**Neighbourhood Management Sub Group Minutes**

**28th January 2016 – Gravesham BC, Civic Centre, Windmill Street, Gravesend Kent**

**Attending**: Helen Sudbury, Golding Homes and NMSG Chair; Matthew Eddy, mhs Homes and NMSG Vice Chair; Eileen Martin, Amicus Horizon Limited & NMSG Mentor; Matthew Robbins, Amicus Horizon Limited; Chailean Ditton-John; Heather Day, West Kent Housing Association; June Heslop, Southern Housing Group; Steven Knowles Dartford BC; Jackie Spencer, East Kent Housing; Abiola Ashiru, Gravesham BC; Jill Rogers, Moat; Sean Bristow, Moat; Daren Donoghue, TCHG; Mark Segal, Gravesham BC; Paul Gilbert, Gravesham BC; Aaron Simpson, Circle Housing Russet

**Apologies**: Pam Millington & Raj Gandecha, Moat; Louise Taylor, East Kent Housing; Rebecca Wilcox & Anthony Crosley, Ashford BC; Jo Downs, Riverside; Genette Pinwill, West Kent HA;

**Visitors**: Nikki Treadwell, Amicus Horizon Limited; Martin Adams, KF&RS

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| **Item** | **NOTES** | **ACTION** |
| **Introductions & Apologies** | Introduction and apologies noted |  |
| **KF&RS Presentation** | MA provided the group with an overview of the remit of the KF&RS, how the service is evolving and the savings that need to be made going forward. There is a significant decrease in attendance and instances of domestic fires but an increase in road traffic accidents. Now responding to medical emergencies should the ambulance service be unavailable or they are the closest responder.  Working with vulnerable client groups in the community around prevention, dementia suffers/elderly people, offering cheap practical solutions, lots of work in schools and education, working on reducing driving incidents with young people, also working with businesses and commercial safety.  Safe and Well Visits – a new initiative for KF&RS, working with vulnerable people to minimise slips trips and falls in the home, part of the Health and Wellbeing agenda reducing admissions to hospital. This is awareness raising and removing hazards from the home, working across two CCG’s currently and hoping to work with others going forward. All staff are trained in dementia awareness and all buildings are dementia friendly. 800 people per year a year die in Kent from winter related illness, KF&RS can provide winter packs to homes to help reduce and prevent these numbers. All these new initiatives and roles are funded from within KF&RS resources.  Hoarding is a big issue, a huge operational risk for KF&RS colleagues, there is on going work and training around this issue and there is a clutter rating that is used to assess the risk and level of hoarding in a home.  ME raised the issue of when tenants have oxygen at home, do KF&RS need to have these properties flagged? Some Landlords do provide notices in communal areas about properties where oxygen is stored. MA advised the issue with flagging on a database is the maintenance of it, keeping it up to date and accurate. |  |
| **Patchless Working** | NT provided the group with an update about their approach to Neighbourhood Management.  2012 – Issues with long term sickness/stress/low morale and a better way of working was required.  2013 – An away day with staff to address the issues, a brainstorming session to understand what the issues were and how to resolve. These included more flexibility, better use of time for responsive and planned works, working without boundaries and considering better ways of mobile working.  The type, number and demand of tasks were reviewed; teams and stakeholders were also spoken.  In April 2014 the first pilot team was introduced with this new patchless approach to working (across three teams in Kent). The pilot was in the biggest team for six months; this pilot was extended as it needed tweaking and went through to December 2014.  Planned work included ASB, MEX, non urgent visits, pre void inspections and transfer visits, as examples. Responsive work included urgent calls, viewing, sign ups and other emergency situations. The rota for the work across the team runs for a six week period and the staff are responsible for managing the rotas alongside taking on the tasks. The roll out to other areas has happened in Sussex, London is slightly different due to the regions across the City.  The team use REACT to monitor and manage ASB cases, once an officer is allocated a case for ASB or a MEX they keep hold of this and see it through to the end. The use of CRM is the key component for this system to work, this is the ideal communication and work load management tool to assist with this approach to working. Team morale has improved and they are able to understand the benefits of this approach, the workloads is even and clear communication and engagement to implement change is key.  Resident satisfaction has improved since the introduction of the pilot, there have been no negative comments or feedback via resident surveys about patchless working. Benefits for residents include reduced waiting times for appointments and better communication and flexibility.  Going forward the consideration of working hours will be undertaken, looking at when the demand for appointments is, allowing staff to be flexible whilst meeting the demands of the role. The CRM can set up dashboards to monitor work load and can help distribute the work ratio and is live and linked to on going cases.  The CRM system can also set up queues, there is a waiting and holding area, a place where jobs are added, can be allocated a priority, given deadline dates and allocated to the NM team or other teams in the organisation. CRM reporting can allow management of performance across teams and individuals, used for 1:1, quality checking and manage the work load. All desks for this team are now hot desks across the Kent offices.  There is a sub group across the organisation and its regions sharing good practice and situations, driving forward consistency and improvement. Staff will require support through the changes, some may need training or refreshment about issues, it’s important to understand how to use the system correctly.  NT advised that travel arrangements and time are all considered with regards to appointment setting, this allows sensible and practical use of time. All items that are received into the office is scanned and available for when mobile working. All staff have access to mobile working tools such as iPhone and iPad, the system and information are all available to staff when they are out on site. NT can share costing regarding the IT support and how applications have been developed. AHL have a specialist IT team working on the development of IT resources to help improve consistency for mobile working.  Currently in Sussex the Customer Services Team is used to allocate work and appointments, for Kent and London the NM officers undertake this role due to the regions and understanding the travel time and more appropriate for them to plan the work load. Appointment time slots are offered, for example between 10 and 12 but can offer specific appointments if requested/required.  NT advised that with regards to vulnerable clients they try to assign specific officers to work with them but have developed a buddy system so that when annual leave or sickness may impact on the staff resources the vulnerable client does suffer any difference in service provision. With regards to recording sensitive data there are reports run on a regular basis and updated with flags on the system to alert staff to any particular needs. The Income Team at AHL already work within this approach. | **Anyone who wishes to visit or understand more about this approach, the use of CRM and capabilities please contact MR or EM** |
| **Minutes and Matters Arising** | EM updated that the Sustainability Protocol is on hold currently with regards to other pieces of work and announcements which may impact on this protocol.  RS to chase up PM regarding the paper from Moat and impact of Government announcements.  ALL to note the request to send contact details to share with DWP and RS to chase DWP about contact details for NMSG colleagues.  Minutes agreed as accurate. | **RS to note**  **RS to chase up colleagues** |
| **KHG Update** | RS advised that currently there is work to develop the briefing session taking place on the 10th February. Since the KHG EXB meeting on 20th January the focus of the session has altered, this is now a discussion between housing providers and local authorities about the future of housing in Kent and Medway, this is about the true impact of all the announcements and reform upon the business planning, the primary focus of member organisations and who and how we will be housing now and in the future. The Housing, Planning and Developer workshop session will be postponed until there is further understanding and detail about the Housing and Planning Bill, RS will share details when available. The main representative for KHG from each member organisation has been invited and will delegate attendance if they are unable to attend. Marion Money, Ross Gill, Melanie Anthony, Kerry Parr and Nick Fenton have been invited to participate in the discussion.  The KHG Seminar is progressing, with Dr Jessica Allen and Gavin Smart confirmed as keynote speakers, with a varied selection of workshops and another market place for delegates to network. There has been correspondence circulated by RS and JP about the early booking price, this deal ends on the 31st January.  Work continues to review and update the KHG website, once a third proposal is received this will be reviewed by a small working group and a decision taken about next steps. The aim of the new website is to provide members with an information portal, a place to share information about what KHG is undertaken, what is has achieved, to reduce the amount of email correspondence, duplication of information shared and to enhance the user experience. |  |
| **Universal Credit/Welfare Reform Updates** | RS updated that the Welfare Reform Group that is chaired by William Benson has met again following a break. The first meeting took place in December and was a chance to look at membership and what the group would set out to achieve. All the issues regarding welfare reform were discussed and William Benson is keen to take the key issues to his CE colleagues and present facts and figures. RS met with KCC colleagues supporting William to firm up what information is required ahead of the meeting in March. RS will share more details as they come forward.  HS updated that Golding Homes are testing another tranche of Direct Payments within their stock and all new builds are only offered Direct Payment as their option for payment. HS advised that Golding is also notifying those effected by benefit caps, for example those under 35 years, all under 35’s are being advised of the changes regardless of employment. EM suggested that it would be useful to have a targeted campaign on Kent Homechoice for this change.  DD advised that the TCHG affordability calculator will identify clients who are under 35 and potentially are impacted by the benefit caps.  ME advised that there are debates and challenges about affordability and the impact of the reforms, what does it mean in both social terms and commercial terms. There are still many unknowns to make informed firm decisions. EM commented that continuation of joint working, sharing and lobbying in Kent locally and with larger national groups such as Place Shapers or NHF is critical to get the messages back to Government. | **RS to note and share when available**  **RS to note and feedback to Vicky Hodson** |
| **Rent Decrease Notice** | ME advised that their advice is that you should write to tenants to notify them about a decrease but not service a Section 13 Notice. The correspondence should be clear and concise to minimise the potential for increase in communication from residents to call centres. |  |
| **Discussion Session** | HS questioned with LA colleagues about Pay to Stay, it was concluded that currently there are still general discussions around this as there is not yet enough detail. Next steps will also include data matching and who will be affected, with the potential to identify a variety of scenarios.  Right to Rent and Fixed Term Tenancies, AS questioned how colleagues were considering the management of these? Moat are running FTT and getting the database set up to manage the monitoring of these tenancies and approaches. JH advised that SHG are introducing a CRM System and is keen to understand more about how this can assist with the efficient management of the Fixed Term Tenancies. ME described the check as a reapplication process and credit check, an online process, similar to a commercial approach to letting and management of an asset, taking this on an annual basis is appropriate and achievable.  Technology and the evolving digital agenda will assist with how the housing sector responds to the need to make efficiencies and respond to changes. Household composition or ASB are two reasons not to renew a fixed term tenancy. |  |
| **Affordability Checks** | Moat advised that they are taking into account all elements, all in coming and out going expenditure; to date they haven’t refused any applicant. They are aware of the 40% threshold.  TCHG have an affordability calculator, an electronic, taking into account household composition, TCHG use the National Office of Statistics to determine the minimum amount that a household can live on, if the net income is below -5% they are refused, there are also referrals to other agencies for support. An updated version also identifies those who are under 35 and likely to be impacted by the benefit cap. TCHG have not yet refused an applicant and this is across all rent types, with the changes in April there may be  WKHA are only undertaking affordability checks on those in Affordable Rent, WKHA need to determine their position about how and when to refuse an applicant. There is a scheme funded by Sevenoaks DC, Flying Start Programme and is about tenancy sustainment and applicants would be referred if refused or flagged for social rent tenancies. Moat also offer pre tenancy sustainment programmes.  HS advised that Golding Homes have refused some applications where it is clear that they cannot afford to rent the property, this is dependent on the rental cost for the property, they may be able to afford rent on another property type.  ME advised that MHS Homes have authority from April 2016 to refuse applications where the affordability check has a negative outcome. This will include owing debt to another landlord, private or public sector landlords above £500 they will not be housed. Two weeks rent in advance is required for social rent, six to eight weeks rent in advance for market rents.  Circle Housing only undertake affordability checks on single households under 35 years and they have to undertake a budgeting course. If an applicant is over 35 years it is more of a risk assessment and will undertake referrals to other agencies for any support needs highlighted. |  |
| **Forward Plan** | HS advised that the forward plan has been circulated and happy to take on suggestions about presentations or themes for discussion. | **ALL to note** |
| **Any Other Business** | The next meeting of NMSG is 26th April, details to be shared closer to the meeting date  MR a reminder to colleagues about responding to a survey sent out via RS regarding mobile working.  RS raised the point about Safeguarding Awareness week, all organisations would share information within staff to support and share information about Safeguarding, the Board want to understand if this is a useful objective (Safeguarding Week, 3rd October 2016) and what do partners need to support and take this on in Kent. RS to feedback that NMSG members are happy to support this. | **RS to share** |

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