Council 25 February 2025

Item 8: Budget 2026/27 and Medium Term Financial Strategy

Conservative Group amendment

The Conservative Group is proposing a responsible and community-focused amendment to the 2026/27 budget. Our approach prioritises residents, frontline services, and cost discipline, while ensuring value for money.

We propose removing the following allocations:

- **£411,726** currently allocated to reserves.
- **£100,000** for the Guildford Car Park lighting project. We believe this project should be reconsidered through proper scrutiny due to concerns regarding overall costs and scope, with a view to potentially delivering it from next year's budget if justified.
- **£14,009** increase to member allowances*.

This reflects our belief that residents should come first, and that discretionary spending and internal increases should be carefully controlled during financially challenging times.

We propose reinvesting these funds into the following priorities:

- **£353, 803 – Council Tax Freeze (2026/27)**
  Delivering a council tax freeze to support households facing ongoing cost-of-living pressures.
- **£48,433 – Strengthening Fly-Tipping Enforcement**
  Increasing the proposal from one to two enforcement officers, increasing capacity further to tackle environmental crime and protect our rural communities.
- **£50,000 – Station Parking Feasibility Study**
  Supporting commuters, reducing inappropriate parking in residential areas, and strengthening sustainable transport links. Funding towards a feasibility study into expanding parking at:
  - o   Charlbury Station
  - o   Kingham Station
  - o   Hanborough Station
- **£70,000 – Youth Sport Grant Scheme**
  Launching a new grant programme, administered by the Community Funding Officer, to support grassroots youth sport across West Oxfordshire to promote better health, opportunities, and community engagement.

*Officer comment – this assumes a 0% increase to members allowances for 2026/27, which would require a separate decision following consultation with the Council's Independent Remuneration Panel.