**DRAFT MINUTES – Housing Strategy and Enabling Group**

**20th September 2016 - Ashford Borough Council Offices, Civic Centre, Tannery Lane, Ashford Kent**

**Present:** Jennifer Shaw, Co-Chair and Ashford BC; Liz Crockford, Co-Chair and Sevenoaks DC; Sarah Lewis, Tunbridge Wells BC; Satnam Kaur, TMBC and HSEG Mentor; Jane Griffiths, BPHA; Tessa O’Sullivan, ACRK; Alison Elliott, Maidstone BC; Jo Allchurch, LGA; Stephen Baldry & Hannah Gates, HCA; Rachel Britt & Arron Nichols, Medway Council

**Apologies:** Brian Horton, SELEP; Sandra Sainsbury, Shepway DC; Ashley Stacey, Thanet DC; David Jeffrey, Ashford BC; Rebecca Walker, Swale BC; Sharon Donald, Gravesham BC; Tony Stewart & Andrew Connors, Maidstone BC; Andrew Paterson & Emma Bartlett, Canterbury City Council

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| **ITEM** | **NOTES** | **ACTION** |
| **Introductions and Apologies** | Introduction and apologies noted. |  |
| **LGA Update** | LGA is the National voice of Local Government, this is a membership organisation with an improvement support arm and the Policy Development/Policy Advocacy work, JA focus is planning but with recognition of housing. This is a cross party organisation, there are Board structures. The Board cycle starts in September. Housing and Planning - the main focus has been the Housing and Planning Bill over the last 12 months, big areas were starter homes and pay to stay with a lot of work behind the scenes to influence the Bill. The LGA have published a document about where they assisted with the Housing and Planning Bill. The change in parliament gives a fresh outlook on some of the areas to lobby; new ministers are taking time to reflect on the policies recently published by Government.Another piece of work is the Housing Commissioning Work, what role can local authorities have to enable building of homes, sharing best practice and what lobbying can be done to influence the details of these opportunities. Next Steps for the LGA is writing a more detailed report with more findings, this will follow up the preliminary report published.Questions from Jo:Starter Homes – what this will this mean for housing delivery? The Housing Minister has indicated delivery of homes across all tenures and again what impact this will have? How do we fund infrastructure?Discussion:ABC are doing their Local Plan, the first public consultation has closed with assumptions about starter homes with a lack of detail from the Housing and Planning Bill. There is an assumption that there will be 20% starter homes and the remainder will be affordable homes, but this doesn’t work in all areas of Ashford due to viability and will reduce the output of affordable homes, impacting on those who are on the waiting list.SL questioned what happened to the consultation on starter homes, JA advised that DCLG are still considering responses to the consultation and there has been a pause due to the ministerial changes and the outcome of Brexit. JA advised that LGA have responded to request to not have a national target. SL also questioned the cap on starter homes as in more affluent areas this will mean only one bed homes.LC reinforced the issues of SL that starter homes will be one bed units, which are likely to be bought by commuters to London or other areas close to Sevenoaks, due to the transport network and location of Sevenoaks, and not benefit the local community. JA advised that the LGA have requested that starter homes are kept in perpetuity; SL advised that this is very difficult to enforce from a legal perspective and have had to waiver this for a OP scheme in Tunbridge Wells. There was a discussion about the variety of possible scenarios about the recycling of the 20% from the starter homes, to whom does the discount go back to? What will be the regulations about how the discount is used look like? The proposed 20% of starter home provision on certain sized sites and with viability issues there was a discussion about other options to the proposed national starter homes target? Would this help to have a local target over a number of sites to meet a target, and how this would assist with viability issues?The National Federation of Builders who represent SME’s are broadly ok with the starter homes product but there are concerns about the impact on their cash flow as these units are built at risk, with an assumption that they will sell. The House Builders Federation has remained quiet on this issue.Affordable housing delivery is unimplemented planning permissions, which can impact on affordable housing delivery, are there any ideas about how to tackle this and gets sites moving? Does anyone have a strategy or monitor sites with planning permissions expired? AN advised that he has undertaken this for Medway, most of the sites with expired permissions are due to viability based on older land values, which may now have increased.JS advised that members at Ashford took a view, with regards to the town centre, that they will waive other planning obligations to get sites moving. There is one site in Ashford with 600 units with no affordable units to be delivered. SL advised that similar to ABC there are land value issues and over payment for land, also town centre is about retail units unable to let or be bought under housing delivery. No grant for rented have negatively impacted stalled sites and TWBC are considering using commuted sums to kick start site, due to capacity locally.Housing for Older People is captured in the report and there are some challenges for local authorities to do more but this is dependent upon capacity. JS advised that the rent reduction and the LHA have impacted on the provision of supported and sheltered with yet still uncertain times. There are now sites with Extra Care provision planned but these are now stalled due to uncertainty. Under 35’s are going to be a big issue going forward, how this need is going to be met? There was a discussion about the Build to Rent model shared with some KHG colleagues from Manchester City Council, lots of information about how the model works and the upfront de risking that makes these possible to work.SK confirmed that in the report from the LGA there was not mention of affordability and the cost of living generally that makes property in the affordable to occupy. SL commented that the Manchester model that was shared as part of the Build to Rent approached affordability differently and rents were set / based upon the local living wage. JA will share the initial thinking from the LGA on the Homelessness Reduction Bill as this isn’t JA area, there is a person working in the HCA working on this area for the LGA and all the work streams from the LGA need to be linked.With regards to Local Plans and planning applications it was agreed the viability expertise within each local authority is limited and planners are concerned about whether sites are deliverable and no longer aspirational. JA advised that some local authorities are looking at bringing forward local viability strategies; Islington is an example of this.JS advised that Ashford BC have concerns about the sale of high value homes and pay to stay coming forward, both will have an impact on the HRA and borrowing capacity. RB advised that Medway Council have made assumptions about the likely increase in admin cost for Pay to Stay. LC commented about the VRTB, the portable discounts and the impact on rural communities, there does need to be some clarity on this from Government. JA will feedback this to LGA colleagues. JA to continue dialogue with the group via RS, especially useful for consultation responses or select committees. The Chairman of the LGA is due to meet with the Planning Minister in due course. | **JA to share via RS****JA to share via RS****RS to add JA to HSEG Circulation** |
| **Minutes & Matters Arising** | The Minutes were agreed accurate with the following matters arising:Page 1 – RS advised that Graham Herbert unable to attend this meeting but is scheduled to attend in November.On individual sales policies, LC advised that there are some responses but will chase up those responses missing and will share via RS.Page 3 – RS advised that SL attended the Affordability T&FG meeting; the notes are on the KHG website. There was discussion about the homelessness reduction bill and the adopting the Welsh Model. West Kent HA and TCHG were in attendance, the main policy in circulation currently is the TCHG Affordability Calculator. The summary is there is an agreement to host a workshop session to look at the four main issues for affordability across Kent, with a view to develop a protocol with a set of principles about affordability that the majority can agree on and to also determine how we define affordability. This will be about bringing all partners to the table, including a possible presentation from Snug Bug which will get the conversation about the under 35 housing issues on the table. RS advised that Eileen Martin has invited William Benson (TWBC) to lead or be part of the session as he is the Chief Executive Lead on Welfare Reform. AN has shared the latest Benchmarking report, this was also shared with KHG.Page 5 – LC advised that a letter has gone to DCLG asking for additional s157 exemptions, LC will update when a response is received. LC suggested a reflection at the next Rural Housing meeting what the pages on the Kent Homechoice website says for each local authority, Vicky Hodson to be invited. | **LC to note and share****RS to share more details about the Affordability Workshop when available** |
| **KMHS Update/SELEP Update / KHG Update** | RS advised that there are some broad themes now suggested for an interim KMHS, to be developed to cover a period of 3 year. RS shared with the group the themes:Affordability to run through all elements of the strategyEnablement and delivery of affordable housing to include acceleration of delivery across all tenures, exploration of funding models, sale of high value assets, working with KCC and the One Public Estate agenda, Grant funding – how to lobby and influence the flexibility required of grant funding, and working with developers to ensure right numbers, right tenure and right design for communities, keeping a watching brief on starter homes.Supported Housing – links to the KCC Accommodation Strategy, again numbers, type, affordability, demand and need assessment, the impact of welfare reforms and 1% rent reduction on this going forward. Is there a more flexiable care ready offer? Working with HB to look at consistency of exemption criteria, what are the impacts of the transformation agenda in KCC for this accommodation?Housing, Health and Social Care – supporting independent living when appropriate, links to the Integrated Housing Health and Social Care project, and links to Think Housing first and the JSNA, what can housing do to influence the HWBB’s and outputs from the CCG’s? links to the Fuel Poverty StrategyHousing Need and Homelessness – who will we be housing in the future? What support do they need to keep a tenancy longer term? Links to the PRS, prevention of homelessness, what is new, what is best practice? The cost and use of TA in Kent, how to reduce and what support is there for those using it? The impact of welfare reforms across the services, learning about Social Lettings Agencies and Property Companies.Partnership and Role of the PRS – working in partnership with the PRS improving conditions and standards, supporting clients who are housed in the PRS to maintain their tenanciesWider Economic and Strategic Plans for Kent and Medway – links and understand the SEP (Strategic Economic Plan) and the other key documents being developed by KCC.SELEP – a paper has gone to the LEP Board with recommendations to roll out the Housing Ready Programme with HiFi, with one in Kent. The LEP is going to recommend a refresh of the SEP, there is an identified link between the refresh of the SEP and the KMHS. There will be a review of the Housing sub group of the LEP, ensuring it is fit for purpose but with a strong commitment that housing is key to the LEP.KHG Update – the recent meeting of KHG took place on 14th September with presentations about the Kent Syrian Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme and the Kent Integrated Data Set (KIDS). There was a paper update from the HCA and the group discussed the themes and the SELEP update. The sub group leads updated on their work streams and there was feedback about the Joint Kent Chiefs Away Day which KHG presented at and the Integrated Housing Health and Social Care Project, which RS is the Project Officer for. Eileen Martin will stand down as Chair in January and Satnam Kaur will take this role, there will be an election of an RP rep to the EXB and then an election of an RP to the Vice Chair role.RS to invite the KIDS representatives from KCC to present on the Kent Integrated Data Set system (KIDS). | **RS to action** |
| **HCA Update** | HG updated that submissions for the SOAP bids are in and being assessed locally, results likely to be issued in December 2017, with CME opening early next year. The LA proformas, the feedback is welcomed but HG advised that the power for LA’s to veto a bid is now removed. Garden village bids, there are two for Kent, these are still being assessed.With regards to starter homes there is still a wait for results of EOI, still waiting on regulations and NPPF consultations. There is still more detail to come forward.The HCA restructure is still taking place with no firm indication of a structure, there may be a focus on themes within the agency and potentially with a North and South structure but will be in place by April 2017.Shared Ownership homes that the only preference can be for service personnel if a scheme is part of an HCA. This is part of the Capital Fund Guide that is now published.SK questioned about whether planning consent would override this new decision/guidance and SB advised that they come via HCA or through IMS they are not subject to local connection. On re sale for historic sites and with preference to local connection would this new guidance apply? SB and HG suggested that this would be ok for a re sale to a household with local connection. LC advised that this new rule does not apply to rural exception sites. | **HG to share the link to the Capital Fund Guidance**  |
| **BPHA Update** | JG advised that business as usual, there is an event in Ashford on 24th September, there are a good mix of developers and HA’s attending, financial advisors and legal representation. Then hold events in Surrey and Sussex.JG has emailed the MOD but not yet had response but is chasing them about recent correspondence to have an accessible but secure way to store details for the MOD applicants. SL questioned about intermediate rent and if BPHA keep data on those interested in just this product and not shared ownership, JG confirmed that they do and it’s the same criteria of assessment as per shared ownership.  |  |
| **HSEG Action Plan** | Objective 1 – RS to take this forward and keep the group updated about the KMHS Refresh.Objective 2 – SL to take forward now that Chris Knowles is no longer working at TMBC – change timescale to on-going. This will be captured in the Affordability work being undertaken by the task and finish group for KHG.Objective 3 – this is a watching brief, no further action to be taken forward on this protocol currently.Objective 4 – RS went through the comments received back from Chris Knowles, and amendments were agreed. RS to also make amends provided by LC, DJ and ToS.Objective 5 – OP work will be directed by the themes identified in the KMHS and links to the KCC Accommodation Strategy. To take a decision about this protocol once work on the strategy commences.Objective 6 – It was agreed to circulate the existing Kent wide Tenancy Strategy and to review as a group in November.Objective 7 – remove LC from lead and add AN.LC commented that once all the announcements and regulations/guidance is available then it would be useful to understand the approach of the providers across the County with regards to their intentions for RTB etc. | **RS to note****RS to share the updated protocol as per the discussion with a deadline for commentary.****RS to action** |
| **Table of Products** | Rent to Homeownership – this **is** and not ‘**may’** in the 2016-21 Programme**.** | **RS to amend** |
| **AOB** | An issued raised at the Management Forum held in Ashford last week, Moat raised the questions about encouraging older tenants to downsize and more cross boundary flexibility to enable this. JS asked whether there is a desire to have a collective approach to this, encouraging a move and release of family accommodation, then setting up a reciprocal agreement. LC commented that with differing policies and incentives will make it difficult to have a common approach, it is not the incentive it’s about the impact of the ‘hand holding’ element. SK commented that the principle is a good one but it’s the operational element. It was agreed to include this as part of the affordability workshop planned.LC advised that SDC have appointed ARC 4 to carry out a full housing needs survey, reporting back to Committee in 2017. This will be exact housing needs at Ward level and will support if there are additional elements with regards to accessible and wheel chair housing. This work is being funded through commuted sums. | **RS to note** |
| **Date of next meeting** | **15th November, 10am, Ashford BC** |  |

***Thanks noted to Ashford BC for hosting the meeting***