Housing Strategy and Enabling Group

MINUTES – Tuesday 18th May 2016

Kent County Council, Medway Room, Sessions House, Maidstone, Kent

**Attending**: Jennifer Shaw, Ashford BC & Co Chair; Liz Crockford, Sevenoaks DC & Co Chair; Eileen Martin, Amicus Horizon Limited & KHG Chair; Tessa O’Sullivan, ACRK; Tony Stewart, Maidstone BC; Jane Griffiths, BPHA; Andrew Patterson, Canterbury City Council; Chris Knowles, TMBC; David Jeffrey, Ashford BC; Sandra Sainsbury, Shepway DC; Ashley Stacey, Thanet DC; Sarah Lewis, Tunbridge Well BC; Heather Stoner, HCA; Arron Nicholls, Medway Council; Rebecca Smith, KHG

**Apologies**: Rebecca Walker, Swale BC; Andrew Connors, Maidstone BC; Brian Horton, SELEP

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| **ITEM** | **NOTES** | **ACTION** |
| **Introductions & Apologies** | Introductions and apologies noted. |  |
| **Minutes & Matters Arising** | Minutes agreed as accurate. Matters Arising were noted as following:  ***Page 2***- RS to resend the presentation from Marilyn, Moat Housing, as per the March meeting.  ***Page 4*** – JS and TS unable to update any further on the HiFi progress for Ashford and Maidstone BC  ***Page 5*** – RS to resend the current draft of the KHG Sustainable Communities Protocol.  ***Page 6*** – AP advised that there has been no formal bid by the East Kent Authorities with regards to Devolution and there have been discussion with the County Leader. | **RS to action**  **RS to action** |
| **KMHS Refresh Update/ SELEP Update** | RS updated that there is no further progress in terms of the progress of the KMHS Refresh, this work remains stalled due to the wait on more information resulting from Government announcements. However, since the Future of Housing Briefing in February a number of task and finish groups have been set up to consider a number of wider key issues that may feature in the KMHS refresh. One group is looking at Affordability and Statutory Duty, the overall affordability of living overall so not just about the rent but overall living costs. Working with providers to ensure that partnerships remain and to try and establish a set of principles around the outcomes of affordability calculators, preventing people falling through the gap. LC commented that it would be useful to tie up this work with enabling offers that are looking at new delivery and needing to ensure that these are affordable for the wider provision. KHG are invited to go to the Joint Kent Chiefs Away Day in June and this will be an opportunity to share the wider strategic housing issues, this is one of those key issues. CK and SL to be invited to the next meeting of the Affordability Task and Finish Group meeting.  Another group was going to look at HCA Pilots in Kent, the HCA working with providers to enable sites to come forward. HS confirmed that the HCA are currently working on a site with Orbit but that currently the appetite amongst other organisations is low, KHG to remain sighted on this pilots progress.  The last group is looking at Funding Models, what options are out there for development when grant from Central Government is much lower or not available. There will be a half day briefing to hear from colleagues about the options for funding, including institutional investment and dispelling myths and how to reduce risk around such funding models.  RS to share details of who is involved in each of the task and finish groups with HSEG colleagues, then if questions are to be put forward or information to be shared the contacts are known. | **RS to share next meeting details with SL and CK**  **RS to share date of half day briefing when set**  **RS to include with minutes email** |
| **HCA Update** | HS provided an update to include the following; The Housing and Planning Bill has Royal Ascent and will possibly feature in the Queens Speech on 18th May. The Starter Homes Technical Consultation closes on the 18th May and is likely to inform the detail from the legislation now it has Royal Ascent.  The HCA have a new Chief Executive, Mark Hodgkinson, this is an interim post and firstly the role will be to manage the restructure of the HCA. More details about restructure are unknown currently but will be shared when available.  The AHP 15 – 18 is now closed but open for CME bids for nil grant Affordable Rents, bids that have RCGF going into them are also still accepted. No Affordable Home Ownership schemes are accepted and now have to go in to the new affordable housing programme.  SOAHP 16 – 21, the prospectus was launched in April, it is mainly based on Shared Ownership (88% of the funding allocated with be for shared ownership), organisations can still put nil grant rented into this programme. The prospectus also invites other organisations to bid from outside of the RP Sector. The document is briefer than normal but there are links to other documents such as the Capital Funding Guide.  Starter Homes, Unlocking the Land Fund – this is the focus the HCA going forward and bids closed on 13th May, there were 6/7 Kent Bids received. The assessment of the bids has commenced and then will be ready for announcements in July There is £1.2 Billion available in this fund for allocation to bidders.  HCA I Recoverable Investment Fund– there is an imminent announcement due on this fund, there will be two funds going forward, one for short term funding one for longer term funding.  CK provided some additional information regarding the Starter Homes Programme; this is likely to be 10 year commitment as opposed to the 5 or 8 years previously suggested by Government. There have also been conversations about local connection criteria, and how this may have impact on the product or local discussions. DCLG have commented that buying a starter home proves a commitment from a household as you are buying into a product and area for a minimum term of 10 years, and this will then ‘create’ the local connection. Monitoring of the development there is consideration of the Help to Buy agent to undertake this role, but this is yet to be confirmed. DCLG view about additional affordable housing products on a site where there is 20% starter home development that there is room for at least 15% delivery of other affordable housing products. It was agreed the viability would continue to be a big issue on sites for other development options alongside the starter homes allocation.  LC confirmed that one of the amendments with regards to starter homes was the exemption of rural areas, which is good news.  SL questioned the funding available for supported housing, HS confirmed that this is 5% of the £4.7 million, including delivery in London, and this has to be housing for vulnerable groups and permanent housing, there is more detail in the Capital Funding Guide. There is likely to be an issue for providers with regards to the rental charge and the changes to benefit allocation. |  |
| **HSEG Action Plan** | **Objective One** – Refresh of the KMHS – HSEG remain committed to assisting with this process and being involved with the Task and Finish Groups.  **Objective Two** – Kent Affordability – as per Objective One and the Task and Finish Group for Affordability, SL and CK to be involved in this groups work.  **Objective Three** – Sustainable Communities Protocol – this has been redrafted to a point by HSEG and the NMSG. There has been a stall on this to consider its purpose and how much control there is over some of the elements included within in it. CK commented that TMBC have continued to use this document but did raise the point about potential legal action with regards to point 3a and the issue of working and who and how you allocate to a particular scheme. LC questioned the use and purpose of the protocol and lettings plans when you may have to go much further down a list of potential applicants to find a household who meet the necessary criteria for a particular development.  **Objective Four** – Rural Housing Protocol – this was on hold waiting for the Housing and Planning Bill, once more details about the Act are available this can be finalised.  **Objective Five** – Older Persons Protocol and provision of OP housing going forward. It was agreed to offer the link between HSEG colleagues and the Task and Finish Group who will consider supported housing, models and costs going forward. EM advised that the National Housing Federation have had a group working on this issue and the NHF representative who attends KHG will be sharing details about who has been involved and what the outcomes have been.  SL commented that in TW there is a saturation of OP rented accommodation and they cannot find suitable applicants to fill schemes. SL also raised the point about C2 or C3 categorising on developments and how to manage this going forward as discussions with developers about the categorising is becoming more frequent. This is unlikely to be included in the protocol review as would be change at national level regarding classification.  **Objective Six** – Tenancy Strategy Principles – KHG have discussed this and is again on hold for review once more information is available.  **Objective Seven** – Benchmarking – AN is continuing to collect the Kent data. RS to send a reminder to the group about the information to include within the report. AN happy to add elements if people would like to, for example Empty Homes. AN to bring what he has to the July meeting.  DJ questioned whether data includes wheelchair accommodation, as per his email to HSEG colleagues ahead of the meeting. JS commented that they need to be separated out to establish how much wheelchair accessible housing is required, so to monitor wheelchair accessible housing in general stock. It was agreed to include those who meet the wheelchair standard in general stock, not to include extra care in this count.  JS questioned whether colleagues had put a percentage of wheel chair accessible homes on a site for the local plan. AP advised that Canterbury have quoted 20%, TMBC current policy ‘aspires’ to provide 10% but there is the issue of evidence to support this request. Ashford BC is looking to suggest 1% on schemes over a certain size with evidence from the housing waiting list. | **RS to update the timeframes for each of the objectives**  **RS to send date to CK and SL**  **RS and EM to note for next KHG EXB agenda**  **RS to reconvene the group once details released**  **RS to note and liaise with relevant group lead**  **RS to share NHF details when received**  **ALL to send over the relevant data by Friday 10th June**  **ALL to note the clarity around date collection and wheelchair accessible housing** |
| **Table of Products** | The table is awaiting an update via Jennifer from the Legacy Project that has been mentioned by AN a previous meetings.  LC mentioned the Help to Buy ISA and the new Lifetime ISA and if this should be included within the table. This new ISA will be increased by 25% to help save towards a deposit with no maximum property price JS to investigate detail and update.  LC also advised that there is now a Spring Board Mortgage, there was a discussion about what is relevant for the table and the information collected. It was agreed that JS would include links to additional information such as new mortgage products so that people can access the information if they so require. | **JS to update and share with RS for circulation** |
| **BPHA Update** | JG provided a February, March and April updates with regards to enquiries, JG to send RS the details for inclusion with the minutes. Calls averaging around 1000 for the Low Cost Homeownership Team over each of these months in 2016, this is a significant increase in enquiries.  Providers are still selling properties off plan, at a recent event in Dartford there were 700 people in attendance and there were two Help to Buy reservation deposits take at this event.  JG unable to provide details about the movement between shared ownership properties (resale of Help to Buy).  There have been some discussions with the MOD and accessibility to housing, whether those who are eligible for MOD properties are experiencing delays in being housed but this doesn’t appear to be the case. JG is going to work with colleagues about how to promote Help to Buy for the MOD; this is work linked to the Kent & Medway Civilian Military Partnership Board.  JG has shared the Capital Funding Guidance with colleagues for information as you are no longer able to get alerts from the HCA website.  AP asked whether JG can provide information about applicant numbers for those who want to go to another shared ownership property, JG can do this for Kent and will share via RS. LC questioned whether those in shared owners are aware that they can move to another shared ownership property, RS to take this forward as an action point.  HS advised that there are some road shows for the new SOAH Programme for providers, this is looking at Compliance Audit and people in the programme team will be there to answer questions. There is one scheduled for Guildford and one Bedford. | **JG to note and RS to circulate once received**  **RS and JG to note** |
| **KHG Update** | RS provided feedback from the KHG Housing and Health Seminar. The attendance was lower than previous years but still around 165 delegates in total. There was on line feedback this year, with a 54% response rate and overall the feedback was positive with some good suggestions about themes for future events.  KHG Excellence Awards – the awards are now open for nominations, there are 8 categories, a broad range of categories to encourage nominations. The closing date for nominations is noon on 6th June and then there will be an assessment and the event is taking place in mid-July at Oakwood House. If a nomination is short listed then an invite will be sent out for the event. The link for the categories and nomination form is <http://www.kenthousinggroup.org.uk/KHG_Excellence_Awards_2016.aspx>  New KHG Website – RS updated that work continues on the development of the KHG website, working with an independent company based in Kent. This will be a joint website with JPPB, an information portal where all information will be stored and shared, with the hope of reducing email traffic out to members. New features will include a meeting calendar where documents will be available to view and download and will allow us to share more information that has previously been restricted by the format of the current website. Estimated completion is late June. |  |
| **Discussion Session** | How will we deliver homes for households who cannot afford shared ownership or starter homes? LC ran through some of the key points that were shared with colleagues on the agenda ahead of the meeting.  *Rural* – JS advised that Ashford BC is drafting a Rural Cross Subsidy Policy that provides clarity about the use of cross subsidy on rural sites that will be included in the new Local Plan. SL advised that in TW unless sites are allocated for rural sites they are likely to be used to meet demands for other forms of housing.  *Use of own assets* – TMBC feel that this difficult in their area and will have to consider the best use of the capital receipt. SL advised that some local authorities will be and are considering setting up a Property Company, AP advised that Canterbury CC are considering this an option but have to weigh up all the outcomes, numbers are likely to be low and it may be a way to address the use of temporary accommodation and homelessness issues. EM advised that KHG are setting up a half day event to consider the good practice around Build to Rent from a colleague in Manchester, this will be an open invitation to colleagues and is likely to be in June and hosted by Ashford BC.  Another half-day session to be delivered by KHG is around affordability and different funding models for consideration, how you achieve what Government aspirations are whilst maintaining the social purpose and value of a provider. More details about this will be shared when available. EM expressed that there is a definite will on the behalf of the providers to continue to deliver. HS supported this statement from her discussions.  JS advised that Ashford have had some significant private sector housing coming forward, without affordable housing provision, this is an area where members are not keen to have more affordable units and viability would also not permit the development of affordable units.  SL commented that there is more work required to assess and understand housing waiting list applicants, are there applicants who could be signposted and housed using intermediate rent or shared ownership options? EM advised that one piece of work from the Affordability Task and Finish Group is for Deborah White, WKHA to look at shared housing models with a few colleagues, establish if there is any good practice or models to share. LC asked that a colleague or representative from the Kent Private Sector Housing Group is part of this group. | **RS to share details when available**  **RS to share suggestion with DW** |
| **Any Other Business** | SS advised that Shepway DC have established a Housing Company, they have purchased some land and are building some units, there are also 30 units coming forward on another site. Shepway DC has also been approached about shared accommodation models for the area for consideration.  CK commented that there is still time to respond to the Starter Home Consultation if you have views to share.  CK raised the point about the bulletin produced for the Business Intelligence Statistical unit at KCC has data sets that are inaccurate. There was a discussion about the next steps for this is to encourage Graham and his team to use the data that is collected by Arron Nichols and other sources and to make it clear about where it is sourced. It may be also useful to have the link to the benchmarking data collected by AN when the website is available to use. | **RS to liaise with Graham** |

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