

## IMPORTANT ANNOUNCEMENT

January 2022

Happy New Year from your team at Hunts Grove Parish Council!

We have some **important updates** for you that may have financial and legal implications, plus a request, therefore I am writing to you directly rather than relying on you seeing our website or social media.

### Your New Council

Your new parish council started work in May last year with a full complement of five councillors: Mark, Demelza, Sandra, Adam and Martyn. We recruited our first member of staff, Mrs Julie Shirley as Clerk and Responsible Financial Officer. Julie has brought a wealth of experience and knowledge to the role and we have been delighted with the progress made so far. Hunts Grove is certainly not a sleepy rural council! As well as establishing a brand new council in 2021, we have a demanding list of challenges to resolve and aspirations for change.

As you may know, Hunts Grove Parish Council was established following a residents campaign and then a local governance review and referendum held by Stroud District Council. Parish Councils are the first tier of government and the one closest to residents. When they are working well, they listen to their residents needs and wishes, collaborate with a wide circle of influence such as community groups, District and County Councils, Police, developers, and many other organisations beside. Importantly, they make a plan and budget annually to deliver the services and change that residents are calling for.

In the case of Hunts Grove, the mandate for change was very clear from the outset. The village was split between two old rural parishes of Hardwicke and Haresfield whose needs and vision was very different than Hunts Grove. Further, due to the controversial management company arrangements at Hunts Grove, council tax paid by Hunts Grove residents to the parishes benefitted Hardwicke and Haresfield, but could not be spent here.

The community governance review received the largest response in Stroud District Council history. Key factors raised by residents were to redraw the parish boundaries such that the whole area of Hunts Grove (and Hunts Grove Extension) would have its own Parish Council. This solution guaranteed that Hunts Grove would have its own voice and vision, and that the Parish element of Council Tax would be spent solely to benefit Hunts Grove residents. Another key factor was that the Parish Council, as an authority that included all phases of development at Hunts Grove, could work towards challenging the management company arrangements, eliminating the double taxation that the majority of residents were left with in having to pay expensive service charges to a management company on top of their Council Tax.

**Quite rightly, Hunts Grove residents expect their community open spaces and amenities should be managed and maintained within their Council Tax payment, just like every other community surrounding Hunts Grove.**

### Management Company Negotiations

We are very excited to share with you that in eight short months, the management company negotiations have made great progress.

**We are now at a critical point and need residents to shout loud and clear if you support our campaign to abolish the annual service charges and management company.**

**SIGN OUR PETITION [change.org](https://chnng.it/zqMLqWYM)**

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## Management Company Campaign Details

There is a lot of background to our campaign so far, much more than can be written in this letter, so please see below a summary of topics and head over to our website to read more about them.

**Short link to HGPC website pages: <https://bit.ly/3rk90To>**

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Parish Council Proposed Strategy   | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> FAQ (Frequently Asked Questions)                            |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Request to Siobhan Baillie MP for assistance   | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Adoption of Phase 1   |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Government progress on new legislation to protect homeowners                             | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Impact on Parish Council budget and council tax for 2022-23 |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> The legal stakeholders: Colethrop Farm Limited, Crest Nicholson, Stroud District Council | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Case-Study: Cranbrook Town Council                          |

## PARISH BUDGET 2022-2023

The Parish Council has set its budget for 2022-2023 in the expectation of several factors for the coming year that may temporarily or permanently increase the Parish precept for residents.

The Hunts Grove Parish precept for 2021-22 was **£29.42** for a Band D property. For comparison, properties that were previously in Haresfield Parish would have paid **£60.46** and those in Hardwicke Parish would have paid **£35.63**

Councillors have voted for an increase of approx. £2 per month for a Band D property with a clear expectation that we hope to abolish the **£200.00** per annum services charges to the management company.

The budget makes provision for adopting the Phase 1 open spaces and to start building a reserve fund for future maintenance. In addition, we have made provision for a legal advice reserve fund as we seek to find the optimum means of taking over from the management company.

These are temporary measures and if the Parish Council campaign to abolish the management company is unsuccessful, we will adjust the budget accordingly.

We have published a Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) with additional information, Q.1 and Q.22 are relevant.

Here is a direct link to the FAQ:

**<https://bit.ly/3Gz44QX>**



## Hunts Grove Platinum Jubilee Celebrations

The Parish Council along with a working group of volunteers are planning some events in order to celebrate the Queen's Jubilee Bank Holiday.

This is only in the planning stages, but we would like to organise a Mini festival on Friday, 3rd June 2022, starting early afternoon and finishing around 9/10 pm.

The event will have live music from groups and solo singers. Bring your own picnics and drinks, settle down and enjoy the entertainment. There would be a small ticket price, however children under the age of 12 will be free.

To help us to plan for this event, it would be extremely useful if you would vote on the poll (link below) as to whether you would be interested in attending. Vote once for each ticket paying individual that would be likely to come along.

Many thanks,  
Cllr Sandra Meecham

Link to the poll:

**<https://bit.ly/3qwITJx>**



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