

# Great Waltham Parish Council

## Red Telephone Box Survey – April/May 2026

### Introduction

The Parish Council owns and is responsible for six red telephone kiosks in the parish. None of them are used for their original purpose. During the process of reviewing the use and condition of the Council's assets, its Recreation Committee identified that although some are being put to other good purposes (to contain defibrillators or a library), three of the six have not been utilised for other purposes. These are the ones in Great Waltham village (by the Royal British Legion hall), Ford End village (opposite the Village Hall) and Littley Green (near the Compasses public house). All of the boxes require specific maintenance and expensive repair as necessary.



An online survey was conducted to ask for parishioners' views on retaining the unused boxes (and if so, should they then be utilised for more functional roles), and whether residents wish to get actively involved in their upkeep. The survey was advertised in a Parish News article and on Facebook. The Parish News article offered readers the opportunity to contact the Parish Clerk to request a paper copy to complete if they were unable to access the survey digitally - no requests for paper copies were received.

### Survey Responses

The survey contained five questions. 52 responses were received. These are the results:

**Q.1 Should the Parish Council retain, maintain, and repair those red telephone kiosks which are not currently being put to useful purpose?**

- 51 (98.1%) respondents answered 'Yes'.
- 1 (1.9%) answer was left blank.

**Q.2 If you answered Yes to Q.1, would the same be true even if no future useful purposes are identified and they were to remain solely as aesthetic enhancements for their particular locations?**

- 48 (94.1%) answered 'Yes'
- 3 (7.8%) answered 'No'

**Q.3 What use(s) would you like to see for the unused boxes (indicate all preferences)?**

These preferences were indicated:

- Defibrillators – 34 (65.4%)
- Libraries – 37 (71.2%)
- Information points – 27 (51.9%)
- Aesthetic/visual enhancement only if no other use can be identified – 34 (65.4%)
- Other (please specify below) – 8 (15.4%)

The free format comments received for the final option were:

- The one in GW village centre to be used as an Art Kiosk for the public display of original local artwork.
- Telephone
- Emergency dog waste bags, seed exchange
- It's a landmark and point of reference.
- Not sure but must be other possibilities
- Plant swap or place for surplus homegrown fruit/veg for local communities
- Plant swap or grow flowers inside
- Books, puzzles, etc could be placed on them and exchanged by local people. Seems to work well in other places.

**Q.4 Would you be willing to organise or get involved in a community project to put an unused box into productive use?**

- 27 (51.9%) answered 'Yes'

**Q.5 Would you be willing to get involved in the work needed to maintain the Parish's telephone boxes?**

- 13 (25.0%) answered 'Yes' (including 5 who answered No to Q.4)

Overall, 17 people gave contact details when answering either Q.4 and/or Q.5.

Conclusions

- The Council should retain all telephone kiosks in the parish, whether or not they are used for a community benefit, beyond being aesthetic enhancements for their particular locations.
- There are a number of possible uses for the currently unutilised boxes which would be supported by the community.
- With the support and under the guidance of the Council, there are clear opportunities for parishioners to become actively involved in the refurbishment and maintenance of the unused boxes.

Recommendations

It is recommended that the Council's Recreation Committee initiates a workstream to:

- Collate survey response ideas for each kiosk, and list potential volunteers for the refurbishment and ongoing maintenance of each unutilised kiosk.
- Contact potential volunteers to confirm that individual kiosk projects are being initiated, and organise any workshops or other groups regarded as useful in developing future uses for the boxes, communicating the framework to be operated by the Council/Committee in organising refurbishments/ongoing maintenance, and managing expectations on delivery timescales especially if unbudgeted costs for the Council are involved.
- Create current condition reports for each of the unutilised kiosks (which would help inform the optimal type of future use).
- Make clear to volunteers and others that notwithstanding the survey results and outcome of discussions, the Council reserves the right to decide the future use of each kiosk.
- Use site specific survey responses to assess ideas for each kiosk and take a preferred position based on its views of best uses, and make recommendations to the Council for approval (including projected costs).

- Identify suitable lead volunteers and those with skill sets needed for the initial work (and ongoing maintenance) on each kiosk, and arrange face-to-face meetings accordingly.
- Identify lead volunteers for the ongoing management of the kiosks for their agreed purposes, and arrange face-to-face meetings accordingly.
- Agree timescales.
- Report back to the Council to request site specific motions for approval as and when appropriate.

These activities may well need to be undertaken concurrently and/or not necessarily in the order shown. It will be essential not to lose any community enthusiasm to engage in the initial refurbishment and/or ongoing management of the boxes for the want of effective communication; for example, potentially using media such as a dedicated WhatsApp group.

#### Next Step

- Obtain agreement from the full Council at its May 2026 meeting for the recommendations detailed above.