**Present**: John Littlemore, acting chair and Maidstone; Manpreet Bhupal, vice chair and Gravesham; Zoe Callaway, Roxanne Sheppard, Swale; Kylie Gilham, Canterbury; Sylvia Roberts, Ashford; Rachel Westlake, Robin Cahill, Max Guest, Hazel South, Mel Anthony, Luke Edwards, Zena Cooke, KCC; Elly Toye, Dover; Ray Easdown, Medway; Hannah Gaston, Natalia Merritt, Maidstone; John Barker, Toni Carter, Dartford; Marie Gerald, Alastair Reeves, and Alex Clarke, DLUHC; Vicky Hodson, Kent HomeChoice; Ashley Jackson, Rachel May, Thanet; Rav Kensrey, Sevenoaks; Amanda Gill, Ashford, John King, NRLA; John Barker, Dartford; Stuart Clifton, Tunbridge Wells; Claire Keeling Tonbridge and Malling; Lisa Clarke, Clarion; Mark Damiral, Folkestone and Hythe; Helen Miller, KHG;

**Apologies:** Lora McCourt, Canterbury; Kellie Pettet-Steele; Bob Porter, Thanet; Daniel Killian, Gravesham;

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| Reference | Notes/Outcome | Who | Action/Decision |
| Update from DLUHC | Alex Clarke from DLUHC explained that the HCLIC stats have been published for Jul-Sep 2021 and the performance dashboards are available at <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/statutory-homelessness-in-england-july-to-september-2021>  The AFEO reprofiling exercise for these schemes will be going on. Contact Alex by email if you’d like to discuss.  RSAP letter that has been sent to LAs showed one final opportunity to bid in. Kent is a high needs and so high priority area for DLUHC and the deadline is 13th April. Again, contact Alex with questions. There will also be a webinar on 3rd February. To book please visit [Webinar (microsoft.com)](https://teams.microsoft.com/registration/aeKo-hEIOEWC500pAJIZvw,vnyvniRnBkW6pvwYuwdr5w,Br5G6BlzAUKz6QCp_T1Kag,FxZZD6Xz1UeNV6CCTZI7KA,efIXQTHI90eFkrSQVmdPfQ,sV8VVktJAUy0E_wzLogAKA?mode=read&tenantId=faa8e269-0811-4538-82e7-4d29009219bf)  RSI application process has webinar on application process and next Tuesday 11am. To book please visit [DLUHC RSI 2022-2025 - Application webinar Tickets, Multiple Dates | Eventbrite](https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/dluhc-rsi-2022-2025-application-webinar-tickets-247170231817)  Alex asked that LAs let him know how the winter top up fund is going.  There have been some changes on who covers each area. There are two teams and Alex is the advisor for all of Kent for HAST, which covers part 7, TA, RSAP and AFEO. The Rough Sleeper team, so RSI and protect and vaccinate – has three advisors Alastair Kent covering Canterbury, Dartford, Gravesham and Medway; David Johnson covering Ashford, Maidstone, Sevenoaks, Tonbridge and Malling and Tunbridge Wells and John Kurht for Dover, Folkestone and Hythe and Thanet.  The DLUHC are aware of KCC’s proposed budget cuts and have raised it with the Minister who is taking advice on next steps. JL asked whether there was any way to identify how much of the central government’s grant to KCC is intended for supported accommodation? AC did not know the answer and said the minister is aware of this issue.  MG explained the focus at DLUHC is shifting onto wider homelessness and they would be interested to hear what the pressing issues are. Please let AC know. JL said they are seeing people presenting with complex debt issues. |  |  |
| Fairbonds Scheme | John King from NRLA shared 2 PowerPoint presentations that will be circulated by email.  The first introduced NRLA showing they aim to work with central government to represent landlords and make a better private rented sector to all. NRLA provide landlords with information and can help them find accreditation routes. NRLA encourages landlords to consider letting with local authorities.  JK set out an example of a process NRLA can offer for landlords to become members of NRLA via a local authority to help LAs reaching landlords who do not currently work with the LAs.  JL asked if this could be done across Kent and JK said this can be approached.  NM explained that landlords can be willing to work with the LA and then the landlord wants the property back and do not want to have to use a possession order procedure. LA has to uphold the tenant’s rights to possession. JK explained that NRLA see LA tenants as having the same rights as all other tenants on that type of tenancy.  JK gave a presentation on Fairbonds that will be circulated by email. This showed the innovations being considered by government regarding the National Deposit Bond Scheme. It is considering a non cash rental deposit option for vulnerable households who would have asked the local authority to help. The scheme would be cashless and there would be an option for the landlord to claim the agreed amount if there was damage or loss. The landlord would need to provide evidence, with the decision to be made by TDS and if agreed there would claim against the LA. It is hoped this project will be offered in the next few months. There is no fee to a local authority to join the scheme and there is a fee of £75 per registration of a cashless deposit.  SC asked what happened on disputes resolution when the tenant can move on with no forwarding address. JK said the process isn’t hindered by lack of engagement from the tenant and it’s for the landlord to provide adequate evidence.  Members are welcome to contact [john.king@nrla.org.uk](mailto:john.king@nrla.org.uk) for further details. |  |  |
| COMF update | Manpreet Bhupal, the new vice chair, gave an update.  COMF funding is for preventing homelessness primarily in the private rented sector but can also be used in the social rented sector and for mortgage arrears. It is for households adversely financially affected by COVID. There are other funds available for addressing homelessness at the moment but please make sure that COMF funds are used in accordance with the criteria set out in the MoU.  As LHAs have been notified, the allocations panel met in December to consider the data returns and how to allocate the remaining 25% of funds. Spending varied very significantly between LHAs and the panel felt this partly reflected the speed at which councils had responded to the project and may not reflect the level of need or the organisations ability to use the funds over the entire duration of the project. The panel asked each LHA to make a projection of their spending for each month and to state whether they would welcome the 25% allocation, or potentially a further allocation, by 14th January.  The KCC grant oversight group has reached a decision and now;   1. All local authorities are being allocated the full £175,000 with an extension to 30th June 2022 2. Dover and Sevenoaks, who have already had their full £175,000,  are being allocated an additional £45,000 to come from the contingency fund, to spend by 31st March 3. The criteria for the project remain the same, as laid out in the MoU 4. To support the project the marketing will be extended to 30th June except for Dover and Sevenoaks where it will run to 31st March   As such there is no need to do a data return for January by 3rd February and this can be done by the usual 14th of the month. HM will begin the payment processes by 31st January.  **Maxims marketing update.**  Relevant updates are being regularly posted on Kent Housing Group’s [Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/VoiceofHousinginKent), [LinkedIn](https://www.linkedin.com/company/kent-housing-group) and [Twitter](https://twitter.com/KentHsgGroup) channels to promote the campaign. A Facebook campaign was run for one week in January on Kent Housing Group’s page targeting adults living in Kent. The primary aim was to attract more people to [www.supportforkentlandlords.co.uk](http://www.supportforkentlandlords.co.uk).  Two further blogs have been drafted and added to the Support for Kent Landlords website offering generic advice to landlords. This content was shared on KHG’s social channels and will benefit the website in terms of Search Engine Optimisation.  A poster was drafted and designed to encourage people to contact their Local Authority for support. This has been distributed to the LAs with the suggestion that it’s printed and posted locally. It does not specifically mention COMF funding to ensure it will be valid after the project ends.  Databases were purchased for Kent based solicitors, letting agents and property managing agents. Separate emails were drafted for each audience and these have been distributed. An email has also been sent to Local Authorities to pass to their landlord forums, encouraging people to visit the website.  Maxim is currently seeking opportunities for a follow-up press release which they hope to issue before the end of the month.  Brian Horton has agreed to be a spokesperson if Sharon Williams is not available. He has been briefed accordingly.  There will be a radio advert to run to end of Jan to end of March to promote the project.  Thanet has had a large number of contacts via letting schools know of the service.  NM asked how long it will take until funds arrive. HM said should be receiving funds by mid-February.  Maidstone – what if they need more. HM to ask KCC if any option for further redistribution, or from contingency funds ask KCC  ET asked whether Dover and Sevenoaks can have longer to spend the extra. HM to ask KCC if extra time for Dover & Sevenoaks | **HM**  **HM** | **Contact KCC to clarify options for more funds**  **Contact KCC to clarify timescales** |
| Chair and vice chair | JL explained SC has stepped down after serving two years as chair. L Mc is unable to step up as chair due to changing her job role. Manpreet Bhupal has begun as vice chair with a view to step up to chair in the future. We are seeking volunteers to be Chair. JL is an interim chair as the mentor of KHOG.  RK asked whether, we could consider chairs and co-chairs, as KHOG chair role is very large and people lack capacity. JL explained that the chair won’t always be able to do everything and the vice chair does help. The group does need to support the chair and vice chair. | **All** | **Please consider volunteering to be KHOG chair** |
| Protocols update | **Domestic Abuse Reciprocal Agreement**  Lisa Clarke, from Clarion, explained that this agreement would be for survivors of DA to find an alternative social housing tenancy in Kent and to provide suitable ongoing support. It fits with the principles of DAHA. The project group met once to go through the project initiation document. LC has surveyed the social landlords in Kent on stock levels, support for a scheme, and other comments. The consensus supported a scheme like this.  LC is refreshing the project group to ensure it has members who come from organisations with social housing and will meet again in February. It will revisit the considerations for such a scheme, for example around arrears, different tenancy types, etc. and then consider how a scheme could be implemented. By April LC would hope to have the scheme ready to go to social landlords for sign up. The Group members are currently from LAs with stock, HAs and Lookahead.  JL wanted to ensure the existing protocol regarding households fleeing DA when presenting as homelessness is considered. LC is aware of the need for a link with the existing protocol. JL highlighted the importance of the support aspect as well as the housing part. RW said there is no reduction if DA support due to KHC changes. LC and RW to touch base on this.  RE asked if there could be a commitment to Duty to refer on homelessness in the proposed DA reciprocal arrangement. LC and RE to liaise on this.  SC Letter from DLUHC to LAs updating guidance on supporting those seeking support around DA. Copy of this letter to be send to LC as originally when to LAs. It’s important that households do not experience a worse support level if use reciprocal arrangement than homelessness route.  **IH / families with complex needs**  Natalia Merritt, from Maidstone, explained that the group met and found that the protocol needed more work with KCC as it is about early intervention for vulnerable families. The working group would like to get firmer commitments from KCC and LAs on what the actions taken would be. JL offered help to escalate to get contacts and commitments are needed through the partners.  NM invited LAs to let her know the number of IH decisions they are making.  MG Suggested people may wish to speak to her and she will give information on expected changes to old troubled families programme. IH has dropped in latest stats. Helping families earlier is very effective and we need to work with families early.  TC has found it difficult to get buy in from KCC. JL invited TC to send the email to him for escalation to get the buy-in. JL number of families found IH has dropped and this is good news to reduce the stigma being seen as IH.  **Young Peoples Joint Protocol**.  The group met on 2 Nov and identified the tasks needed. No date is set for future meetings and there is no volunteer to lead this group yet.  HS and RC suggested we wait until OFSTED make the decision on regulation and do after that – this should be in February. | **LC and RW**  **LC and RA**  **SC**  **LAs**  **TC, RK & NM**  **TC**  **RC** | **Touch base to ensure aware of services offered.**  **To touch base to ensure the Duty to Refer is included in proposed protocol**  **To send letter from DLUHC to LC**  **Contact NM to say the number of IH decisions you are making**  **Touch base with MG to see what help can be given**  **Contact John to seek help on escalation for buy-in**  **Tell HM when the OFSTED decision is made and its time to reconvene this group** |
| Commissioning Updates | Zena Cooke from KCC gave a presentation on the KCC budget which will be circulated by email.  Zena Cooke outlined the draft KCC budget. By 16th December it was clear that another savings proposal would be needed. This proposal includes £2.3 from allowing Kent Homeless Connects contract to end at end of September 2022.  KCCs reserves are lower than many other counties. They have above average external debt. The draft budget will be presented to Cabinet on 27th January, with the draft budget for Council approval published on 2nd February and they will present budget for approval to KCC on 10th February. If they are approved there will be a consultation process.  JL asked when the final decision will be taken on the budget. ZC explained that *if* the budget is approved on 10th Feb then it becomes the plan. However, after that further discussions and there is a commitment that transitional arrangements for 2022-23 and 2023-24 will be sufficient.  Mel Anthony gave a presentation on Kent Homeless Connects which will be circulated. She acknowledged the short timeline and that this matter was not under consideration until mid-December 2021. KCC notified partners on 5th January to share the information as soon as they were able. The Kent Homeless Connect focused on adults and is a framework contract so cannot be extended. There are three elements; supported accommodation, support in the community (floating support, outreach to rough sleepers) and welfare provision.  The number of supported accommodation bedspaces in each LHA area varies with some having none. On 14th Jan there were 558 people in the service, 310 in support accommodation, 203 using the prevention service, 14 move on and 31 using the rough sleeper service.  KCC has made appointments to come out to speak with each LHA to look at the impacts for that LHA. This should be the start of ongoing dialogue. They do intend to ascertain how many clients will need a Care Act assessment. They will share analytics to inform the conversations.  KCC would like to ask KHOG how it would like to be involved going forward. KCC are also going to the KHG Executive Board on 2nd Feb and to the Housing Health and Social Care subgroup meeting in March.  If the proposal is accepted on 10th Feb an EqIA will be done and a consultation will be carried out.  Contacts are  Luke Edwards [Luke.edwards@kent.gov.uk](mailto:Luke.edwards@kent.gov.uk)  Max Guest [Max.guest@kent.gov.uk](mailto:Max.guest@kent.gov.uk)  Kellie Pettet-Steele will be leaving KCC early in February.  JL attended Kent Chiefs meeting last week. The main concerns were around the displacement of costs, displacements of people, what will happen with supported accommodation and how to repurpose the buildings with the complication of historic grant in some buildings. Kent Chiefs were very concerned about the speed at which the decisions are being taken and they are hoping for the decision on this contract to be deferred for a year which will give opportunity for engagement. LHAs want to work with KCC to lessen the impacts for this vulnerable client group but do not wish their engagement on this issue to be taken as an endorsement of the proposal. JL raised the point that this is likely to be a false saving as when vulnerable clients’ needs are not addressed early larger needs are likely to arise later. The reconfiguring of other Adult Social care services could also impact on these same clients, or other clients that could present at LHAs for assistance. There is a government expectation and responsibility on upper tier authorities through the code of guidance that they will deliver these services and JL asked how this proposal aligns with national policy?  SC asked whether there has been provider feedback on viability of the units of supported accommodation could continue without KCC funding? MA said that these conversations will be had with LHA and the providers as this is better done together. The meetings booked with each LA will be used to share the info KCC has gathered so far.  JL it feels like the amount of money to be saved is the driving force and the impacts on the services and clients are being considered second rather than informing the proposal.  SC asked what does ‘active move on plan’ mean for the slides for lots 3 and 4? MA explained that some clients would already have been on the path to moving on before the proposal was announced. They’ve been working with providers to get indications of those dates, where they are already engaged with the LHA and where they’re not, and what the proposed solution is.  AC said the advisor teams are concerned about the proposals particularly the potential cost shunt to LHAs and the long term impacts this will have on homelessness in Kent. They have raised these concerns at ministerial level. The minister is taking advice on how this fits with the government’s manifesto commitment to end rough sleeping by 2024 and that this feels like a backward step.  MA explained that KCC would like to work with DLUHC to identify impacts and how to work together. Some LAs fund rough sleeper services themselves. Other upper tier authorities, when the ring fence was removed, have moved away from this work and how that worked to find the best ways to do this in a multi-agency manner. MA said she had struggled to find a contact at DLUHC. AC suggested MA go through him to make contact at DLUHC.  CK Have had their LHA meeting with MA. The service is funded until 30th Sept and so should continue as normal until then and that the transition should not start until then. CK there are waiting lists for those seeking supported accommodation in West Kent now who need to move into this service now. JL said that the providers may experience difficulties in winding the service down as once no new clients are being taken and it starts to have vacancies the service provider may wish to be able to shut the unit as it becomes harder to work.  MB Asked about the EqIA and for it to be shared with the group. He sought assurance that short term contract changes will not be imposed by KCC again. MA, KCC did provide information as soon as they were able to. Cllr Roger Gough is committed to sharing information with partners as soon as possible. The EqIA will be done if the proposal is accepted on 10th February.  JL How will KCC engage with us to inform the paper to KCC council meeting? ZC the paper is the overall budget and will cover a very large number of services. The Kent Homeless Connect service will be on the list of proposed budgetary savings. It shows that they intend to make savings on that list of issues. If the proposal is approved the commissioners will identify the processes, the costs, the timeframe and ways to achieve it. The report to KCC budget report will show the expectation to support transitional arrangements.  This is a proposal, the areas that have been identified as policy choices are where Kent is an outlier in county councils as other county councils have reduced or stopped these type of services.  Some clients may have core adult social care needs and they may be transferred, financially to another budget. The EqIA may show that some clients will need provision for longer. These details will be flagged in later months.  JL from the clients perspective if all services track back to what they must do, not what they have been doing, they may receive less support.  ZC will also speak with Health and housing around ICS and ICPs which is key around redesigning the services. Cllr Gough is committed to looking at how to reduce the impacts on clients and partners.  KCC got the final settlement on 16th Dec and then they started looking at which services could be identified. This service was one of the last to be put on the list.  JL asked about the timetable for Young Persons services. Robin Cahill have been working on creating a business case for directors regarding commissioning YP services. Then OFSTED announced it may require that all placements for 16-17 year olds to be regulated and this could impact supported accommodation, supported lodgings, receptions centres for UASC. When details are know we will consult with partners.  MA wanted to know how KHOG would like to engage as a group with KCC. JL yes, will need to have this discussion and come back to MA and KCC soon. However, each LA’s initial focus will be to understand the impacts for the vulnerable adults and the organisation and to ensure these are understood throughout the organisation and by Members.  Domestic Abuse;  Unfortunately RW was unable to give an update due to time constraints and kindly provided this update in the Teams chat function;   * Needs Assessment now published - [https://www.kpho.org.uk/health-intelligence/population-groups/domestic-abuse#tab1](https://www.kpho.org.uk/health-intelligence/population-groups/domestic-abuse) * Strategy now published - <https://www.kent.gov.uk/about-the-council/strategies-and-policies/community-safety-and-crime-policies/domestic-abuse-strategy> * KCC Policy team leading on development of Delivery Plan * Still no announcement re 2022/23 new burdens funding but DLUHC reassured yesterday there will be more funding and will announce as soon as they can * Work started to formally review the MARAC process and Steering group now established * Mockingbird High – Theatre production raising awareness of DA and impact on children had live launch and have virtual sessions if anyone is interested in attending * ‘Know See Speak Out’ campaign ran across 16 days of action – achieved total reach of 3.3 million! Off the back of this South Eastern have agreed to display our valentines campaign at all train stations * Spec being developed for next iteration of comms work   [Domestic abuse - Kent Public Health Observatory (kpho.org.uk)](https://www.kpho.org.uk/health-intelligence/population-groups/domestic-abuse#tab1) | **MA**  **All** | **Liaise with AC to make contact with DLUHC**  **Consider how KHOG would like to work with KCC on this matter** |
| Urgent National Policy or Case Law | Two cases are listed on AHAS [info@ahas.org.uk](mailto:info@ahas.org.uk) JL will forward to HM to circulate  There is a letter to LHAs on supporting DA survivors. JL will forward to HM to circulate | **HM**  **HM** | **Circulate when received from JL**  **Circulate when received from JL** |
| AOB | Date of next meeting is 10th March. This will be via Teams and we hope to offer blended meetings after this March. |  |  |