**KPSHG Meeting Notes 8th March 2021, Teams Call**

**Attending –** Julian Watts, Chair and Ashford BC; Amanda Martin, Dover DC; Donna Crozier, Peabody; Marion Money, NRLA; Peter Littlewood, iHowz; Tim Lovell, Canterbury CC; Daniel Shaw, Sevenoaks DC; Kerry Petts, F&HDC; Glyn Pritchard, Swale BC; James Cox, TWBC; Ashley Jackson, Thanet DC; Toni Carter, Dartford BC; Francesca Baylis, KCC; Paul Salter, Medway; Nigel Bucklow, Maidstone BC; Paul Tobin, Swale BC; Hazel Skinner, TMBC;

**Apologies** – Richard Stanford Beale, KF&RS; Rachel Evans, Dartford BC; Paul Stephens, KCC; Richard Hopkins, Thanet DC;

**Unauthorised Encampments – Palminder Sandher, Kent County Council**

Heads G&T Service for KCC, operate and manage 10 sites across Kent, two of which are on behalf of Maidstone BC, 163 households across Kent, there are more gypsies in Kent, over 4,000, the majority are on private sites or in housing, small minority travelling and illegally camped throughout the year on land owned by district councils or KCC.

The Toleration Policy – one in place that has been a joint approach, this was ratified and shared with all Kent CEX’s the response to all unauthorised encampments and Covid-19, decided to continue to with local authority powers but to stop spread of the virus it was agreed to look at tolerating these rather than s77 or s78, there are other sections of the Act that can be used by Kent Police if risk to the wider community or children of the encampment themselves.

Local authorities also need to adaption negating stopping approach to encampments, waste and rubbish disposal, there needs to be agreement on who take responsibility on this? Agreed that if camp lands on KCC land they will take the cost with basic amenities and equally for the districts if the camp is on local authority owned land. This can be considered through the Covid-19 funding from Central Government to reimburse any costings to local authorities.

Some districts are aware of the current situation, in some cases a slight disconnect about the expectations and operating as per pre Covid-19. If the unauthorised encampment is in a place of relative safety and they have signed a good neighbour agreement then the site should remain via the tolerance policy, to be reviewed once the restrictions about Covid-19 are lifted, when normal processes will resume.

Currently no transit provision in Kent for the G&T community, need to consider and plan for temporary negotiation stopping places. Some areas will have more of a prevalence of unauthorised encampments, where are the key areas, who are most effected, is there value in a joint approach to provide two or three sites? Under s62A police powers encampers can be directed to a designated transit provision in an area.

Due to the pandemic the welfare inspections will now involve conversations about track and trace and vaccinations and considering a roving vaccination team to capture those who may not be registered with a GP. As and when a UE occurs this roving team will make the necessary connections to prevent the spread of the virus.

**Questions/Comments** – KP asked about the Pal presenting to the Kent Enforcement Groups? KP and colleagues to share details for Pal to make those connections.

JW advised that use Common Law to deal with unauthorised encampments, only Ashford BC PSH Team deal with these encampments compared to other teams and have worked with Pal and his team before. Transit sites – who wants this in their local area, how to work with the local community to consider this? Who are the best colleagues to help shape the discussion on this?

**LADS2 & the Green Homes Grant**

AM shared her knowledge with colleagues on this topic. This is funding that the Greater SE energy Hub have and will split between local authorities based on population and fuel poverty data. There is a delivery model set up by this group, they are employing a managing agent to deal with contractors and a purchase system. However, want to look for a lead consortia partner across all councils, KCC don’t have capacity or will to do this for Kent. There is another meeting tomorrow morning 11.30 – 1.30 and colleagues are invited to attend to help make some quick decisions on this

All tenures – E, F and G and below, can get a D in but only 50% of allocation to be used for D properties, Owner Occupiers can get £10k for measures in their homes, solar panels, external wall installation etc.

Funding for rented, including Private Rented and Social rent can get up to £5000 per property.

Questionnaire to be shared from GSEE Hub with 46 questions which has to be completed by 19th March.

Most authorities in Kent area could get about £300k, how governance behind will get in place and how to work with the hub to access the funds? Contracts and grant funding documents are still in planning, delivery has to be by 31st December 2021 and 75% capital spend by September 2021. Very short time frame to get governance in place.

If looking at social housing – subsidy control rules replaces State Aid– over 3 year fiscal period only £340k can be used.

FB advised that the EPC tool has been shared at the end of last week (5th March).

AM advised that the guidance does state that if LA’s can’t fulfil their quota it will be passed on to another LA in the area or further forward if it can’t be fulfilled their either. How you give those not on benefits, you have to give the managing agent or contract another flex, so does need consideration. Need to be seen to be actively engaging with this piece of work and funding opportunity.

One note of caution, LA are expected to back this project, do we give logos to people we have no contractual relationship with? DDC have to go through governance to do this. KCC do not want to get involved in delivery and also commented on the sign off of governance and the suggested time frame for this.

Home Upgrade Grant (HUG) – will be the new name of the grant moving forward.

MM stressed that important the private landlords do engage with this project, down to MM and PL to raise awareness to find ways to engage landlords.

KP asked about worst case scenario and not meeting deadlines? AM advised that not likely to allow any timeframe extensions, money will follow a path to enable expenditure within the GSE area, this is the case for the questionnaire completion by the 19th March. Unsure yet on the detail required for the form to be completed, will need to have a lot of questions collated from across Kent to share with the hub.

**NRLA Update –**

MM advised that involved in the HHSRS consultation currently, encouraging landlords to feedback on this, another short timeframe for completion. Still have landlords struggling to get EICRs done by the 1st April 2021 deadline, Covid has impacted upon this time frame, landlords to keep records of the contact, and hoping LA’s are listening to the landlords. Breathing Space on 1st May 2021, if you have a tenant in arrears then this will be written off, putting it into a moratorium and continuation of paying rent would not be beneficial, the mental health breathing space another consideration and watching brief. Still have small landlords suffering as a result of the ban on evictions, in North Kent rents are rising due to the exodus from London and competition for commuter based accommodation, and does mean the gulf between the rent and benefits will become greater due to the local housing allowance rates remaining as they are currently.

**iHowz Update –**

PL updated that echoed what MM has commented upon in her update. There have been some landlords who have stalled on the actions regarding the EICR’s and others have expressed the difficulty with gaining access, to keep all proof of contact. Plethora of changes for landlords, huge amount of protection for tenants now in place, HHSRS review and EPC review are both being engaged with via iHowz members. The LLAS conference happened on the 23rd February, David Smith, NRLA advisor and specialised in resident and tenant law with an update, not seen the Breathing Space legislation, an update on the tax elements for landlords, making tax digital for example. Ended with Richard Bowser, the editor of Property Investor News, trying to predict the future, always have a plan B! Also heard from CEX from Training for Professionals Company, talking through managing repairs during a pandemic. Landlord from London Area who explained how they have coped with Covid and in particular his proactive management of arrears to help them remain low.

**HIA Update –**

DC updated for Peabody that work is slowly picking up with regards to referral rates coming through, contractors are working currently but at a slower pace due to social distancing and use of PPE, also access to materials for jobs. Appointed a graduate role, going to the Thanet HIA to support the surveyor based there. The HD Services are ramping up, the focus now is business as usual planning, revising risk assessments with a view to some staff going back to the QEQM, one of the bigger sites to enable a return to the office. All front line staff have had the opportunity to have the Covid vaccination, also been provided through a CCG with lateral flow kits to encourage twice weekly screening. Experiencing some BAME colleagues are resisting the vaccination, Peabody are working to raise the profile about reducing fears about the vaccination. No sign of a return to the office, currently mid-April is likely but will be a phased for Folkestone and Chatham offices.

JW advised that referrals from the OT’s and how these may all come through at a future point, those with a seconded OT seem to have a better referral rate.

PL congratulated KCC on their website to manage the symptom free testing website.

**KMSEP Update** –

FB updated advised that KMSEP meeting due on the 9th March, ELES is signed off and action plan circulated with comments coming back to the work assigned. Comments due in a few weeks, once confirmed will be shared again. Still considering future options for EE options for residents and projects. Solar Together Kent has 4000 residents apply for a no obligation quote with 750 entering into contracts, installations to be completed by the end of June 2021.

**KEEP Update** –

DP not on the call today but AM advised that the new FP strategy for England published in February, there are changes in the definition of what is a fuel poor household and there are tweaks which may impact the LA Flex statements. There was also mention of issues about data sharing for the most vulnerable, HECCA – all LA’s have to put in their HECCA reports this May. GSEH will share data so this could be used for the HECCA report. **ACTION** - RS to share the update about KEEP which was part of the last countywide groups updated shared with KHG on 10th Feb.

JW thanks KEEP colleagues for their work on this area for across Kent.

**Roundtable Discussion –**

Dave Eldridge has advised about a webinar on the 23rd March and adaptations in the PRS and nay LA’s in Kent who would like to attend and share a presentation about good practice? Is there anyone who would be willing to take this on? PRS landlords and grant take up is low and varied across Kent. PL commented that the difficulty with landlords and DFG’s is about the installation of equipment which then can’t be removed, trying to do the adapted so that bathroom equipment etc can be put back (e.g. bath to shower, shower to bath) – planning around where to place waste etc.

Foundations are also running a monthly webinar and considering a more local SE webinar which would include Kent and Medway colleagues, would this be of benefit for colleagues to participate in, sharing best practice, cases? GP advised that there is a Facebook page around disabilities which Paul Smith from Foundations comments on as do other colleagues.

**Additional Updates/Matters Arising/AOB**

KP advised that anyone over age of 56 years can now book their Covid Jab via the NHS website – KP to share link via RS.

DS advised that new Head of Housing in place at SDC, Rebecca Wilcox, former Housing Operations Manager at Ashford BC. Have a couple of staffing issues currently, only has 2 officers. LADS 1B are delivering to mobile home parks, difficult to get engagement due to Covid and shielding and time frames to deliver the project, but picking up now. In house service for DFG’s with referrals coming through, undertaking technical inspections while his officer’s shield.

JW thanked all colleagues for attending and providing updates.

**Date 7th June 2021 – to move to the 8th June, RS to update the meeting appointment.**