

Keeping the Dialogue Moving: Assembly Feedback on Council Plans

Introduction

On 15 July 2025, 16 members of Oxfordshire's Citizens' Assembly on Travel and Transport reconvened for a follow-up workshop. The session had two main aims:

- To continue involving Assembly members as their recommendations are taken forward by the council.
- To explore a proposed temporary congestion charge for Oxford and ensure Assembly perspectives are included early in the public consultation process.

This report presents participants' feedback on Annex B: the council's initial responses to the Assembly's 20 recommendations, and supports ongoing dialogue to ensure these responses reflect the values, intent, and priorities of the Assembly.

Background

In March 2025, the Citizens' Assembly co-developed 20 recommendations to help Oxfordshire's transport system support health, the economy, and the environment by 2050. These were received by the council and the Advisory Board on 23 March. Since then:

- Council officers developed initial responses to each recommendation, outlining next steps and areas for further exploration.
- The Place Overview and Scrutiny Committee reviewed both the recommendations and responses on 25 June.
- Cabinet approved the initial responses and next steps on 15 July.

To support transparency and continued involvement, the Assembly reconvened that same day. The session, independently facilitated by MutualGain (who also delivered the original Assembly), provided an opportunity for the council to update participants and gather feedback on the alignment between their responses and the Assembly's recommendations. Sixteen of the 34 original Assembly members attended. The group retained the demographic diversity achieved through stratified sortition (see Appendix I).

Keeping the Dialogue Moving: Assembly Feedback on Council Plans

Workshop Process and Approach to Feedback

Participants were provided with printed copies of Annex B at their tables. In four facilitated groups of four, they reviewed a selection of responses, each group receiving a mix of recommendations to ensure broad coverage. For each recommendation, participants rated how well the council's response reflected their expectations using a RAG scale:

- Red = Not very well
- Amber = Somewhat
- Green = Very well

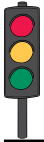
They discussed the responses and provided supporting qualitative feedback.

In total, 11 recommendations were reviewed during the session. To allow all members to comment on all responses, a follow-up survey was circulated. This offered the opportunity to review the remaining recommendations, provide additional RAG ratings (especially where views differed), and submit written feedback.

Workshop notes and survey responses were analysed together to identify key messages and suggestions for each recommendation. Findings are presented in summary tables, which include:

- A synthesis of participant feedback
- A combined RAG rating showing the percentage of Red, Amber, and Green responses, incorporating both workshop and survey input.

This process helps ensure the council's next steps remain grounded in the Assembly's original intentions and supports a collaborative, evolving approach to shaping Oxfordshire's future transport policy.



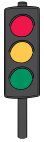
Tracking Progress Against Assembly Intentions

Recommendation Number	RAG Rating	Response Summary
<p>1</p> <p>To reduce congestion and emissions in Central Oxfordshire by maximising the use of park and ride:</p> <p>(a) Use of shuttle services to businesses, schools and hospitals from park and ride</p> <p>(b) Improved cycle connectivity to park and ride and safe cycle storage</p> <p>(c) Increased frequency of buses from park and ride and incentivised use by making them free.</p> <p>(d) Improved connectivity between park and ride.</p> <p>This should commence within 12 months.</p> <p>97% support</p>	<p>Green: 64% Amber: 36%</p>	<p>Participants welcomed the council's response as a positive and realistic starting point. They encouraged faster progress on pilot shuttle schemes and broader engagement, particularly with large employers. Public transport was seen as central, with suggestions for free Park and Ride buses and a balanced funding mix beyond the Workplace Parking Levy. Participants felt cycling infrastructure was under-addressed and asked for more clarity on delivery timelines, funding, and implementation plans.</p>
<p>2</p> <p>Implement standardised ticketing across all of the bus companies in the county. This will make buses easier especially for younger and older people, visitors and people whose first language is not English. Increase overall bus use.</p> <p>94% support</p>	<p>Amber: 62% Green: 23% Red: 15%</p>	<p>Participants broadly supported the council's direction but felt the response missed a key issue: the need to simplify the current ticketing system. Complexity remains a major barrier, especially for occasional users. Participants urged the council to prioritise unified fares, consistent pricing across operators, and simplified platforms. They encouraged stronger leadership in coordinating bus companies and improving public communication about existing schemes. Visibility, accessibility, and multilingual information were all seen as critical. Building shared incentives between operators was seen as essential to support lasting improvements and increase bus use.</p>



Tracking Progress Against Assembly Intentions

Recommendation	RAG Rating	Key takeaways the council should prioritise when developing the next stage of their response
<p>3</p> <p>Sell the vision to the public: inform them about transport and active travel options, and their benefits. Examples: information stands with live feeds, social media campaigns, posters and billboards, regional news and radio, advertising on taxis and public transport</p> <p>94% support</p>	<p>Amber: 60% Green: 40%</p>	<p>Participants welcomed the council's intent to raise awareness of sustainable travel options but felt the response could be strengthened by greater clarity, creativity, and commitment. They encouraged the council to frame messages positively and accessibly, highlighting the benefits of sustainable travel and learning from past communication challenges (e.g. LTNs). Suggestions included using terms like "clean air charge" instead of "congestion charge" to shift public perception. Participants welcomed the development of web-based tools but also stressed the need for inclusive, visible communication beyond digital platforms, through print, events, public spaces, and multilingual channels. Greater transparency around funding and delivery plans was seen as key to building trust.</p>
<p>4</p> <p>Oxfordshire County Council (OCC) to create and administer a 'kite mark' / standard called 'The Oxford Travel Positive Employer' for large companies (e.g over 100 employees). This will generate revenue for OCC to contribute to a ring-fenced fund for active travel, traffic reduction, and low emission travel. Criteria could include introduction of shuttle services for staff, use of EV vehicles, encouraging staff to use buses, shower and change facilities, and encouraging car sharing, with Gold, Silver and Bronze levels for the employers</p> <p>94% support</p>	<p>Amber: 60% Green: 40%</p>	<p>Participants welcomed the council's interest in further developing a kite mark scheme. They encouraged the council to provide clearer detail on its design, including costs, timelines, and how award levels (e.g. gold, silver, bronze) will be defined and assessed. To support employer engagement, participants felt the scheme's benefits for both employers and employees should be clearly communicated. Ensuring credibility was also seen as essential, the kite mark must be backed by meaningful standards and accountability to avoid perceptions of greenwashing.</p>




Tracking Progress Against Assembly Intentions

Recommendation	RAG Rating	Key takeaways the council should prioritise when developing the next stage of their response
<p>5</p> <p>Invest in educating and informing the public about transport and active travel options and their benefits. To sell the vision of a healthier and more connected travel network and increase public buy in for effective implementation. People need to be inspired by the benefits and opportunities of active travel and public transport. Offer carrots in order to make effective change. Education: school programmes, information roadshows, social media campaigns, posters, billboards, advertising (on buses and taxis). Information: Information points in town and city centres with live data, maps, links to support, accessibility features (vision impaired etc.), information about where to find trains, buses, taxi ranks, bicycle rentals etc. Make public knowledge of information points through social media campaigns, regional radio and news (etc.)</p> <p>94% support</p>	<p>Amber: 67% Green: 33%</p>	<p>Participants were pleased with the council's positive response and encouraged a shift toward more concrete action. Some felt the response was too vague and asked for clearer detail on what "giving people opportunities" means in practice. They suggested including specific actions, examples, or case studies to make the response more tangible. Participants also recommended using real-world evidence, such as data from other cities or local pilot schemes, to demonstrate the benefits of behaviour change and build public confidence in the council's approach.</p>
<p>6</p> <p>To improve connectivity in rural areas by ensuring that local communities are listened to by involving them in decision making. Considerations should be given to active travel options and repurposing bridle paths for greenways, rural hubs, car sharing, community travel (mini buses and cars), any other needs identifies by the community, first and last mile options. In terms of accountability evidence MUST be shown that community voices have been listened to in the decision making</p> <p>91% support</p>	<p>Amber: 60% Green: 40%</p>	<p>Participants supported the council's recognition of this recommendation but felt the response lacked clarity on how engagement would happen, when progress would be reviewed, and how work would be funded. They called for a clear plan for co-production, a 12-month check-in, and transparency around funding. The need to define how impact will be measured, particularly in rural areas, was also emphasised. Participants wanted specific, localised ideas, such as repurposing bridleways (e.g. Besselsleigh-Henwood route) for active travel, to be further considered and highlighted that greenways are important for wheelchair users for accessing the countryside.</p>



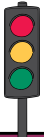
Tracking Progress Against Assembly Intentions

Recommendation	RAG Rating	Key takeaways the council should prioritise when developing the next stage of their response
<p>7</p> <p>Improve community infrastructure in the medical sector. Why? less congestion and reducing car journeys, and reduce number of people coming into Oxford. This is line with liveable neighbourhoods thinking.</p> <p>91% support</p>	<p>Amber: 100%</p>	<p>Participants acknowledged the limits on the council's powers to directly implement this recommendation but felt the response was appropriate in recognising those constraints and engaging relevant stakeholders. They encouraged the council to clearly set out what it can influence or lead and to commit to realistic next steps, even if its role is primarily to convene or advocate. Including a timeline for progressing these actions was seen as important to build transparency, accountability, and momentum.</p>
<p>8</p> <p>Reduce road fatalities and serious injuries by encouraging behaviour change through, for example, enforcements of 20mph limits, using ANPR, more use of speed warnings 'face' signs. Support for residents who want to get involved in community traffic watch initiatives and speed humps. Implement in residential areas, outside schools, and other road fatality hotspots.</p> <p>88% support</p>	<p>Amber: 79% Green: 21%</p>	<p>Participants felt the response showed the issues were being taken seriously but called for greater clarity on concrete actions, timelines, and enforcement plans. They encouraged the council to make firmer commitments, including use of its direct powers, such as installing speed warning signs and to clarify how it is working with Thames Valley Police on enforcement. Concerns were raised about the visibility and effectiveness of current deterrents. While supporting the ambition to reduce road harm, participants questioned deliverability within current budgets and urged the council to prioritise actions transparently.</p>
<p>9</p> <p>Implementing a franchise model between county council and bus companies so that the council takes back control of bus routes, timetables and pricing so that it ensures that it is driven by needs and services, not just profit. Similar to London and Manchester models.</p> <p>88% support</p> 	<p>Amber: 54% Red: 31% Green: 15%</p>	<p>Participants called for greater clarity and commitment regarding the council's exploration of a franchise model. They found the response too vague and asked for more detail on alternative models under consideration, including whether they would deliver similar public benefits in terms of pricing, routes, and control. There was strong support for service models that prioritise public need over profit, and disappointment at the lack of clear leadership or direction. While the inclusion of a timeline was welcomed, participants highlighted risks from local government reform and funding pressures, and called for national coordination to support long-term progress.</p>



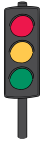
Tracking Progress Against Assembly Intentions

Recommendation	RAG Rating	Key takeaways the council should prioritise when developing the next stage of their response
<p>10 Build new housing developments so that major facilities are within walking distance. This will reduce traffic, encourage health habit, build community and create jobs. We acknowledge sometimes it is supportive for well being for people to get out of their immediate neighbourhood - this proposal does not remove the possibility of people doing that. 88% support</p>	<p>Amber: 54% Red: 31% Green: 15%</p>	<p>Participant views on this recommendation were mixed. Red ratings often reflected frustration with developments already underway, where poor transport links and infrastructure have led to increased car dependency. Participants called for stronger planning controls to prevent further unsustainable development. Some felt the council's response did not adequately address implementation gaps between planning policy and practice. One participant noted that local government reform may shift planning responsibilities, but emphasised the continued need to prioritise affordable, well-located housing supported by public transport and active travel infrastructure.</p>
<p>11 A designated road just for a bus system (exceptions for cyclists, emergency vehicles, blue badge holders and taxis during certain hours). - Frequent service and stops - Subsidies for 60+ - Under 16s- incentivise families. City centre location - moving towards a car free city centre. Reserved/exclusive to buses - not new build, existing roads Long term behaviour change. Depends on a 1st class service, has to be accessible, frequent and affordable (an alternative to having a tram). 88% support</p>	<p>Amber: 43% Red: 31% Green: 26%</p>	<p>Participants felt the council's response lacked the clarity, detail, and ambition needed to deliver a truly car-free city centre. There was concern that the focus on existing schemes risked diluting the Assembly's call for bold, transformative change. Participants asked for more detail on which specific projects are planned, how they align with the recommendation, and what further steps will be taken. They also called for bolder, visible action, such as dedicated bus lanes, and greater transparency around funding, stressing that incremental measures alone will not achieve the desired shift.</p>



Tracking Progress Against Assembly Intentions

Recommendation	RAG Rating	Key takeaways the council should prioritise when developing the next stage of their response
<p>12 Make the city centre car free while being fair and not disadvantaging key groups. The aim would be to reduce congestion, cut emissions, improve environmental and human health and make the city more visitor friendly. Those mainly impacted by this would be car drivers. The intention is to create alternatives for drivers, implementing policies in a phased way so that they have alternatives to use. Alternatives include: strengthening bus networks, making cycling safer, and making the Park and Rides into mobility hubs). It is likely disincentives (sticks) would be needed to encourage people out of cars. 88% support</p>	<p>Amber: 54% Green: 38% Red: 8%</p>	<p>Participants broadly welcomed the intention behind the council's response but felt greater clarity was needed to build public trust and support. They called for clearer reassurance on how essential vehicle users, such as disabled people, carers, and tradespeople, would be protected, with concrete examples of exemptions or accommodations. Participants also urged the council to communicate the benefits of reduced car use more confidently, highlighting gains like cleaner air and safer streets. Finally, they emphasised the importance of outlining viable alternatives to driving, particularly for those who currently lack good transport options.</p>
<p>13 Promote generational change over the next 15 years to shift the next generation to think active travel first, bus second, car third by making bus and bike travel affordable, extending bike programmes for schools, education programmes from primary school all the way through, and children travel free on public transport. This also helps change behaviour of parents. 87% support</p>	<p>Green: 58% Amber: 25% Red: 17%</p>	<p>Participants welcomed the inclusion of the recommendation's proposals in the Sustainable School Travel Strategy and its associated action plan. However, there was concern that the long-term scope of the strategy could lead to certain measures being deprioritised or delayed. Participants encouraged the council to maintain momentum and ensure that early, tangible progress is made on the actions proposed.</p>
<p>14 Introduce mobility hubs types 1 and 2 to make cycling safer, reduce congestion, improve rural connectivity Specifically, type 1 in Banbury and Didcot Type 2 in Chipping Norton, Abingdon, Witney, Wantage. 85% support</p>	<p>Amber: 46% Green: 31% Red: 23%</p>	<p>Participants supported the response but wanted more detail on current plans and delivery timelines. They asked the council to clarify how and when hubs will be implemented and stressed the importance of learning from previous challenges, particularly those experienced with the Eynsham Park & Ride, to improve future delivery.</p>



Tracking Progress Against Assembly Intentions

Recommendation	RAG Rating	Key takeaways the council should prioritise when developing the next stage of their response
<p>15 Introduce a graduated Workplace Parking Levy which must be paid by the employer rather than the employee, and which facilitates reductions and award 'Kite Marks' to those employers that contribute to the COTP and LTCP - exemptions to be decided in a consultation process. 82% support</p>	<p>Amber: 62% Red: 23% Green: 15%</p>	<p>Most participants welcomed the council's commitment to progressing work on the Workplace Parking Levy (WPL), but emphasised the need to align with the Assembly's intent. Several expressed concern that the response appeared to misrepresent the original recommendation, which clearly stated that the levy should be paid by employers, not employees. Participants asked for clarification on whether this was a typo or a policy decision. They strongly supported designing the WPL to protect employees from unfair cost burdens and suggested tools such as kite mark accreditation or targeted exemptions to incentivise responsible employer behaviour.</p>
<p>16 What: reduce driving by commuters, short trips, and school runs. Why: in order to improve health and the environment, and reduce traffic fatalities by: How: 1. Introducing a workplace parking levy to generate income for other travel schemes 2. Encourage car sharing by business, schools and other organisations by introducing apps etc and advertising car share schemes. Reflect in the employer kite mark. 3. Introduction of mobility hubs at train stations. 82% support</p>	<p>Amber: 55% Green: 45%</p>	<p>Participants expressed that most points in this recommendation and response are covered in other recommendations' feedback.</p>



Tracking Progress Against Assembly Intentions

Recommendation	RAG Rating	Key takeaways the council should prioritise when developing the next stage of their response
<p>17 Subsidised travel for 60+ ensuring it is accessible in peak times. Children under 10 free, children 10-16 (or 18) free during school times, funded by WPL and ZEZs 79% support</p>	<p>Amber: 67% Green: 33%</p>	<p>Participants suggested piloting subsidised travel schemes if wider implementation isn't yet possible, to demonstrate impact. There were also calls for more detail on who would be eligible for discounts and how priorities would be set.</p>
<p>18: Implement a congestion charge to cut car usage coming into the town centre and raise money for the county council. This should be in addition to the ZEZ. This would encourage us to use the park and ride. It is important to have alternatives to car use before this is implemented. For instance using the money that is raised to incentivise other transport options. There will need to be exceptions. 74% support</p>	<p>Green: 76.92% Amber: 23.08%</p>	<p>A full report on the congestion charge has been produced separately as part of this workshop and the council's temporary charge consultation.</p> <p>Assembly members welcomed the increased clarity and detail in the council's response, even when they did not agree with all the decisions taken. Views on the proposed £5 congestion charge were mixed: while some noted it aligns with the cost of a return park & ride bus ticket, others felt it was too low to effectively change behaviour. Participants suggested a variable charge based on vehicle size, with higher rates for larger vehicles like SUVs and 4x4s, citing their greater impact on safety and road space. There was also concern that the congestion charge may be more effective than the proposed traffic filters at tackling issues such as weekend congestion at key destinations like Westgate and Oxpens, which remain accessible via Botley Road. Participants emphasised the importance of monitoring the impact of the charge and ensuring fairness in its design.</p>



Tracking Progress Against Assembly Intentions

Recommendation	RAG Rating	Key takeaways the council should prioritise when developing the next stage of their response
<p>19: Trams: develop a north - south and east- west in Oxford that links the park and rides. Trams are sleek, modern, spacious and carry more people than buses. Their energy consumption is also much lower than that of a bus. They provide more capacity than buses and additional room for wheelchair and bicycle users. A tram would help maximise usage of park and rides.</p> <p>74% support</p>	<p>Green: 50% Amber: 40% Red: 10%</p>	<p>Assembly members recalled the challenging and sometimes conflicting discussions they had during the Assembly about the feasibility of a tram system, with expert views divided. Acknowledging that this is a complex and contentious issue, they expressed a clear interest in seeing the council document more transparently why a tram is considered unviable. While the council cited "physical challenges" in its response, members felt this explanation lacked sufficient detail. They recognised that this may be due in part to the scale, cost, and long-term nature of the proposal—as well as the limited specificity in the original recommendation. However, they noted that the Assembly had discussed options such as a tram or tram-like system running along the ring road, and including that detail may have enabled a more targeted response from the council. Overall, while the council's position was broadly as expected, members felt that further exploration of a ring road-aligned tram concept would be valuable. The council's proposal for a "metro-style" bus system was noted, though some expressed scepticism about its effectiveness if buses remain impacted by traffic. One participant reflected that a tram was always likely to be unrealistic for Oxford due to its narrow roads and smaller population, but the group still felt a clearer explanation from the council would be helpful.</p>
<p>20. Recommendation 20: Generate income to enable the recommendations approved yesterday (Saturday), recommendation 12 and 14. We will do this by evolving the ZEZ into a wider congestion zone within the ring road, with fair exemptions/concessions by late 2020s.</p> <p>70% support</p>	<p>Amber: 60% Green: 30% Red: 10%</p>	<p>Assembly members found the council's response on income generation unclear and at times contradictory, particularly in how it addressed the purpose and potential of revenue-raising schemes. While they appreciated the need for caution, the language felt overly indirect, and members were frustrated that the key message had to be inferred. They asked for greater clarity and transparency around how surplus income would be used, including a clear, publicly available reinvestment framework to build trust. Members also emphasised the importance of fair exemptions, particularly for Blue Badge holders, essential service vehicles, and lower-income residents - see their fair road use output from the assembly.</p>

Keeping the Dialogue Moving: Assembly Feedback on Council Plans

Closing Comments

This follow-up workshop provided a valuable opportunity for Assembly members to reflect on how well the council's initial responses align with the spirit and detail of their original recommendations. Members welcomed the council's continued engagement and acknowledged the complexity of delivering transport reform. They appreciated the opportunity to engage in dialogue and highlight where clearer communication or stronger alignment with Assembly intent could be achieved. They welcomed the council's move toward more transparent decision-making and look forward to further opportunities to strengthen this, particularly around income generation, exemptions, and scheme delivery timelines.

This feedback reflects the Assembly's ongoing commitment to shaping a fair, inclusive, and sustainable transport future for Oxfordshire. Continued dialogue, accountability, and co-design will be essential as the council moves from intention to implementation. This report is offered as a constructive tool to support that journey, helping to ensure Assembly values remain at the heart of future decision-making.

MutualGain would like to thank Oxfordshire County Council for its continued commitment to embedding the Citizens' Assembly process into its decision-making. This approach reflects good practice in deliberative democracy and supports more inclusive, transparent, and community-informed policymaking.

