



HANGER HILL GARDEN ESTATE RESIDENTS ASSOCIATION



MINUTES

Draft pending approval by 2018 AGM

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

7:30pm on 30th March 2017 at the Community Hall, Holy Family School, Vale Lane

The meeting was attended by approx. 55 residents of houses and flats on the Estate.

Welcome and apologies

Bill Bailey, HHGERA Chairman, welcomed those present and introduced the meeting.

Crime and security update

The Hanger Hill Safer Neighbourhoods Police team was represented by PC Prabjeet Bhogal and PCSO Ikram Syed, accompanied by Aaron Clarke, the new police Inspector for Acton. They said Hanger Hill remained a low crime area but that current concerns included burglary, with intruders most often entering properties through the rear and sides of buildings; scams by criminals impersonating legitimate tradesmen; non-residential burglaries, especially from garages; and car crime. Some simple measures the team suggested to deter crime included:

- Ensuring that properties are fully secure by locking windows and side gates, and putting something breakable like a trellis on top of garden fences to deter intruders;
- Not leaving wheelie bins in service roads, as criminals can use them to climb on;
- Not being embarrassed to call the Police if you see something suspicious – dial 999 in an emergency or 101 to report something less urgent;
- Never leaving possessions visible in motor vehicles, even if they have no financial value, and physically checking car doors to counter electronic jammers;
- Requesting a free crime prevention survey by the Safer Neighbourhoods team;
- Fitting garage doors with strong padlocks, or more than one lock;
- Looking after vulnerable neighbours and reporting any concerns as the team if necessary can refer to Social Services (this can be on a confidential basis).

Inspector Clarke explained that he had only very recently arrived in the area from Peckham, and would be responsible for a large area stretching from Acton to Southfields. He said he was keen to spend time on the streets with his team and to encourage engagement between the Police and local communities. In a recent example of this, residents had alerted Police to a car driver acting suspiciously. Plain clothes Police had watched the vehicle, which had apparently been used to deal drugs, and charged the occupants with money laundering. Even on a short acquaintance, he said he thought the fact that Hanger Hill was a relatively safe ward, was due partly to its strong residents associations and sense of community.

In discussion, the officers reassured residents that there had been no reports of mugging or aggression on the path from West Acton to Park Royal, though there were occasionally drunks. Trudy Prescott, our Neighbourhood Watch co-ordinator, noted that a recent incidence of anti-Semitic graffiti at West Acton had been dealt with very swiftly by Ealing Council. Insp Clarke and the team said they were sceptical of the value of CCTV for crime prevention – it was expensive to install and monitor, and often unreliable in practice. It was simpler and more effective for residents to be alert and to work with the Police and other agencies. In case of graffiti, for instance, officers would be sent to take photos and talk to any witnesses. It was noted that Police were required to respond within 15 minutes to a 999 call and within 1hr to a 101 call, but that a message left on the Safer Neighbourhoods mobile (07879 694830) could take longer.

Local councillors' report

Cllrs Nigel Sumner, Joy Morrissey and Greg Stafford attended the meeting. Cllr Sumner highlighted some areas where councillors had recently worked on behalf of the HHGERA community:

- Councillors had successfully lobbied for the restoration of a regular street sweeping service (on alternate Wednesdays on the Estate) after the Council had proposed only cleaning on request. Residents were asked to tell councillors, with photos, if streets were not being kept clear of rubbish.
- Documentary evidence had been uncovered that planning approval for the Holy Family School included an agreement that the Community Hall could be used for councillors' ward surgeries and residents association meetings. This would safeguard the venue for future AGMs, among others.
- Councillors had learned that the £35,000 road safety budget included in the school's planning approval had been spent on roadworks before the school opened. Cllr Sumner had written to the Council reminding it of its duty of care to pupils and alternative funding had now been identified for badly needed safety improvements. Councillors were working with council officials and HHGERA on this.

In response to a suggestion from the floor, Cllr Sumner said he would convey to the council that its contractors should put food waste caddies back inside people's gardens once they had been emptied, so as not to signal to thieves which houses were likely to be unoccupied during the day.

Minutes of the 2016 AGM

The minutes, previously circulated, were approved without amendment.

Annual report

The Chairman outlined some of the highlights of the Association's year in a report that was circulated in hard copy at the meeting and has been placed on the HHGERA website (www.hhgera.com). Some highlights:

- Following the strong views expressed at the last AGM, the Association had successfully lobbied for wheelie bins to be collected from the rear of houses via service roads, wherever possible, rather than from the pavement. A huge amount of work had been put in to prepare the Estate for the change and to find a solution for houses on service roads that were inaccessible to the contractors' heavy vehicles. There had inevitably been teething problems but the new arrangements had now bedded in and had many benefits for the Estate – there had been a big

increase in recycling, far fewer rodents, foxes and other pests, and the arrangement was even being highlighted by estate agents in sales particulars.

- Social events over the past year had included a very successful, family-oriented Spring Festival and regular PlayStreet parties on Monks Drive. Kate Crosland, who organised the latter, urged all residents to take part – including those who did not bring young children!
- Work had begun on a plan for the restoration of the Princes Gardens central reservation (see below).
- The Association had engaged with Ealing Council about a wide range of planning and conservation issues, and most recently on the problem of Houses of Multiple Occupancy on the Estate. It was also monitoring closely the huge Old Oak & Park Royal development, though so far no changes had been proposed to land use at Park Royal (adjoining our Estate).
- Residents had been kept in touch with each other and local news via three full-colour Newsletters delivered to all houses and flats with the support of Japan Services Ltd. The Association website, www.hhgera.com, had meanwhile been moved to a new mobile-friendly platform and would be further developed during the coming year.

Residents were urged to get involved with the Association's work and to participate in meetings such as the Hanger Hill Ward Forum, where our local councillors made themselves available to respond to local concerns.

Presentation of accounts and 2017 service charge

Levon Agulian, HHGERA Treasurer, outlined the accounts circulated at the meeting. These showed a large financial loss in 2016 due to work associated with the wheelie bins exercise, which had considerably depleted reserves. It was noted that the Association had only been able to carry out residents' wishes in respect of wheelie bins because it had had sufficient funds in reserve. These reserves now needed to be rebuilt. The Association's income had fallen last year, due to a reduced proportion (82%) of households paying their subscriptions. However, it was proposed to strengthen the balance sheet via the transfer to reserves of £4,500 from the key deposits account. This was regarded by the Houses Committee as prudent and appropriate, given that only a handful of key deposits had been returned during a period when perhaps a third of the houses on the Estate had changed hands.

Responding to questions from the floor about the subscriptions collection rate, the Chairman noted that there were particular problems with tenanted properties, some of whose landlords could not be located, and when houses were sold during the course of the year. A few individuals also refused to pay. However, he had been investigating the legal position which appeared to support a requirement to contribute. Houses whose owners had signed a Deed of Easement (broadly, those that had been sold over the past 15 years) were legally obliged to pay their share of Estate maintenance expenses and were not a problem. It meanwhile appeared that covenants inherited from Hillside Gardens Ltd, the former owner of the service roads and gardens, required all householders to contribute to upkeep. Use by householders of the service roads, to get to their garages and for waste and recycling collections, also implied a duty of upkeep.

There was unanimous support from the floor for:

- Further investigation of the legal position, with the aim of obliging all houses to contribute their share of Estate maintenance costs;

- A change of terminology for this contribution from ‘subscription’ to ‘service charge’; and
- An increase in the annual service charge for 2017 from £40 to £60, to begin rebuilding financial reserves and pay for urgent maintenance work on service road gates (see Five Year Plan below).

Anthea Douglas outlined the Flats Committee accounts, showing a balance of funds only £100 lower than last year, thanks mainly to the contributions of Japan Services Ltd and other local businesses for the social event organised. No subscription will be levied from Flats residents in 2016.

Election of Officers

The meeting unanimously re-elected Bill Bailey as HHGERA Chairman and Anthea Douglas as Vice Chair.

Election of Committee Members

The meeting warmly thanked retiring Houses Committee member and former HHGERA Treasurer Victor Jundi for his service to the Association, and welcomed Hugh Richards as a new member. All those nominated were elected unanimously to serve until the next AGM:

Houses Committee

Bill Bailey	134 Princes Gardens	Chair
Sergei Turceninoff	43 Monks Drive	Conservation Panel
Levon Agulian	112 Princes Gardens	Treasurer
Piers Mahoney	20 Princes Gardens	Gardens
Nim Maradas	227 Princes Gardens	Secretary & Website
Glenn Ellis	33 Tudor Gardens	
Neil McNair	193 Princes Gardens	
Nicholas Kassapakis	150 Princes Gardens	
Harriet Lalor	9 Monks Drive	
Hugh Richards	11 Links Road	
Amir Sadjady	61 Tudor Gardens	
MC Tsang	167 Princes Gardens	
Quentin Phillipps	2 Queens Drive	Co-Opted (Landlords & Agents)

Flats Committee

Anthea Douglas	2 Buckingham Hse	Treasurer
Carole McLoughlin	2 Essex House	Social
Robin Bowden	11 Essex House	
Julia Wong	21 Oxford Court	
Aleksandra Turner	12 Ayr Court	
Janet Simpson	2 Devon Court	

Most Flats residents left the meeting at this point, at the invitation of the Chair.

Houses 5-year budget

The Chairman introduced a discussion of priorities for maintenance and improvement of the Estate over the medium term, a paper on which had been delivered in advance to all houses ahead of the AGM. The Houses Committee had identified four areas of work and proposed the following order of priorities:

1. Service road security gates: essential maintenance, after 10 years in situ, at an estimated cost of £7,000.
2. Ornamental gardens: redesign and replanting of the Princes Gardens central reservation, which was badly overgrown and contained trees and shrubs that were nearing the end of their natural lives. An outline plan for the area had been prepared by the Estate gardeners and was on display at the meeting.
3. Service road repairs: further work on the most badly damaged sections, following the repairs made last year so the Council's contractors could access the rear of most houses. The latter had been paid for out of HHGERA funds, on the grounds that the wheelie bins project benefitted the entire Houses estate. In future, the practice would be restored whereby the owners of houses paid for service road repairs zone by zone (as required if covered by a Deed of Easement).
4. Service road lighting: repairs, replacements and additions to service road lighting following Ealing Council's withdrawal of its previous commitment to keep lighting in good order (though it did still pay for the electricity and replace bulbs when needed).

The meeting unanimously endorsed this order of priorities. In discussion, the following points were made:

- The plans for the Princes Gardens central reservation were not detailed so far and the cost estimate appeared very high. The Association, supported by Cllr Sumner and resident Renée McCaw, had registered its interest in funding from Ealing Council's 'Transform Your Space' initiative. A number of residents offered to help with the project, including design and project management expertise, access to trees and shrubs at wholesale prices, and potentially organising community work days to support the gardeners. It was suggested that social/community/environmental factors should be to the fore in deciding on the design.
- There was a discussion around whether automation of the service road gates should be a further priority. The Chairman explained that remote control gates had been considered and rejected when they were originally installed, on grounds of cost and reliability. Opinions from the floor were divided and the meeting appeared content to return to this at a later date.
- One householder reiterated a longstanding request that gates should be installed on the one service road (Zone J) that so far lacked them. The Chairman acknowledged the problems this had caused for security and fly tipping, and recapped for the sake of the meeting that the land was owned by the Flats, which had so far refused to allow gating and was demanding the Houses paid to take ownership. We had been in contact with a valuer (who informally supported the view that the service road had no commercial value) and had raised the issue again with the Chair of the Flats management company following the last AGM. However, there had been no movement. The Chairman said he understood there was now a new Chair at the Flats, Ian Collier, so he would renew the approach in the hope of a more constructive response. As with persistent fly tipping on Garage Road, which was also owned by the Flats, until there was a change of policy by the Flats, the Association's hands were tied.

It was agreed that a start should be made as soon as possible on the service road gates, while a working party made up of the people who had offered their services would support the Houses Committee on the ornamental gardens and continue the search for 3rd party sources of funding.

Any other business

1. The meeting's attention was drawn to the rubbish generated by a house that appeared to be in multiple occupancy: the residents did not use their wheelie bins and black sacks were piled up in its garage. The Chairman said he was aware of the problem, with was part of a wider issue with HMOs that he was working on with Cllr Sumner and Ealing Council's new licensing team. The Council and our Police Safer Neighbourhoods team had also been alerted to antisocial behaviour by users of a house being rented out for parties via Airbnb. Residents were requested to report any problems with HMOs via the hhgera website.
2. The Association had made initial inquiries, via new Houses Committee member Hugh Richards, about the scope to install lifts at West Acton station. This appeared technically feasible, though it was unlikely to be a high priority given the relatively light passenger traffic at the station. Anyone interested in pursuing this was asked to make contact via the hhgera website, where any progress would be reported.
3. The Chairman noted with disappointment that the West Acton post office counter had once again been closed, removing a valuable service from the local community. The Association was working with local shops and councillors to see if alternative options were available, such as one of the other local shops taking on the role.
4. Association officers Nim Maradas and Neil McNair respectively called for volunteers to help with website development and door-to-door service charge collections.

The Chairman thanked residents for their support and closed the meeting at approximately 9:45pm.