



## **Annual General Meeting 2024**

HOUSES MANAGEMENT BOARD – GARDENS REPORT AND PLANS FOR 2023-2024

### Report on gardens activities in 2023

Pawel (our regular gardener) and Eddie and Patrick, who do occasional extra work for us, have had another very busy year. But unlike the previous year the weather has been wet, and recently very wet so fortunately little watering has been needed.

Pawel works one day a week during the three winter months and one and a half days for the remainder of the year. Much of the work is routine maintenance such as mowing the many lawns and cutting hedges, weeding etc. However, there has also been the need to do quite a bit of extra work. A few years ago we started a rolling programme of thinning out the many shrubberies on the estate which had become overgrown and often full of brambles, and were also perceived to be a security issue. In 2023 we finally finished this programme with a considerable reduction in the height of the shrubs in the half-moon gardens in the Princes Gardens loop.

During the autumn we planted more bulbs along the edge of the Princes Gardens central reservation which are now (early March) starting to flower. In late 2024 we plan to plant more bulbs on the Estate. We also planted two trees last year. The new Cherry tree in Tudor Gardens should soon be in flower. The other new tree (a Liquidambar, commonly known as Sweet Gum) was planted as a replacement for the big Horse Chestnut at the junction of Vale Lane and Princes Gardens.

A major programme carried out during the autumn was the replacement of dead Privet hedging around the western side of the Rose Garden with Portuguese Laurel which seems to be doing well...surely helped by all the rain that has fallen since!

The gardeners had to spend quite a lot of time cutting back the border vegetation along the Princes Gardens/Tudor Gardens service road so that the refuse lorry has a clear route. Also in this area, the gardeners were able to prune some of the branches of the larger trees which were hanging down on to the service road; this spared us the very high cost of using outside contractors.

### Plans for 2024

During 2024 we are embarking on a programme to remove much of the ivy growing up many of these trees. The ivy can make the trees 'top heavy' which increases the risk they may be blown over in high winds. During recent gales a large dead tree in Masons Green Lane fell into our service road, completely blocking it. All credit to our gardeners who arrived within hours and cut up the tree and removed the wood.

We will also have to find some time to remove some of the dead ash trees which have succumbed to ash dieback disease. Most of these trees are around the edge of the Princes Gardens/Tudor Gardens service road.



Our garden at the junction of Queens Drive and Monks Drive, largely maintained by local residents, continues to look very attractive. We are considering planting two cherry trees in late 2024 to replace the dead ones which we had to cut down earlier in 2023.

John Stone  
HMB Gardens Co-ordinator for 2023