report the Committee had requested on the School Streets programme. He was accompanied by Paul Fermer, Director of Environment and Highways, Robin Rogers, Director of Economy and Place, Mark Gregory, Team Leader: Behavioural Change and Travel, Cathy Champion, Operations Manager: Civil Enforcement, and Melissa Goodacre, Sustainable Transport Manager.

The Cabinet member outlined that School Streets were a widely-adopted national policy, with evidence of positive outcomes locally, particularly at early phase sites such as Larkrise Primary School. He emphasised that School Streets should be viewed as part of a wider package of transport and behaviour-change measures within the Local Transport and Connectivity Plan, rather than as a standalone intervention.

Members discussed the process for identifying and progressing School Street schemes. Officers explained that expressions of interest could originate from schools, parents, parish and town councils, councillors, or through officer engagement, and that each scheme was developed through a school travel planning process with formal consultation. The Committee noted that phases four and five were in development, informed by the external review, and that delivery capacity was constrained by funding and officer resources.

The Committee discussed issues of enforcement, particularly exemptions for taxis and other vehicles under ANPR arrangements. Members raised concerns about perceived misuse of exemptions and the lack of granular monitoring data. Officers explained that enforcement was strictly governed by national legislation and data protection requirements, limiting the extent of data captured for exempt vehicles.

Members noted that while abuse could be addressed through licensing authorities in specific cases, there were practical limits to wider enforcement.

Members welcomed the scheme's aims but expressed concern about geographic concentration in early phases and the applicability of School Streets in rural areas or on main roads. Officers outlined how School Streets were supplemented by "soft" active travel measures, including park-and-stride schemes, Bikeability, cycle libraries, walking buses and behaviour-change initiatives, and how physical infrastructure was addressed through Local Walking and Cycling Infrastructure Plans and Movement and Place Plans.

The Committee discussed displacement of traffic and parking. Officers acknowledged the concern and explained that School Streets were intended to reduce congestion directly around school gates, often by encouraging safer parking locations nearby. Members requested greater clarity on whether displacement was being monitored and how impacts on surrounding streets were assessed.

Members also discussed the integration of School Streets principles into new school and housing developments. Officers advised that newer schemes were increasingly designed with active travel and access considerations in mind, but that many recently-opened schools had been approved before current policies were in place, limiting available interventions in the short term.

Members raised the role of independent schools in generating traffic and noted ongoing discussions with school operators around travel behaviour, park-and-ride arrangements and bespoke bus services. It was acknowledged that solutions varied by location and age range and required stakeholder buy-in.

The Committee recognised the positive outcomes achieved to date, while identifying areas for further development relating to monitoring, geographic equity, enforcement clarity, resourcing and integration with planning and funding mechanisms.

The Committee agreed to make recommendations to Cabinet under the following headings:

1. That the Council strengthens early engagement and sign-off arrangements for School Streets proposals, including clearer involvement of county councillors and town and parish councils, drawing on established processes used for other traffic interventions.
2. That the Council ensures adequate officer capacity and funding is made available to support expansion of the School Streets programme, including consideration within future budget planning.
3. That the Council accelerates engagement with independent schools to reduce traffic impacts associated with school travel.
4. That the Council reviews exemptions and enforcement arrangements for School Streets, within legislative constraints, and consider options to tighten

controls where persistent issues arise.

5. That the Council ensures School Streets principles and wider active travel measures are prioritised within planning, section 106 agreements and developer-funded infrastructure for new schools and housing developments.

19/26 BUS SERVICES AND RURAL TRANSPORT INCLUDING MOBILITY HUBS (Agenda No. 10)

The Committee considered a report on bus services, rural transport and mobility hubs in Oxfordshire.

Councillor Andrew Gant, Cabinet Member for Transport Management, and Councillor Judy Roberts, Cabinet Member for Place, Environment and Climate Action, attended to introduce the report. They were accompanied by Paul Fermer, Director of Environment and Highways, Robin Rogers, Director of Economy and Place, and Ben Smith, Strategic Transport Manager, Melissa Goodacre, Sustainable Transport Manager, Ashley Hayden, Team Leader: Area Travel Plans, Dave Harrison, Team Leader: Public Transport, Eric Manners: Technical Leader: Active Travel.

Councillor Gant outlined the background to the Council's bus strategy following the withdrawal of all bus subsidies in 2016 and the subsequent rebuilding of the network. Members were informed that, since July 2024, all parishes with a population of 500 or more were served by a scheduled bus service, and that this represented a significant achievement when compared with national trends.

The Committee heard that bus services were delivered through a mix of funding sources, including the Bus Service Improvement Plan, the enhanced partnership with operators, contributions from public institutions, community transport organisations and, in some cases, private employers. The popularity and financial impact of the "MyBus" ticket offers, particularly the young person's day ticket, were noted, with Members recognising both the social benefits and the pressure placed on Council finances.

Councillor Roberts introduced the section of the report on mobility hubs, emphasising their importance in improving rural connectivity and enabling modal shift in a predominantly rural county. Members noted that over 300 potential hub locations had been identified through public engagement and that pilot schemes were being progressed, alongside integration with Movement and Place Plans, the Oxfordshire Rail Plan and wider corridor studies. Officers advised that £1.4m had been committed to the programme, although some sites would be taken forward through related strategic transport schemes due to design or location constraints.

Officers also highlighted the Council's rural active travel and behaviour-change work, including delivery of Local Walking and Cycling Infrastructure Plans, the Oxfordshire Greenways programme, Quiet Lanes pilots, school travel initiatives and incentive schemes. It was emphasised that these initiatives were intended to support healthier places and reduce inequalities, particularly in rural areas.

Members discussed rural connectivity and accessibility of bus services. Concerns were raised about limited frequency on some rural routes and the impact on access to education, healthcare and employment. The Committee discussed the potential role of feeder or shuttle services linking smaller settlements to main bus corridors, noting changes in legislation which might allow greater flexibility and cross-subsidisation. Officers advised that community transport, Council-operated services and the Comet bus already played an important role, and that cost, demand and value for money had to be carefully balanced when considering frequency improvements.

The Committee discussed the relationship between bus services, park and ride provision and wider network performance, including the implications of the Botley Road closure and its eventual reopening. Officers advised that improved journey time reliability would enable better use of existing resources and potentially reduce the need for Council subsidy on some services.

Members raised issues of accessibility to bus stops, including the lack of footways, dropped kerbs and safe crossings, which could prevent residents from using services even where stops existed. Officers confirmed that forthcoming capital funding would enable targeted improvements as part of the Bus Service Improvement Plan and accessibility work.

The Committee discussed communication and public understanding of services. Members emphasised the importance of improving awareness of existing routes, particularly among vulnerable residents, and queried whether “mobility hubs” was a sufficiently clear term, suggesting that plainer language such as “transport hubs” might be more accessible. Officers acknowledged the point and confirmed that communication and terminology were under review.

Members raised questions about specific schemes referenced in the report, including park and ride proposals, interim improvements at Oxford railway station, and the inclusion of continuous walking and cycling routes alongside major infrastructure projects. Officers advised that these matters were being considered through existing strategies and engagement with delivery partners.

The Committee welcomed the progress made in stabilising and extending bus services, but recognised the ongoing challenges of rural connectivity, accessibility, funding constraints and public communication.

The Committee agreed to make recommendations to Cabinet under the following headings:

1. That the Council explores 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.
2. That the Council reviews the terminology and communications used for “mobility hubs”, including consideration of adopting clearer, more accessible language such as “transport hubs”.

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.
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.
5. That the Council considers options for more granular assessment of demand for bus services, to complement population-based analysis and inform future service planning.
6. That the Council ensures Movement and Place Plans and section 106 priorities clearly reflect local transport needs, including bus services and active travel, alongside strategic infrastructure.
7. That the Council accelerates progress on key transport and interchange schemes, including interim improvements at Oxford railway station and integration with wider corridor and rail strategies.

20/26 TEMPORARY CONGESTION CHARGE SCHEME MONITORING REPORT (Agenda No. 11)

The Committee considered a monitoring report on the Temporary Congestion Charge scheme and heard representations from members of the public regarding traffic impacts, data transparency and business effects.

Councillor Andrew Gant, Cabinet Member for Transport Management, introduced the report and was accompanied by Paul Fermer, Director of Environment and Highways, and Aron Wisdom, Programme Lead: Central. He emphasised that the primary purpose of the scheme was to reduce congestion at known pinch points and improve safety, and stated that the scheme had succeeded in doing so. He explained that the scheme should be seen as part of a wider package of transport measures, including bus service enhancements, congestion management and hospital access arrangements. Councillor Gant clarified that the key performance measure related to bus productivity rather than speed alone, and that improvements to bus services had been delivered during the temporary scheme.

Members discussed the presentation and accessibility of congestion and traffic monitoring data. Concerns were raised that the current data was difficult to interpret, lacked sufficient context and did not clearly demonstrate trends or localised impacts. Members requested clearer, more longitudinal reporting to support effective scrutiny.

The Committee discussed impacts on specific areas, including outer routes and areas near hospitals, and noted evidence of traffic displacement. Officers advised that anticipated changes broadly aligned with modelling assumptions and that mitigation measures were being pursued, including signal re-phasing, service retiming and engagement with private schools and NHS partners.

Members noted that continued monitoring would be required as circumstances changed, including following the reopening of Botley Road and introduction of traffic filters.

Members discussed impacts on businesses and expressed concern that promised monitoring of footfall and spend had been delayed due to data reliability issues. Officers advised that alternative data sources were being validated and that spend data was expected to be published shortly, alongside an independently-run business survey. Members stressed the importance of publishing this information before further decisions were taken.

The Committee discussed customer engagement data and noted that while headline figures were provided on volumes of enquiries, there was insufficient information on the nature of feedback received. Members requested a clearer breakdown of themes and issues raised by residents and businesses.

The Committee discussed the timing of the transition from the congestion charge to traffic filters. Officers confirmed that implementation would follow the reopening of Botley Road and that preparatory work was under way, subject to confirmation of Network Rail's programme.

The Committee requested the following actions:

1. That a written response to the questions posed by Oxford Business Action Group be provided and circulated to the Committee.
2. That a breakdown and summary of customer engagement enquiries and feedback themes be provided to the Committee.
3. That, in future reports to the Committee, congestion monitoring data be presented in a clearer and more contextualised format, including trend analysis and localised impacts, to support effective scrutiny.

The Committee agreed to make recommendations to Cabinet under the following headings:

1. That business monitoring be strengthened, with footfall and spend data and survey results published as soon as validation is complete.
2. That the Council should ensure that mitigations for areas experiencing increased congestion, including parts of north and east Oxford, continue to be developed and reported.
3. That the Council should ensure that contingency measures are prepared in advance of the reopening of Botley Road and implementation of traffic filters.

The Committee adjourned at 13.40 and reconvened at 14.00.

21/26 ILLEGAL WASTE NEAR KIDLINGTON

(Agenda No. 12)

The Committee had requested an interim report updating the Committee on the illegal waste site at Hampton Poyle, near Kidlington.

Councillor Liz Leffman, the Leader of the Council, and Councillor Judy Roberts, Cabinet member for Place, Environment, and Climate Action, attended to present the report. They were accompanied by Robin Rogers, Director of Economy and Place, as well as Nicola Riley, Cherwell District Council's Assistant Director: Wellbeing and Housing Services, and Michael Adcock, Deputy Chief Fire Officer, Jason Sherwood, Head of Regulatory Planning Enforcement, David Periam, Planning Development Manager, Neal Richmond, Team Leader: Enforcement, and Matthew Case, Team Leader: Applications.

The Chair noted that the Environment Agency was not represented owing to their interpretation of guidance on the pre-election period and hoped that that, if the Committee were to consider another report on the topic, that the Environment Agency would be represented then.

The Leader of the Council introduced the report and thanked residents, local members, officers and partner agencies for their work in responding to the incident. The Leader emphasised the seriousness and complexity of the illegal waste activity, its links to organised criminal behaviour, and the impact on the local community. Councillor Leffman highlighted the importance of partnership working, particularly with the Environment Agency and district councils, and advised that progress had been made in securing the site and commencing clearance, noting the national relevance of the lessons emerging from the incident.

Councillor Roberts supported those remarks and reflected on the technical sophistication and speed of the illegal operation. The Cabinet member acknowledged that, whilst the response once the scale of the issue was understood had been strong, there were lessons to be learned about internal escalation and member communication. Councillor Roberts stressed the importance of improving early intelligence and governance arrangements.

Robin Rogers, Director of Economy and Place, shared photographs to provide visual context, explaining the site's scale, proximity to the River Cherwell and drainage features, and the vegetation that initially concealed the activity. He described how flooding exposed the waste and increased risk, the protective measures installed to prevent pollution, the creation of a raised working compound to mitigate flooding, and the logistical challenges of removal, including overhead power cables that added to the site's risk profile.

In discussion, the Committee explored the following:

Members asked how a waste site of this scale could have developed without earlier detection. Officers explained that the waste had been deposited very rapidly over a short period, rather than gradually over time, and that the site had been deliberately selected and prepared to minimise visibility. Dense vegetation, bunding and partial

burial of waste were used to conceal the activity, and vehicle movements were not initially obvious given the site's location. The full extent of the waste only became apparent later, particularly after vegetation thinned and flooding occurred.

The Committee queried when the County Council first became aware that the activity constituted illegal waste disposal rather than engineering or land-use activity. Officers advised that initial intelligence in late June and early July suggested unauthorised activity, which was initially considered to be potentially engineering-related. A joint site visit in early July, involving the County Council, Cherwell District Council, and the Environment Agency, confirmed the presence of mechanically-treated waste and the scale of the illegal operation, at which point the matter was escalated.

Members questioned whether the issue had been escalated quickly enough internally and to Members. Officers acknowledged that internal escalation and member awareness could have occurred earlier and accepted that clearer escalation triggers and earlier structured communication would be a learning point. It was explained that, prior to confirmation of the waste operation, the issue was being managed through normal operational processes.

The Committee asked why dumping appeared to continue after the Council became aware of the site. Officers explained that the majority of the waste had been deposited before the early July site visit and that any additional waste deposited afterwards was not significant in comparison. Crucially, the Council's civil planning powers were not sufficient to stop organised criminal dumping. Effective prevention only became possible once the Environment Agency secured a court-backed restriction order in October, which enabled the site to be physically secured and enforced by the police.

Members asked what powers the County Council had to intervene or stop the activity. Officers clarified that the Council's powers were civil planning powers, including planning contravention and enforcement notices, which required careful evidence-gathering and were subject to rights of appeal. Illegal waste disposal was a criminal offence under environmental legislation, for which the Environment Agency was the lead authority. The Council did not have powers to close the site, seize vehicles or physically restrict access prior to the Environment Agency's intervention.

The Committee asked whether the Council could have physically secured the site, for example by locking gates. Officers confirmed that the Council had no lawful authority to secure private land without a court order and that acting outside statutory powers would have been unlawful and could have compromised subsequent enforcement and criminal proceedings. Lawful site security only became possible once the Environment Agency obtained the restriction order.

Members explored the role of Thames Valley Police and whether they could or should have been informed earlier. Officers explained that criminal investigation of illegal waste activity, including liaison with police forces and national crime units, was led by the Environment Agency. Once the activity was confirmed as criminal, it was pursued through those established channels. Local planning authorities did not have powers to intercept vehicles or duplicate criminal investigations once a site became a crime scene.

The Committee asked whether spot-check monitoring had been sufficient once concerns were identified. Officers advised that spot-check monitoring formed part of normal planning enforcement but was not sufficient to deter or stop organised criminal activity, which required intelligence-led criminal enforcement rather than routine civil monitoring.

Members queried how effectively agencies worked together. Officers stated that inter-agency working was strong once the scale and criminal nature of the issue was identified, with clear roles between the County Council, District Council and the Environment Agency. Members acknowledged this but emphasised that earlier clarity and escalation would be an important lesson.

The Committee asked how and when local residents and parish councils were informed. Officers explained that public awareness increased significantly from September onwards as the scale of the issue became visible and response activity intensified. While legal constraints limited what could be shared during an active investigation, officers accepted that clearer and earlier communication, where possible, would have helped manage local concern.

Members asked what lessons could be learned to prevent similar incidents elsewhere in Oxfordshire. Officers and Members agreed that lessons included improving early intelligence and detection, establishing clearer internal escalation thresholds, strengthening communication with Members, and continuing engagement with national action on waste crime. It was noted that addressing organised illegal waste activity would also require stronger national frameworks and resources.

The Committee agreed to make recommendations to Cabinet under the following headings:

1. That the Council should ensure that lessons learned from this incident be captured and used to strengthen early detection, escalation, inter-agency coordination and internal communication in future cases of illegal waste activity.
2. That the Council should ensure that elected members are kept appropriately informed of progress and key milestones, subject to legal and investigation-related constraints.

The Committee agreed that it would be appropriate to receive a further report at a later stage.

..... in the Chair

Date of signing

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Copy of verbal presentation by Rita Atkinson, Chair, Sutton Courtenay Parish Council to the Place Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 22nd April 2026

Mr. Chairman and members of this committee – thank you for the opportunity to speak before you today. In my capacity as Chair of Sutton Courtenay Parish Council, I speak to agenda item 8 – the report on OCC's Minerals and Waste (M&W) responsibilities.

Our request to you is to recommend an independent review of the current procedures and processes in place used to determine M&W planning applications, monitor planning conditions and enforcement of breaches.

We come to you because, according to the OCC website this Committee can exercise influence on OCC's work, for example, by challenging and improving performance:

- challenging the way things are done;
- bringing in the views and evidence of local people, service users and citizens;
- and making evidence-based recommendations to the cabinet.

We also fully appreciate that your remit is not to examine individual cases but to have an overview and any recommendation you make can only be in that capacity.

Any reference I make here to Sutton Courtenay's experience should only be regarded as a case study to substantiate our request.

Since the 1930s Sutton Courtenay and its neighbouring parish of Appleford have hosted minerals and waste operations on a site that straddles both the parishes with a total area of about 264 hectares – enough to accommodate 700 full sized football pitches. It started with gravel extraction and subsequently landfill waste was used to fill up the resultant holes. Over the years other operations such as composting have also been introduced. With village expansion due to new housing developments, the closest dwelling is less than 70m from the western boundary of the site. Further south, the village's only safe recreational space is less than 30m from the western site boundary. The closure date for this site has repeatedly been extended with the use of s73 applications and is currently 2030 – a hundred years after operations started!

Over the years the parish council has responded to Minerals and Waste planning applications as a consultee. However, it has become increasingly frustrated by the:

- delays in resolving applications;
- the plethora of s73 applications that are submitted to vary or remove previously agreed planning conditions to the extent that it becomes impossible to track back to the original application;
- several iterations with the applicant.

We did write to this committee in July 2025, and are grateful to the chairman for commissioning the report that is before you today. It clearly sets out the roles responsibilities, processes, procedures etc. to carry out the Planning department's work. The messages of resource shortage and work overload are loud and clear.

At paragraph 3 it is acknowledged that *'Decisions taken through minerals and waste planning have long-term implications, often spanning decades, and require careful balancing of environmental protection, **community impacts**, infrastructure needs and national policy requirements.'*

There several mentions of community impact, public interest and community and stakeholder engagement in the report and it is that aspect that I wish to focus on here. With reference to paragraph numbers in the report, I give a few examples:

Para 64. - *Potential impacts from such factors as traffic, noise, dust on such as landscape, biodiversity, water environment and local amenity are assessed. In accordance with paragraph 39 of the NPPF, officers are required to approach decisions on proposed development in a positive and creative way and work proactively with applicants to secure developments that will improve the economic, social and environmental conditions of the area.*

We note that officers are required officers are required to approach decisions on proposed developments in a positive and creative way and work proactively with applicants. It is not clear what is meant by positive and creative in this context. Currently Sutton Courtenay has seen absolutely no improvement in its social and environmental conditions due to the M&W operations. In its parish

Para 71 – *Two KPIs on Minerals and Waste Development Management Applications team's functions -KP1 speed of decision making and the Council's current performance over the measured period of January 2024 to December 2025 is 100% i.e. all planning applications were determined within the statutory time or agreed extended period.*

Our question here relates to the meaning of 'agreed extended period'. In our letter of 1st July 2025 we gave the examples of applications that took over 5 years for determination. Should there not be a limit to the 'agreed extended time period'? We feel that this should be an area that should be explored more to increase efficiency.

Para 99. - *Equality and inclusion considerations are embedded within plan-making, development management, and monitoring and enforcement processes through public consultation, statutory engagement, and transparent decision-making.*

The submissions of section 73 applications to modify planning conditions of a previous s73s, bit like the Russian Dolls, means that oversight is lost and meaningful consultation is impossible and the whole process becomes very opaque to the public that is trying to respond to a consultation.

Conclusion

Our particular focus in bringing the request for an independent review of the work of the planning department to you is to support the planning department in achieving its aspirations to have meaningful community consultations and minimise community impact of the Minerals and Waste operations within the county. We appreciate the constraints under which the department has to work.

However, currently the communities feel the frustration of not being able to engage constructively with the process because of the constantly changing goal posts by the applicant through S73s and delays in determination of applications and follow up of breaches in planning conditions. It also means that measures that may be applied to further reduce community impact are not fed back because the continuity between the original application and the submitted s73 is lost to the layperson.

As a suggestion the Authority Monitoring Reports could include the length of time taken to determine applications and the reasons.

1. My name is Greg O’Broin & I am Vice Chair of Appleford-on-Thames Parish Council. I’m a frequent participant at the SC / Appleford ‘Quarterly Local Liaison Committee’ meetings for the Minerals & Waste site.
2. I am familiar with the concerns expressed by Appleford and Sutton Courtenay in the letters sent to this Committee.
3. We are concerned that S73 applications are used to extend permitted use beyond termination dates. This distorts the planning system and enables permissions to be repurposed in ways not originally intended.
4. In addition, the lack of compliance with Conditions for permissions granted, such as maintenance of hedgerows, drains, lane ways, ROWs, restoration works and aftercare not carried out, is a concern.
5. Further S106 agreements are often ignored, like the 10-year long violation of the Hinterland Agreement!
6. Any rational assessment must conclude the current position is not acceptable with local communities enduring the harm of noncompliance which damages public trust in the system.
7. These concerns not only arise in Sutton Courtenay and Appleford, but also in Radley and Faringdon / Wicklesham.
8. The Officers Report acknowledges there is a burden of ‘post-permission’ casework that is essential to maintaining public confidence *“given the scale, longevity, and operational complexity of M&W sites.”*
9. Nothing we say is intended to reflect on the Officers, who we know and respect. However, it is clear the lack of resources and enforcement action leads us to ask if **the Monitoring & Enforcement function is fit for purpose?**

For information (not to read)		
MW Strategy Team.	4 – 1 P/T + 1 Vac. (2.5).	inadequate to prep. New Plan
Dev App Mgt Team.	7 – 1 Vac. (6)	
Dev Mgt Mon & Enf.Team.	4 – 2 P/T + 1 Shared (3*)	Inadequate to monitor 26 sites

Out of 15 staff positions in the OR, 4 are P/T with 2 vacancies & what looks like 3 and a bit staff in the Monitoring & Enforcement team to look after 26 sites.

10. The Council has sufficient powers to deal with breaches of conditions or S106 agreements, using civil processes or through the Courts. But are these powers used?
11. We can only speculate that the lack of appetite to prosecute enforcement is due to an over abundance of caution. What does this tell site Operators?
12. Councillors, we are all outraged at the illegal dump at Kidlington & yet here we see a light touch system with inadequate resources for Monitoring and Enforcement. This sends the wrong message to operators.
13. We ask the Scrutiny Committee to grasp this nettle and seek an independent review :-
 - a. To examine processes and a sample of breaches & make recommendations to Cabinet.
 - and
 - b. To consider the adequacy of resources to discharge the Council's M&W responsibilities.

Thank you for listening.

ADDRESS TO SCRUTINY COMMITTEE 22 APRIL ON ITEM 8

Mr Chairman, thank you for considering the Parish Councils' concerns about the Planning Department's performance. This is not about officers, but about processes, procedures and culture — especially the lack of urgency in progressing applications and in pressing other departments (notably Highways and Legal) to respond promptly and in considering the cumulative impact on local communities.

The Parish Councils' letters highlight many concerns, including repeat applications, changes that arguably depart from the intent of the original consent, limited enforcement of breaches of conditions, and consultation responses being overlooked, which risks OCC being vulnerable under the **Gunning Principles**.

It is disappointing that, after eight months, the committee is only being asked to consider an overview of the department's responsibilities, governance, performance and resourcing.

The overview is helpful in broad terms. It is strong on delegation, but weak on supervision, accountability, transparency and internal checks. However, It does not reflect the reality on the ground. As such, it goes no way towards addressing the parishes' concerns, so please look beyond the overview — either by establishing a working party with independent advice, or by asking Cabinet to commission an independent review.

Today I ask the committee to keep asking “why” — and to use the answers to drive improvements.

Why, for instance, given the statutory time limit of 13 to 16 weeks, has it:

- a. Needed eight consultations for one Section 73 application and seven for another?
- b. Taken 5 years 4 months to determine one case, 4 years 9 months another — and still left routing and Section 106 agreements outstanding eight months later?

Similar delays arise across the county (see my sheet, including Thrupp Farm, Sonning Quarry, Bunkers Hill–Shipton and Culham Weir). This also raises questions about paragraph 71 of the report and the “agreed extended period”.

On enforcement: Cllrs Constance, Webber and Snowden previously raised serious concerns about a lack of action. Officers have powers but are reluctant to use them. Again, the question is why, when other councils do?

For instance, FCC was found in blatant breach of a condition on the hinterland; no information was sought on how long it had persisted; the Contravention Notice was not made public; and approval of a retrospective application was then cited to justify no further enforcement.

Heidelberg was also in breach from December 2021 to September 2024 of the condition to cease operations by the end of 2021, yet no enforcement action was taken.

In summary, beneath the report's overview are worrying performance and enforcement issues. I urge the committee to examine these in detail in its role of challenging and improving performance.

Finally, do not accept the suggestion that you are unqualified to address them. What is required is common sense and business nous, which I am sure, from your varied experience, you can apply.

R A Draper

Sutton Courtenay

21 April 2026

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Congestion charge monitoring - key observations

Overall

The way that congestion charge monitoring data is presented makes it difficult to ascertain:

- Trends over time – are impacts of the introduction of the congestion charge static, fading, or intensifying over time?
- Localised impacts – are there winners and losers? If so, where?
- Context – a focus on percentages, not numbers, makes it difficult to ascertain the importance of what we're seeing.

Presenting data in different formats offers (some) useful insights

Traffic flows

In outer Oxford, initial reductions in traffic flows on (already relatively busy) suburban roads have gone into reverse, with various key roads now busier than they were 12 months before.

Traffic flows impact - year on year percentage changes

Outer Oxford

Location	Nov-25	Dec-25	Jan-26	Feb-26	2024 average daily traffic count	City traffic volume ranking (where known)
Woodstock Road south of Blandford Avenue	No data	No data	No data	No data	10,531	27
Marsh Lane north of Horseman Close	2%	5%	2%	2%	16,251	13
London Road east of Lyndworth Close	-1%	0%	0%	0%	16,360	11
Garsington Road south-east of John Smith Dr	31%	15%	9%	7%	17,086	10
Rose Hill south of Newman Road	0%	2%	1%	2%	18,625	8
Botley Road west of Seacourt park and ride	2%	2%	1%	4%	16,266	12
Blackbird Leys Road north-west of Sandy Ln	-5%	-3%	3%	4%	8,161	33
Banbury Road north of Davenant Road	No data	2%	0%	1%	14,407	18
Horspath Driftway	-1%	-2%	1%	0%	19,232	7
Abingdon Road south of Weirs Lane	-6%	-7%	-7%	-3%	21,874	6

On the ring road, traffic immediately and consistently became heavier on several stretches - on roads that were already the busiest in Oxford. We don't have data for several ring road sections.

Traffic flows impact - year on year percentage changes

Ring road

Location	Nov-25	Dec-25	Jan-26	Feb-26	2024 average daily traffic count	City traffic volume ranking (where known)
A423 southern bypass (Kennington roundabout to Heyford Hill)	3%	3%	No data	No data	49500 (2023)	No data
A4142 eastern bypass, east of Heyford Hill roundabout	No data	No data	1%	3%	43,641	1
A4142 eastern bypass (Horspath Driftway to Headington roundabout)	3%	3%	4%	4%	32,219	4
A40 northern bypass, south-east of River Cherwell	4%	4%	0%	0%	37,152	3
A34 Hinksey Hill interchange, southbound offslip	No data	No data	No data	No data	No data	No data
A34 Botley interchange, southbound offslip	6%	-62%**	No data	No data	No data	No data
A34 Botley interchange southbound, south of southbound offslip	4%	-29%**	No data	No data	No data	No data
A34 Peartree interchange, northbound offslip	10%	9%	6%	9%	No data	No data

Congestion charge monitoring - key observations

Data for traffic volumes in inner Oxford is often sketchy. The data we have indicates falls in traffic levels. But some of these roads were already less busy than outer Oxford.

Traffic flows impact - year on year percentage changes

Inner Oxford

Location	Nov-25	Dec-25	Jan-26	Feb-26	2024 average daily traffic count	City traffic volume ranking (where known)
Kingston Road south of Leckford Road	-24%	No data	No data	0%	2,566	43
Woodstock Road south of Leckford Road	0%	No data	No data	No data	10,531	27
Banbury Road north of Norham Road	No data	No data	No data	No data	14,407	21
Magdalen Bridge	-6%	-10%	-13%	-11%	14,899	14
Folly Bridge	-12%	-11%	-14%	No data	14,741	15

Traffic volumes on several congestion charge roads fell – but again, several of these roads were already relatively quiet, even before the congestion charge was introduced.

OCC is consistently reluctant to disclose traffic data regarding St Cross Road – despite it being a congestion charge site. The road is the 34th busiest recorded in Oxford – so was never an obvious filter location. It is (and always was) often deserted, even during term time rush hour.

Traffic flows impact - year on year percentage changes

Other sites

Location	Nov-25	Dec-25	Jan-26	Feb-26	2024 average daily traffic count	City traffic volume ranking (where known)
Hollow Way	-20%	-20%	No data	-40%	8,961	30
Marston Ferry Road	-24%	-24%	-17%	-19%	10,205	29
Thames Street	-16%	-14%	-20%	-16%	12,464	22
Woodstock Road south of South Parade	-3%	-6%	2%	2%	10,531	27
Banbury Road south of Marston Ferry Road	-16%	-19%	-13%	-8%	12,529	18
Cowley Road	-8%	-8%	No data	No data	10,468	28
Hythe Bridge Street	-33%	-35%	No data	-29%	11,366	20
Headley Way	5%	4%	3%	1%	14,546	17
St Clements	-22%	No data	No data	No data	14,677	16
Iffley Road	-5%	-4%	No data	-4%	14,178	19
St Cross Road	No data	No data	No data	No data	7,332	34

Presenting OCC data in a different format – by area, and with added contextual insights, illustrates how hard the congestion charge is hitting Cowley and the surrounding area. Roads surrounding the congestion charge filter on Hollow Way – suburban and ring road – are consistently busier, indicating displacement rather than evaporation. Most of these roads are either residential, or have housing directly alongside them – i.e. the ring road, where traffic levels (already between 32,219 – 43,641 vehicles per day) have risen by 3-4%.

Impact of congestion charge on traffic levels in Oxford, according to OCC reporting data

Outer east Oxford - Wood Farm, Cowley, Blackbird Leys

Congestion charge location and nearby streets, where traffic counts and traffic volume changes are available	Year by year, month to month comparison				2024 average daily traffic count	City traffic volume ranking (where known)	Where in Oxford?	Adjacent to housing?
	Nov 2024 - Nov 2025	Dec 2024 - Dec 2025	Jan 2025 - Jan 2026	Feb 2025 - Feb 2026				
Hollow Way - congestion charge location	-20%	-20%	No data	-40%	8,961	30	Outer	Yes
A4142 eastern bypass, east of Heyford Hill roundabout	No data	No data	1%	3%	43,641	1	Outer	Yes
A4142 eastern bypass (Horspath Driftway to Headington roundabout)	3%	3%	4%	4%	32,219	4	Outer	Yes
Horspath Driftway	-1%	-2%	1%	0%	19,232	7	Outer	Yes
Garsington Road south-east of John Smith Drive	31%	15%	9%	7%	17,086	10	Outer	No
Rose Hill south of Newman Road	0%	2%	1%	2%	18,625	8	Outer	Yes
Blackbird Leys Road north-west of Sandy Ln	-5%	-3%	3%	4%	8,161	33	Outer	Yes

Congestion charge monitoring - key observations

Indications that the Cowley area is bearing the brunt of the negative impacts of the congestion charge is also borne out by journey time impacts. Modest initial improvements in journey times, at certain times of the day when the congestion charge was first introduced, have now given way to sustained negative impacts, on both suburban roads around Cowley and on the nearby ring road. Even Hollow Way, a congestion charge location, has tended to see a general worsening of journey times since the congestion charge was installed.

Journey times on selected roads within Oxford, year-on-year percentage change

Outer Oxford suburban roads	Monitoring distance in miles	Average daily traffic count (if collected)	Nov-25		Dec-25		Jan-26		Feb-26		Nov-25		Dec-25		Jan-26		Feb-26		Nov-25		Dec-25		Jan-26		Feb-26	
			7-9am inbound				7-9am outbound				4-7pm inbound				4-7pm outbound											
Henley Avenue/Hilley Road between Church Cowley Road and Donnington Bridge Road	0.4		5%	3%	3%	-5%	4%	3%	2%	4%	-2%	2%	3%	-1%	2%	4%	3%	4%								
Oxford Road/Rose Hill, between Littlemore roundabout and Church Cowley Road	0.6	18,625	0%	3%	3%	-3%	1%	6%	5%	4%	4%	10%	6%	8%	3%	8%	4%	5%								
Cowley Road and Oxford Road, between Towns Road and Southfield Road	1.1		2%	1%	-4%	-3%	3%	2%	2%	-1%	-1%	-1%	-2%	0%	-5%	-9%	1%	5%								
Between Towns Road/Church Cowley Road between Henley Avenue and Oxford Road	0.8		No data	No data	No data	7%	No data	No data	No data	7%	No data	No data	No data	3%	No data	No data	No data	6%								
Garsington Road/Oxford Road, between Between Towns Road and the Cowley interchange	0.5	17,086	10%	36%	9%	-4%	-5%	3%	8%	4%	15%	46%	20%	6%	6%	9%	16%	12%								
Hollow Way, between Horspath Road and Garsington Road	0.4		1%	2%	-1%	4%	9%	10%	10%	6%	3%	2%	5%	2%	1%	0%	1%	-6%								
Hollow Way, between Horspath Road and The Slade	0.4	8,961	-1%	0%	-1%	0%	4%	5%	8%	8%	5%	3%	4%	4%	2%	2%	6%	5%								
The Slade (whole length)	0.7		-1%	9%	3%	3%	3%	3%	4%	5%	6%	5%	3%	1%	5%	1%	0%	-4%								
Horspath Driftway	0.3	19,232	No data	No data	No data	No data	3%	3%	5%	4%	No data	No data	No data	No data	7%	8%	7%	6%								
Ring road section	Monitoring distance in miles	Average daily traffic count (if collected)	7-9am clockwise				7-9am anti-clockwise				4-7pm clockwise				4-7pm anti-clockwise											
Between Heyford Hill roundabout and Littlemore roundabout	0.7	43,641	-9%	-13%	-30%	-29%	17%	10%	17%	10%	-21%	22%	11%	3%	-1%	1%	14%	0%								
Between Littlemore roundabout and Cowley interchange	1.2		33%	31%	20%	33%	12%	19%	8%	-5%	8%	15%	19%	39%	8%	6%	29%	6%								
Between Cowley interchange and Horspath Driftway	0.8		1%	0%	1%	-2%	33%	41%	44%	9%	10%	17%	11%	2%	20%	23%	24%	6%								

There are also a clustering of negative impacts in North Oxford, particularly on the Banbury and Woodstock Roads. With the notable section of the A40 that connects Wolvercote and Cutteslowe Roundabouts, the trend has generally been towards slower journeys over time, as the deterrent impact of the congestion charge has faded.

Journey times on selected roads within Oxford, year-on-year percentage change

Outer Oxford suburban roads	Monitoring distance in miles	Average daily traffic count (if collected)	Nov-25		Dec-25		Jan-26		Feb-26		Nov-25		Dec-25		Jan-26		Feb-26		Nov-25		Dec-25		Jan-26		Feb-26	
			7-9am inbound				7-9am outbound				4-7pm inbound				4-7pm outbound											
Woodstock Road, between St Giles and Moreton Road	1.3	10,531	-4%	-2%	-2%	-2%	No data	No data	No data	2%	-4%	No data	2%	3%	No data	No data	No data	9%								
Banbury Road, between St Giles and Moreton Road	1.3	12,529	7%	3%	3%	4%	1%	0%	0%	2%	5%	0%	4%	1%	-4%	-5%	0%	5%								
Woodstock Road, Moreton Road and Wolvercote roundabout	1.3	13,700 (2023)	0%	-3%	-3%	No data	3%	2%	0%	2%	3%	4%	2%	No data	17%	8%	3%	11%								
Banbury Road, between Moreton Road and Cutteslowe roundabout	1.2	14,407	0%	2%	-1%	-3%	6%	4%	3%	2%	6%	4%	5%	5%	22%	13%	12%	18%								
Ring road section	Monitoring distance in miles	Average daily traffic count (if collected)	7-9am clockwise				7-9am anti-clockwise				4-7pm clockwise				4-7pm anti-clockwise											
Between Cutteslowe roundabout and Wolvercote roundabout	0.4	28,476	9%	-25%	14%	33%	-14%	-7%	-10%	-12%	-9%	-34%	3%	7%	-17%	-12%	-20%	-23%								
Between Wolvercote roundabout and Peartree interchange	0.5	30,300 (2023)	0%	-1%	0%	1%	-6%	-9%	-8%	-11%	-7%	3%	12%	9%	7%	8%	6%	-3%								
Oxford Road/Banbury Road between Kidlington roundabout and Cutteslowe roundabout	1.4	18,042	-15%	-11%	-7%	-9%	2%	4%	3%	4%	-9%	-2%	6%	4%	1%	1%	2%	3%								

In Marston, the displacement effect of the congestion charge is clear. While the (previously free flowing) 40mph Marston Ferry Road has got even more free flowing, traffic has instead moved to Marsh Lane – a suburban road that is frequently logjammed with hospital traffic, year-round.

Journey times on selected roads within Oxford, year-on-year percentage change

Outer Oxford suburban roads	Monitoring distance in miles	Average daily traffic count (if collected)	Nov-25		Dec-25		Jan-26		Feb-26		Nov-25		Dec-25		Jan-26		Feb-26		Nov-25		Dec-25		Jan-26		Feb-26	
			7-9am inbound				7-9am outbound				4-7pm inbound				4-7pm outbound											
Marston Ferry Road/Cherwell Drive, between Marsh Lane and Banbury Road	1.7	10,205	-14%	-11%	-16%	-6%	-21%	-12%	-17%	-14%	-7%	-3%	-1%	0%	-30%	-14%	-10%	-2%								
Marsh Lane, between A40 and Cherwell Drive	0.8	16,251	-9%	-8%	-5%	-11%	7%	5%	4%	5%	63%	44%	48%	39%	18%	8%	11%	12%								
Headley Way between Marsh Lane and London Road	0.8	14,546	No data	No data	No data	7%	No data	No data	No data	6%	No data	No data	No data	2%	No data	No data	No data	-5%								
Marston Road between London Place and Headley Way	1.1	6,819	No data	No data	No data	-3%	No data	No data	No data	1%	No data	No data	No data	-1%	No data	No data	No data	0%								

Congestion charge monitoring - key observations

In terms of positive journey speed impacts, two areas are clear winners – the roads converging on the plain via Iffley and Cowley Road (where the LTNs have previously slowed down traffic) and journey speeds in the centre of Oxford on the roads that lead towards the Westgate shopping centre. Incidentally, the Hythe Bridge / Thames street filters are also OCC's two main congestion charge “cash cows” – generating around 74% of all PCNs issued since the scheme launched.

Journey times on selected roads within Oxford, year-on-year percentage change																		
Inner Oxford roads	Monitoring distance in miles	Average daily traffic count (if collected)	Nov-25	Dec-25	Jan-26	Feb-26	Nov-25	Dec-25	Jan-26	Feb-26	Nov-25	Dec-25	Jan-26	Feb-26	Nov-25	Dec-25	Jan-26	Feb-26
			7 - 9am inbound				7 - 9am outbound				4 - 7pm inbound				4 - 7pm outbound			
			Cowley Road, between Southfield Road and The Plain	0.7	10,468	-13%	-5%	-17%	-9%	-1%	1%	-4%	-1%	-9%	-12%	-9%	-3%	0%
Iffley Road, between Donnington Bridge Road and The Plain	1.0	14,178	-16%	-10%	-11%	-11%	-1%	-1%	2%	0%	-4%	-3%	5%	-1%	-3%	10%	1%	
London Place/St Clements, between Marston Road and The Plain	0.3	14,677	-12%	-11%	-12%	-15%	-6%	-3%	-3%	-3%	-11%	-12%	-13%	-11%	-6%	-4%	-3%	-3%
High Street, between Longwall Street and The Plain	0.3	14,899	0%	0%	1%	-2%	1%	0%	0%	0%	-2%	0%	-2%	-2%	-14%	-11%	-13%	-9%

Journey times on selected roads within Oxford, year-on-year percentage change																		
Inner Oxford roads	Monitoring distance in miles	Average daily traffic count (if collected)	Nov-25	Dec-25	Jan-26	Feb-26	Nov-25	Dec-25	Jan-26	Feb-26	Nov-25	Dec-25	Jan-26	Feb-26	Nov-25	Dec-25	Jan-26	Feb-26
			7 - 9am inbound				7 - 9am outbound				4 - 7pm inbound				4 - 7pm outbound			
			Beaumont Street/Morchester Street/Hythe Bridge Street	0.3	13,366	-4%	-8%	-2%	-2%	-5%	-6%	-7%	-8%	-7%	-9%	-6%	-5%	-6%
Thames Street/Oxpens Road/Hollybush Row	0.5	12,133	-1%	-2%	-15%	-15%	1%	-1%	-1%	0%	-3%	-4%	-8%	-3%	-16%	-13%	-7%	0%

Congestion charge PCNs - where issued, total issued, and percentage totals

Month	Hythe Bridge Steet	St Cross Road	St Clements	Thames Street	Marston Ferry Road	Hollow Way	Monthly totals
Dec-25	7,435	2,996	2,504	12,280	847	1,516	27,578
Jan-26	3,934	3,213	2,235	12,848	1,267	1,590	25,087
Feb-26	7,140	2,406	2,300	10,433	1,848	1,520	25,647
Location totals	18,509	8,615	7,039	35,561	3,962	4,626	78,312
Location percentages	23.63	11.00	8.99	45.41	5.06	5.91	100.00

For vehicles entering the city from the South via Abingdon Road, a mixed picture emerges. Journeys along the final approach into the city are now consistently clearer – an outcome also shown in bus speed data for this area. However, this has come at the expense of journey times in the sections of the ring road leading into this part of the city – and (recently) onto the connecting Old Abingdon Road. There is also a fair amount of missing sensor data in this area.

Journey times on selected roads within Oxford, year-on-year percentage change

Outer Oxford suburban roads	Monitoring distance in miles	Average daily traffic count (if collected)	Nov-25	Dec-25	Jan-26	Feb-26	Nov-25	Dec-25	Jan-26	Feb-26	Nov-25	Dec-25	Jan-26	Feb-26	Nov-25	Dec-25	Jan-26	Feb-26
			7 - 9am inbound				7 - 9am outbound				4 - 7pm inbound				4 - 7pm outbound			
			Abingdon Road, between Weirs Lane and Thames Street	1.0	14,741	-17%	-11%	-12%	-11%	-2%	-3%	-6%	-3%	-3%	-5%	-5%	-3%	-15%
Abingdon Road between Weirs Lane and Kennington Roundabout	0.4	21,874	No data	No data	No data	-2%	No data	No data	No data	No data	No data	No data	No data	1%	No data	No data	No data	No data
Weirs Lane/Donnington Bridge Road between Abingdon Road and Iffley Road	0.7	11,440	No data	No data	No data	-9%	No data	No data	No data	-1%	No data	No data	No data	10%	No data	No data	No data	2%
Old Abingdon Road, Southern Bypass to Abingdon Road	0.4		-37%	-26%	-23%	-20%	-3%	-4%	-3%	-8%	-3%	2%	10%	-15%	6%	8%	8%	8%
Ring road section	Monitoring distance in miles	Average daily traffic count (if collected)	Jan-00	Jan-00	Jan-00	Jan-00	Nov-25	Dec-25	Jan-26	Feb-26	Nov-25	Dec-25	Jan-26	Feb-26	Nov-25	Dec-25	Jan-26	Feb-26
			7 - 9am clockwise				7 - 9am anti-clockwise				4 - 7pm clockwise				4 - 7pm anti-clockwise			
			Between Hinksey Hill interchange and Kennington roundabout	0.4		-24%	-32%	-39%	-43%	-24%	-20%	-18%	-14%	-10%	6%	9%	3%	2%
Between Kennington roundabout and Heyford Hill roundabout	0.8	49,500 (2023)	-18%	-39%	-51%	-55%	7%	8%	8%	3%	-8%	6%	12%	7%	-3%	3%	12%	6%
Between Peartree interchange and Botley interchange	3.2		10%	3%	2%	1%	-6%	-14%	-18%	-19%	12%	2%	20%	23%	6%	26%	23%	-3%
Between Botley interchange and Hinksey Hill interchange	2.9		11%	9%	5%	6%	-21%	-21%	-29%	-22%	8%	3%	15%	16%	-10%	3%	16%	5%

Congestion charge monitoring - key observations

In relation to bus impacts, a very confused picture emerges. There are clear winners (bus journey times in the centre of Oxford, plus journeys via Abingdon Road), and clear losers – notably journey times in North Oxford, via Banbury and Woodstock Roads.

Annual percentage changes in bus times since the introduction of the congestion charge - selected Oxford roads

Locations clustered by similar / linked bus routes

Outer north Oxford

Road	7am – 9am inbound				7am – 9am outbound				4pm – 7pm inbound				4pm – 7pm outbound			
	Nov. '24 - Nov. '25	Dec. '24 - Dec. '25	Jan. '25 - Jan. '26	Feb. '25 - Feb. '26	Nov. '24 - Nov. '25	Dec. '24 - Dec. '25	Jan. '25 - Jan. '26	Feb. '25 - Feb. '26	Nov. '24 - Nov. '25	Dec. '24 - Dec. '25	Jan. '25 - Jan. '26	Feb. '25 - Feb. '26	Nov. '24 - Nov. '25	Dec. '24 - Dec. '25	Jan. '25 - Jan. '26	Feb. '25 - Feb. '26
Banbury Road	-4%	-4%	1%	-4%	3%	-1%	4%	1%	1%	-2%	4%	0%	-1%	4%	6%	-4%
Woodstock Road	-3%	-3%	-5%	-1%	3%	2%	3%	1%	1%	2%	2%	2%	10%	11%	-2%	7%

Annual percentage changes in bus times since the introduction of the congestion charge - selected Oxford roads

City centre / South

Road	7am – 9am inbound				7am – 9am outbound				4pm – 7pm inbound				4pm – 7pm outbound			
	Nov. '24 - Nov. '25	Dec. '24 - Dec. '25	Jan. '25 - Jan. '26	Feb. '25 - Feb. '26	Nov. '24 - Nov. '25	Dec. '24 - Dec. '25	Jan. '25 - Jan. '26	Feb. '25 - Feb. '26	Nov. '24 - Nov. '25	Dec. '24 - Dec. '25	Jan. '25 - Jan. '26	Feb. '25 - Feb. '26	Nov. '24 - Nov. '25	Dec. '24 - Dec. '25	Jan. '25 - Jan. '26	Feb. '25 - Feb. '26
St Clements Street	-10%	-7%	-10%	-10%	-12%	-1%	-5%	-3%	-26%	-23%	-27%	-32%	-4%	-3%	2%	1%
High Street	6%	7%	-2%	9%	0%	-2%	1%	-1%	4%	5%	2%	6%	-3%	-5%	-2%	-2%
Abingdon Road	-23%	-9%	-11%	-9%	-9%	-10%	-12%	-6%	-3%	-5%	-4%	-3%	-11%	-16%	-13%	-8%

In the outer suburbs, no overarching picture emerges. Bus services generally aren't observed being consistently quicker, or slower, even on an area-by-area basis. There is also no clear pattern over time, when the same evaluation timeslots are compared on a month-by-month basis.

To the extent that any patterns can be detected, the best that can generally be said is that “X route is generally now quicker in one direction at a certain time of day”, whereas “Y route is generally now slower in one direction at a certain time of day.”

For this set of results, context arguably matters most – in particular, is the road in question a major bus route, or not? Is the evaluation road short, or long? Was the road busy before the congestion charge was introduced, or not?

For example, if London Road (a major bus route carrying at least 13 bus services) is now often slower, does it help that Headington Road (a continuation of the same stretch of road) is now often quicker? Especially as London Road is often heavily congested at peak times, whereas Headington Road typically isn't.

Likewise, is a (sometimes) faster Henley avenue in the evening suitable compensation for a slower Rose Hill during the same period - bearing in mind the same buses are often running along both stretches of the connecting road?

Annual percentage changes in bus times since the introduction of the congestion charge - selected Oxford roads

Around Headington / Headington Hill

Road	7am – 9am inbound				7am – 9am outbound				4pm – 7pm inbound				4pm – 7pm outbound			
	Nov. '24 - Nov. '25	Dec. '24 - Dec. '25	Jan. '25 - Jan. '26	Feb. '25 - Feb. '26	Nov. '24 - Nov. '25	Dec. '24 - Dec. '25	Jan. '25 - Jan. '26	Feb. '25 - Feb. '26	Nov. '24 - Nov. '25	Dec. '24 - Dec. '25	Jan. '25 - Jan. '26	Feb. '25 - Feb. '26	Nov. '24 - Nov. '25	Dec. '24 - Dec. '25	Jan. '25 - Jan. '26	Feb. '25 - Feb. '26
London Road	1%	-2%	3%	4%	5%	0%	5%	3%	1%	2%	3%	5%	6%	0%	-2%	-3%
Windmill Road	3%	-3%	-3%	5%	-3%	2%	-10%	10%	10%	1%	3%	-5%	-2%	3%	0%	-1%
Headington Road	-8%	-10%	-8%	-7%	-4%	-5%	-3%	0%	-39%	-23%	-28%	-31%	-8%	-4%	-2%	1%
Warneford Lane	4%	-2%	1%	0%	6%	1%	4%	5%	2%	-3%	5%	1%	6%	6%	4%	2%
Morrell Avenue	-6%	-5%	-6%	-9%	-1%	-2%	-1%	0%	-40%	-15%	-17%	-25%	4%	2%	3%	-1%

Congestion charge monitoring - key observations

Annual percentage changes in bus times since the introduction of the congestion charge - selected Oxford roads

Around Cowley

Road	7am - 9am inbound				7am - 9am outbound				4pm - 7pm inbound				4pm - 7pm outbound			
	Nov. 24 - Nov. 25	Dec. 24 - Dec. 25	Jan. 25 - Jan. 26	Feb. 25 - Feb. 26	Nov. 24 - Nov. 25	Dec. 24 - Dec. 25	Jan. 25 - Jan. 26	Feb. 25 - Feb. 26	Nov. 24 - Nov. 25	Dec. 24 - Dec. 25	Jan. 25 - Jan. 26	Feb. 25 - Feb. 26	Nov. 24 - Nov. 25	Dec. 24 - Dec. 25	Jan. 25 - Jan. 26	Feb. 25 - Feb. 26
Rose Hill	-2%	3%	-2%	-4%	-7%	-2%	-4%	-2%	3%	5%	4%	6%	2%	-1%	-4%	2%
Henley Avenue	-1%	2%	-2%	-7%	-4%	-4%	-2%	-4%	5%	-3%	-1%	4%	-1%	3%	-1%	-3%
Iffley Road	-17%	-6%	-8%	-20%	-1%	-3%	6%	-3%	-4%	-3%	8%	0%	-1%	-2%	7%	-1%
Garsington Road	-52%	-6%	10%	-14%	8%	8%	9%	2%	-65%	14%	30%	-6%	8%	5%	3%	-2%
Oxford Road	5%	1%	-5%	-12%	-1%	-8%	4%	-1%	4%	1%	-1%	-7%	-4%	-11%	3%	6%
Cowley Road	-16%	-10%	-12%	-8%	3%	-3%	0%	-2%	-13%	-14%	-9%	-9%	1%	-7%	1%	6%
Hollow Way	-3%	0%	-1%	-7%	13%	11%	13%	-5%	3%	0%	1%	-2%	12%	13%	10%	-12%
The Slade	-1%	13%	0%	0%	6%	-1%	11%	4%	4%	4%	1%	-4%	4%	0%	0%	5%

Annual percentage changes in bus times since the introduction of the congestion charge - selected Oxford roads

Around Marston / Northway

Road	7am - 9am inbound				7am - 9am outbound				4pm - 7pm inbound				4pm - 7pm outbound			
	Nov. 24 - Nov. 25	Dec. 24 - Dec. 25	Jan. 25 - Jan. 26	Feb. 25 - Feb. 26	Nov. 24 - Nov. 25	Dec. 24 - Dec. 25	Jan. 25 - Jan. 26	Feb. 25 - Feb. 26	Nov. 24 - Nov. 25	Dec. 24 - Dec. 25	Jan. 25 - Jan. 26	Feb. 25 - Feb. 26	Nov. 24 - Nov. 25	Dec. 24 - Dec. 25	Jan. 25 - Jan. 26	Feb. 25 - Feb. 26
Marston Ferry Road	8%	1%	3%	4%	-12%	-17%	-7%	-8%	6%	3%	5%	5%	-25%	-15%	-3%	9%
Cherwell Drive	-19%	-17%	-18%	-11%	-8%	-2%	1%	10%	0%	4%	1%	7%	-3%	-1%	2%	4%
Headley Way	-1%	-7%	-4%	-1%	7%	4%	1%	3%	-8%	-1%	4%	0%	-15%	-9%	-10%	-8%

In light of this confusing picture, it is arguably best to defer to what bus company the Go Ahead Group have said about the impact of the congestion charge, [in a submission](#) made to OCC cabinet on 21 April. Not for the first time, Oxford's bus companies have blamed OCC policies for making their services worse. This company is now talking about cutting services in response to what has happened – the exact opposite of OCC's intended policy outcome.

ANNEX 2

4. Following the introduction of these timetable improvements, it quickly became clear that, while in some areas of the city traffic conditions improved broadly in line with modelling, and others supported by the free P&R offer (such as Abingdon Road and London Road) performed slightly better; in other areas such as Iffley Road, Marston Ferry Road and roads around Temple Cowley, improvements in bus running times were not observed at the levels anticipated.
5. As a result, punctuality on Go-Ahead's network during November and December 2025 worsened materially and reached unsustainable levels, with punctuality on service 700 (which had received 2 of the re-invested vehicles) being 60.81% on time in November 2025, service 100 (which received 1 re-invested vehicle) being 68.47% on time in November 2025, and service 3A (which received 1 re-invested vehicle) being 55.20% on time in the same month. This punctuality level was not sustainable for Go-Ahead, as it risked regulatory action against its operator's licence, and therefore the operator sought to engage with the county council's public transport team to make changes to the implemented timetables as a matter of urgency.

Good morning committee, my name is Geoff Sutton, I am here today on behalf of Reconnecting Oxford and OBAG.

Oxford City has been the centre of transport networks for 1000 years. Businesses served Oxfordshire from the city centre until 2000 when heavy retail was evicted leaving light retail in the historic centre. The NHS also moved and developed Headington into the £billion complex we see today.

In transport terms, we now have two similar sized trip destinations within the Oxford Ring Road, with their own separate catchment areas, drawing in visitors with different objectives and needs, the city centre at the heart of the transport network, the hospitals on the periphery. Put simply, the Congestion Charge has now separated the two, stopping hospitals pulling cars across Oxford city centre.

I think the Highways Authority didn't do enough to understand the catchments of the two neighbouring trip destinations, especially the needs of the regional catchment served by the hospitals and how the Congestion Charge would optimise one at the expense of the other. Reconnecting Oxford's consultation response was our attempt to address the analytical shortfall. My first question for the committee is to ask you to scrutinise how this could have happened.

My next request is to ask the committee to look at the failings in the Oxfordshire Strategic Model. I analysed the output and found that the car parks for the John Radcliffe, the single largest trip destination in Oxford, were missing. How this could have happened? The model underwent rigorous testing and validation, it was recalibrated at least once, yet this error appears to have been repeatedly missed. Is it now fixed?

When I asked the Council about this, the response was that the OSM was more accurate at the strategic level and less accurate at the granular level. What I didn't realise at the time was the impact that this error would have on the bus companies, that the actual congestion in Headington post implementation was so bad that at one point Go Ahead risked losing their operator's licence.

Yesterday Councillor Gant expressed his delight at Cabinet that Oxford now had more electric buses per capita than anyone else. The improvement in air quality is noticeable but someone has to pay for them. At the moment, it's the bus companies but they retain the option to ask the County to pay, the agreement apparently hinging on one metric, bus journey times. Both the County and the bus companies say this metric has not been hit by the target date despite the County claiming the introduction of the Congestion Charge would deliver it. My next request is for the committee to investigate why bus journey time was selected as the key metric and why it was not met. Did the County enter into the Zebra commitment, using an overly optimistic bus journey time calculation generated from the flawed OSM modelling data?

Another point, Councillor Gant was clear that he supported the scheme because accident rates were forecast to drop. Yet there's no mention of accident rates in the report before you today. My question is why not and when can we expect a report?

This brings me to my final point on governance, what's happened to the project management and management of risks? I want to know why did monitoring of local businesses fail? Why was there no back up monitoring plan? Why was the flaw in the modelling data not spotted and the real-world impact on the bus companies not anticipated? Why was the adverse impact on the hospitals also not anticipated?

Thank you