



HANGER HILL GARDEN ESTATE RESIDENTS ASSOCIATION & HOUSES MANAGEMENT BOARD



MINUTES

Draft pending approval by 2025 AGM

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

at 7:30pm on Thursday 21st March 2024 at Holy Family School, Vale Lane

This was a routine joint annual meeting of Hanger Hill Garden Estate Residents Association (HHGERA) and the Houses Management Board (HMB). Approximately 40 residents attended.

All relevant documents, including reports by the HHGERA and Houses Management Board chairs; budget and accounts were placed on the HHGERA website at www.hhgera.com/2024-agm. Residents were invited to contact the Association by email with any points they wished to raise. Formal notice of the meeting and the final agenda and nominations were delivered to all flats and houses within the timeframes set in the HHGERA Constitution. Notice of the AGM was also emailed to those non-resident landlords for whom the Association has email addresses.

The main decisions taken were:

HHGERA

1. To agree the Minutes of the 2023 AGM
2. To support the nominations for HHGERA officers in 2024
3. To approve the report on activities since the last AGM and plans for 2024
4. To approve the HHGERA Budget for 2024 and draft Budget for 2025
5. To agree the HHGERA subscription rate should be set at zero for 2024 and 2025
6. To agree that houses in Garage Road should be invited to future AGMs

Houses Management Board

(Only houses residents voted on these items)

7. To support the nominations for Houses Management Board officers and Conservation Panel members in 2024
8. To approve the HMB report on activities since the last AGM and plans for 2024
9. To approve the Houses Accounts for 2023
10. To approve the Houses Budget for 2024 and draft Budget for 2025
11. To agree the Houses service charge should be set at £70 per house for 2024 and 2025.

Welcome and apologies

Hugh Richards, HHGERA Chair, welcomed those present and introduced two guest attendees – Hanger Hill ward Councillors Fabio Conti and Athena Zissimos. Apologies were received from the ward's Safer Neighbourhood Police team; from Cllr Gregory Stafford; from HHGERA officers Aleksandra Turner, Elen Rideal and Sarin Takhar; and from a number of individual Estate residents.

Minutes of the 2023 AGM

The minutes, which had been available on the HHGERA website since April 2023, were approved without amendment, unanimously on a show of hands.

HHGERA: Annual report

Kate Crossland, as HHGERA Vice-Chair, offered her thanks to everyone who had participated in and supported the work of the Association over the past year, thanking in particular Quentin Phillipps of Japan Services for sponsoring the circulars and newsletters produced during the year and the many other residents who helped in big and small ways by delivering newsletters, organising events and so on.

She highlighted a number of issues affecting the whole Estate, more detail on which is available in the HHGERA Chair's [report](#):

- **Crime:** Theft of parcels and car crime had been a particular problem over the past year and there had also been a handful of burglaries. The Association attended regular meetings with our ward Police team, which had prioritised the Estate for patrols during part of the year. This had had a positive impact but residents were urged to report any crimes or suspicious behaviour as this helped to build a picture and target police resources.
- **Antisocial behaviour:** The unacceptable noise suffered by some residents from the Anyah (formerly Basrah) Lounge had improved for a while following action by Ealing Council. However, the nuisance seemed to have started again. Kate promised that HHGERA would continue working with the affected residents and councillors to deal with it. Other problems dealt with over the past year had included fly tipping, misuse of service roads and most recently graffiti. These issues took up a significant amount of the committee's time and involved liaising with affected residents, Ealing Council and local Police over appropriate action.
- **Sustainability:** The double glazed windows currently being installed in many of the flats were an important step forward and would help those residents with lower heating bills. She said the Estate gardeners would again be leaving some areas unmowed during "No Mow May".
- **Solar energy:** Another exciting project was to install solar panels on the flats, which would not only support the sustainability agenda but also potentially save a lot of money currently spent on electricity for communal areas and individual flats. Kate said she had been working with a number of organisations on this, with the support of the Flats board, and that it had been established the flat roofs of the blocks were potentially suitable for solar panels. There were lots of things to discuss but a major challenge was to work out how the project could be paid for. Funding had been applied for to take it to the next stage and anyone interested was invited to contact Kate via consultation@hhgera.com.
- **Planning and conservation:** Bill Bailey, an HHGE Conservation Panel member, outlined the history of the Conservation Area, which protected the Estate's unique environment via strict planning requirements to prevent inappropriate developments. Some of these were relatively uncontroversial, and he was pleased to report that the landlord's appeal against converting a house for multiple occupancy by 8/9 people had been turned down by Ealing Council. Other planning restrictions, for instance the requirement to use wooden double glazing on the front of houses, rather than uPVC, seemed more onerous but were still being enforced. He also drew attention to the need to use the right type and colour of tiles when re-roofing – the Council was looking at a number of cases where the right tiles but the wrong colour had been used.

Community events and activities

Kate reported that two Playstreets had been held in June and October 2023 with lots of families in attendance. A new team was taking over the running of Playstreets and would welcome help from anyone who wished to join them and/or help organise other community activities (email consultation@hhgera.com).

Estate centenary plans

Kate said a number of projects were taking shape to celebrate the Estate's forthcoming centenary (starting in 2028). One exciting development was to have met with the Ealing Library archives team to see how we can work together to update the history of the Estate, and to donate materials from our archive. We continued to work on improving the gardens across the Estate in anticipation of the centenary. And a meeting was planned with Gunnersbury Museum to get some guidance on a possible oral history project, and perhaps an exhibition.

One of our residents – Elen – had some great ideas about creating an Estate cookbook and getting together over coffee mornings perhaps even to taste food and hear music. Anyone who would like get involved was invited to get in touch via consultation@hhgera.com.

Liaison with Flats management company and update on pond

Kate said HHGERA had met a couple of times with the Flats’ management board to discuss the pond, its surrounding fence and garden, which belonged to the flats but was overlooked by houses on Monks Drive and badly needed restoration. Planning for this was still a work in progress and residents were asked to be patient for a little while longer as the details were worked out. There was also a longstanding issue over management of the Links/Monks/Queens (LMQ) service road – also owned by the Flats but used almost exclusively by houses residents. Here too there had been little progress, partly because of the demands of the windows project on Flats board time. But there was goodwill on both sides and it was to be hoped movement might be possible over the coming year.

Presentation of 2023 accounts and budget for 2024

Kate outlined the ‘residents association’ part of the accounts and budget, covering Estate-wide activities of benefit to both houses and flats. Approximately £300 had been spent on running the Association and its website in 2023 but plans to contribute to joint projects with the Flats board had again not come to fruition during the year. The plan was again to set aside £2,150 in 2024 for joint projects – notably as a HHGERA contribution to restoration of the pond garden. Other costs were also expected to increase slightly in line with general inflation.

The meeting voted unanimously on a show of hands to approve the HHGERA budget and accounts.

Subscription rate for 2024 and 2025

Kate said the HHGERA Committee proposed that there should once again be no membership fee in 2024-2025 as the Association had adequate funds in reserve for its Estate-wide activities. This might however have to change at some time in the future.

The meeting unanimously agreed that the HHGERA subscription rate (as distinct from the houses service charge) should be zero for the current year and next.

Election of officers

The meeting unanimously elected the HHGERA officers nominated, to serve until the next AGM:

NOMINATIONS – 2024 *	
<u>HHGERA Committee</u>	
Chair	Kate Crossland
Vice-Chair	Hugh Richards
Treasurer	Levon Agulian
Secretary	Nim Maradas
Communications	Aleksandra Turner
Planning and Conservation Area Panel	Bill Bailey/Pat McNair/ Sergei Turceninoff
Ealing Council liaison	Glenn Ellis
Police liaison and Neighbourhood Watch	Aleksandra Turner
Flats Management Board liaison	Kate Crossland/Dion Hitchcock
Social and community events	Aleksandra Turner
<i>* Incorporating the following amendments since the list was circulated with the AGM final agenda: removal of Elen Rideal as joint Social and Community Events organiser, and reinstatement of Sergei Turceninoff to the Planning and Conservation Panel portfolio.</i>	

Any other business (houses and flats)

A number of issues were raised from the floor:

- **Garage Road crime:** A resident whose house backs onto this road queried its ownership and management, given her belief that it was the site of regular criminal activities. The Police not being present at the meeting, the HHGERA committee members were unable to comment beyond reaffirming that Garage Road was managed by the Flats board.
- **Inclusion of Garage Road in HHGERA:** Hugh said it had been noticed, in preparing for the AGM, that the small number of houses on Garage Road fell within the Conservation Area. The Association proposed that they should be invited to join in future HHGERA activities including the AGM. This was agreed by general consent.
- **Vale Lane improvements:** It was suggested that HHGERA could work with Holy Family school and Ealing Council to improve the strip of land along the fence on the opposite side of the road from the school. This was full of nettles and brambles, and attracted litter. Cllr Zissimos said she would be happy to support such an initiative and volunteers were invited to take it forward.
- **Dog fouling:** Several residents raised the problem of dog poo around the Estate as a growing number of people walked their pets: a few had developed the nasty habit of dropping poo bags around trees or even on people's front hedges. This was a public health matter as well as being unsightly and disgusting. Signs should be put up so nobody was in any doubt about their responsibilities, and offenders should be prosecuted. Councillors promised to take up the signage issue. They asked residents to pass on evidence of fouling (eg from doorbell webcams) – either directly or via the HHGERA website – as the Council needed proof who was responsible and where they lived before it could prosecute.
- **Police impersonation:** A resident asked if there had been any repetition of the worrying incident in late 2023 when people pretending to be Police had been seen knocking on doors on the Estate. Kate said she wasn't aware of any and recalled that the Association had arranged with the ward Police team to deliver a leaflet warning people to check Police ID to all houses and flats.
- **Service road fence:** Hugh said he would follow up reported damage to the fence behind part of Tudor Gardens, as this was a Houses Management Board issue.

There being no other business, this concluded the first part of the meeting. Guests and Flats residents with no direct interest in the remainder of the agenda were invited to stay or leave as they wished.

HOUSES MANAGEMENT BOARD (HMB)

Report on activities in 2023

Hugh Richards, HMB Chair, reminded residents that HHGERA's core tasks on behalf of houses residents were look after the communal gardens and service roads, and meeting statutory requirements including insurance and removal of unsafe trees. This was paid for out of a service charge levied on each house (currently £70 per house per year) and managed by volunteers, which allowed us to keep costs very low.

Summarising from his annual [report](#), he said one big item of expenditure in 2023 had been replacement of two service road gates – one damaged during a car theft and the other by a Council recycling lorry. Some of the cost had been recovered from insurers and there was potentially more to come. But even so, the replacements had been more expensive than expected and the replacements had exhausted the gates reserve allowed for in HMB accounts. Hugh therefore proposed that the amount set aside should be increased from £1,500 to £2,000 a year from now on.

Hugh introduced Gavin Anderson, who had taken over responsibility for organising the houses' service charge collections from Neil McNair in 2023. Gavin started by thanking everyone who had paid their service charge promptly, as this helped keep the amount of the charge low and meant the Association had the money to pay for maintenance of the gardens and service roads for which it was responsible. Only a few years ago, volunteers had had to visit every house to deliver the invoices and collect payment – often made in cash or by cheque. Moreover, the invoices had normally only been raised halfway through the year, after the level of the charge was set at the

March AGM. Delivering paper invoices could also make it difficult to collect the money from rented houses when landlords were responsible for payment.

A series of innovations – stimulated partly by the difficulty of house-to-house visits during Covid – had greatly improved efficiency of this operation. Setting the level of charge in advance (as agreed at the 2023 AGM) meant invoices could be sent out earlier in the year and had improved cash flow. Tighter enforcement of deeds of easement, under which house owners were legally obliged to pay their share of Estate expenses, had had a material impact on arrears. Invoicing by email, which now covered about half the invoices sent out, made it easier to reach landlords. And the vast majority of householders now paid online, which saved the need for hundreds of house visits. Gavin said he was pleased to report that more than £15,000 had already been collected this year, of which £1,500 arrears from previous years.

2023 accounts and budget for 2024

Picking up this theme, Levon Agulian, HHGERA Treasurer, reported that £20,744 service charge had been collected in 2023. This represented an 82% payment rate and was more than £4,000 higher than the previous year thanks mainly to an increase from £60 to £70 per house. Service charge was by far the largest source of HHGERA's income, while maintenance of the gardens and service roads (at £18,219) was the biggest expense. Last year had also, however, seen a one-off cost of £8,113 (net of insurance payment received) to replace the two damaged gates. Overall, therefore, the houses' account showed an outflow of £5,164 during the year. There was no need for concern about this as funds had been held in reserve for the gates, and the Association held sufficient funds in the general reserve to meet any conceivable needs during 2024.

Introducing the 2024 budget, Hugh said the Board was still hoping to receive a contribution to the cost of gates replacement from the Motor Insurers' Bureau, which helped in cases where regular insurance routes were not available. Service charge receipts were expected to be similar to last year, and higher interest rates meant interest receipts would rise – though it had been decided to cap this item at £1,000 to avoid the need to do a tax return. On the spending side, a 4% inflation increase had been allowed for gardening and related costs and £350 for a skip – which was arranged every other year – to dispose of rubbish left on service roads when it had been impossible to identify who was responsible. Overall, it was expected the HMB would make a small positive contribution to reserves but that there would be a further drawdown on accumulated funds once joint projects with the Flats board (notably the pond restoration) were taken into account.

The meeting unanimously approved the HMB budget and accounts on a show of hands.

Houses' service charge for 2024 and 2025

Hugh said early thinking for 2025 was broadly similar. The healthy state of HHGERA reserves meant the Board felt comfortable leaving the annual service charge at £70 per house next year so income would remain the same. Gardens costs were expected to increase in line with inflation which was estimated at 4%. All other things being equal, therefore, in 2025 we expected to break even.

The meeting unanimously approved the proposed houses service charge of £70 for 2025 on a show of hands.

Gardens report and plans for 2024

John Stone, Gardens Co-ordinator, reported that 2023 had been another very busy year for the Estate gardeners, as wet weather had reduced the amount of watering needed but meant a proportionate increase in time spent cutting hedges and lawns. Most of the work was routine maintenance but John drew attention to the multi-year programme to thin out overgrown shrubberies on the Estate, which had become unsightly and were perceived to be a security risk. This programme had been completed in 2023 with a big reduction in the height of the shrubs in the half-moon gardens in the Princes Gardens loop.

New planting, set out in more detail in the [gardens report](#), included [Portuguese Laurel](#) hedging to replace the areas of dead Privet around the Rose Garden. Portuguese Laurel had some resistance to Honey Fungus, which was endemic around the Estate, and the new plants seemed to be doing well after a wet winter and spring. In response to a request from the floor, the name of this and another resistant species – [Griselinia Littoralis](#) – will be included in the next HHGERA newsletter. John said lots more Spring bulbs had also gone in, along with two new trees – a Cherry in Tudor Gardens and a Liquidambar (Sweet Gum) in the Princes Gardens/Vale Lane triangle.

Managing the Estate's trees would be a key focus for 2024, along with all the usual routine maintenance tasks. John said the gardeners had recently done a great job removing a fallen tree on Masons Green Lane (on Ealing Council land) which had completely blocked the 'outer loop' (Princes Gardens/Tudor Gardens) service road. Some of our own trees along the service roads also needed attention, however. Most if not all this work would be done by the gardeners, which would save a lot of money – a tree surgeon had quoted £1,500 just to trim a single tree. There were also many self-seeded Ash saplings that needed to be removed as they were falling prey to dieback disease.

Finally, John mentioned a suggestion that the Estate centenary celebrations could include planting Cherry trees. There had once been Cherries (or more properly, [Purple Plum](#)) in almost every front garden but the original trees were reaching the end of their lives and each year a few more disappeared. To make a start, two new Cherry trees would be planted during 2024 in the small garden on the corner of Queens Drive and Monks Drive – which was, incidentally, looked after by HHGERA volunteers.

John completed his report to the accompaniment of spontaneous applause.

Update on Links/Monks/Queens service road

Hugh reported that little further progress had been made on the plans to gate the LMQ service road and possibly to undertake surface repairs there as well. However, there had been a break-in at 17 Queens Drive from the service road, so this project had become a greater priority for the HMB.

Election of officers

The meeting unanimously elected the HHGERA officers nominated, to serve until the next AGM:

<u>Houses Management Board</u>	
Chair	Hugh Richards
Vice-Chair	Glenn Ellis
Treasurer	Levon Agulian
Communications (Secretariat)	Nim Maradas
HHGER Ltd Company Secretary	Levon Agulian
Annual Service Charge co-ordinator	Gavin Anderson/Hugh Richards
Gardens co-ordinator	John Stone
Service roads co-ordinator	Sarin Takhar
HHGER Ltd directors (appointed by Houses Management Board)	Bill Bailey/Hugh Richards/ Levon Agulian/Sergei Turceninoff

Any other business – Houses

Two issues were raised from the floor:

- **Vale Lane roundabout:** Responding to a comment from the floor that this was looking unsightly and overgrown, Hugh said it was owned by HHGERA but managed by Ealing Council. Former Councillor Nigel Sumner had arranged for it to be planted with a new tree and wildflower meadow when Holy Family school had been built. A local resident had added the bird feeders and the roundabout could be seen as a tiny island of biodiversity. But he agreed that a few invasive plants had overtaken the wildflower meadow and that thought could be given to making the roundabout prettier.
- **Service road repairs:** Asked about plans to repair the concrete surface of the 'outer loop' service road carriageway, Hugh said these remained indefinitely on hold. He said the work would ultimately have to be done but that it had become less urgent since Ealing Council had taken over recycling collections from the previous contractor and stopped alleging the surface was unsafe. Moreover, the costs of this work had gone up considerably over the past two years so further thought needed to be given to fundraising.

The meeting ended at approximately 8.30pm with thanks all round. The next AGM will be held in March 2025.