**KENT ENGAGEMENT GROUP**

**DRAFT MINUTES – 19th July 2016, Council Chamber, Gravesham Borough Council, Windmill Street, Gravesend, Kent**

**Attending**: Wendy Mason, Riverside & Chair; Lisa Cornish, Orbit & Vice Chair; Melanie McAdam, Circle Housing Russet; Helen Charles (HCh), Town & Country Housing Group; Philippa Dale, Ashford BC; Helen Critcher, Golding Homes; Lisa Harris, Southern Housing Group; Michelle Thomas, East Kent Housing; Tania McGee, Gravesham BC; Corrine Beech, West Kent HA; Rebecca Coles, Dartford BC; Catherine Owston, Affinity Sutton; Rebecca Smith, KHG

**Apologies**: Carol Francis, TCHG ; Lynsey Brogan, Hyde Housing ; Louise Gray, Dartford BC; Jan Henry, Moat; Linda Aldred, Southern Housing Group; Jodie Miller, Medway Council;

**Visitor**: Stuart Beaumont, Kent Crime Stoppers

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| **ITEM** | **NOTES** | **ACTION** |
| **Introductions & Apologies** | Introductions and apologies noted. WM welcomed LC to the meeting as the new Vice Chair. |  |
| **Kent Crime Stoppers** | SB introduced himself to the group and advised that the Crime Stoppers is a Charity and in the main run by volunteers. The concept is about collating information from the public and sharing information with the Police.  All calls made to the service are 100% anonymous and there has been a great success with information provided by Crime Stoppers. SB provided the group with some useful stats about the success.  Traditionally over the last 25 years the information received by Crime Stoppers has been about Drugs related crime or car theft but now the Police have now advised that they no longer require intel on these crimes going forward.  Kent Police focus has now moved to more personal crimes, Domestic Violence, ASB, Human Trafficking for example. Crime Stoppers are now rolling out the Crime Stoppers Ambassador Scheme, sharing the new message and asking colleagues to become ambassadors for the scheme.  Crime Stoppers would like colleagues to help share the message in communities or within organisations. There is no record of names or numbers when calls are made; information shared is not traced back to the person sharing the information.  In Kent there is an email address for Crime Stoppers, when this is available SB will share the details and electronic copies of documents to share about the programme. There are several websites related to Crime Stoppers, included Most Wanted and a website for Young People.  SB advised that how information is shared is dependent on what it’s about. Call handlers for Crime Stoppers are trained to assess information and know how to direct the sharing of information to the relevant authority or body.  In Kent the Crime Stoppers Board has a Police representative, and there are good relationships established in Kent and Essex. SB to share contacts for London and Sussex with LH and WM.  There are some instances of malicious reporting via Crime Stoppers but all calls are taken seriously and inquiries are made to check the validity of a claim by a person calling Crime Stoppers.  There is a new app available for Kent, for people who live in the Countryside, about fly tipping. You can photograph the fly tipping and using GPS it gets directed to the right department. SB to send details about this app when available.  There are some instances of callers going back to Crime Stoppers but they are directed back to the appropriate authority or organisation to which the information was passed to.  Crime Stoppers do sign post to relevant agencies if a caller is a victim of crime.  **0800 555 111 is the number – 24 hours a day. £5 million a year Charity.** |  |
| **Minutes & Matters Arising** | Minutes agreed as accurate. The following matters arising were noted:  Page 1 – WM advised that she has shared the B&CE information with colleagues working in the North and a useful presentation.  Page 4 – RS advised that the website for KHG should be ready to launch later this week. |  |
| **KEG Tenant Training** | LC fed back about the current situation with regards to the KEG Training.  **Food Hygiene and First Aid** – these will have to be paid for.  LC attended the Dementia Training Session at County Hall last week; this was about encouraging Dementia Communities and overall awareness. The Dementia Friend training has been undertaken by many colleagues, this is usually around 45 minutes and could be delivered free and in house.  **Care Related Training** – this is about residents caring for family members without knowledge.  **Assertiveness and Communication Skills** – Orbit provides this in house so could run this in house and for free.  **Barclays Digital Eagles** – Not yet sure what they could deliver and how it could be shared with residents but this is free.  **DIY Skills** – this is a potential cost course, it is likely that between providers and their contractors this could be delivered at low cost.  **Budget Skills** – this is more about ‘Savvy Saving’ – not about telling households how or what to spend their income on but about how to practically save money, useful tips. PD suggested that this could be linked to those who are likely to be impacted by Pay to Stay.  LC shared with the group her feedback from customers that were contacted about the training options for residents:  **Food Hygiene** was popular in the feedback as it **First Aid**. RS did comment that with accredited training there are a certain number of educational hours to be completed and to bear this in mind when agreeing training, the timings and the venue, taking into account those with children who then have to travel. These two courses are likely to be the two with an associated cost.  **Care/Care Related Training** – LC did advise that the feedback was vague as the input from us about this potential course was vague; LC did raise the point about whether it would be more appropriate to provide some support or guidance about being a good neighbour, supporting elderly or vulnerable residents in the community. LH advised that SHG have undertaken similar consultation around this and members of the community becoming a mentor/support/be friend.  **Dementia Awareness/Dementia Friend** – one point made from the training that LC attended last week was that you have to be considered about how you approach this with residents, not to scare them. PD advised that Ashford BC colleagues have undertaken training and then used this within Sheltered Schemes and it was well received on the whole.  **Meeting and Presentation Skills** – from a Customer Involvement perspective this is deliverable in house at low course, as is the Assertiveness and Communication Skills.  **DIY Skills** – some contractors could be contacted about providing or assisting with this training through their Social Value/Community based work. PD suggested including gardening skills, basic training.  **Barclays Digital Eagles** – WM advised that it may be worth sign posting to this e learning facility and advise services. You don’t have to be a Barclay’s customer to use these facilities. MT questioned whether there will need to be agreement from Barclay’s about sharing their details/sign posting. WM agreed to check this and feedback. HC has two presentations from them, she will find out if she can share details.  **Savvy Saving** – Feedback is vague but the information shared was, there is likely to be interest but it needs to be marketed at the right level and attractive to residents. LC questioned whether there are local charities or organisations that KEG could tap into? This may link to be friending or digital courses. LC to research locally about any organisation could assist. Another point is about sharing information about loans, saving through the Credit Union etc.  It was agreed the training group should meet again, flesh out the details and if possible to identify costing.  MT commented about the cost of the training, whether this would be per delegate or lump sum per course. For the courses such as Food Hygiene or First Aid this could be costed on a day delegate rate to include the cost of refreshments on the full day courses. The other courses that can be delivered in house by colleagues can be arranged geographically to reduce travel expenses and difficulties. | **WM to note and feedback**  **ALL colleagues unable to attend to review the summary in the minutes about training and also the notes shared by LC from their residents. What is the feedback/thoughts?**  **All to comment about costing options asap** |
| **KEG DVD** | RS advised that the DVD is now complete. The link to the page on the KHG website will be shared with colleagues when it’s available and this can then be shared with colleagues accordingly.  Although there was a request for additional information for the DVD there was little that came forward and so only minor editing was undertaken and those who had initial concerns about the content (Speakers) were all happy with the final cut.  PD advised that Ashford BC use Objective Connect which is a recognised sharing platform for local authorities.  RS advised that the short film is about sharing good practice, its about learning from those who are regarded as exemplar and how to improve this offer within organisations.  If colleagues are unable to view the content of the short film via You Tube to contact RS and she will share via another media format, DropBox or We Transfer for example. | **RS to share web link when available**  **Please contact RS if you wish to have the short film in another format** |
| **KHG Update** | KHG will be producing an interim Kent and Medway Housing Strategy, this document will focus on four or five key themes that are impacting and relevant to Kent and Medway, to set out aims objectives and outcomes that will see us through the next two years of potential uncertainty, resulting from the Government announcements and the Housing and Planning Bill. RS will undertake this work for KHG.  RS advised that she will also be working on a County wide review of the DFG process; this is about ensuring a high quality transparent service for the customer, end to end, and to ensure the best outcome for the applicant. It is also about ensuring value for money, consistency in approach and more integrated working between all statutory partners. This work has just commenced.  The KHG and Joint Policy and Planning Board website is almost complete, colleagues will be able to find all protocols, strategies, briefing papers, new s and events information from the site, meeting details and papers will all be available from this new website. RS will share the link one its ready to go live. The website will be the main point of contact and communication for all KHG members.  RS advised that the number and of Resident Champions nominated for the KHG Excellence Awards was very low this year and although the nominations received were of a high standard the number in comparison to previous years was low. The event is taking place on the 20th July and you will have been contacted by Jill Pells if you have made a successful nomination or been nominated. | **RS to share details once the website is ready to go live** |
| **Round Table** | LC asked the group about use of Yammer for sharing internal information. LC is using this tool as a way to share meeting details with customers and they appear to enjoy using it.  PD advised that the Residents Panel in Ashford use What’s App for sharing details via group chat, including documents and photos. This is a new communication tool for Ashford so very early days. Residents can also use Objective Box as a tool to share and amend documents/information  WM uses Yammer, including the instant chat function, for a recent large scale service review. You do need to be strict about what it is used for.  MT advised that EKH are looking to use Google Drive, where you can make changes to a document between a group and view who is making changes/amendments. EKH are going to roll this out internally initially to test the ease of use.  LH advised that SHG are looking at a way to productively link communications between three resident groups so would be keen to hear feedback about Yammer or other products/tools. WM advised that when a document is uploaded to Yammer there is no email prompt so you would need to make sure there is a notification in the message board to prompt an email to be sent out to all group members.  WM suggested that KEG could have a Yammer Group, all colleagues to ascertain if they can access and use Yammer and then set this up.  It was agreed that at a future meeting it would be useful for colleagues to demonstrate and share their tools for communication.  Affinity Sutton use Moodle Board, this is a closed forum that you have to join and log in to, and the numbers are growing slowly and picking up interest with good feedback from residents. It’s unknown whether some residents have signed up but not viewed or signed back in for a second time. CO to share details of the cost for this system.  EKH have recently reviewed their Resident Involvement Strategy and this includes communication with residents. Another element of work from the strategy is to look at the structure of resident involvement and MT is interested to hear or visit with colleagues who have moved away from Committee meeting set up. The other element of work is incentives and would welcome information about any work undertaken in Kent in this area. LC has undertaken some work on this and will summarise and share with the group.  HCh incentive the Scrutiny Panel at TCHG, and although this was agreed by the TCHG Group Board not the entirety of panel members take the incentives, that is not their focus to attend.  PD commented that Moat approach their Scrutiny Panel work as a business. LH advised that expenses can be a barrier to engagement as it may impact on their allocation of benefits, even if residents are offered an incentive and don’t accept it they have to declare this to the Job Centre and this is a barrier.    There was a discussion about Prize Draws and how these are used to incentive residents to complete surveys or to assist with engagement. Circle Housing Russet is looking forward at using Skype and Video Conferencing for engagement activity, to meet digitally.  HC advised that Golding run the Customer Sounding Board only four times a year, there is usually a presentation from a locally supported charity or organisation and they are asked to decision make on Community Chest applications, there are 16 residents who attend this Board at all four meetings.    The group agreed that it is important to ensure that all engaged residents are aware of the changing environment and the impact upon providers and the services delivered and the ways in which engagement is undertaken. It is also important to ensure that engaged residents are fulfilling their roles and bringing items/knowledge to the meetings, demonstrating their value in their role. | **ALL to notify RS about use of Yammer**  **WM and LC to note for future agenda**  **RS to liaise with WM and LC about a potential DWP presentation about volunteering and the impact upon benefits/income** |
| **Any Other Business** | LC advised that a colleague in Hastings is embarking on a project about assisting Older People with claiming benefits, LC will share details about this project via email and ultimately he wants to know if there is a delivery partner who could undertake this project, potentially in Thanet.  HCh thanked everyone who has responded to her requests for information; all information has been very useful. LC echoed this. LC also asked that when colleagues collate information from surveys or information requests that they share the outcomes with all KEG colleagues.  RS advised that both Victoria France and Sue Sleet each passed on thanks and well wishes as they are now both moved on or retired from Hyde and SHG. | **LC to share via email**  **ALL to note** |
| **Scrutiny Discussion** | A small number of colleagues remained to discuss Scrutiny, WM, PD, MT, CO, HC, MMc, HCh and RS.  MMc advised that circle have a Group Service Improvement Panel that regional SIPS feed into. If a regional panel looks at an issue or policy and this then happens in more than one region it will lead potentially to a change. Currently Circle is recruiting and finalising all the Panels for Circle, this is all still new and in the early stages. Regional Panels will consist of customers and stakeholders. Digital application forms have been used to gauge skills and interests for example, ahead of selection. There are already 500 members registered on the digital element ‘Circle Voice’. MMc to share a link to the digital platform if able to. There is an online discussion forum on the digital platform but they have to be invited to join this. Circle has paid for this package via an external company and they monitor the use of it. MMc to share a copy of the digital form that is on line for completion.  PD advised that Ashford BC spent time switching groups to Panels and this included a Scrutiny Panels but a review is due as they are not meeting expected outcomes.  MT advised that EKH have a dedicated Scrutiny Officer who manages the Scrutiny Panel and their outcomes. The Scrutiny Panel at EKH that they are supported empowered and they do contribute with regards to report writing and agreement of how information is presented. HCh carries out a similar role and activities with regards to supporting the TCHG Scrutiny Panel. EKH also have Area Boards and Local Groups (the local groups are least effective in their outcomes).  MT advised that for the Scrutiny Panel they don’t use video conferencing and there is equal representation across the four Districts and Boroughs, Dover and Canterbury are the most common location for the meetings. There are four people who are regularly engaged in the Area Boards that sit on the Scrutiny Panel, all other panel members are not on other groups/panels to avoid duplication.  TCHG offer an incentive (annual payment) for being a Scrutiny Panel member, they meet formally monthly but they are encouraged to avoid August, and there are additional meetings when they are in a ‘reality check’ stage of a review. Each member contributes as it suits them. There is capacity for 12 on the Panel and currently they have 9, with turnover due to employment opportunities coming forward. The challenge for HCh is about recruitment.  PD raised the issue about disengaged Members and that engagement with them is not as it used to be.  WM advised that Riverside have a similar structure in respect of regional panels reporting nationally and then trends are identified. WM also suggested and agreed colleagues should share details about self-appraisal forms for panel members to complete.  HCh advised that TCHG have a non-resident Independent Chair of the Scrutiny Panel, she doesn’t claim any expenses and has undertaken the role to grow her knowledge of the housing sector. TCHG have a good suite of Governance Documents which are reviewed regularly and agree such details as length of Chair.  It was agreed to have Scrutiny on the agenda for two meetings of the year for KEG. | **MMc to share details of the digital platform and the form completed. Also to share outlay and on-going costs associated with the digital package**  **ALL to note**  **RS to note** |

Thanks noted to Gravesham BC for hosting and providing lovely refreshments and lunch