

Place and Asset Working Group meeting notes

Weds 2026-01-28 – 10:30 – Tilia House, Limetree Rd, Goring

Present: Cllr Toby Thurston (chair), Cllr Robin Williamson, Cllr David Bermingham, Mr Kevin Saunders, Facilities Manager, and Mr Nick Mallen, Deputy Clerk

1 Review of completed actions

Completed actions were noted as part of the discussion of each topic below.

2 Discussion

2.1 Welcome to Kevin Saunders

KS has now started work in the new Facilities Manager role and will be working 70–80 hours per month (about 2–2.5 days per week). TT pointed out that the PAWG could easily generate lots of work for KS, so we agreed it would be useful to review how much time PAWG tasks are fitting into the agreed hours in a few months time.

2.2 Benches

KS and TT reported that the three new benches purchased with help from MIGGS were installed by M&C on Monday 26 Jan as planned. TT has agreed with the Clerk to purchase some identifying stickers for them, at a cost of £30.

Action: TT

TT also reported despite having the plan and budget for mending some of the existing benches round the village, agreed last summer, no work has been started yet. The three urgent repairs are the first bench on the left in Rectory Gardens, and the two collapsing benches in Sheepcot. Need to assess if they can be repaired, or whether replacement would be more cost effective. KS agreed to organize this assessment by end Feb, and supervise any repair, weather permitting, over the next 2–3 months, with assistance from NM as needed.

Action: KS

2.3 Weeding plan for 2026

We reviewed the weeding plan that DB has created, and agreed that DB should present it to full council on 8 Feb for adoption, once it has been updated with details of the new weed burner device that has been purchased, and with some details about how KS plans to supervise manual weed clearance by burner and or machine so that we stay within the law on health and safety issues.

Action: DB

2.4 Phone box

RW presented a plan from The Goring Art Space Project for transforming the phone box into a miniature art gallery. The plan looks good, but there are some final details about costs required before we can present it to full council. In particular on the costs of the initial refurbishment and the cost of getting our solicitors to review the proposed rental scheme. RW will find out more detail on these points and aim to present a complete proposal to Council at the March meeting

Action: RW

2.5 Oxfordshire Together volunteer days

Footpath maintenance

Agreed that the next volunteer day would be scheduled for Weds 25 February. The target action is to do the second part of the vegetation clearance on the Reading Road, and remove the accumulated earth and vegetation from the “refuge” near the post box. This was left after the vegetation clearance on 20 Aug, but needs to be cleared before the brambles and weeds that are re-growing from it get much bigger. TT to write a plan and submit to OxTog to see if they will remove what we clear. If not maybe disperse along hedge in Sheepcot or WHBG skip. May need team of about six.

Action: TT

Litter pick

Agreed to organize litter pick on Sat 21 March to avoid Easter hols and fit in with national litter cleaning campaign. Re-use plan from last year, make new posters, advertise on social media/Genie/GGN, book Gardiner pavilion or Community Centre, pay WI to do refreshments. Make sure Cllr Filipova-Rivers knows about it. Note recent guidance on bags and support from SODC. KS to lead with RW assistance.

Action: KS

Hi-Vis Jackets

It would be good to get GPC branded Volunteer hi-vis jackets available before 21 March. Need to progress with Clerk the purchase of 50 jackets in a range of sizes.

Action: RW

2.6 Hedges

TT handed his catalogue of obstructive trees and hedges over to NM. This list was drawn up in October from a survey done by TT and Roger Wood. NM to check progress with retiring Assistant Clerk.

Action: NM

2.7 Jubilee Garden maintenance

KS agreed to find out the current state of the gardening contract for Jubilee Garden and then to take charge of managing the contractor. To be reviewed here by June 2026.

Action: KS

2.8 Drinking fountain refurbishment

TT reported that it has been suggested to him that we could refurbish the drinking fountain on the Gardiner recreation ground. It would be good to provide somewhere for visitors to fill water bottles and it could be a very attractive bit of village heritage when restored. We might look at similar projects in Oxford (such as the Walton Well drinking fountain), we might contact the Goring History Soc to find out a bit about the historical context and significance. NM agreed to do an initial investigation.

Action: NM

2.9 Storage space at WHBG

No progress has been made on the Clerk's suggestion that the dilapidated garage at WHBG should be demolished and replaced by two storage containers. NM reported that Cllr Lofthouse had suggested that a new WHBG working group should take this on. In the meantime, NM agreed to start the process of getting quotes for the demolition. KS to assist.

Action: NM +
KS

2.10 Salt bins

We discussed the three Salt Bins that we were aware of in the village, and no-one knew if they belonged to the PC or OCC highways. They are all currently full. First task is to draw up a complete list and add them to the Place & Assets spreadsheet.

Action: KS

2.11 Final clearance of OJFS

No definite date for sale of OJFS, but we will need to do a final clearance. KS to agree a date for a visit with TT to make a plan of exactly what we are keeping and what can be left for the demolition teams.

Action: KS

2.12 IT service improvements

No firm recommendations about improved email, calendaring, and shared storage yet, but TT has developed a detailed draft IT policy for discussion. This document is needed to help the Council achieve Cyber Essentials certification, which was a recommendation from last year's audit findings.

We discussed the content and recommended policy at some length, and noted that there are several new IT-related tasks for the Clerk team (such as writing down simple recovery plans for the website, and the other vital services we run). We also discussed at some length how much privacy should be allowed to Councillors using their own devices for Council work. In the event of an FOI it is possible that the Council might need access to personal devices. It was suggested that some councillors would find this difficult to support. It was also suggested that the Council should consider providing IT equipment for councillors as well as staff.

We agreed that TT would not put the draft policy on the agenda for full council until we have been able to have a discussion meeting with all interested councillors and allowed everyone to comment on the policy; a revised draft policy can then be put forward for acceptance at a future council.

Action: TT

TT still aims to work with the Clerk to develop recommendations about the email and shared storage service by end of March 2026.

Action: TT

2.13 Signs for open spaces

NM and TT (and other Cllrs) attended a productive meeting on Fri 16 Jan with Janet Tuppen her team from Mend the Gap. They are keen to support the village in developing new signage and "interpretation boards" for the open spaces, and if we can put together an expression of interest document for them, they may be able to consider supporting us with funding as well as design skills. Their idea is to try and make the interpretation fit in with their plans for visitor signs across the Chilterns National Landscape. NM agreed to draft the EOI.

Action: NM

3 Future actions

1. Update weed control plan as discussed, and present to Council in Feb. (DB)
2. Organize great spring Litter Pick for 21 March (with RW) (KS)
3. Draw up a list of salt bins and locations round the village (KS)
4. Evaluate benches for repair or replace, and then progress work (KS)
5. Make a plan for final clearance of OJFS and site (KS)
6. Take charge of managing contractor for Jubilee Garden maintenance (KS)
7. Report back to PAWG on possibility of refurbishment of Gardiner fountain (NM)
8. Draft an EOI for Mend the Gap about open space signage (NM)
9. Start plans for demolishing old garage at WHBG (NM)
10. Take over management of obstructive trees and hedges catalogue (NM)
11. Firm up costings for art gallery plan for the old phone box (RW)
12. Work with Clerk to procure 50 HiVis jackets for GPC volunteers (RW)
13. Continue to work with the Clerk to draw up costs for improved IT services (TT)
14. Organize Reading Road vegetation clearance, part II, for 25 Feb (TT)
15. Organize a planning meeting with council to discuss potential IT policy changes (TT)
16. Procure and affix identification stickers to new MIGGS benches (TT)
17. Schedule a special PAWG meeting to review Emergency Planning (TT)
18. Write up a No Mow May plan for future years and agree with Clerk (TT)

4 Date of next meeting

Wednesday 18 March 2026 – 10:30 – Friar’s Ford, Manor Road, Goring