

**Local Government Act 2003: Section 25
Supplementary Report by the Executive Director of Resources &
Section 151 Officer (Chief Finance Officer) based on the
Conservative Independent Alliance Group budget amendments**

Introduction

1. This paper should be read in conjunction with Section 3 of the Cabinet's Budget and Business Planning Report 2024/25 to 2026/27 which sets out my view of the robustness of the budget estimates recommended by the Cabinet and the adequacy of the level of reserves as required by the Local Government Act 2003. My assurance statement sets out that these are both adequate.
2. This paper sets out an assessment of how the budget changes proposed by the Conservative Independent Alliance Group impact on my assurance statement.
3. It is not the role of the S25 assurance statement to comment on the precise mix of changes to expenditure plans and the savings then required to match the funding available, providing the overall combination results in a balanced budget and the estimates on which the calculation is based are robust.
4. The council is required to have due regard to this report when making decisions on the budget. The law expects councillors to consider this advice and not set it aside lightly.

Budget Assumptions

5. The following paragraphs set out the changes to the budget assumptions made, together with an assessment of their risk:
 - a) Use of Reserves – the amendments proposed utilize £0.1m of earmarked reserves to balance the budget in 2024/25. This is insignificant given the scale of the budget and available reserves.
 - b) Capital Programme - the budget proposals include a reduction of £1.0m in the funding of the capital programme (met from revenue) alongside the removal of the associated scheme for Transport/Mobility Hubs. Therefore, a balanced programme is proposed.
 - c) Demand led pressures – the amendments proposed remove the investments in home to school transport & Independent Travel of £1.0m in 2024/25. However, these are offset by additional equal investment to complement enhanced Oxfordshire Way provision for Children's Services and for developing a model of resource bases in mainstream educational settings.

Conservative Independent Alliance - Section 3 amendments

Level of total reserves

6. The amendments to the Earmarked Reserves and General Balances Policy Statement at Conservative Independent Alliance Section 4.6 do not impact negatively on the overall level of Earmarked Reserves across the period of the MTFS. The amendments include a proposal which increases the level of reserves over the medium term due to the postponement of use of £1.8m funding held in the prudential borrowing reserve to forward fund the revenue cost of the Workplace Parking Levy in 2024/25.

Assurance Statement of the Chief Finance Officer

7. The amendments proposed for 2024/25 and across the Medium Term Financial Strategy to 2026/27 provide a very similar overall financial position as that in the Cabinet's MTFS, with a balanced budget for 2024/25. For 2025/26, the amendments proposed provide a gap between estimated spend and funding streams of £13.5m (compared to £13.9m proposed by Cabinet) and for 2026/27 the amendments proposed provide a gap between estimated spend and funding streams of £0.4m (compared to -£0.1m proposed by Cabinet).
8. As Section 151 officer, I can formally report that in my view the budget amendments proposed by the Conservative Independent alliance Group are robust and the level of reserves adequate, as required by the Local Government Act 2003.

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Executive Director of Resources and Section 151 Officer

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