

My first and largest question is what budget is available to the council for open spaces?
And over what years would this budget be released?
Who determines how this budget will be split amongst the various spaces?
Do all spaces get a proportion or will it be allocated to the space that merits the most improvement?

I feel this budget information is very important to share with the community at this point in time, so when the public are assessing the merits (including estimated costs!) they have visibility over what funds are likely to be available.

It's all very well to like the strategy and support various options, but if there is no means to turn the strategy into reality, then the strategy is a failure.

I assume the next challenge is funding!!

It is very pleasing to see that the council is taking a long term view on how to change things and has invested in a comprehensive review. Given the enormity of the cost of the overall project, it would be appropriate for the first phase of the changes to be the improvement to existing playgrounds, given their comparatively low cost and huge immediate benefit.

Please include an option to do none of these and save money. Council tax etc. is already too high.
If, for example, the cricket club put up money to develop their nets, subject to local approval, go for it.
On the other hand, who is going to pay for a skate park? I have three young children whose afternoons and weekends are already filled with enriching experiences currently on offer in Goring (Football, Cricket, Ballet, Tennis and enjoying the beautiful natural countryside we are lucky enough to live in). I don't see the need for any further capital to be spent on youth enrichment.
Goring is a lovely place as it is. And I would live nowhere else.
Please advise your councillors to do nothing beyond upkeep of the local services they are responsible for, and not to waste time or money on reports.

Which brings me to my final point, the incredible cost of all this, at a time when most families are having to make economies. I am told 'there will be grants', but unless you have discovered the whereabouts of the Magic Money Tree, those grants are also coming out of our taxes. Most grants are one-offs for individual projects. Has the cost of on-going maintenance been discussed, and properly costed, as I can see no mention of what this will be? Given that the company doing this survey have noted that the parking barriers at the Sheepcote field have not been given a coat of paint in years, the tree guards had not been removed after twenty years, the seats are in poor condition and that after the planting of the Jubilee Garden, there seemed to be no plan for its maintenance, I hope more thought has been given to this than is in the document. Having been involved over a working life in a number of projects, I know that enthusiasm for new things is always keen, and there are frequently volunteers for a one-off job, but the boring, on-going slog of keeping things in order thereafter is more difficult, and always more costly than originally envisaged.

I prefer option 4 for Sheepcot or option 2 if money is an issue.

Our first comment on the strategy document is on funding and how the proposed changes would be paid for. We assume funding is not unlimited and so it would be helpful to know what funds are available, how this compares to the expected costs and which proposals would therefore be prioritised.

Beware of cost implications. Spend wisely and improve current facilities.

I hope whatever is decided there will be enough money put aside for continued maintenance. A case in point is the Jubilee Gardens which cost a great deal of money and is a disgrace as it has not been maintained. They also stop safe pedestrian access to Sheepcot.

In the next stage it would be helpful to have comparative examples to help frame the costs, I can imagine (as many have mentioned to me!) that most of us can't imagine how these items add up to the costs given, this is of course because we are on the whole not planning, buying or building play equipment, cricket nets or pavilions on a regular basis, I think it would help frame things to give an example that is tangible e.g. we know that the playground in Blewbury cost £xx, or the cost of the changing rooms in Y local village was £xx.

I presume the GPC is not expecting to fund all the improvements . Individual clubs will have access to grants that Councils can not access . I am certain some will have considerable reserves already (eg Tennis Club rumoured to have £90K)
This comment also applies to activities such as the Summer of Play . The Youth Club used to get the Oxford Association to bring instructors and equipment to the village at no cost .

In the next stage it would be helpful to have comparative examples to help frame the costs, as well as plans for maintaining the facilities once in place.

However, I feel that we have been requested to provide feedback on the report without sufficient context of what is a realistic outcome for the village. In particular there is no indication of what level of budget/funding is actually available to support any of the recommendations contained within the report. It is very easy for us to give feedback and say this all looks and sounds wonderful and we want it all, however, if there are limited funds available then a prioritisation of where the money should be spent is quite critical and likely to be missing from much of the public feedback. As a rough estimate (using the context of the costs highlighted in the report) I estimate that the minimum cost of the works would be as follows:

Insert table of number, ranging from total cost to the village of £158200 --> £3419000 using figures in the report.

Based on a reading of the latest publicly available accounts on the Goring Parish Council website it appears that the parish council has total available reserves of c.£600k of which c.£250k is already earmarked for other projects/expense areas (admittedly £20k of this is for playground equipment so is related to the open spaces strategy). Therefore even in the lowest spend range there is a shortfall of in excess of £1 million of funding (this rises to £3 million in the highest range). Without any context of how this funding gap could or would be addressed (e.g. are there grants from county or national government available) or the extent to which local sports clubs can or would assist with funding (for example I understand that the Goring Robins could likely be eligible for a football funding grant towards a significant proportion of the cost of a 3G pitch and that the cricket club would raise all of the funding for the move of the cricket nets to the existing bowling green location) I don't believe that we have been provided with the full and relevant information to inform our feedback,.

With that context however, please see my feedback on each of the options below.

I think the Thirlwall Associates report is a good basis for further work such as costing, obtaining funding, budgeting and setting priorities.

Whatever is done, do not forget maintenance and ongoing minor works. Many of the existing deficiencies identified in the report could have been dealt with under this heading. (Goring is not the only place where facilities are neglected to the point where they need to be replaced, instead of being maintained in good order.)

Also, it would be good to know how will those improvements be funded.

I do wonder how much budget there is for all this - there are some large sums quoted here and imagine it would take many years to get everything on this wish list done.

Do the PC really have the funds to create equivalent facilities for bowls and croquet elsewhere in the village? I thought not.

Priority should be replacing Pavilion and extending car parking spaces above all else. It's not clear: 1) who is funding 2) any conditions of funding 3) how much funding is available

How much money will be available to support these new facilities? If there is no likelihood of the required funds for some of the suggested options, then this should be stated openly in the report and the options discarded.

The next phase of this strategy should include some estimate of likely budget and the optimum way to invest it for maximum benefit and a pragmatic view of what is possible.

Provide more detail on costs and options for the community to feed into (some of the proposed has significant spans of potential costs!)

One final question: what budget did you give to the consultants to work within, for developing these proposals?

Also Major issue with the use of comparative costs in the report: £1-£1.5m stated for a 3G pitch, but this would immediately generate significant income for the Council as owners of the pitch. (This could be quite easily quantified based on local pitch usage, which is maxed out; income would be >£80,000 per year, with Robins currently spending £40,000pa on winter training facility hire outside of the village). Also FA grant funding would cover a significant chunk of the capital outlay. This could be money-making for the Council long-term, or at least very low cost overall.

As user of tennis and football, I would love new and extended Clubhouse, but this will not be a public space. Would Robins and Tennis clubs pay for this, or would Council charge increased rent? People being asked to give feedback without knowing how much these things will actually cost the Council – is it £1million or nothing?!

The review has some great suggestions for improvements but many of these require significant financial input. So I am concerned whether these are just aspirations that will sadly never come to fruition. I haven't seen anything on how these projects will actually be funded or the timeline of spend. Also presuming funds are limited then tough decisions will be necessary as to which projects to go ahead with or the order of them. If this is the case, how will improvements at one site be deemed more important to prioritise/proceed with than another? The questionnaire to households could have gone further to identify what the residents considered to be the priorities for improvements.

The absence of how the projects will be funded may also have fuelled concern from some residents that council funds would be used on projects they do not consider relevant to them and thereby deem these projects are taking funds away from other local amenities especially given the significant costs included in the report. Whereas in reality I imagine the projects will largely be funded by various grants, lottery funding, the FA etc. Also with some significant housing developments already passed and currently in planning consultation there will be funds available from Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL). The various source of funds needs to be communicated to the local community.