



**HANGER HILL GARDEN ESTATE
RESIDENTS ASSOCIATION**
Houses Management Board
www.hhgera.com



Annual General Meeting 2022

HOUSES MANAGEMENT BOARD – REPORT ON ACTIVITIES IN 2021

The Houses Management Board looks after the shared gardens and service roads that belong to the houses part of the Estate and are formally owned by HHGER Ltd, itself controlled by the Residents Association. 2021 brought its share of routine challenges and we made progress on two important fronts – catching up a backlog of gardens maintenance and improving management of the Deeds of Easement that govern the relationship between some houses on the Estate and the Residents Association.

Service charge collection

By far the biggest source of funds to do this work is a very modest annual service charge levied on all houses on the Estate. It is used to pay for the communal gardens and security gates, among other things, and so keeps our neighbourhood beautiful and secure. The charge was held last year at £60 per house and the Board is delighted to report we collected over £20,000 in 2021 – the most for several years and £3,000 more than the previous year.

Service charge collection is organised by Neil McNair and supported by volunteers who deliver the invoices and if necessary, call from door to door. The excellent result in 2021 also owes much to Hugh Richards' work on Deeds of Easement (see below) and chasing arrears of non-payers. It means we were able to increase spending while continuing to build reserves, and that we can hold the service charge at £60 again in 2022 despite inflation.

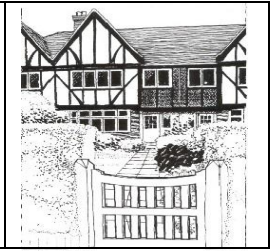
Some 90% of service charge payments in 2021 were made by bank transfer, which is the safest and most convenient way to pay. We would everyone to pay promptly, please, as it takes time to produce and deliver reminders and for collectors to visit houses individually.

There are a few houses – mostly owned by landlords – which consistently refuse to pay. We have successfully used the small claims court procedure to recover arrears from house owners and will consider taking similar action against persistent non-payers in future.

Contact Neil at the AGM or email him via neil@hhgera.com if you have questions, want to make back payments or to discuss joining the collections team.



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Deeds of Easement

A Deed of Easement is a legal document that guarantees the right of access for houses residents to their garages and rear gardens via the service roads owned by HHGER Ltd. In return the house owner undertakes to pay the annual service charge and a specified share of the cost of repairs to the service roads based on the number of houses affected.

It is helpful to both parties to have the situation formalised and since adoption of the 2019 HHGERA Constitution, a Deed of Easement has to be put in place whenever any house with access to a HHGER Ltd. owned service road changes hands.

During the past year we have put in place a much quicker and cheaper process for implementing a Deed of Easement. This can now be done in literally a few hours and at no cost. We have also improved record-keeping so there is always an up-to-date database of the Deeds in force. As part of this exercise, £2,600 in service charge arrears was raised from house owners who had signed Deeds of Easement but not respected their terms, bringing the payment rate on this population to 100%.

Currently, only 84 of the 278 houses with a garage accessed from a HHGER Ltd. owned service road have a Deed of Easement in force. As only 5-10 houses change hands each year on the Estate, it will take a long time to get everyone signed up. That is one reason why we're asking the AGM to approve a change to the service road Rules of Use that would require residents to have a Deed of Easement in place for their house before they can buy keys to the service road gates.

If approved, the change will accelerate the rate at which Deeds of Easement are taken out, increase certainty around funding and help the Houses Management Board keep down the service charge for everyone.

Gardens

Most of the money collected goes on the Estate gardens (though not those surrounding the blocks of flats, which are managed separately by the flats' managing agent). It has been a busy year for our gardeners (Patrick, Pawel and Eddie). Last summer was an ideal growing season. That made it particularly hard work to keep the lawns and hedges looking neat. They rose to the challenge and the gardens have continued to look good throughout.

We have also been moving forward with some work that will make it easier to keep the gardens looking smart in future. On the Princes Gardens central reservation, the big laurel bushes have been pruned so they can be easily kept in shape by a hedge cutter in future years.

**Hanger Hill Garden Estate Residents Association are the Managing Agents for
Hanger Hill Garden Estate Residents Ltd**
Company No: 01757836. Registered Office: 112 Princes Gardens, London W3 0LJ



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Reducing the height of these bushes improved visibility across the central reservation and hence security for the houses and pedestrians on both sides. We have opened up the vegetation in some other places, too. There is now a grass border around the edges, protected from vehicles by large stones, and created some grass 'bays' that have been part-planted with Spring flowers.

One area which has been rather neglected in recent years is the small triangle of land in Tudor Gardens. This has been completely renovated, removing all the degraded shrubs and leaving an open copse which has been part planted with bulbs and the rest mowed. One or more new trees will be planted in the newly opened area.

The Rose Garden, at the top of Princes Gardens, has had a lot of attention. The overgrown copses at the two ends have both been cleared of undergrowth, improving visibility and making them much easier to maintain. So too has the big patch of scrub at the eastern end of the Rose Garden, which will be seeded to lawn. Spring bulbs have been planted and the rose beds have been mulched with compost. We ask everyone to be respectful of the Rose Garden as a shared space by not damaging the plants, making undue noise or dropping litter. Our current rules of the Estate state that dogs are not allowed in.

Another big job is to cut back vegetation along the service roads. The first area completed was the Tudor Gardens service road and work is now under way on the Princes Gardens loop.

Sadly, we had to say goodbye to the very old horse chestnut at the junction of Vale Lane and Princes Gardens. This was once a magnificent tree. Some years ago a lot of dead wood was cut out; since then half the remaining tree had died and become potentially dangerous. Contractors came and felled the tree in January; we are investigating possible replacements. Another tree in the Tudor Gardens triangle (a self-seeded sycamore) was found to be in a dangerous state. It was also cut down in January, fortunately just before the recent storms.

The spring growing season is now with us and the gardeners will be very busy over the next six months. Nonetheless extra work will entail the removal of some dead small trees in both the central reservation and Princes Gardens service road (some of the young self-seeded Ash trees are dying due to ash die back) Later in the year the gardeners will be replacing some of the dead hedging around the Rose Garden... then it's back to sweeping up Autumn leaves.

Service roads

The service roads that run behind our houses are privately owned so responsibility for keeping them safe and clear lies with all residents alongside either the Houses Management Board (for



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the five gated service roads on the Estate) or flats management (Garage Road and the one with access from Queens Drive).

The first line of defence against inconsiderate parking and fly tipping on service roads is a network of monitors co-ordinated by Sarin Takhar (who kindly stepped in after Genevieve Bornor left the Estate). However, we rely on everyone to explain to new neighbours how the rubbish collection system works, pick up litter and help us tackle fly tipping/parking issues. Please contact Sarin via skips@hhgera.com if you would like to help monitor your own service road or report any concerns.

We are asking the AGM to approve a change to the service road Rules of Use that would allow the Houses Management Board to charge for taking away rubbish left on HHGER Ltd owned land.

Last year the AGM approved a project to repair the concrete surface of the service road behind the Princes Gardens outer loop and parts of Vale Lane/ Tudor Gardens. We were nearly ready to award the contract but decided to postpone the project because of the very difficult market conditions caused by the ending of the Covid pandemic. We do not expect to make any further progress on this front in 2022.

Plans for 2022

The change of leadership in the Flats' board gives us an opportunity to reopen discussions on management of the service road running behind Links Road and parts of Monks Drive and Queens Drive. Residents have long wanted this to be gated, like the service roads owned by HHGER Ltd. The Houses Management Board will explore legal aspects of this further, as the land is owned by the Flats' company (HHGE Ltd) and cannot be gated without its permission. We will keep residents informed of any progress via HHGERA News and circulars to the houses concerned, as appropriate.

There may also be opportunities to work with the Flats board on other areas such as restoration of the pond on Monks Drive and Links Road.

Other priorities include further strengthening of our service charge collection process and the tree/garden works outlined above. And, of course, the routine management of our gardens, service roads and Estate boundaries that is the 'bread and butter' of Houses Management Board work.

A report on activities in 2022 will be presented to next year's AGM.