

Division(s) Affected – All

DELEGATED DECISIONS BY CABINET MEMBER FOR TRANSPORT

16 JULY 2026

Proposed Changes to the MyBus Oxfordshire Ticketing Scheme

Report by Director of Environment and Highways

RECOMMENDATION

The Cabinet Member is **RECOMMENDED** to:

Approve the following changes to the MyBus ticketing scheme:

- a) Implementation of ticket price increases from 1 August 2026 or as soon as practically possible after this date.
- b) Delegate authority to the Director for Environment & Highways, in consultation with the Cabinet Member, to cancel or postpone the potential further increase in fares in January 2027 – where alternative funding is identified or where the August 2026 change has resulted in the overall financial position of the MyBus scheme remaining within the available budget.
- c) Utilisation of the remaining c.£300k BSIP/Bus Grant funding carried forward from 2025/26 to support the costs of the MyBus scheme in 2026/27 (if required).
- d) Introduction of a new 28-day (monthly) MyBus ticket product for both adults and young people from 1 April 2027 in line with Government Enhanced Partnership requirements, giving delegated authority for the price to be set by the Director for Environment & Highways in consultation with the Cabinet Member.
- e) Introduction of a simplified reimbursement approach for smaller operators, whereby those with expected monthly reimbursements below £50 receive a fixed payment for participating in the scheme.
- f) Introduction of a standard refund policy for MyBus tickets across all participating operators, to ensure a consistent approach.

Executive Summary

1. The MyBus multi-operator ticketing scheme, introduced with revenue support from DfT Bus Grant, has been successful in delivering a simple, integrated and good value offer, supporting increased bus use across Oxfordshire. Demand continues to grow, particularly for day tickets and among young people (including those aged 16-18 inclusive who would otherwise pay adult fares).
2. Bus Grant revenue funding has been allocated to MyBus for the next 3 years, at £900k per annum. However, current and projected costs are significantly above this available funding. Without further changes, the scheme is forecast to cost between £2.6m (best case) and £3.2m (worse case) in 2026/27, which is unsustainable. This paper outlines the financial position, options considered, and a recommended approach to ensure the scheme's sustainability while supporting the council's strategic transport objectives, government statutory guidance and benefits to bus passengers.
3. Evidence gathered from a survey in 2025 indicates that current usage is primarily driven by value for money, with many passengers using the ticket for single-operator journeys. While this supports affordability, it means the scheme is not being entirely used in accordance with its primary objective of providing an integrated ticketing solution for multi operator journeys.
4. A scheme review has been undertaken to identify a sustainable approach that maintains integration, simplicity and affordability as much as possible, while reducing the funding gap and aligning with [Government Enhanced Partnership \(EP\) requirements](#).
5. The recommendations represent a necessary move towards greater financial sustainability for the scheme while preserving the core benefits, supporting the long-term viability of MyBus within constrained public funding and meeting DfT Enhanced Partnership requirements. This recommendation does not preclude short term targeted discounts being offered on MyBus tickets in the future.
6. A revenue generation charge for operators was considered to reflect any additional bus use created by the scheme. However, it is difficult to robustly demonstrate how much patronage growth can be directly attributed to MyBus. The potential savings were also considered insufficient to justify the risk of operators withdrawing from the scheme due to reduced financial viability, which would limit its availability and reduce passenger benefits.

Background and Context

7. The MyBus multi operator bus ticketing scheme has seen strong uptake since its launch in July 2024 – especially among young people – which led to operator reimbursement costs far exceeding the original £700k budget in 2025/26. To mitigate this, a price increase was applied to the weekly tickets on

11 January 2026 alongside the reallocation of other funding (approved at CMD on 11 December 2025). This successfully enabled the scheme to be financially supported for 2025/26, however further changes are necessary to ensure the scheme is financially viable in 2026/27 and beyond.

8. In addition, new Government guidance on minimum standards for Enhanced Partnerships states that multi operator ticketing is to be provided for the full range of ticket products. This means that OCC will need to introduce a monthly ticket option, as well as the prevailing day and week ticket options, by 1 April 2027.
9. The current £3 national fare cap for single journeys is confirmed until 31 March 2027; however, there is currently no clarity on arrangements beyond this date. If the cap is increased or withdrawn and MyBus prices are not adjusted accordingly this will result in a significant further increase in scheme reimbursement costs, placing additional financial pressure on the scheme.
10. The Government has recently announced a Department for Transport-funded 'Great British Summer Savings' scheme, offering free bus travel for children aged 5 to 15 during August 2026. Should operators choose to take part, sales of MyBus Young Person day and week tickets are expected to fall significantly during that month. However, this may be partly offset by increased adult travel, including additional MyBus adult day and week ticket purchases by those travelling with children. The overall reduction in scheme costs is therefore likely to be lower than the fall in Young Person ticket sales alone would suggest.

The Principles and Process Applied in Conducting the Review

11. The purpose of the review is to bring the scheme back within an affordable budget envelope, in line with the following scheme aims – in priority order:
 - a) To provide a simple and integrated ticketing product for the whole of Oxfordshire, which facilitates multi-operator journeys;
 - b) To provide a good value ticket offer, in particular to young people aged 16 to 18 who would otherwise have to purchase an adult ticket; and
 - c) To encourage greater bus use.
12. Operator sales and usage data and passenger survey data were reviewed to determine how and why the tickets are being used. This showed that value for money appears to be the primary driver of use, combined with evidence that many passengers use the ticket predominantly to travel on services provided by a single operator. This suggests the scheme is more likely to be encouraging switching from existing ticket types rather than predominantly facilitating multi-operator journeys.
13. A long list of possible scheme change options was created in collaboration with the Enhanced Partnership's Making Buses More Attractive working group. Whilst reducing the cost of the scheme was a pressing factor, the list also includes options for improving the scheme.

14. Each option was then scored (and weighted) against the following criteria:
- Budget impact (30%);
 - Equalities impact (25%);
 - Integration (20%);
 - Simplicity (15%); and
 - Value for money (for passengers) (10%).
15. The highest scoring options were reviewed for feasibility to come up with the final list of recommendations.

Options Considered

16. The table at Annex 4 presents 17 options that were reviewed, along with their principal advantages and disadvantages (Pros and Cons) and rankings, following a scoring process.
17. The recommendations to introduce a simplified reimbursement approach for smaller operators and to introduce a standard refund policy for MyBus tickets were not assessed as part of the options appraisal. These are intended to improve the administration and consistency of the scheme and are not expected to have a material impact on costs, demand, or user outcomes.
18. A summary of the recombination's is:
- **Introduce ticket price increases**
Implement a price increase from 1 August 2026 or as soon as possible thereafter, as set out in the table below, to bring fares in line with comparable commercial products while maintaining scheme affordability into the future.

Should the August changes enable the required savings then the further increase for January 2027 may be reduced or cancelled.

Ticket type	Metric	Current	Aug 2026	Potential future change Jan 2027
Adult Day	Price (£)	£6.50	£8.50	£9.00
	£ change	–	£2.00	£0.50
	% change	–	30.8%	5.88%
Young Person Day	Price (£)	£3.50	£5.50	£6.00
	£ change	–	£2.00	£0.50
	% change	–	57.14%	9.09%
Adult Week	Price (£)	£30.00	£34.00	£35.00
	£ change	–	£4.00	£1.00
	% change	–	13.33%	2.94%
	Price (£)	£17.00	£24.00	£27.00

Young Person	£ change	–	£7.00	£3.00
Week	% change	–	41.18%	12.50%

It should be noted that the proposed cost of the Adult day ticket is more than the respective Smartzone and Stagecoach countywide ticket and slightly less than the Go Ahead countywide equivalent. The YP day ticket is 65% of the adult price which is broadly comparable to the commercial ratio. OCC has no direct control over the setting of commercial fares.

- Apply the carry forward from 2025/26**
Utilise the remaining c.£300k BSIP/Bus Grant funding carried forward from 2025/26 to support operator reimbursement of the MyBus scheme in 2026/27.
- Introduce a 28-day ticket product**
Develop and implement a new 28-day (monthly) ticket for both adults and young people from 1 April 2027, in line with DfT Enhanced Partnership requirements. Pricing will be set to align with comparable operator products and would consider any future changes to the National Fare Cap. The final prices will be agreed by the Director in consultation with the Cabinet Member under delegated decision.
- Simplify arrangements for smaller operators**
Introduce a simplified reimbursement approach for smaller operators, whereby those with expected monthly reimbursements below £50 receive a fixed payment based on an agreed calculation. This would reduce administrative burden and support wider operator participation in the scheme.
- Introduce a MyBus ticket refund policy**
Establish a standardised refund policy for MyBus tickets across all operators to ensure a fair and consistent customer experience. This would be based on a non-pro-rata calculation, whereby refunds are determined by deducting the cost of equivalent shorter-duration tickets used (e.g. day tickets), with the remaining balance returned to the customer.

Corporate Policies and Priorities

19. The MyBus scheme supports a range of Council policies, primarily the Strategic Plan, the Local Transport & Connectivity Plan and the Bus Service Improvement Plan.
20. The MyBus scheme supports Oxfordshire's BSIP goal to make buses easier to access and understand. MyBus also supports other strategic objectives including promoting greater use of the public transport network, tackling the climate emergency and inequalities, whilst also meeting the DfT Enhanced Partnership guidance (see above).

21. Consequently, MyBus is aligned with and directly supports the County Council's priorities for fostering an inclusive, integrated, and sustainable transportation network, contributing to making Oxfordshire a greener, fairer and healthier county.

Financial Implications

22. The primary objective of this decision is to bring MyBus costs within the available budget envelope.
23. Without any intervention it is estimated that the scheme will face up to a £2.3m deficit for 2026/27. This takes into account an expected slight reduction in reimbursement costs during August 2026, due to the Government's 'Great British Summer Savings' fares offer which will offer free travel to 5-15's inclusive.
24. The proposed fare increases are expected to reduce scheme costs in two ways:
- by increasing passenger contributions towards ticket costs; and
 - by reducing demand as some passengers switch to single-operator products.
25. This is forecast to reduce scheme costs for 2026/27 to c.£1.1m, bringing them within an affordable level when including the carry-forward funding available.
26. The below table compares the estimated financial positions for the current financial year with and without the recommended interventions.

2026/27 Estimated financial positions	Without interventions (worst case scenario) (£)	With interventions (£)
Original Budget	900,000	900,000
<i>Plus</i> carry forward funding	n/a	300,000
<i>Less</i> estimated cost	3,256,745	1,239,491
End position	-2,356,745	-39,491

27. The proposed fare increases for January 2027 will only be applied if required to enable reimbursement delivery within the assigned budget. It should be noted that the volume of sales of the MyBus products post price increases is only an estimate, based on recent utilisation and single operator product availability. The budget shortfall will be funded through additional Bus Grant, in agreement with DfT.
28. The c.£300k BSIP/Bus Grant funding carried forward from 2025/26 will only be used if required, specifically if ticket sales are above the assumptions in the table.

29. For 2027/28 and 2028/29 it is anticipated that the impacts of the interventions will have been fully realised and the scheme costs will sit within the £900k budget. If the interventions result in surplus budget there will be further consideration as to how this is utilised which could result in a further MyBus fare review.

Comments checked by:

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Legal Implications

30. These proposals do not represent changes to the Council's Local Transport Delivery Plan submitted to the DfT in March 2026.
31. The terms of the Oxfordshire Countywide Multi-Operator Ticket Scheme state that ticket prices are set by the County Council, and that at least one month's written notice will be given to operators of any changes to ticket prices. The Council intends to comply with this requirement.
32. In April 2026 the Government introduced new minimum standards for Enhanced Partnerships as a condition of future DfT bus funding. One such requirement states; "Partners in the EP are expected to offer and promote a full range of multi-operator ticketing products at little or no premium compared to comparable single-operator fares". The MyBus scheme enables compliance with this condition.
33. Whilst the Council has powers under the Bus Services Act 2017 to enforce membership by operators, the MyBus scheme has been set up under a voluntary arrangement in keeping with the Enhanced Partnership model. The Enhanced Partnership was entered and is operated in accordance with the provisions of the Transport Act 2000.

Comments checked by:

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Staff Implications

34. There are no anticipated impacts on staffing.

Equality & Inclusion Implications

35. The Equalities Impact Assessment (EQIA) for the proposed changes to the MyBus Oxfordshire Ticketing Scheme indicates that there likely to be adverse

effects on several protected and vulnerable groups. The full assessment can be found at Annex 5.

36. Groups most affected include younger people, women (including those pregnant or on maternity leave), Black, Asian and minority ethnic communities, those on lower incomes, rural residents and carers. These groups are statistically more reliant on bus services and may be disproportionately disadvantaged by fare increases. Groups that are able to benefit from a concessionary bus pass, such as older and disabled people, will be less affected.
37. Weekly tickets are currently only available to purchase via a mobile app, reflecting technical constraints linked to revenue apportionment between operators, with no alternative purchase options. Emerging policies relating to mobile phone use in schools may create additional challenges for access to MyBus weekly (and potentially future monthly) tickets and as a result, there may be accessibility impacts for young people. While options to address this are being explored, including operator support for purchasing tap-on tap-off technology to enable capped fares, a solution is unlikely in the short term.

Sustainability Implications

38. The Climate Impact Assessment (CIA) for the proposed changes to the MyBus Oxfordshire Ticketing Scheme indicates an overall negative climate and social outcome, with a total score of -18 points. The full assessment can be found at Annex 6.
39. Previous Climate Impact Assessment and associated advice on this topic have been taken into account as far as practicable in developing the recommended approach. It is important to note that it is difficult to robustly evidence the extent to which any increase in patronage can be directly attributed to MyBus, due to the range of external factors influencing demand and the absence of directly comparable pre-scheme data. Collaborative publicity of alternative day, week and monthly single-operator tickets will mitigate the impact of MyBus price increases for a significant proportion of users.

Risk Management

40. Key risks and mitigations aligned with the actions in this report are listed in Annex 7.
41. The risks of proceeding with the proposal are considered lower than maintaining the current position, as scheme costs are unaffordable within the identified budget. Ticket price increases are not expected to significantly reduce bus use, as many passengers are likely to switch to alternative single-operator products.

Consultations

42. No new consultations have been carried out to inform this paper, however consideration has been given to previous engagement as per the below.
43. An online survey using bus operator mailing lists was conducted from August to October 2025, which gathered feedback from 110 bus users across Oxfordshire to assess the impact and user experience of the MyBus ticket scheme. Half of respondents reported increased bus usage due to the availability of MyBus tickets, which are valued for cost savings (56%), convenience (39%), and flexibility to travel across multiple operators (49%). The tickets were primarily used for commuting, education, leisure, and shopping.
44. The Citizens' Assembly convened by the Council gathered public perspectives on improving the county's transport system. Participants expressed a desire for a transport network that is affordable, reliable, inclusive, and environmentally responsible.

Paul Fermer Director for Environment & Highways

Annex 1:	The MyBus Scheme in 2025/26
Annex 2:	Operator sales and usage data insights
Annex 3:	Price benchmarking
Annex 4:	Options ranking
Annex 5:	Equalities Impact Assessment (EQIA)
Annex 6:	Climate Impact Assessment (CIA)
Annex 7:	Risks and mitigations

Background papers: [Previous Cabinet Member Decision on Proposed Changes to the MyBus Ticketing Scheme, December 2025](#)

Other Documents: [Department for Transport Enhanced Partnership guidance](#)

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