

Divisions Affected – All

CABINET

19 June 2026

Temporary Congestion Charge Scheme Monitoring Report of Place Overview & Scrutiny Committee

RECOMMENDATION

1. The Cabinet is **RECOMMENDED** to —
 - a) Note the recommendations contained in the body of this report and to consider and determine its response to the Place Overview and Scrutiny Committee, and
 - b) Agree that relevant officers will continue to update Scrutiny for 12 months on progress made against actions committed to in response to the recommendations, or until they are completed (if earlier).

REQUIREMENT TO RESPOND

2. In accordance with section 9FE of the Local Government Act 2000, the Place Overview & Scrutiny Committee requires that, within two months of the consideration of this report, the Cabinet publish a response to this report and any recommendations.

INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

3. The Place Overview & Scrutiny Committee considered a monitoring report on the Oxford Temporary Congestion Charge at its meeting on 22 April 2026. This item was brought back to the Committee as previously agreed, approximately six months after the scheme's introduction on 29 October 2025, in order to scrutinise its initial outcomes and implementation.
4. The Committee would like to thank Councillor Andrew Gant, the then Cabinet Member for Transport Management, Paul Fermer, Director of Environment and Highways, and Aron Wisdom, Programme Lead: Central, for attending to present the report and for answering the Committee's questions.

5. The Committee was also grateful to the three public speakers who attended to make representations to the Committee. Their addresses highlighted their concerns about data transparency, local traffic impacts, and the effects on businesses of the congestion charge.

SUMMARY

6. The then Cabinet member emphasised that the primary purpose of the scheme was to reduce congestion at known pinch points and to improve safety. He advised the Committee that the scheme had succeeded in doing so.
7. Councillor Gant 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. He explained that the key performance measure related to bus productivity rather than speed alone and that improvements to bus services had been delivered during the time of the temporary scheme.
8. In its discussion, the Committee focussed on the quality and usability of monitoring data, localised impacts and mitigation, and the impacts on businesses as well as the transition from congestion charge to traffic filters once Botley Road reopens.
9. The Committee makes three recommendations: one about improving data; one about mitigations in areas that have seen more congestion; one about contingency plans.

RECOMMENDATIONS

10. The Committee is pleased that, of its eight recommendations when it considered the proposed temporary congestion charge in August 2025, its recommendation for regular data monitoring reports was accepted and that they have been published.
11. However, members were concerned that the current data are difficult to interpret, lack sufficient context, and do not clearly demonstrate either trends or localised impacts. Members also discussed the impact on businesses and expressed concern that promised monitoring of footfall and spend had been delayed owing to data reliability issues.
12. The Committee was advised that alternative data sources were being validated and that spend data was expected to be published shortly, as well as an independently-run business survey. Members stressed the importance of publishing this information before further decisions were taken.

13. The Committee has no desire to relitigate discussions over whether or not the congestion charge should exist but, given that it does, its impact should be able to be properly monitored. The Committee, therefore, calls on Cabinet to ensure that business monitoring is strengthened and that information is published and publicised as soon as it is validated.

Recommendation 1: *That the Council should ensure that business monitoring is strengthened, with footfall and spend data and survey results published and publicised as soon as validation is complete.*

14. The Committee was told that the scheme had delivered some of its intended benefits so far – including faster bus journeys, increased Park & Ride usage, and reduced congestion in many central areas. However, it was nonetheless the case that, despite anticipated changes broadly aligning with modelling assumptions, some congestion had been displaced to other parts of the network.
15. Monitoring data and local feedback both pointed to rising traffic volumes in some outer routes and suburban areas, including on approaches to the ring road and near the hospital in north and parts of east Oxford.
16. The Committee heard that mitigation measures, such as adjusting traffic signal timings and working with major employers and schools on traffic planning, were already underway to manage these impacts. The Committee welcomed that but recommends that the Council prioritises and publicly reports on such mitigations.
17. This would be to ensure that communities facing extra congestion are not overlooked as the scheme progresses. It would show that improvements in one area are not achieved at an unacceptable cost to another and would show that the Council is actively managing these mitigations.

Recommendation 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.*

18. The Committee's final recommendation arises from the recognition that the transport context in Oxford will soon change again. The temporary congestion charge is set to end when Botley Road reopens (following major works), after which the Council's previously approved traffic filter trial is expected to come into place. These transitions will mark a significant shift in traffic management in and around the city.
19. The Committee, therefore, calls on the Council to ensure it has contingency plans in place ahead of these changes. This could include ready-to-implement measures to address any unexpected surges in traffic or other unforeseen effects during any handover period between the end of the charge and the start of the filters.

20. By planning contingencies now, the Council will be better placed to respond quickly and effectively to any emerging issues, thereby minimising disruption for residents and commuters.
21. This recommendation, if adopted, will benefit the Council by ensuring continuity of the positive outcomes achieved so far – such as improved bus reliability – and by reinforcing public confidence that the second phase of traffic management measures will be introduced smoothly and without avoidable problems.
22. Without appropriate contingency measures, the transition from the congestion charge scheme to the traffic filters could pose risks to network performance and public perception. For instance, any gap or delay between the end of one scheme and the start of another might lead to a rebound in traffic congestion, eroding any gains made over the past months.
23. Additionally, if the reopening of Botley Road or the introduction of traffic filters produces travel conditions that differ from expectations, the absence of a prepared contingency could leave the Council reacting defensively rather than shaping events. This could impact journey times and passenger experience, By ensuring that contingency plans are in place – for example, temporary traffic management tactics or communications strategies – the Council will mitigate these risks.

Recommendation 3: *That the Council should ensure that contingency measures are prepared in advance of the reopening of Botley Road and the implementation of traffic filters.*

FURTHER CONSIDERATION

24. The Committee anticipates that the congestion charge and related measures will feature in its work programme during the 2026/2027 municipal year.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

25. Under Part 6.2 (13) (a) of the Constitution Scrutiny has the following power: 'Once a Scrutiny Committee has completed its deliberations on any matter a formal report may be prepared on behalf of the Committee and when agreed by them the Proper Officer will normally refer it to the Cabinet for consideration.
26. Under Part 4.2 of the Constitution, the Cabinet Procedure Rules, s 2 (3) iv) the Cabinet will consider any reports from Scrutiny Committees.

Anita Bradley, Director of Law and Governance and Monitoring Officer

Annex: Pro-forma Response Template

Background papers: None

Other Documents: None

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