



Notice of a Meeting

**Place Overview & Scrutiny Committee
Wednesday, 24 June 2026 at 10.00 am
Room 2&3 - County Hall, New Road, Oxford OX1 1ND**

These proceedings are open to the public

If you wish to view proceedings, please click on this [Live Stream Link](#).
However, that will not allow you to participate in the meeting.

Membership

Chair: Councillor Liam Walker
Deputy Chair: Councillor Bethia Thomas

Councillors: Thomas Ashby Emily Kerr Leigh Rawlins
Ron Batstone Lesley McLean
Chris Brant Susanna Pressel

Date of Next Meeting: *23 September 2026*

For more information about this Committee please contact:

Committee Officer: *Scrutiny Team*
Email: *Email: scrutiny@oxfordshire.gov.uk*

Martin Reeves, OBE
Chief Executive

June 2026

What does this Committee review or scrutinise?

Climate change, transport, highways, planning and place-based services. Including the delivery of regulatory services, fire and rescue, community safety and community services such as libraries. NB This Committee will act as the Council's 'Crime and Disorder Committee'.

How can I have my say?

We welcome the views of the community on any issues in relation to the responsibilities of this Committee. Members of the public may ask to speak on any item on the agenda or may suggest matters which they would like the Committee to look at. **Requests to speak must be submitted to the Committee Officer below no later than 9 am 4 working day before the date of the meeting.**

About the County Council

The Oxfordshire County Council is made up of 69 councillors who are democratically elected every four years. The Council provides a range of services to Oxfordshire's 763,200 residents.

These include:

schools	social & health care	libraries and museums
the fire service	roads	trading standards
land use	transport planning	waste management

Each year the Council manages £1.2 billion of public money in providing these services. Most decisions are taken by a Cabinet of 10 Councillors, which makes decisions about service priorities and spending. Some decisions will now be delegated to individual members of the Cabinet.

About Scrutiny

Scrutiny is about:

- Providing a challenge to the Cabinet
- Examining how well the Cabinet and the Authority are performing
- Influencing the Cabinet on decisions that affect local people
- Helping the Cabinet to develop Council policies
- Representing the community in Council decision making
- Promoting joined up working across the authority's work and with partners

Scrutiny is NOT about:

- Making day to day service decisions
- Investigating individual complaints.

What does this Committee do?

The Committee meets at least 4 times a year or more. It develops a work programme, which lists the issues it plans to investigate. These investigations can include whole committee investigations undertaken during the meeting, or reviews by a panel of members doing research and talking to lots of people outside of the meeting. Once an investigation is completed the Committee provides its advice to the Cabinet, the full Council or other scrutiny committees. Meetings are open to the public and all reports are available to the public unless exempt or confidential, when the items would be considered in closed session.

If you have any special requirements (such as a large print version of these papers or special access facilities) please contact the officer named on the front page, giving as much notice as possible before the meeting

A hearing loop is available at County Hall.

AGENDA

1. Apologies for Absence and Temporary Appointments

To receive any apologies for absence and temporary appointments.

2. Declaration of Interests

See guidance note on the back page.

3. Minutes (Pages 7 - 38)

The Committee is recommended to **APPROVE** the minutes of the meetings held on 22 April 2026 and on 12 May 2026.

4. Petitions and Public Addresses

Members of the public who wish to speak on an item on the agenda at this meeting can attend the meeting in person or 'virtually' through an online connection.

Requests to speak must be submitted no later than 9.00 am three working days before the meeting, i.e., Friday 19 June, 2026.

Requests should be submitted to the Scrutiny Officer at scrutiny@oxfordshire.gov.uk.

If you are speaking 'virtually', you may submit a written statement of your presentation to ensure that if the technology fails, then your views can still be taken into account. A written copy of your statement can be provided no later than 9.00 am on the day of the meeting. Written submissions should be no longer than 1 A4 sheet.

Where there are a number of requests from persons wishing to present similar views on the same issue, the Chair may require that the views be put by a single spokesperson. It is expected that only in exceptional circumstances will a person (or organisation) be allowed to address more than one meeting on a particular issue in any period of six months.

5. Committee Action and Recommendation Tracker (Pages 39 - 44)

The Committee is recommended to **NOTE** the progress of previous recommendations and actions arising from previous meetings, having raised any questions on the contents.

6. Responses to Scrutiny Recommendations (Pages 45 - 52)

Attached is the Cabinet response to the Place Overview and Scrutiny Committee report on 16 June, 2026. The Committee is asked to **NOTE** the response.

7. Committee Forward Work Plan (Pages 53 - 56)

The Committee is recommended to **AGREE** its work programme for forthcoming meetings, having heard any changes from previous iterations, and taking account of the [Cabinet Forward Plan](#) and of the [Budget Management Monitoring Report](#).

The Committee is also recommended to **AGREE** to schedule an additional meeting on 21 October 2026.

8. OxBUS 2040: Plan for Bus and Enhanced Partnership Plus (Pages 57 - 80)

Cllr Gareth Epps, Cabinet Member for Transport, Paul Fermer, Director of Environment and Highways, and Ashley Hayden, Team Leader, have been invited to present a report on OxBUS 2040: Plan for Bus and Enhanced Partnership Plus.

The Committee is asked to **CONSIDER** the proposed approach, content, engagement and consultation for the OxBus 2040: Plan for Bus and the Enhanced Partnership Plus, including delivery timescales, **RAISE** any questions, and **AGREE** any recommendations it wishes to make to Cabinet.

9. Flag-Flying Protocol (Pages 81 - 94)

Cllr Neil Fawcett, Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Resources, and Susannah Wintersgill, Director of Public Affairs, Policy, and Partnerships, have been invited to present a report on the Council's Flag-Flying Protocol which sets out a proposed policy for flying flags on the buildings and land owned by or managed by the Council. It does not refer to flags flown on highways or assets which are treated separately under enforcement powers.

The Committee is asked to **CONSIDER** the report, to **RAISE** any questions, and to **AGREE** any recommendations it wishes to make to Cabinet arising therefrom.

Councillors declaring interests

General duty

You must declare any disclosable pecuniary interests when the meeting reaches the item on the agenda headed 'Declarations of Interest' or as soon as it becomes apparent to you.

What is a disclosable pecuniary interest?

Disclosable pecuniary interests relate to your employment; sponsorship (i.e. payment for expenses incurred by you in carrying out your duties as a councillor or towards your election expenses); contracts; land in the Council's area; licenses for land in the Council's area; corporate tenancies; and securities. These declarations must be recorded in each councillor's Register of Interests which is publicly available on the Council's website.

Disclosable pecuniary interests that must be declared are not only those of the member her or himself but also those member's spouse, civil partner or person they are living with as husband or wife or as if they were civil partners.

Declaring an interest

Where any matter disclosed in your Register of Interests is being considered at a meeting, you must declare that you have an interest. You should also disclose the nature as well as the existence of the interest. If you have a disclosable pecuniary interest, after having declared it at the meeting you must not participate in discussion or voting on the item and must withdraw from the meeting whilst the matter is discussed.

Members' Code of Conduct and public perception

Even if you do not have a disclosable pecuniary interest in a matter, the Members' Code of Conduct says that a member 'must serve only the public interest and must never improperly confer an advantage or disadvantage on any person including yourself' and that 'you must not place yourself in situations where your honesty and integrity may be questioned'.

Members Code – Other registrable interests

Where a matter arises at a meeting which directly relates to the financial interest or wellbeing of one of your other registerable interests then you must declare an interest. You must not participate in discussion or voting on the item and you must withdraw from the meeting whilst the matter is discussed.

Wellbeing can be described as a condition of contentedness, healthiness and happiness; anything that could be said to affect a person's quality of life, either positively or negatively, is likely to affect their wellbeing.

Other registrable interests include:

- a) Any unpaid directorships
- b) Any body of which you are a member or are in a position of general control or management and to which you are nominated or appointed by your authority.

- c) Any body (i) exercising functions of a public nature (ii) directed to charitable purposes or (iii) one of whose principal purposes includes the influence of public opinion or policy (including any political party or trade union) of which you are a member or in a position of general control or management.

Members Code – Non-registrable interests

Where a matter arises at a meeting which directly relates to your financial interest or wellbeing (and does not fall under disclosable pecuniary interests), or the financial interest or wellbeing of a relative or close associate, you must declare the interest.

Where a matter arises at a meeting which affects your own financial interest or wellbeing, a financial interest or wellbeing of a relative or close associate or a financial interest or wellbeing of a body included under other registrable interests, then you must declare the interest.

In order to determine whether you can remain in the meeting after disclosing your interest the following test should be applied:

Where a matter affects the financial interest or well-being:

- a) to a greater extent than it affects the financial interests of the majority of inhabitants of the ward affected by the decision and;
- b) a reasonable member of the public knowing all the facts would believe that it would affect your view of the wider public interest.

You may speak on the matter only if members of the public are also allowed to speak at the meeting. Otherwise you must not take part in any discussion or vote on the matter and must not remain in the room unless you have been granted a dispensation.

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 -KPI 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%	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%	-2%	-1%	4%
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%	-4%	3%	-3%
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%	-11%	-20%	-5%
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%	9%	20%	9%
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

1 Annual percentage changes in bus times since the introduction of the congestion charge - selected Oxford roads
 17
 18 Around Cowley
 19
 20

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%

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1 Annual percentage changes in bus times since the introduction of the congestion charge - selected Oxford roads
 0 Around Marston / Northway
 1
 2

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%

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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



PLACE OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MINUTES of the meeting held on Tuesday, 12 May 2026 commencing at 12.02 pm and finishing at 12.04 pm.

Present:

Voting Members: Councillor Thomas Ashby
Councillor Ron Batstone
Councillor Chris Brant
Councillor Emily Kerr
Councillor Lesley McLean
Councillor Susanna Pressel
Councillor Leigh Rawlins
Councillor Bethia Thomas
Councillor Liam Walker

Officers: Anita Bradley, Director of Law & Governance
and Monitoring Officer

The Council 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.

22/26 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND TEMPORARY APPOINTMENTS
(Agenda No. 1)

There were none.

23/26 ELECTION OF CHAIR FOR THE 2026/27 COUNCIL YEAR
(Agenda No. 2)

Cllr Walker was nominated by Cllr Pressel and seconded by Cllr Ashby.

There being no other nominations, Cllr Walker was deemed Chair for the 2026/27 municipal year.

24/26 ELECTION OF DEPUTY CHAIR FOR THE 2026/27 COUNCIL YEAR
(Agenda No. 3)

Cllr Thomas was nominated by Cllr Brant and seconded by Cllr Walker.

There being no other nominations, Cllr Thomas was deemed Deputy Chair for the 2026/27 municipal year.

..... in the Chair

Date of signing

**Recommendation Tracker
Place Overview & Scrutiny Committee**

Cllr Liam Walker, Chair | Richard Doney, Scrutiny Officer, richard.doney@oxfordshire.gov.uk

The action and recommendation tracker enables the Committee to monitor progress against agreed actions and recommendations. The tracker is updated with the actions and recommendations agreed at each meeting. Once an action or recommendation has been completed or fully implemented, it will be shaded green and reported into the next meeting of the Committee, after which it will be removed from the tracker.

KEY	Due to Cabinet	In progress	Complete
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Recommendations:

Meeting date	Item	Recommendation	Lead officer	Update/response
04-Feb-26	Road Safety	1. That the Council should work to improve the post-collision responses, especially between the Council and TVP, in regard to communication and follow-up, particularly about serious incidents.	Paul Fermer; Sean Rooney	Went to Cabinet 17-Mar-26
		2. That the Council should strengthen communication between officers and members, with clearer reporting routes and updates.		
		3. That the Council should ensure Vision Zero/road safety data is taken to Locality meetings for more granular analysis.		
		4. That the Council should update the Vision Zero Action Plan (Annex 1 and Annex A) so that actions marked as complete or overdue are properly recorded.		

KEY	Due to Cabinet	With Cabinet	Complete
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Meeting date	Item	Recommendation	Lead officer	Update/response
Page 40		5. That the Council should launch a campaign to recruit more Bikeability instructors and, also, investigate the underlying limiting factors.		
		6. That the Council should improve the road safety website and marketing, ensuring clearer public information and better visibility of safety campaigns.		
		7. That the Council should encourage primary schools to have local leads for road safety.		
		8. That the Council should develop a specific pedestrian safety programme, focussed on areas with high numbers of fatal and serious pedestrian casualties.		
		9. That the Council should work with Thames Valley Police to encourage the increase of enforcement, including use of more speed cameras.		
		10. That the Council should review the use and deployment of Vehicle Activated Signs (VAS) to assess effectiveness and improve the process.		
		11. That the Council should advocate nationally for improved HGV safety standards (e.g., type-approval requirements).		
04-Feb-26	Repairing of Defects and Superuser Report	1. That the Council should improve communications with residents, including clearer updates on ongoing works and challenges.	Paul Fermer; Sean Rooney	Accepted See agenda item 6
		2. That the Council should launch the new public-facing statistics dashboard to provide visibility of defect volumes and repair progress.		Accepted See agenda item 6
		3. That the Council should strengthen communication and escalation routes for elected members, including reviewing the adequacy of the out of hours service.		Partially Accepted See agenda item 6

KEY	Due to Cabinet	With Cabinet	Complete
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Meeting date	Item	Recommendation	Lead officer	Update/response
Page 41		4. That the Council should increase visibility and clarity of programmed works, supported by earlier publication of multi-year plans.		Accepted See agenda item 6
		5. That the Council should improve integration of local knowledge, especially of elected members, into prioritisation of repairs and programmed works.		Partially Accepted See agenda item 6
		6. That the Council should review the FixMyStreet process, ensuring cases are not closed prematurely and status updates are clearer.		Accepted See agenda item 6
		7. That the Council should enhance training and support in relation to the Superuser scheme.		Accepted See agenda item 6
		8. That the Council should review approaches to temporary repairs, including failure patterns on bus routes.		Accepted See agenda item 6
		9. That the Council should explore further measures to limit the impact of HGVs on vulnerable roads.		Partially Accepted See agenda item 6
		10. That the Council should undertake a review of the impact of cars being significantly heavier on average than previously and the resultant pressure on roads.		Partially Accepted See agenda item 6
		11. That the Council should consider whether additional inspection capacity is needed and strengthen inspection processes.		Accepted See agenda item 6
		12. That the Council should continue to embed learning from repair failures, including materials choices and method improvements.		Accepted See agenda item 6
22-Apr-26	Minerals & Waste Planning	Seven recommendations (Environment and Economy)	Robin Rogers	Submitted to Cabinet on 16-June-26
22-Apr-26	School Streets	Five recommendations (Transport)	Paul Fermer	Submitted to Cabinet on 16-June-26

KEY	Due to Cabinet	With Cabinet	Complete
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Meeting date	Item	Recommendation	Lead officer	Update/response
22-Apr-26	Bus Services & Rural Transport including Mobility Hubs	Seven recommendations (Transport)	Paul Fermer	Submitted to Cabinet on 16-June-26
22-Apr-26	Temporary Congestion Charge Monitoring Report	Three recommendations (Transport)	Paul Fermer	Submitted to Cabinet on 16-June-26
22-Apr-26	Illegal Waste Near Kidlington	Two recommendations (Transport)	Robin Rogers	Submitted to Cabinet on 16-June-26

**Action Tracker
Place Overview & Scrutiny Committee**

Cllr Liam Walker, Chair | Richard Doney, Scrutiny Officer, richard.doney@oxfordshire.gov.uk

KEY	Delayed	In progress	Complete
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Meeting date	Item	Action	Lead	Update/response
22-Apr-26	Temporary Congestion Charge Scheme Monitoring Report	1. That a written response to the questions posed by Oxford Business Action Group be provided and circulated to the Committee.	Aron Wisdom	Circulated 15-June-26
		2. That a breakdown and summary of customer engagement enquiries and feedback themes be provided to the Committee.		



OXFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Recommendation Update Tracker Place Overview & Scrutiny Committee

Cllr Liam Walker, Chair | Richard Doney, Scrutiny Officer, richard.doney@oxfordshire.gov.uk

The recommendation update tracker enables the Committee to monitor progress accepted recommendations. The tracker is updated with recommendations accepted by Cabinet. Once a recommendation has been updated, it will be shaded green and reported into the next meeting of the Committee, after which it will be removed from the tracker. If the recommendation will be update in the form of a separate item, it will be shaded yellow.

KEY	Update Pending	Update in Item	Updated
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Cabinet Response Date	Item	Lead	Update
16-Sept-25	Transport Working Group	Paul Fermer; Robin Rogers; Hannah Battye	Progress updates to be provided in Sept.
18-Nov-25	Part Night Lighting Consultation	Paul Fermer, Sean Rooney	Progress updates to be provided
18-Nov-25	OxRail 20240	Robin Rogers, Pete Brunskill	Progress updates to be provided
16-Dec-25	Verge and Vegetation Management	Paul Fermer; Sean Rooney	Progress updates to be provided
24-Feb-26	IFS & s.106 Improvement Programme Update	Robin Rogers; Ian Dyson	Progress updates to be provided in Nov.
24-Feb-26	Movement & Place Plans	Paul Fermer; Sean Rooney	Progress updates to be provided in Sept.

Overview & Scrutiny Recommendation Response Pro forma

		<p>with the same information available via our local website to ensure consistent public visibility.</p> <p>As part of our preparation for larger schemes, we also provide advance warning signage around two weeks before works begin and carry out targeted letter drops to households directly affected.</p> <p>However, we recognise the importance of strengthening and improving our communication further, especially where works evolve or unavoidable delays occur.</p> <p>In respect of updates to enquires received through FixMyStreet, we are working closely with mySociety (system owners) to enhance the clarity of direct updates received by the public, particularly around explaining why a repair may be delayed, or why a temporary safety intervention is required before a permanent fix can be delivered. This will help ensure updates are more meaningful, transparent, and aligned with resident expectations.</p> <p>We also hope to shortly further enhance the online customer experience through the introduction of a 'Zoom Virtual Agent' (ZVA) on our local website – this is a major digital transformation initiative that will modernise how residents engage with Highway Maintenance enquiries. The ZVA will provide smarter self-service, quicker access to information, and more intuitive guidance - forming a key part of our wider ambition to deliver a more responsive, consistent and digitally integrated Highways service.</p>
<p>2. That the Council should launch the new public-facing statistics dashboard to</p>	<p>Accepted</p>	<p>The Council recognises the importance of transparency in relation to highway defect volumes and the progress of repairs, which is the reason we are now publishing the latest defect information</p>

Overview & Scrutiny Recommendation Response Pro forma

<p>provide visibility of defect volumes and repair progress.</p>		<p>though the council's social media channels - this will continue for as long as it is deemed helpful. These communications are designed to provide residents with an overview of key metrics, including the scale of reported defects and the progress being made to address them.</p> <p>In addition, County Councillors have access to further relevant data via the Members' Resource Hub, which provides up-to-date information on defect levels, repair activity and performance trends to support local oversight and engagement.</p> <p>The council will continue to review how best to present and communicate performance data to both county councillors and members of the public, ensuring that information remains transparent, accessible and meaningful.</p>
<p>3. That the Council should strengthen communication and escalation routes for elected members, including reviewing the adequacy of the out of hours service.</p>	<p>Partially Accepted</p>	<p>County Councillors already have communication and escalation routes through the dedicated Councillor Portal Form and Guidance/information webpages on the Hive, ensuring they can quickly find the information and support they need. However, we do recognise this could be improved and are continuing to develop this page and add more information based on common requests and feedback.</p> <p>Improvements have been also made to the council's website recently in respect of the promotion of temporary road closures due to flooding and severe weather, again we will continue to improve based on feedback received.</p> <p>The expectation that teams are proactive and communicate directly on matters within councillor's divisions remains an expectation, and this requirement will be reinforced.</p>

Overview & Scrutiny Recommendation Response Pro forma

		<p>In respect of the out of hours service, it is there to service genuine emergency highway issues that arise rather than an out of hours extension to the highway enquiry process. There is a single customer service centre number to call for both councillors and the public, and the customer service centre will escalate to the on-duty officer, Mgroup or in extreme cases our joint resilience team as appropriate. We will remind the company providing the out of hours call service to recognise the role of the county councillor within this though.</p>
<p>4. That the Council should increase visibility and clarity of programmed works, supported by earlier publication of multi-year plans.</p>	<p>Accepted</p>	<p>Please also see responses under 1 as they are relevant here too.</p> <p>To confirm our larger planned works are multi-year programmes and typically we have a two-year rolling outlook. On the Highway schemes map we publish last year's, this year's, and next year's programme. However, we will also look to publish this in different formats to increase accessibility of this information.</p>
<p>5. That the Council should improve integration of local knowledge, especially of elected members, into prioritisation of repairs and programmed works.</p>	<p>Partially Accepted</p>	<p>Input of local knowledge from Councillors is important, but there may be good asset-based reasons for programme decisions which don't along with local opinion on priority. It is appreciated that local knowledge needs to be known and taken into account when making programme decisions, and that the decision made and rationale for it needs to be explained.</p> <p>The process in developing and sharing our annual programmes of planned work will be updated to allow for this.</p>

Overview & Scrutiny Recommendation Response Pro forma

<p>6. That the Council should review the FixMyStreet process, ensuring cases are not closed prematurely and status updates are clearer.</p>	<p>Accepted</p>	<p>FixMyStreet is already subject to continuous review and ongoing development to improve both functionality and user experience.</p> <p>This includes regular assessment of reporting categories, workflow logic, response templates, and how information is presented back to the public. Feedback from residents, councillors, frontline teams, inspectors, and our contractor is routinely analysed to identify where enhancements are needed.</p> <p>The approach of continuous improvement will continue to be carried out, but we will commit to looking with a particular focus on not prematurely closing cases or managing some of the longer-term issues or service requests in a different way.</p> <p>We are also looking at opportunities to automate more of the responses using inspection schedule and work schedule information to provide a more timely response.</p>
<p>7. That the Council should enhance training and support in relation to the Superuser scheme.</p>	<p>Accepted</p>	<p>We will look to run further campaigns to attract additional volunteers to this successful initiative and promote the scheme.</p> <p>There is already a strong training programme, refresher sessions and support activity in place, however, we will carry out further engagement with the superuser volunteer network to understand where improvements might be required.</p> <p>To confirm we carried out an FMS SU survey during Nov 2024, and early 2026 collecting structured feedback on what's working well, where improvements are needed, and ideas for further support the volunteers may find valuable. We will continue to provide an annual feedback survey form. This helps us to shape</p>

Overview & Scrutiny Recommendation Response Pro forma

		<p>our future working with our volunteers in relation to our processes and scope of our volunteers across all activities and potential new ones.</p> <p>For awareness since Jan 2026 there have been 30 min on-line drop-in sessions taking place and these will continue with 3 sessions per month planned, plus, ad-hoc ones as required.</p> <p>Using activity data, both individual and general training support is provided as needed. Formal reviews following the initial training are had at 6 weeks, 6 months and annually. An annual in-person refresher training is also held.</p> <p>All OxToG volunteers are also sent a monthly newsletter that includes training updates and defects raised. We welcome and encourage volunteer good news stories, recognising their contributions across all the OxToG activities. These articles help in providing a strong sense of community and appreciation of the work our volunteers do, as well as encourage best practice and potential for crossover OxToG activities.</p>
<p>8. That the Council should review approaches to temporary repairs, including failure patterns on bus routes.</p>	<p>Accepted</p>	<p>To strengthen quality assurance, the Council has increased resourcing in this area, with two Highway Officers now dedicated solely to monitoring the quality of completed repairs. Where recurring quality issues arise, they are addressed through formal contractual performance management, which may include financial adjustments and impacts on contractor Key Performance Indicators.</p> <p>In addition, the service carried out an end-to-end defect management process review. This programme looked at and has implemented enhancing inspection accuracy, the quality of works instructions, and overall data integrity.</p>

Overview & Scrutiny Recommendation Response Pro forma

		In respect to impact of buses, we will explore how we could potentially assess and compare road condition degradation and bus routes to see if there is a correlation or not.
9. That the Council should explore further measures to limit the impact of HGVs on vulnerable roads.	Partially Accepted	<p>The council accepts the proposal to keep under review additional tools and interventions, including routing measures, improved signage, engagement with freight operators, and strengthened use of planning and development levers where relevant to manage and route HGVs appropriately.</p> <p>With regards to Highways Maintenance specifically, the Council takes into account the need for HGV use on its roads when maintaining them, and looks to use advanced materials and design specifications when developing planned works.</p> <p>Although the use of graphene-enhanced asphalt is still within its infancy, the potential benefits on high-traffic routes to increase resistance to cracking and deformation, extending surface life where Heavy Goods Vehicle (HGV) loading is greatest.</p>
10. That the Council should undertake a review of the impact of cars being significantly heavier on average than previously and the resultant pressure on roads.	Partially Accepted	<p>The impact of changes in vehicle weight on road deterioration is primarily being considered at a national level, where research and policy development continue to evolve. Current available evidence does not demonstrate a clear or significant link between heavier cars, including electric vehicles, and increased road damage.</p> <p>Locally, the Council will continue to monitor emerging evidence and remain engaged with national research and guidance. Where appropriate, we will contribute our experience of managing the network to help inform this wider work.</p>

Overview & Scrutiny Recommendation Response Pro forma

		<p>In practice, the main drivers of road deterioration in Oxfordshire remain ageing materials, weather-related factors, past levels of maintenance investment, and Heavy Goods Vehicle use.</p>
<p>11. That the Council should consider whether additional inspection capacity is needed and strengthen inspection processes.</p>	<p>Accepted</p>	<p>Work is already underway to review current inspection routes and frequencies to ensure they remain appropriate, targeted, and risk-based. As part of this review, the level of resource required to deliver an effective and resilient inspection regime is being considered, alongside technology and A.I opportunities.</p> <p>In parallel, changes to the structure and associated responsibilities will be considered if deemed to help improve oversight, and enhance the efficiency and consistency of inspections.</p>
<p>12. That the Council should continue to embed learning from repair failures, including materials choices and method improvements.</p>	<p>Accepted</p>	<p>The Council will ensure that reviews and lessons learned are part of continuous service improvement.</p> <p>A key part of this will be planned Pothole Innovation Day, which will bring together a wide range of suppliers and delivery partners to showcase and compare different repair methods and materials. This will give the Council a practical opportunity to see what works best in real conditions, rather than relying on theory alone. The day will also help encourage collaboration and open discussion about what has and hasn't worked in the past. Feedback from operational teams will be gathered and used to improve future approaches, with the outcomes helping to update our standards and ensure we are using the most effective, durable and value-for-money solutions. Overall, this approach will support a more consistent and proactive way of improving repairs over time.</p>

**Provisional Work Programme
Place Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

Cllr Liam Walker, Chair | Richard Doney, Scrutiny Officer, richard.doney@oxfordshire.gov.uk

Topic	Relevant strategic priorities	Purpose	Type	Lead presenters
24 June 2026				
Ox:Bus Plan for 2040 and Enhanced Partnership Plus proposals	Fairer; Greener; Healthier	To provide the Committee with an high-level overview of the Bus Plan (including the structure, vision, objectives, and key outcomes) as well as the overall project programme the Council is working towards delivering. This would be to provide the Committee with the opportunity to influence the approach before the public consultation in September.	Overview and Scrutiny	Paul Fermer, Katharine Broomfield, Ashley Hayden
Flag-flying protocol	Fairer	To consider the policy for flying flags on the buildings and land owned or managed by the Council before it is recommended to Cabinet in July. The policy aims to comply with the planning regulations, respect the national and local significance of certain dates and events, and accommodate the requests of organisations that wish to fly their own flags. It states the responsibilities and decision-making process for	Overview and Scrutiny	Susannah Wintersgill, Lauren Bond



		the flying of flags, and which flags are excluded. It does not refer to flags flown by citizens on highways or assets, which are treated separately under enforcement powers.		
23 September 2026				
Police and Crime Plan for Oxfordshire	Fairer; Greener; Healthier	As part of its Crime and Disorder Panel responsibilities, the Committee has invited the Police and Crime Commissioner and the Chief Constable of Thames Valley Police to report on progress against the Police and Crime Plan. The Head of the Road Policing Unit has also been invited.	Crime and Disorder Panel	Matthew Barber; Jason Hogg
Movement and Place Plans: West Oxfordshire Lowlands and Kidlington & Surrounding Villages	Fairer; Greener; Healthier	To review the proposed Movement and Place Plans, which set out key objectives for the areas, and which are part of the work supporting and delivering the Council to deliver its LTCP targets and its Policies 52 and 53 which noted the aspiration to deliver localised movement and place plans, before they are recommended to Cabinet in October.	Overview and Scrutiny	Paul Fermer; Ashley Hayden
Transport Working Group: Update on Recommendations	Fairer; Greener; Healthier	To receive an update on actions arising from the Committee's recommendations (submitted to Cabinet in June 2025 and responded to by Cabinet on 16 September 2025).	Overview and Scrutiny	Paul Fermer
21 October 2026 – additional meeting				
Oxfordshire Fire and Rescue Cover Model	Fairer; Greener; Healthier	To consider the latest proposals for the OFRS Cover Model following consultation and before submission to Cabinet	Overview and Scrutiny	Rob MacDougall; Hal Davison
Fire and Rescue Improvement Programme: Update	Fairer; Greener; Healthier	To receive the annual update on the progress OFRS has made in response to the areas for improvement highlighted in the HMICFRS report of 2024.	Overview and Scrutiny	Rob MacDougall



25 November 2026				
Quiet Lanes: Phase 1 Review	Fairer; Greener; Healthier	To receive an update on Phase 1 of the Quiet Lanes policy and to consider plans for Phase 2	Overview and Scrutiny	Paul Fermer; Daniel McCrory; Melissa Goodacre
Infrastructure Funding Statement 2025/26 and s106 Improvement Programme Update	Fairer; Greener; Healthier	To review the Infrastructure Funding Statement for 2025/26 and to receive an update on the s.106 Improvement Programme.	Overview and Scrutiny	Robin Rogers; Ian Dyson; Tahira Khan
03 February 2027				
21 April 2027				

Sub-groups/Working Groups				
Name	Relevant strategic priorities	Description	Outcomes	Members
None at present				

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PLACE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

24 JUNE 2026

OxBUS 2040: Plan for Bus and Enhanced Partnership Plus

Report by the Director of Environment and Highways

RECOMMENDATION

1. The Place Overview and Scrutiny Committee is asked to **CONSIDER** the proposed approach, content, engagement and consultation for the OxBus 2040: Plan for Bus and the Enhanced Partnership Plus, including delivery timescales, **RAISE** any questions, and **AGREE** any recommendations it wishes to make to Cabinet.

Executive Summary

2. This paper provides a high-level overview of the emerging OxBUS 2040: Plan for Bus (the Plan) and sets out early thinking to enable scrutiny of its proposed structure, content and engagement/consultation plans. It is being presented before any public consultation so that the committee can help shape and influence the approach.
3. Officers intend to return to the Committee with the final draft Plan after consultation, before it is considered by Cabinet later this year. We are currently working towards a timetable of November 2026.
4. Officers are progressing the development of the Plan and initial discussions have taken place with bus operators to inform its development. The Plan will support delivery of the County Council's Local Transport and Connectivity Plan (LTCP), particularly Policy 18, which highlights the need for an effective and reliable bus network to achieve LTCP targets.
5. The Plan will set out a bold and ambitious approach to improving bus transport and connectivity across the County to 2040, aligning with other adopted plans such as the OxRAIL 2040: Plan for Rail (Rail Plan). It will promote inclusive and accessible bus travel for all, building on Oxfordshire's existing strong bus network.
6. The Plan will be a daughter document of the Council's LTCP, adopted in July 2022. The Plan will sit under the LTCP and alongside several other Council policies and strategies relating to transport including those relating to Rail, Mobility hubs, Freight and Logistics, Active Travel and Movement and Place Plans.

7. Alongside the development of the Plan, officers are also progressing proposals for an Enhanced Partnership Plus (EP+), as agreed by Cabinet on 21 October 2025, which approved the development of an EP+ as the preferred approach to bus delivery in Oxfordshire. This will improve and strengthen the existing Enhanced Partnership (EP), which is a statutory arrangement between the local authority and bus operators, underscored by an EP Plan and Scheme setting out legally binding shared commitments to improve bus services.
8. The Plan and EP+ will be developed in parallel as there is a clear and complementary relationship between the two. The Plan sets the long-term vision, outcomes and strategic direction for buses in Oxfordshire (the “what”), while EP+ provides the primary mechanism for delivery (the “how”), translating these ambitions into specific commitments, schemes and interventions through the statutory EP framework.
9. The EP+ proposal will be submitted for approval to Cabinet or Cabinet Member Decision, at the same time or after the Bus Plan, but not before.

Purpose and scope of the Plan and EP+

10. The Plan will set out the Council’s bold and ambitious plan to improve bus transport and connectivity across the County to 2040 and will replace the previously adopted Connecting Oxfordshire: Bus & Rapid Transit Strategy (2015-2031).
11. To maintain consistency across the Council’s transport policies and strategies, and to support easier public engagement with these documents, the Plan is intended to follow the same style and approach as the recently adopted Rail Plan. It will therefore include the same sections, as set out below:
 - Foreword
 - Introduction
 - Visions, themes and priorities
 - Buses in numbers
 - Opportunities and challenges
 - Delivering the outcomes
 - Monitoring and evaluation
 - Annexes
12. The proposed EP+ will build on the existing EP to include new additional and strengthened legally binding commitments on both the County Council (as the Local Transport Authority) and local bus operators. These commitments will need to comply with the Government’s new Guidance on Enhanced Partnerships which includes set minimum standards to incorporate by 1 April 2027 (see ‘Other Documents’ section).
13. Many of these requirements align closely with the measures already being considered through the EP+ approach. The intention therefore is not only to

meet these minimum standards, but - where funding allows - to go further and position Oxfordshire at the forefront of bus service improvement nationally. The Council has identified £6m of capital funding over the next three years from Oxfordshire's Integrated Transport Fund grant from the Government to support the development and implementation of EP+ measures, which in turn will support delivery of the outcomes set out in the Plan.

14. The guidance also states that a separate Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) document is no longer required, and content can instead be incorporated within the EP Plan. Officers consider this approach would be beneficial to reduce duplication, avoid potential confusion, improve clarity and accessibility for the public, and streamline the ongoing management of what would otherwise be three separate documents (BSIP, EP and Bus Plan).

Emerging content of the Plan for Bus

Vision, themes and priorities

15. The Vision, Themes and Priorities chapter defines the overarching vision for Oxfordshire's bus network and translates this into a structured set of themes and priorities underpinning the Plan.
16. There are three themes and three priorities as follows:
 - Theme 1: Improve connectivity and infrastructure
 - Theme 2: Climate action
 - Theme 3: Bus as place shaper
 - Priority 1: Better, safer journeys for all
 - Priority 2: Seamless travel and integrated ticketing
 - Priority 3: A clean, green bus network
17. A draft of this section with more detail is included at **Annex 1**.

Buses in Numbers

18. The Buses in Numbers chapter will offer a visually engaging snapshot of the bus network, using key data and graphics to illustrate its scale, usage, accessibility and wider impacts. The latest draft of this is included at **Annex 2** and will be updated with the latest figures prior to final approval.
19. This chapter will include a countywide map of the bus network.

Opportunities and challenges

20. The Opportunities and Challenges chapter will summarise the main issues shaping the Oxfordshire bus network to establish the context for future interventions. These are listed below and aligned, where possible, with the

topics in the Rail Plan.

- Oxfordshire today: a growing county under pressure
- Unlocking sustainable growth through development
- Connecting Oxfordshire to local (inc rural), regional, national and international opportunities
- Supporting our visitor and night-time economies
- Enabling inclusive, accessible safe everyday travel
- Tackling congestion, improving reliability and dependability
- Delivering a financially sustainable and growing network
- Accelerating decarbonisation while maintaining a resilient network
- Creating a seamless, integrated public transport system

21. More detail on the content of this chapter is included at **Annex 3**. Please note that this is not presented in the format it will take in the final Plan, where it will be developed into a more narrative, text-based format.

Delivering the outcomes

22. The Delivering the Outcomes chapter will translate the Bus Plan's ambitions into a clear delivery framework, setting out strategic outcomes alongside the proposed interventions which are still being developed. It will include a 'Plan on a Page' - a concise, visual summary of delivery - which was a key strength of the Rail Plan. The finer detail of the interventions, particularly how they translate into actionable commitments, will likely sit within the EP+ document.

23. Six key strategic outcomes have been identified which fall into the following categories listed below.

- Network design, growth, investment (including reinvestment) and inclusive, planning-aligned services
- Network performance, stability, data and journey time reliability
- Passenger experience, integration and people-centred design
- Infrastructure, vehicles and on-board experience
- Decarbonisation, energy and innovation
- Inclusion, accessibility and travel behaviour change

24. More detail on the content of this chapter is included at **Annex 4**. Please note that this is not presented in the format it will take in the final Plan, where it will be developed into a more narrative, text-based format alongside the 'Plan on a Page'.

25. The new commitments included under the EP+ will support and align with Plan deliverables. Please note that some of these are mandatory as per the Government's new Guidance on Enhanced Partnerships.

Monitoring and evaluation

26. This chapter has not yet been drafted. However, it is proposed that outcomes will be monitored and progress reported through the Council’s existing LTCP reporting processes.
27. In addition, from April 2026 a new Department for Transport (DfT) accountability framework will apply. This will introduce a consistent national outcomes framework and standardised reporting requirements for all Local Transport Authorities, including on programme delivery, expenditure and performance against customer-focused indicators.

Proposed roadmap, including engagement and consultation

28. **Table 1** sets out the proposed engagement process and timescales for developing and adopting the Plan. Engagement and consultation for the EP+ will be incorporated within this process, but it will ultimately be presented as a separate report for Council approval, followed by a statutory EP variation and operator objection process prior to adoption.

Table 1: Proposed roadmap and timescales

Engagement process	Timescales	Comment
Early Scoping	Completed – November 25 to February 26	Following Cabinet approval to proceed with developing an EP+ proposal, early scoping was conducted with bus operators, EP working groups and Oxon4Buses to get suggestions on the scope of the EP+. This is also pertinent to development of the Plan.
Discovery – Workshop 1	Completed – March 26	Officers used this to inform the emerging Plan and agree the overall direction of travel.
Produce and Deliver – Workshop 2	Completed – May 26	Further collaboration with operators to inform thinking.
Produce and Deliver – Governance	June 26	Members review via a briefing with the newly appointed Cabinet Member for Transport and the Place Overview and Scrutiny Committee.
Produce and Deliver – Workshop 3	July - August 26	Further engagement with key stakeholders including bus user groups to inform thinking. This is likely to include a workshop and convene an EP Stakeholder Forum meeting. In addition, subject to funding, officers are considering a recall of the Citizens Assembly and presentation at the Inclusive Transport and Movement Focus Group.
Produce and Deliver – Review feedback and	August 26	Further collaboration with operators to review feedback to date and draft a full draft Plan and executive summary version ready for consultation. This will include materials relevant to the EP+.

draft the full Plan		
Transition and consultation	September 26	Hold a 4 week (minimum) public consultation via Let's Talk and accompanying public events. Officers will also work with members and partners to publicise this Plan.
Adopt and Embed	November 26	Seek adoption from members

29. Alongside new evidence gathered over the coming months, officers will draw on findings from earlier consultation and engagement, including the Let's Talk survey (April 2024) undertaken to support the Oxfordshire Bus Service Improvement Plan, the most recent annual bus passenger surveys, and the Oxfordshire results from the National Highways & Transport survey. Previous feedback from residents consistently identified five key priorities for bus improvement (in order): faster or more direct services, improved reliability, increased service frequency, better value fares, and improved pre-journey information.
30. Recent engagement with local bus user group Oxon4Buses (O4B) highlighted the importance of strong governance arrangements within the EP, including mechanisms to incorporate passenger voice and provide constructive challenge. Key themes included maintaining a comprehensive and value-for-money network, increasing investment in the passenger waiting environment, aligning with wider infrastructure such as Oxford City Centre and rail station, and developing a more ambitious and simplified approach to fares and ticketing, alongside greater transparency and reinvestment in local services.
31. Officers will also take account of lessons learned from the development of the Rail Plan.

Corporate Policies and Priorities

32. The County Council's Strategic Plan for 2025–28 sets out a vision for Oxfordshire to be a place where everyone can live well, with thriving communities and a strong local economy. The Bus Plan recognises bus as a key enabler of this vision, and therefore improvements in this area will make a significant and direct contribution to delivering the Strategic Plan's objectives.
33. The Council's Strategic Plan outlines key headline projects delivering a "Greener, Fairer and Healthier" Oxfordshire. This is alongside the nine strategic priorities. The Plan helps to address this as it considers how bus travel can be delivered for all communities across Oxfordshire and supports the transition towards zero emission bus journeys. This will strengthen and improve local economies, deliver improvements towards air quality and reduce noise levels and seeks to improve connectivity around Oxfordshire recognising the importance bus also has in developing places and communities.

34. As noted above, the Plan specifically looks to deliver against **Policy 18** of the LTCP by setting a clear direction and vision for bus travel across Oxfordshire, explores the infrastructure and bus network that may be required to deliver this, ensures bus journeys are improved for all and works proactively with our bus operators and other key stakeholders to continue to operate an efficient, flexible and reliable bus network.
35. Neither the Plan nor the EP+ will introduce any policies or proposed service changes that are not in line with the corporate policies and priorities.

Financial Implications

36. The Plan does not create any direct financial commitments for the County Council, aside from the temporary staff resource required for its development, which has already been approved as part of the council's budget setting process. Interventions will be progressed subject to the availability of funding.
37. The EP+, however, may introduce additional commitments that require funding. Any commitments that cannot be met from existing budgets would be considered through the annual budget-setting process.
38. The Council has identified £6m of capital funding over the next three years (£1.5m in 2027/28, £2m in 2028/29 and £2.5m in 2029/30) from Oxfordshire's Integrated Transport Fund grant from the Government in order to support EP+ measures, such as additional bus priority or upgraded bus stop infrastructure. No additional revenue funding has been identified at this stage.

Comments checked by:
Filipp Skiffins, Finance Business Partner

Legal Implications

39. The approach proposed in this report complies with the Council's statutory duties under the Transport Act 2000 (as amended), which requires the Council to develop policies for the promotion and encouragement of safe, integrated, efficient and economic transport to, from and within their area, and carry out their functions so as to implement those policies.
40. The Plan will be a public facing strategy document owned by the County Council and therefore the usual reputational risks may apply. There will be no commitment on the County Council to deliver on outcomes contained within.
41. In contrast, the EP+ is a statutory and legally binding document; accordingly, all draft proposals - particularly those placing new commitments on the County Council - will be subject to review by Legal.
42. Government guidance requires Enhanced Partnerships to be updated to incorporate new minimum standards by 1 April 2027 as a condition of

Oxfordshire's Integrated Transport and Bus Services Fund allocation from the Government.

43. Ownership and responsibility for the Plan and EP+ rests with the Local Transport Authority and is therefore expected to sit at Combined Authority level following devolution.

Comments checked by:
Jennifer Crouch, Principal Solicitor (Regulatory),

Staff Implications

44. A temporary 'Programme Lead' position has recently been appointed to lead on the development and consultation of the Plan, funded through existing County Council staffing budgets. It is anticipated that this position will cease once the Place Shaping Redesign has been completed (currently scheduled for September 2026) as there is a dedicated role identified within the draft new structure.
45. Once the Plan and EP+ are adopted, the intention is for the relevant teams including Public Transport, Infrastructure Development, Strategic Planning, Highways Maintenance and Civil Enforcement, to facilitate delivery, supported by colleagues in Transport Strategy and Policy.
46. Officers would work alongside members to agree and discuss any additional resources if required once the plan and EP+ is adopted.

Equality & Inclusion Implications

47. An Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) has not been undertaken at this stage, as it would be premature given that the detail is still being developed, however the aim of both the Plan and EP+ is to have a positive impact on equality and inclusion. A full EIA will be completed prior to submitting to Cabinet.

Sustainability Implications

48. A Climate Impact Assessment (CIA) has not been undertaken at this stage, as it would be premature given that the detail is still being developed, however the aim of both the Plan and EP+ is to have a positive impact in supporting the Council's climate objectives. A full CIA will be completed prior to submitting to Cabinet.

Risk Management

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

Paul Fermer
Director of Environment and Highways

Annex 1: Visions, themes and priorities
Annex 2: Buses in numbers
Annex 3: Opportunities and Challenges - outline content
Annex 4: Delivering the Outcomes - outline content
Annex 5: Risks and mitigations

Background papers: None

Other Documents: [Decision details - Future Bus Regulation Options](#)
[Local Transport and Connectivity Plan](#)
[OxRAIL 2040: Plan for Rail](#)
[Oxfordshire: Bus & Rapid Transit Strategy \(2015-2031\)](#)
[Government Enhanced Partnerships Guidance](#)
[The Government's Vision for Buses](#)

Contact Officers:

Katharine Broomfield (Programme Lead – Integrated Transport Interim)

Email: Katharine.Broomfield@Oxfordshire.gov.uk

Ashley Hayden (Transport Policy and Strategy Team Lead)

Email: Ashley.Hayden@Oxfordshire.gov.uk

Tel: 0752 6567299

June 2026

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Vision, themes and priorities

Vision

A growing, high quality customer centric bus network, which is inclusive, accessible, modern, environmentally friendly and well connected, increasing bus mode share and supporting a shift towards sustainable travel, while enabling healthy lifestyles, high quality economic growth, reduced congestion and enhanced air quality.

Themes



Improve connectivity and infrastructure

Simple, reliable and safe journeys connecting you to places



Climate action

A network for tomorrow's future where more journeys are made by bus



Bus as place shaper

People at the heart of decision making and a network for you

Priorities

1 **Better, safer journeys for all**

Delivering consistently reliable services with improved journey times and punctuality, supported by bus priority and measures that improve accessibility and personal safety. A relevant and inclusive network connecting people to key destinations across Oxfordshire and the wider region, recognising the needs of different communities.

2 **Seamless travel and integrated ticketing**

A more positive customer experience, easy to plan, pay for and use buses alongside other transport modes, through integration and clear real time information on all services and fares.

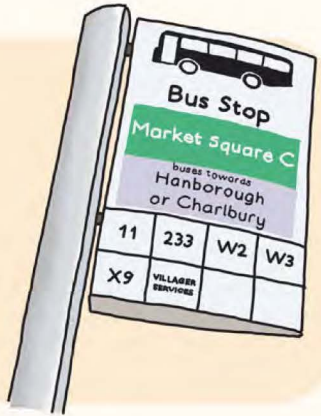
3 **A clean, green bus network**

A zero-emission bus network by 2040 with improved air quality, reduced carbon emissions and noise pollution, achieved through both the transition to greener vehicles and increased bus use, supporting residents to live healthy lives and enabling businesses to thrive, as our city, towns (including market towns) and the wider region continue to develop.

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Oxfordshire buses in numbers

Based on the most recently available data as at May 2026, with figures comprising a combination of annual datasets and point-in-time snapshots



Approximately

150

bus routes



168

electric buses
or c. 35% of all vehicles

Saving over

7,000

tonnes of CO₂ annually

Over

18.5 million

bus miles operated

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39.5 million

customer journeys

(and rising, nearing pre-pandemic levels!)



of which 14% or

5.6 million

are elderly and disabled concessionary journeys

3,890 bus stops, of which

68%

are step free,

28%

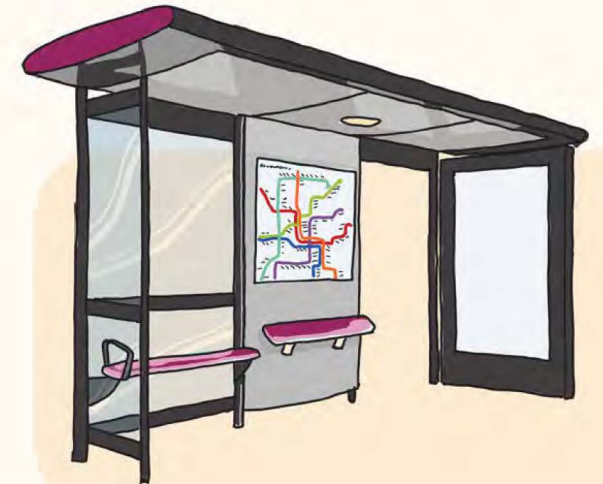
are sheltered, and

9%

are with real time information

and reducing roadside NO₂ levels in Oxford by

↓ 24%



86%

overall customer satisfaction

+8 pp

from 2023



Over 8.5 million

multi-operator journeys

Over £200 million

estimated contribution to UK GDP

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Annex 3: Opportunities and Challenges - outline content

This annex summarises the key challenges and opportunities affecting the bus network in Oxfordshire, highlighting pressures from growth, congestion, funding and fragmentation, alongside opportunities for buses to better support connectivity, sustainable development and climate objectives through closer integration with planning and other modes. This content may be refined through further engagement.

Oxfordshire today: a growing county under pressure

Challenges

- Rapid housing and economic growth (not necessarily aligned spatially)
- Up to 250% bus growth required to meet LTCP 2040 targets
- Interurban congestion impacting reliability and journey times
- Funding constraints and post-pandemic travel shifts
- Adapting to Government policy change and governance complexity (LGR/Devolution)

Opportunities

- Strong history of political support for public transport
- Buses as a scalable, flexible solution
- EP+ enabling joint network planning with operators, shaping services around demand
- Devolution enabling strategic, joined-up leadership across a wider geography

Unlocking sustainable growth through development

Challenges

- Risk of car-dependent developments: bus provision too late / not prioritised
- Disconnect between planning and transport functions
- Additional bus depot capacity needed to unlock growth

Opportunities

- Buses enable sustainable growth
- Embedding buses in master planning and place design
- Integrating developments into existing networks to maximise efficiency and reduce reliance on new services

Connecting Oxfordshire (local to international)

Challenges

- Inconsistent first/last mile connectivity to other transport modes
- Rurality and low density affecting viability of servicing by bus

Opportunities

- Buses as key connectors across modes
- Strengthened strategic corridors (inter-urban, P&R, rail feeders)

Supporting visitor and night-time economies

Challenges

- Aligning with shift work, leisure and tourism demand
- Aligning with seasonal travel demand patterns

Opportunities

- Buses (and coaches) supporting tourism and visitor economy

- Improved access to key destinations and heritage sites
- Growth in evening, weekend and seasonal services
- Stronger partnerships with tourist and visitor organisations

Enabling inclusive, accessible and safe travel

Challenges

- Inequalities in access (e.g. rural, non-car, non-digital users)
- Accessibility and safety barriers
- Rising cost pressures risking service decline and isolation if not aligned with revenue growth

Opportunities

- Sustainable travel as default mode
- Targeted interventions (e.g. for young people, women, concessionary users, deprived communities)
- National focus on socially necessary services strengthens the case for protecting essential bus routes

Tackling congestion and improving reliability

Challenges

- Congestion limiting performance and growth
- Significant network disruption expected from major infrastructure and roadworks, with limited resilience due to constrained capacity

Opportunities

- Bus priority, enforcement and demand management
- Improved journey times and reliability
- Increased competitiveness with the car → modal shift
- Step-change interventions already underway (e.g. congestion charging and lane rental)

Delivering a financially sustainable network

Challenges

- Long-term decline in use (pre-COVID)
- Often short-term, fragmented funding
- Reliance on subsidy (Govt / S106)
- County Council financial pressures

Opportunities

- Growing patronage to strengthen revenues
- Consolidated transport funding from Government enabling greater flexibility for integration and joined up decision making
- Leverage more private funding for bus, working with major employers
- Government funding certainty to 2028/29

Accelerating decarbonisation

Challenges

- High costs and infrastructure requirements for zero-emission transition
- Risk of trade-offs with service levels
- Space and grid constraints
- Limitations of current EV technology

Opportunities

- Building on Oxford's EV leadership
- Alignment with net zero 2040 ambition
- Cleaner air and public health benefits

Creating a seamless public transport system

Challenges

- Fragmented customer experience (ticketing, information, interchange)
- Multiple operators and systems
- Slow national programme delivery (e.g. Project Coral - a national technology solution to facilitate multi-operator ticketing on buses)
- Limited data on end-to-end travel patterns across modes

Opportunities

- Further use of the MyBus platform and Tap On Tap Off expansion
- Integrated ticketing and journey planning
- Improved fares, information and coordination
- Rail investment and new stations enabling better first/last mile links

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Annex 4: Delivering the Outcomes - outline content

This annex summarises the proposed outcomes for the Bus Plan alongside the key deliverables that would support their implementation. Deliverables are indicative and will be refined through engagement on and further development of the Plan and associated EP+ proposals. Items **highlighted** are mandated by the Department for Transport.

1. Network design, growth, reinvestment and inclusive, planning-aligned services

A coherent, growing and financially sustainable bus network that is fully embedded in planning and economic development, responds to demand, provides equitable connectivity to essential services and opportunities for all communities, and is valued by customers as their own - creating a network they actively support, champion and promote.

Key deliverables / outputs

- Greater collaboration on network design and service amendments
 - Improved services (new routes, extended hours, increased frequencies)
 - **Defined route classifications with aspirational service standards**
 - Bus integration within Local Plans and partnerships with planning stakeholders
 - Developer-led bus plans and use of S106 contributions
 - **Agreed reinvestment principles and documented reinvestment decisions**
 - Delivery plans and strengthened operator commitments
 - **Increased capacity and expertise within the Council and maintenance of baseline bus budgets**
 - Improved customer communications, engagement and growth monitoring
 - Community transport integration and improved connectivity to key destinations
 - Stop upgrades and network usability improvements
 - Exploration of enhanced coach provision supporting regional and national travel
 - Develop a work programme to establish a longer-term bus network vision, e.g. how to realise high growth in bus use by 2040; and investigating the potential for new rapid transit corridors
-

2. Network reliability, stability, data integrity and journey time reliability

A consistently reliable, predictable and competitive bus network, underpinned by robust data and performance management, with journey times that make bus a realistic alternative to private car travel.

Key deliverables / outputs

- Data sharing framework and performance reporting
- **Review processes and publication of performance metrics**
- **Accurate real-time information data and timely service registrations**
- **Defined socially necessary services list and processes**

- **Standardised timetable change dates**
 - Coordinated services (including later services on key days)
 - Clear communications on service changes and disruption
 - **Delivery, maintenance and enforcement of bus priority measures**
 - Wider journey time improvements
 - Defined approaches and procedures to minimise network disruption
-

3. Customer experience, integration and people-centred design

A simple, seamless and intuitive end-to-end customer experience, where journeys across modes are well integrated and services are shaped by customer needs, enabling people to easily plan, understand, pay for and trust bus travel.

Key deliverables / outputs

- Consistent and easy-to-use customer information
 - Expansion of real-time passenger information
 - Consistent branding and **promotion of a customer charter**
 - Simplified fare structures
 - Integrated and multi-modal ticketing (bus/bus and bus/rail)
 - **Additional MyBus ticket with a 28 day duration**
 - Multi-operator and multi-modal fare capping
 - High-quality interchanges
 - Integrated journey information and seamless modal connections
 - Customer engagement processes and feedback loops
 - Increased transparency in decision-making
-

4. Infrastructure, vehicles and on-board experience

A high-quality, well maintained, safe and consistent end-to-end travel environment, with modern vehicles, well-designed infrastructure and a skilled, motivated, customer-focused workforce that together enhance the quality of journey.

Key deliverables / outputs

- Standardised roadside information provision
 - Delivery of higher-quality bus stops and improved facilities
 - Defined infrastructure standards and stop upgrades
 - Logical and consistent bus stop naming
 - Higher-quality vehicle fleets with improved customer features
 - Safety initiatives, including targeted safety measures and data sharing with the police
 - Vehicle standards (including age and cleaning standards)
 - Training programmes for staff
 - Improved welfare facilities for drivers
 - Staff recognition and initiatives to improve retention
-

5. Decarbonisation, energy and innovation

A fully zero-emission, future-ready bus system that delivers cleaner air and carbon reduction, supported by flexible energy infrastructure and innovative approaches to maximise efficiency and long-term resilience.

Key deliverables / outputs

- Rollout of zero-emission buses and emissions reduction
 - Charging infrastructure, including en-route charging
 - Depot upgrades and optimisation of depot capacity
 - Charging and technology pilots
 - Battery reuse initiatives
 - Exploration of wider system integration (including freight)
-

6. Inclusion, accessibility and travel behaviour change

A safe, inclusive and welcoming bus network that removes barriers to travel and builds awareness, confidence and long-term adoption of bus use across all communities.

Key deliverables / outputs

- Consideration of the needs of disabled people as per Section 18 of the Bus Services Act 2025
- Accessibility schemes and targeted improvements
- Adopt a people-centred design approach
- Safety enhancements to improve personal security and confidence
- Greater transparency and representation within governance arrangements
- Training, education and outreach programmes
- Targeted engagement with key groups and communities
- Marketing and behaviour change campaigns
- Promotion of bus use (including concessionary fares)
- Partnerships with schools, employers and community organisations
- Monitoring of behaviour change and effectiveness
- Annual customer surveys

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Annex 5: Risks and mitigations

This annex summarises the key risks associated with delivery of the Bus Plan and EP+, particularly financial and delivery commitments, dependencies on partners, and external pressures, and highlights the need for careful governance, prioritisation and alignment with available funding and Government requirements.

- There are no significant risks identified in the development or adoption of the proposed Plan. The outcomes will align with wider Council strategies and policy objectives.
- The Plan does not place a formal commitment on the County Council to deliver outcomes; however, progress will be monitored and expectations will need to be carefully managed through the engagement, consultation and adoption phases.
- Delivering enabling projects needed to achieve the Plan's outcomes may involve risks. These will be managed and mitigated during detailed scheme development.
- The EP+, however, is a statutory and legally binding document and may introduce additional commitments for the County Council, including financial and delivery obligations. This creates a risk that the Council may be required to deliver measures without confirmed or sufficient funding, particularly in the context of limited revenue funding and wider financial pressures.
- There is also a delivery risk associated with the Council's ability to implement EP+ commitments, including dependencies on third parties such as bus operators and infrastructure delivery, as well as external factors such as inflation, supply chain constraints and changing travel patterns.
- These risks will be mitigated through careful development of the EP+ proposals, ensuring that any commitments are realistic, deliverable and aligned with available funding, with appropriate phasing and prioritisation. Strong governance, ongoing engagement with operators and partners, and regular monitoring and review will also support effective risk management and delivery.
- In addition, Government guidance requires Enhanced Partnerships to be updated to incorporate new minimum standards by 1 April 2027 as a condition of the Consolidated Transport Funding. This presents a programme and delivery risk, particularly in ensuring that the Council is sufficiently prepared to meet new requirements within the required timeframe. The proposed approach to seek approval of the EP+ alongside, or shortly after, the Bus Plan (anticipated November 2026) provides a mitigation by allowing time to prepare for implementation and readiness ahead of the Government deadline.

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Divisions Affected – ALL

PLACE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

24 JUNE 2026

Protocol for Flag Flying

Report by the Director for Public Affairs, Policy and Partnerships

RECOMMENDATION

1. The Committee is **RECOMMENDED** to
 - i) **NOTE** the draft Protocol, and
 - ii) **AGREE** any recommendations it wishes to make to Cabinet

Executive Summary

2. This is a proposed Protocol for Flag Flying for Oxfordshire County Council, which establishes a clear and consistent framework for the display of flags on Council buildings and land. The protocol has been developed to ensure compliance with relevant legislation and national guidance, while recognising the cultural, civic and symbolic significance of flag flying.
3. The protocol sets out the Council's approach to routine flag flying, including arrangements for existing flagpoles, established annual commitments, and the management of flag displays during the transitions between County Hall, Midland House and Speedwell House. It also defines roles and responsibilities, delegating decision-making to the Director of Law and Governance and Monitoring Officer, with appropriate consultation, to ensure decisions are fair, transparent and aligned with the Council's values and Public Sector Equality Duty.
4. In addition, the protocol provides detailed operational guidance on the appropriate use and positioning of flags, compliance with planning regulations, and procedures for flying flags at half-mast. It also introduces a structured process for considering one-off requests, including clear criteria to ensure that requests reflect the Council's values, avoid political or commercial use, and are sensitive to community cohesion.

5. The protocol seeks to balance the role of flag flying as a means of recognising significant events and communities, with the need to mitigate potential controversy and ensure consistency in decision-making. It reinforces that flag flying is one of a wider range of ways in which the Council demonstrates support for communities and occasions throughout the year.
6. The Committee is invited to consider the proposed protocol and provide any comments prior to it being taken to Cabinet on 14 July, 2026.

Financial Implications

7. All financial implications are included within Annex A (the draft Protocol).

Comments checked by:

Bick Nguyen-McBride, Finance Business Partner, bick.nguyen-mcbride@oxfordshire.gov.uk (Finance)

Legal Implications

8. All legal implications are included within Annex A (the draft Protocol).

Comments checked by:

Esma Basbaydar, Principal Solicitor (Litigation, Employment & Property), Esma.basbaydar@oxfordshire.gov.uk

Annex A: Draft Protocol for Flag Flying

Contact Officer: Susannah Wintersgill, Susannah.wintersgill@oxfordshire.gov.uk

June 2026

Oxfordshire County Council Protocol for Flag Flying

1. Introduction and Context

- 1.1 This document sets out the policy for flying flags on the buildings and land owned or managed by Oxfordshire County Council. The policy aims to comply with the available legislative framework including national guidance including planning regulations and with due regard to the national and local significance of certain dates and events, and accommodate requests for one-off events.
- 1.2 This protocol relates only to flag flying on County Council buildings. Flag displays on highways or other Council assets will be treated separately under the available legislative framework including available enforcement powers.
- 1.3 Oxfordshire County Council recognises the meaning and significance attributed to flags. They are emotive symbols which can boost local and national identities and strengthen community cohesion. They are ways for communities to express feelings of joy, pride and loyalty. Flying a flag is a cultural and social recognition of place, and as such should be flown with dignity and care. A formal policy for the flying of flags is therefore necessary to ensure consistency and lawfulness, and to understand which flags can and cannot be flown.
- 1.4 Like all symbols, flags are open to wide-ranging interpretation and therefore also have the potential to cause controversy and create tension between community groups whose opinions may differ. The flying of any flag must be viewed in the context in which it is flown or displayed. Factors affecting the context include the manner, location and frequency with which flags are flown. The Council has a responsibility to carefully consider the potential impact upon its communities of flying flags from its properties and how that action may be interpreted, particularly when considering its obligations under the Public Sector Equality Duty.
- 1.5 Flying flags is not the only means by which the Council demonstrates recognition of, or support for, communities, causes and significant occasions. The Council supports a wide range of celebrations, commemorations and awareness-raising activity through an established calendar of events and other civic, cultural and communications activity throughout the year.
- 1.6 Civic flag flying responsibilities are delegated to the Director of Law and Governance and Monitoring Officer in consultation with the Leader or Deputy Leader. This protocol guides the Director of Law

and Governance and Monitoring Officer in the exercise of those responsibilities.

2. Flagpoles

2.1 At present, the Council has access to three flagpoles. Two are located on the building at County Hall, Oxford. The other is located at the Fire and Rescue Service in Kidlington.

2.2 At County Hall, the mast positioned to the left, as viewed from New Road, is used to fly the Union Flag at all times with the exception of one week in April of each year when the flag of St George is flown.



2.3 The mast positioned to the right, as viewed from New Road, is used to fly the Oxfordshire County Flag. This mast can also be used to fly flags marking a variety of events and occasions, as listed in paragraph 6.1.



2.4 The flagpole at Kidlington is used to fly the Union Flag at all times, except for when marking the specific occasions observed by the Council listed in paragraph 6.1.

2.5 During the transition from County Hall to Midland House, the Council will not initially fly a flag at Midland House and will continue to use the flagpoles at County Hall until the building closes. Once County Hall is closed, the Council will begin using the single available flagpole at Midland House. At Midland House, only one flag may be flown at any time. The Union Flag will take precedence, in line with the Order of Precedence set out in Appendix A, and will be replaced on specific, pre-approved occasions by other flags listed in paragraph 6.1.

2.6 Following the permanent move to Speedwell House, the Council will have access to two flagpoles, and these will follow the same protocols as at County Hall (Union Flag on the left, County flag and other occasion-specific flags on the right).

3. Decision-Making Protocol

3.1 The Director of Law and Governance and Monitoring Officer has the discretion to authorise the flying of flags from the Council buildings as appropriate subject to compliance with the planning regulations set out in paragraph 4.8 and will consider any request to fly a flag which is not listed in the Policy.

3.2 The flying of flags is not the subject of statute law in England, Wales or Scotland. The Government liberalised the regulations surrounding the flying of flags in England in October 2012.



- 3.4 The matter of flag flying on local government buildings is not bound by any specific directive. It remains for individual local authorities to establish their own flag flying protocols. [Guidance was issued in 2021 by the Government on the flying of national flags on government buildings](#). This advice relates to government buildings only, but many councils follow the advice on a voluntary basis, and it is widely considered to be best practice to do so.
- 3.5 [Guidance on the flying of the Union Flag was also published in 2013](#). It provides general UK Government guidance on how and when the Union Flag should be flown on public buildings, while encouraging consistent and appropriate flag-flying practices across organisations.
- 3.6 The Director of Law and Governance and Monitoring Officer will adhere to Oxfordshire County Council's Protocol for Flag Flying and to recognised flag flying guidance, ensuring fairness, consistency and transparency in decision-making.
- 3.7 The flying of any flag must be viewed in the context in which it is flown or displayed. Factors affecting the context include the manner, location and frequency with which flags are to be flown. The decision should be sensitive to the views of all of Oxfordshire's communities in line with the [Public Sector Equality Duty](#), and seek to avoid creating controversy or conflict.
- 3.8 The decision of the Council to fly flags should be made in the spirit of displaying universal allegiance, support or respect or to celebrate a significant international, national or local occasion. It should be considered whether it is appropriate for a local authority to display such support on behalf of its communities. The decision should ultimately reflect the values of Oxfordshire County Council.
- 3.9 Flags representing political parties or campaigns seeking to influence public policy or electoral outcomes will not be flown. This does not include broadly recognised equality or civic awareness flags endorsed through this policy. The council shall also not allow the use of flags for the purpose of advertising.
- 3.10 The Director of Law and Governance and Monitoring Officer must keep a log of requests for flag flying and publish the decisions made. The log should include the request received, the name of the organisation or individual requesting, the decision taken, the rationale provided, and the date.

4. Procedure for Flying of Flags

- 4.1 All flag flying commitments are subject to the weather and safe access to the flagpoles.
- 4.2 Flags should not be flown in a worn, damaged or soiled condition

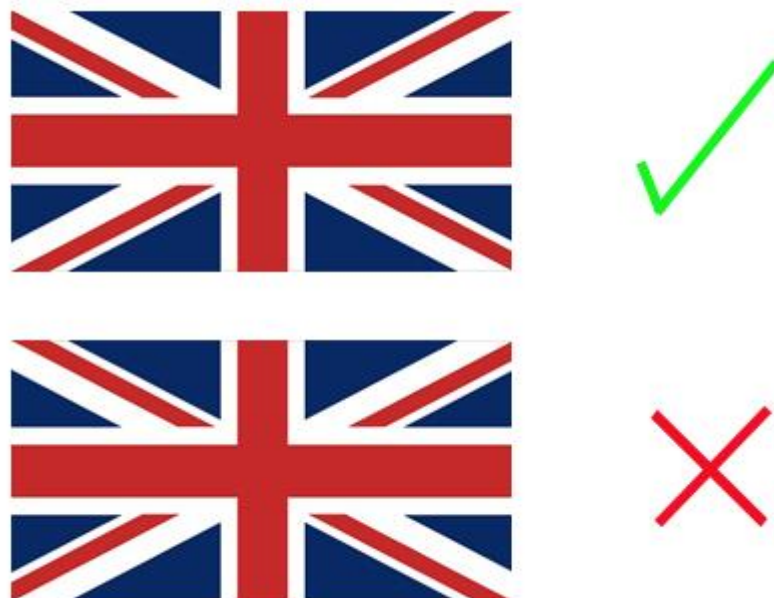
and will be inspected when they are taken down and before they are due to be flown, with sufficient time allowed for a replacement to be obtained if necessary.

4.3 The Union Flag should be flown at all times, with the exception of one week in April of each year when the flag of St George is flown.

4.4 Reference is made to the Government's guidance on the flying of the Union Flag from Government buildings. [Union Flag flying guidance for UK government buildings - GOV.UK](#)

4.5 National flags should be displayed with respect and in a dignified manner, as befitting national emblems and should not be displayed in a position inferior to any other flag or ensign. Flags must be flown from designated flagpoles, and it is considered improper for national flags to be used in any other manner.

4.6 The Union Flag must be flown the correct way up. In the half of the flag nearest the flagpole, the wider diagonal white stripe must be above the red diagonal stripe.



4.7 When more than one flag is flown at a time the British national flag must be in a superior position. To clarify:

a) The Union Flag should always be flown from the left flagpole, as viewed from New Road. The other flag will then be flown on the second flagpole, to the right. The Order of Precedence is included as Appendix A, for situations when two or more approved flag flying commitments fall on the same date.

- b) If other flags are flown they must be of the same size.
- c) When multiple flags are flown the British national flag shall be raised first and lowered last.

4.8 The planning regulations for flying flags in England are set out in the Town and Country Planning (Control of Advertisements) (England) Regulations 2007. According to these regulations, some flags do not require consent from the local planning authority. These are:

- The national flags of any country
- The flags of the Commonwealth and the United Nations
- The flag of any island, county, district, borough, parish, city, town or village
- The flag of the Black Country, East Anglia, Wessex; any part of Lincolnshire, any Riding of Yorkshire; any historic county
- The flag of St David and St Patrick
- The flag of any administrative area within any country outside of the UK
- The flags of His Majesty's forces
- The Armed Forces Day Flag

The Council has the freedom to fly flags of this category on any day of the year.

4.9 There are a number of categories of flag that may be flown without consent, but which are subject to certain planning restrictions regarding the size of the flag, the size of characters on the flag, and the number and location of the flags. This applies to flagpoles located on a building or within the grounds of a building. These include:

- 'House flags' that display the name, emblem, device or trademark of the company (or person) occupying the building from which they are flown, such as the Oxfordshire County Council flag. This may also refer to a specific event of limited duration that is taking place in the building from which the flag is flown.
- Any sports club
- The horizontal striped rainbow flag, such as the "Pride" Flag – this flag is an international symbol of the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender social movement. It is commonly flown by local authorities around Britain during local Pride celebrations in order to demonstrate their commitment to equality and the inclusion of all citizens, as it is widely interpreted as a universal symbol of freedom rather than the emblem of a 'political' group.
- The NHS flag.
- Specified award schemes (such as 'Investors in People' and 'Green Flag').

4.10 Planning restrictions apply in the following circumstances:

- If a flag does not fall within the categories above that are automatically permitted or granted consent.

- When a flag is used for commercial advertising purposes or carries promotional material (other than recognised national or county emblems.)
- The erection of a new flag pole may require planning permission if the pole is taller than 4.6 metres above ground level, or if it is on land without a building on it.
- If the property is located in an Area of Outstanding National Beauty (AONB) or a National Park, the flags must not exceed 0.75 metres in height.
- It is permitted to fly one flag (or two if one is from the category not requiring consent) on a vertical flagpole on the roof of a building and one flag (or two if one is from category not requiring consent) on a flagpole within the grounds of the building without consent. However, it is not permitted to fly a flag on a projecting flagpole and on a vertical roof top flagpole without consent. Two separate flagpoles are allowed within the grounds of the building.
- Flags must not exceed 2 square metres in size.

4.11 Where multiple approved occasions coincide, precedence will be determined by Appendix A.

5. Procedure for Flying Flags at Half-Mast

5.1 Union and County Flags will normally be flown at full mast. Half-mast flying will mark the following occasions:

- On the death/funeral of the Sovereign
- On the death/funeral of another member of the Royal Family
- On the death/funeral of the Prime Minister (or ex-Prime Minister)
- On the death/funeral of a serving member of the Armed Forces from the County
- On Holocaust Day on 27 January
- The death/funeral of any dignitary as advised by the Department of Culture, Media and Sport
- At the discretion of the Director of Legal and Governance, or after guidance from the Department of Culture, Media and Sport the Union Flag may also be flown at half-mast at times of national mourning due to a major incident where British lives are lost (for instance, a terrorist attack or a major incident on British soil or abroad.)
- At the discretion of the Director of Legal and Governance, and after guidance from the Department of Culture, Media and Sport, the Union Flag may be flown at half-mast to show respect and support to other nations who are in periods of national mourning.
- The Union Flag will be flown at half-mast at Kidlington on the death of any serving Fire Officer across the UK.

5.2 A half-mast flying means that the flag is flown two-thirds of the way up the flagpole, leaving one-third of the flagpole empty.

5.3 When a flag is to be flown at half-mast, it should first be raised all the way to the top of the mast, allowed to remain there for a second and then lowered. When it is being lowered from half-mast, it should again be raised to the top of the mast for a second before being fully lowered.

5.4 When the Union Flag is at half-mast, other flags will also be at half-mast or should not be flown at all. Flags of foreign nations will not be flown whilst the Union Flag is at half-mast, unless their country is also observing mourning.

6. Annual Flag Flying Commitments Observed by the Council

6.1 There are other regular annual occasions when specific flags are flown from County Hall. These are listed below:

Date	Occasion	Flag
The second Monday of March, for 1 week	Commonwealth Day Commonwealth Day is the annual celebration of the Commonwealth of Nations	The Commonwealth Flag
23rd April – 1 week <i>Flown on the left flagpole at County Hall, in place of the Union Flag.</i>	St George's Day Commemorates England's patron saint and is a day of national pride.	The Cross of St George Flag
1 st June to 23 rd June	Pride Month Global celebration of LGBTQ+ communities, promoting visibility, equality, and the ongoing fight against discrimination and injustice.	The Progress Pride Flag
23 rd June to 30 th June	Armed Forces Week National occasion to honour the service and sacrifice of the men and women in the British Armed Forces, past and present.	The Armed Forces Flag
1 st November – 11 th November	Remembrance Day National occasion to remember and honour the heroic efforts, achievements and sacrifices made in past wars.	Royal British Legion Flag

7. Managing Additional One-Off Requests

7.1 Consideration will be given to one-off additional requests to fly specific flags by the Director of Law and Governance and Monitoring Officer in line with the following procedures:

- a) The request may come from a serving County Councillor or a member of the public and be made in writing to the Director of Law and Governance and Monitoring Officer. Requests should be sent to committeesdemocraticservices@oxfordshire.gov.uk. Requests must include a description and a drawing/image of the flag.
- b) The request will only be considered if the relevant mast is available on the date(s) in question.
- c) The request should reflect the values of the Council, be sensitive to the views of communities and be made in the spirit of displaying allegiance, support or respect or to celebrate or mark a significant international, national or local occasion.
- d) The council will not allow the use of flags for party political purposes or for the purposes of commercial advertising.
- e) Where planning consent is required by regulations, this must be obtained before the flag can be displayed (which can take 8-10 weeks). This applies to any flagpole owned by the County Council.
- f) Late requests will ordinarily be declined.
- g) The Director of Law and Governance and Monitoring Officer will consult the Leader of the Council and/or Chief Executive on one-off requests on an advisory basis.
- h) The Council may impose conditions on the approval of any request to fly a flag, such as the duration, the frequency, or the hours of flying the flag.
- i) The council will retain neutrality, and will consider flying a white flag when requests to fly flags of specific nations during times of conflict are made.
- j) Previous approvals for one-off requests do not imply future approval.
- k) Approval of a flag does not imply the Council's endorsement of all associated views or activities, but recognises the significance of the occasion being marked.
- l) The Council may revoke the approval of any request to fly a flag, if the flag is flown in breach of the planning regulations, the flag protocol, or the conditions of approval.
- m) The decision of the Director of Law and Governance and Monitoring Officer is final.

7.2 Decisions on annual or regular flag flying commitments will be considered and reviewed on a regular basis by the Cabinet.

8. Review of the Policy

8.1 The policy will be reviewed periodically and/or in respect of any future revisions to Government guidance.

APPENDIX A: Order of Precedence:

The Royal Standards

The Union Flag

The national flag of England, Scotland, Wales, a Crown Dependency or a British

Overseas Territory (within those countries, dependencies or territories)

The White Ensign of the Royal Navy

The Ensign of the Royal Air Force

The Blue and Red Ensigns

The Civil Air Ensign

The national flags of England, Scotland, Wales, the Crown Dependencies and the

British Overseas Territories (when displayed elsewhere)

The national flags of other nations (in English alphabetical order as shown below)

The United Nations Flag

The Commonwealth Flag

The British Army Flag (Non-Ceremonial)

Flags of counties and metropolitan cities

Flags of other cities and towns

Banners of Arms (both personal and corporate)

House flags

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