

## **Parish Council Report**

### **Weed Control on Pavements and Kerbsides**

#### **Leaf Clearance**

##### **1. Purpose of Report**

To review Goring Parish Council's weed management and village leaf clearance strategy, in particular in response to public concern surrounding the use of Glyphosate. This report considers alternative weed management strategies, current best practice across other Councils, and makes a recommended proposal for adoption in 2026, with review of effectiveness to be undertaken in late 2026 after autumn leaves have been cleared.

This report is limited to the treatment and maintenance of roads, pavements and walkways around Goring. It does not cover the practices used by contractors to maintain the open spaces such as Sheepcot, Gardiner and Bourdillon.

This report sets out the advantages and disadvantages of using various methods including glyphosate-based herbicides for weed control on the village pavements, kerbsides, and other hard surfaces. It is intended to support informed decision-making by the Parish Council when considering current practice or alternative weed management approaches.

##### **2. Background**

Weed growth on pavements and kerbsides presents challenges for safety, accessibility, drainage, and the appearance of the village. Leaf clearance in autumn likewise is essential for all the same reasons.

Weed control methods must balance effectiveness, cost, environmental impact, and public expectation. In pre-Covid days, the council approach was an amalgam of mechanical sweeping done by OCC, selective glyphosate spraying (treatments normally in May and September), and hand weeding, most notably around the village centre by the volunteers of Goring in Bloom.

The post Covid era has produced significant budget challenges which have limited the services provided to parish councils by OCC and SODC, and as a consequence the parish council has to assume a greater responsibility for both weeding and leaf clearance.

In 2025, the approach taken to weeding was a mixture of glyphosate spraying and hand weeding by volunteers. A village weeding day was organised for June but was very poorly attended by the public. In addition, there was significant local opposition to the use of glyphosate spraying, mainly on grounds of perceived risks to health and the environment. Glyphosate spot treatment was undertaken in June and September nonetheless by a third party contractor who have a long history of treatment in the village in the pre-Covid years.

A village leaf clearing day in November was relatively well attended by the public and successful.

### 3. Alternative Weed Control Methods (Summary)

Method	Advantages	Disadvantages
Manual Weeding	No chemicals; high public acceptance	Labour-intensive; higher cost if third party contractors used
Mechanical Brushing	Immediate results	Capital cost of machinery; noisy
Thermal / Foam Treatment	Chemical-free	High energy use; frequent repeat treatments
Glyphosate	Cost-effective; longer-lasting	Environmental and public concerns
Acetic Acid	Fewer environmental concerns than Glyphosate	Higher cost; labour intensive
Weed Burner	Relatively cost effective	Risk of fire, smell, use of explosive propane

### Comparisons of Spray Treatments

	Glyphosate	Acetic Acid	Hot foam
Comparative cost	1	x 3.5	x 6.5
Number of applications required	2 times	4 times	3 times
Comparative Water required	1	X 0.8	x 65
Man power required	1	x 1.5	x 30
Machinery required	Specialist spot treatment machine	15l knapsack + lance	Handheld lance linked to vehicle mounted tank.

### 4. Peer Analysis

A detailed study of recent strategies for weed control was undertaken by Henley Town Council in early 2025. This study looked at 6 different local authorities with a variety of different strategies for weed control, as tabulated below. It is clear that there is no overarching 'best practice',

particularly with respect to streets. It is notable that none experimented with weed burners, despite them being relatively inexpensive, presumably because of the health and safety issues when working in a public space (the burners have a flame which can reach 3000C and use propane as a fuel, which itself is highly explosive).

	Parks and Open spaces	Streets
LB Westminster	No chemicals. No glyphosate Landowners encouraged to follow suit.	Kerbs-manual weeding. Pelargonic Acid. No sweeper. No flame guns.
LB Lambeth	No chemicals. No glyphosate	No chemicals. Mechanical sweepers/rippers. Thermal treatment (flame guns) for occasional use.
LB Hammersmith & Fulham	No chemicals. No glyphosate - except Japanese Knotweed and Giant Hogweed.	Mechanical and Manual Thermal treatment (vehicle mounted).
Jersey	Acetic Acid. Glyphosate on problematic weeds only.	Mechanical sweeping every fortnight (run on bio-diesel). Manual weeding in town centre. Acetic Acid. No flame guns.
Brighton & Hove	Glyphosate on problematic weeds only.	Glyphosate used on all hard surfaces (contractor appointed uses droplet applicator). Manual weeding. No sweepers.
Cambridge	No chemicals.	Glyphosate used. Mechanical sweeper/ripper. Thermal treatment (being trialled).

Henley TC elected to continue with glyphosate treatment for pavements and streets, albeit at a lower dose, with an emphasis on community engagement with a view to further reduction or elimination of glyphosate in the future. An element of mechanical sweeping was also included in the strategy.

## 5. Considerations for the Parish Council

When deciding whether to continue, reduce, or replace glyphosate use, the Parish Council may wish to consider:

- Budget constraints and staff or contractor availability
- Public opinion and community expectations
- Environmental and biodiversity objectives
- Health and safety responsibilities
- The feasibility of mixed or integrated weed management approaches

Glyphosate offers an effective and economical method of weed control on pavements and kerbsides, particularly where resources are limited and safety risks must be managed. However, environmental concerns, public perception, and regulatory uncertainty mean that its use should be carefully reviewed and clearly justified. The Parish Council may wish to consider a balanced approach that combines limited glyphosate use with alternative methods where practical, much as Henley elected to do, or indeed to eliminate glyphosate use altogether other than as a back up where preferred strategies prove ineffective.

## **6. Resource Issues**

One of the greatest limiting factors in the strategy for 2025 was human resource. Weed control was outside of the remit of the part time Facilities Manager. Villagers were not sufficiently informed of the extent of the problem such that they could be mobilised in support of a collective effort. The human resource in terms of hand weeding largely consisted of the volunteers of Goring in Bloom, many of whom are ageing, and a small number of councillors. The decision to use glyphosate spraying in support of the effort was thus made in the absence of any other viable alternative.

For 2026 and beyond, the following should all be considered as available tools in the armoury:

- A greater pool of volunteers, especially younger ones. Many of the villagers who signed the petition against the use of glyphosate have expressed an interest in being involved in public weeding efforts around the village. A representative of those people met with members of the Place and Assets working group in November 2025, and an immediate consequence of that meeting was a healthy turnout for the leaf clearance day, which was consequently very effective. Ongoing communication with the village, and in particular through this interested group, will hopefully provide a small army of volunteers for selective weeding days.
- A new Facilities Manager with a wider remit and longer working hours, who could potentially be tasked with the operation of a weed ripping machine (see below).
- Allocated budget of £10,000 for 2026 to be deployed specifically towards weed management, whether in the purchase of mechanical aids such as a weed ripper, or in engaging third party contractors.
- Glyphosate spot treatment as in prior years.

## **6. Weed Ripping Equipment**

As noted in the Peer Analysis at 4 above, several councils have purchased and deployed weed ripping equipment. There are a variety of different types of these machines, all operated in much the same way as a standard walkalong lawnmower, at capital costs ranging from around £1,000 plus VAT through to £5,000 plus VAT, and there are both battery and petrol models available. Inevitably the cheaper models are less powerful and are likely to last less time than the more expensive models, and so some trials would be required to see which might be best suited to the needs of the village if the council were to decide to purchase one.

## **7. Potential Weed Clearance Strategies for Adoption**

### A/ Continue as in 2025, with better community engagement

This strategy would entail community weeding days in May and September, with spot treatment of glyphosate immediately thereafter if the community weeding days were insufficient to ensure an adequate level of weed clearance.

The advantage of this approach would be cost effectiveness (potentially zero cost if glyphosate were not needed). The disadvantages would be the uncertainty of community engagement on the designated weeding days, and the environmental and health concerns surrounding the use of glyphosate.

### B/ Purchase a Weed Ripper for use by the Facilities Manager

This strategy would entail the purchase of a weed ripper which could be used over several days in the Spring and early Autumn by the Facilities Manager or other trained personnel, in conjunction with community weeding days in May and September.

The advantage of this approach would be the elimination of glyphosate and a much lesser reliance on community weeding days. The disadvantage would be cost (capital cost of the machine, running cost, and time spent by the Facilities Manager using it).

## **8. Recommended strategy for 2026**

Given that there is an allocated budget for weed clearance for FY 2026/27, it is proposed that the council adopt strategy B above. The Facilities Manager, in conjunction with the Place and Assets Working Group, would arrange for trials of a number of different weed rippers during Feb 2026, and then put a recommendation to Full Council in either March or April as to which machine should be purchased.

Community Weeding Days would be organised for May and September, and advertised in all local media in both March and April. Specific dates to be decided by the clerk in conjunction with the Facilities Manager. A single community leaf clearance day would be organised for November along the lines of the successful 2025 day.

Place and Assets working group would co-ordinate with representatives of the community working groups (including Goring in Bloom) to ensure maximum public participation in the village events.

Place and Assets Working Group would report to Full Council in December 2026 as to the success or otherwise of the strategy during the year, and any suggested improvements or alterations for future years. If in particular the public participation in the Community Weeding Days were to be disappointing, it may be that spot treatments of glyphosate would have to be reinstated to maintain the level of overall effectiveness.