

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: **Oxford Temporary Congestion Charge**

Lead Cabinet Member(s): **Cllr Andrew Gant, Cabinet member for Transport Management**

Date response requested:² **10 September 2025**

Response to report:

Cabinet thanks the Place Overview and Scrutiny Committee for its comments and recommendations and the time committee members have taken to consider the issues.

Responses are provided below to each of the committee's recommendations.

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

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Response to recommendations:

Recommendation	Accepted, rejected or partially accepted	Proposed action (if different to that recommended) and indicative timescale (unless rejected)
<p>1. That the Cabinet gives specific consideration to historic peak capacity levels data at the Park and Rides and whether there are any negative implications on plans to reduce car journeys within the city by increasing park and ride usage</p>	<p>Accepted</p>	<p>Park and ride data showing peak occupancy in November and December 2024 is at the end of this pro forma. This shows that there is sufficient parking capacity at all park and ride sites, with at least 2700 free spaces on the busiest weekday and 3500 free spaces on the busiest Saturday.</p> <p>The free park and ride bus travel offer is being implemented in partnership with bus operators who consider there is sufficient bus capacity across the park and ride system to meet additional demand but will carefully monitor bus loadings once the scheme is in place. Reduced congestion should lead to more regular service intervals on park and ride services, allowing the available seats to be used as efficiently as possible.</p> <p>Park and ride service improvements are planned from 9 November as detailed in response to recommendation 8.</p>
<p>2. That the Council publishes and updates its monitoring data online as closely to real-time as possible, and no less than once a month from the commencement of the congestion charge.</p>	<p>Partially accepted</p>	<p><u>Annex 13</u> of the September 2025 cabinet report outlines the proposed monitoring. The plan states that “officers aim to publish data promptly with website updates every month where data is available.” Monthly updates will not be possible for all data.</p> <p>Where monthly data is available, this will be published via an online data “dashboard”.</p>

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<p>3. That the Council provides congestion charge exemptions for those Oxfordshire parents with children referred for but awaiting EHCP assessments and/or results</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Rejected</p>	<p>On average around 18% of all EHCP applications do not result in an assessment being carried out. In 8% of assessed cases no EHCP is issued. Permits issued to those awaiting assessments, drafts or the final EHCP would then need to be cancelled. In discussion with the Children’s service, it is considered that this could be confusing and distressing.</p> <p>Issuing permits to those who have applied for EHCPs could also set a challenging precedent for applicants of other permit types, for example blue badge or disability benefit permits.</p>
<p>4. That the Council commits to dedicating a proportionate percentage of income to supporting services in deprived and rural areas</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Partially accepted</p>	<p>The council has already agreed to fund free park and ride buses for 3 months until the end of January 2026. This will help support those residents in rural and deprived areas by providing a cheaper way to travel for part of the journey into Oxford. The scheme itself will help existing bus services, including those that serve deprived and rural areas, by improving bus journey times in the city and extension of services e.g. from Rose Hill.</p> <p>Officers will be assessing what the remaining income can be spent on for the subsequent period of the temporary congestion charge. This will include investigating supporting services in rural and deprived areas that serve Oxford. This will be dependent on the expected income being sufficient (based on empirical data), viability in the long term, including commerciality of routes and how best it meets the aims of the Local Transport and Connectivity Plan.</p> <p>Any spend from the temporary congestion charge income will need to meet the aims of the council’s adopted transport policies, to ensure compliance with the Transport Act 2000.</p>

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<p>5. That the Council invests in increased education around the flexibilities in the existing bus network</p>	<p>Partially accepted</p>	<p>Resource capacity can impact on the council's ability to deliver in full and in a timely manner. The council will investigate using the temporary congestion charge income, in addition to some existing funds, to provide a temporary marketing and information post to work on and expand existing promotional activity in relation to the bus network.</p>
<p>6. That the Council does not extend the IT system used for parking permits to the resident pass system and finds a more user-friendly alternative instead.</p>	<p>Partially accepted</p>	<p>The Council has a current contract with a supplier for the IT systems. The system has been upgraded to accommodate the Congestion Charge and user interface requirements for this initiative, this included incorporation of an enhanced Council "front end". This is now working adequately and is more user friendly. At the time of writing, more than 18,000 applications have been successfully received, with many permits approved.</p>
<p>7. That the Council improves the time it takes to enable the police to suspend congestion charges in case of emergency</p>	<p>Partially accepted</p>	<p>The Council has protocols in place which determine when ANPR cameras are 'turned off'. Any temporary change at ANPR locations is at the discretion of Oxfordshire County Council's Network Management team. It is the Council's policy to 'open up' traffic restriction points if requested by a 'blue light' service. Officers already do work proactively with the 'blue light' services, but will review its policy to ensure timely decision-making.</p>
<p>8. That the Council expedites the delivery of its 'smaller schemes' with additional resource, particularly those which relate to schools.</p>	<p>Partially accepted</p>	<p>In June 2025, officers presented to Cabinet a range of solutions to mitigate the delay to the traffic filters. A number of smaller measures were proposed. While they would provide benefits in terms of traffic reduction, this would be geographically localised and not city-wide. However, they did warrant further investigation and investment.</p> <p>Timing of signals at Abingdon Road/Weirs Lane This has been undertaken and impact is being monitored.</p> <p>Introducing Red Routes, suspension of parking/loading etc</p>

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	<p>This is part of a longer-term strategy, but provision is being allowed for the next enforcement contract, currently being procured. Implementing Red Routes and/or parking/loading restrictions would require considered engagement and consultation so could not be expediated in the short term.</p> <p>School streets around private schools While early engagement with private schools has been conducted, further engagement and consultation will be required. It is therefore not possible to expediate in the short term. However, measures to assist private schools to travel more sustainably, as mentioned above, plus the congestion charge, may negate the need for school streets.</p> <p>Park & Ride stops and bus lane access for private school shuttle buses This is being actively pursued. Engagement is being undertaken with schools, the city council and bus operators. Areas have been identified at Park & Ride sites for coaches to set-down and pick-up safely. However, it is important that these activities do not impinge on public buses so need to be carefully scrutinised. Work continues to move this forward and can be implemented relatively quickly subject to partner organisations' acceptability.</p> <p>Direct access to hospitals bus links/Park & Ride The temporary congestion charge will improve bus journey time reliability, providing quicker and more reliably bus journeys to the hospitals. All hospital sites are accessible by public transport – the John Radcliffe is served by no fewer than 10 bus services with direct links from 3 P&R sites. Many local bus services serve the hospital sites not just P&R ride buses e.g. the X32 and X3 from Redbridge, and the 14 from Oxford railway station. Other</p>
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		<p>services use London Road a short walk away, including frequent and direct links from Wheatley and Thame.</p> <p>Frequencies on services to the hospitals have been consistently improved in recent years, and from September 2025 there will be up to 14 buses per hour from the John Radcliffe Hospital to the city centre, 11 per hour to Cowley, 6 per hour to Summertown, 3 per hour to Abingdon and Didcot, 2 per hour to Witney and 1 per hour to Bicester.</p> <p>In terms of Park & Ride services, there are up to 5 buses per hour from Redbridge, 4 buses per hour from Thornhill and 3 per hour from Oxford Parkway. These are, particularly in the first two cases, good levels of frequency. Improvement in service levels from Oxford Parkway are likely to be a direct consequence of the congestion charge. Services 100 and 700 combine to provide a coordinated frequency between Hollow Way and JR Hospital up to every 10 minutes on weekdays, and every 15 minutes on weekends. A new service operating up to every 40 minutes between Rose Hill, Iffley Road, Morrell Avenue, Brookes University, JR Hospital and Marston Road, providing a direct link between these locations on weekdays. All this is as a direct result of the congestion charge.</p> <p>Nevertheless, the Council is looking at ways to further improve bus services to the hospitals. Oxford University Hospitals tell us the most important P&R site for their staff is Thornhill. This is why we have commissioned consultants to look at the engineering feasibility of providing direct access for buses from the A40 into Barton Fields Road with access into the John Radcliffe Hospital from Saxon Way.</p>
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Oxford Park & Ride car park occupancy, late November and December 2024

P&R Site	Capacity	Day	Week beginning 25 November 2024		December 2024	
			Max occupancy	Max occupancy %	Max occupancy	Max occupancy %
Pear Tree	1035	Busiest weekday	559	54%	680	66%
		Saturday	579	56%	553	53%
Redbridge	1412	Busiest weekday	781	55%	837	59%
		Saturday	749	53%	713	50%
Seacourt	1389	Busiest weekday	569	41%	606	44%
		Saturday	246	18%	221	16%
Oxford Parkway	758	Busiest weekday	325	43%	324	43%
		Saturday	344	45%	241	32%
Thornhill	1335	Busiest weekday	754	56%	734	55%
		Saturday	518	39%	555	42%
Minimum free spaces on a weekday across all sites			2748			
Minimum free spaces on a Saturday across all sites			3493			
<i>Oxford Parkway occupancy estimated using Chiltern Railways car park ticket data & traffic sensor data covering station and P&R car parks</i>						