

# Langford Village Bus Service

---

Cllr Calum Miller, LVCA AGM, 3 October 2022





# Background context: Oxfordshire (1)

---

- From 2010 to 2020, central government funding to local government fell by 50%. Over that period, Council Tax and business rates rose but total local government expenditure fell by 25%.
- As part of a series of cuts, in 2016, the previous, Conservative administration at Oxfordshire County Council (OCC) decided to withdraw bus subsidies from the budget.
- Bus services now have to be commercially viable or receive funding from special allocations, such as the sums paid by developers to fund public services when building new homes (“section 106 monies”).

# Background context: Oxfordshire (2)

---

- Bus companies will only offer to add a loop to an existing service if this allows them to make use of a bus and driver that would otherwise be unused (e.g. if there is a 30 minute lay-over at the end of a point-to-point route)
- Bus companies will not risk adding a loop if it could delay more profitable journeys (e.g. the S5 service from Bicester to Oxford)
- The more cost/ adaptation/ risk involved in extending a service, the more subsidy the bus companies will seek in return for offering it.
- Where users have a free bus pass, the bus company claim back for the journey but only receive a portion of the full fare. So more journeys are needed to make the route viable.

# Background context: the national bus industry

- Pandemic hit passenger numbers
- Post-Brexit driver shortages hit driver numbers
- Fuel inflation hit operating costs
- Industry experts describe this as an “unprecedented crisis”
- Huge government support during the pandemic but now uncertain, unpredictable

## Bristol Community Transport bus firm to stop trading amid cost of living crisis

WEST COUNTRY | TRANSPORT | BRISTOL | FIRSTGROUP | Tuesday 23 August 2022 at 4:02pm



ITV News understands key services like the MetroBus M1 will be taken over by First Bus  
Credit: First West of England

## Bournemouth's Yellow Buses collapses after 120 years of service - putting hundreds of jobs at risk

The 120-year-old bus company fell into administration last week after facing financial difficulties

NEWS By Hannah Baker Business Editor  
10:15, 4 AUG 2022

f t e Comments



# Key recent developments in Langford

---

- The contract held by Red Rose for the 27 service was due to expire on 7 September.
- Over the summer, Oxfordshire County Council (OCC) asked bus companies to tender for a service from Langford Village to Bicester town centre.
- The bids were 21-44% higher than the cost of the Red Rose service.
- Red Rose told OCC that passenger utilization had averaged 5.9 journeys a day (less than 3 return journeys and less than one journey per bus).
- OCC could not justify increasing the cost to public funds to provide the service, especially given low usage.
- Services therefore stopped on 7 September.

# Options

---

**Option 1:  
regular,  
commercial  
service**

This would restore some kind of regular service – probably by attaching it to an existing service

---

Challenge: this was tested in the recent tender and the bids were not affordable; only more money or more passengers could change that equation

---

---

**Option 2:  
less  
regular,  
local  
service**

This would find a way to provide a local service (e.g. a “Langford Loop”) that ran perhaps twice a day

---

Challenges: lower frequency would make it less convenient for users; how to fund the service

---

---

**Option 3:  
on-  
demand,  
local  
service**

This would offer residents the chance to book and share a service

---

Challenges: more bespoke likely to be more expensive; how to coordinate lift-sharing and cost-sharing

---

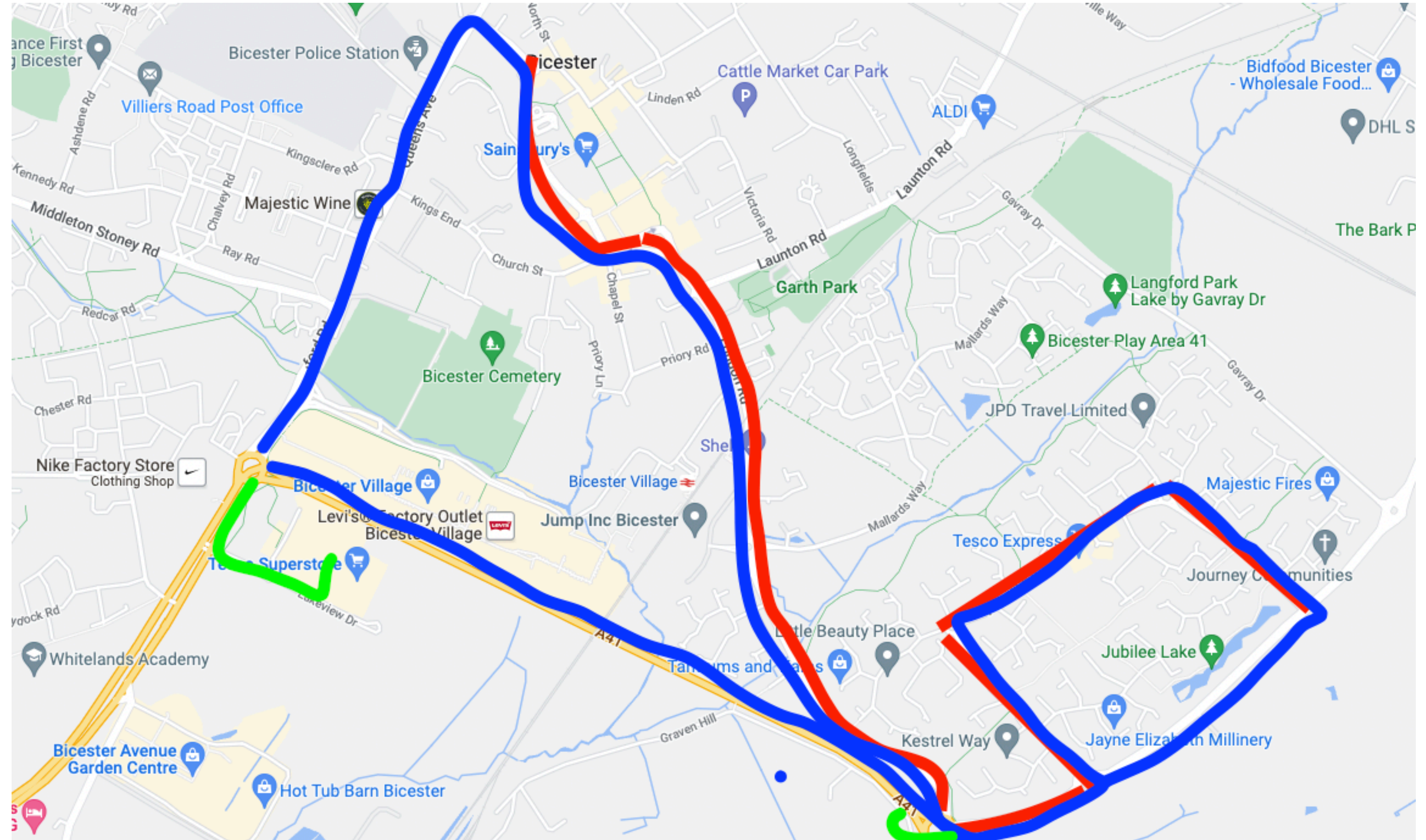
# Key questions

- Which would be the **key stopping points** on any route?
- What's the **minimum frequency** that would serve users?
- What's the **maximum single journey fare** that would be acceptable to users?
- How could we **drive up usage** to make a service sustainable?
- Are there any better **alternatives**?



# Local route options

---





# Next steps

---

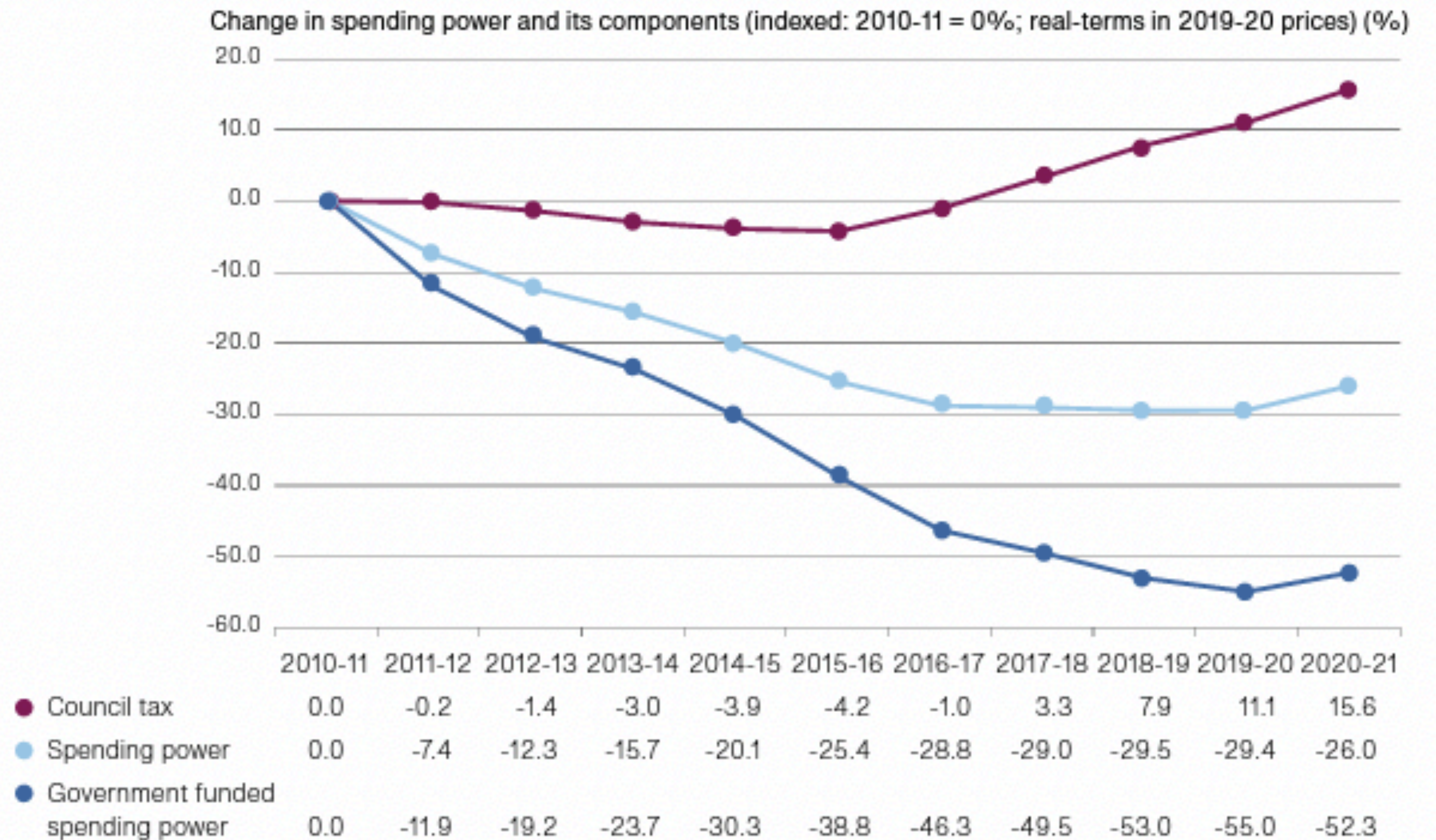
- Keen to have a “bus users group” to help develop options; those interested, please email [calum.miller@oxfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:calum.miller@oxfordshire.gov.uk)
- Aware that many users are not necessarily online so depend on community champions to spread the word

# Annex: Change in funding

**Figure 5**

Change in components of spending power in English local authorities 2010-11 to 2020-21

Government-funded spending power has reduced by more than 50% since 2010-11



- Source: <https://www.nao.org.uk/reports/the-local-government-finance-system-in-england-overview-and-challenges/#downloads>