**Present**: Jo Ellis, Chair & Town and Country Housing; Rebecca Smith, KHG; Nicole Arthur, Gravesham BC; Ashley Jackson, Thanet DC; Debra Exall, Kent County Council; Linda Hibbs, TMBC; Lisa Collins, Optivo; Nick Fenton, KDG; Shola Alao, Hyde Housing; Catherine Parker & Gavin Richards, Kent Savers; Jacqueline Pye, Dartford BC; Tracy Allison, WKHA; Stuart Ilsley, TCH; Bev Covington, Clarion HG; Marion Money, NLA; Stephen Elliot, Riverside HA; John Littlemore, Maidstone BC; Sasha Harrison, Southern Housing Group; Terry Spillard, Golding Homes; Cynthia Allen, KSS CRC; Wayne Cooper, Pathways to Independence; Zena Cooke, Tim Woolmer & David Godfrey, KCC; Hayley Brooks, Sevenoaks DC; Caroline Lower; Becky Ashley, Homes England; Marion Money, NARLA;

**Apologies:** Peter Dosad, Dartford BC;Martin Collett, English Rural Housing Association; Kerry Newbury, Optivo; Jane Iley, Rapport; Mark Breathwick, Medway Council; Christy Holden, Caroline Smith, KCC;Adrian Hammond, Folkestone & Hythe DC; Louise Taylor, Dover DC; Bob Porter, Thanet DC;Jane Lang, TWBC; Matthew Robbins, Optivo; Sharon Williams, Ashford BC; Donna Pearson, Look Ahead Care Support and Housing

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| **Reference** | **Notes/Outcome** |  **BY** | **Lead**  | **Action/Decision** |
| **Introductions & apologies** | JE welcomed colleagues to the second full membership meeting. |  |  |  |
| **Matters Arising Written Update** | Updated version of the update paper to be shared with the notes as includes a written update from Homes England. TS advised that new in role at Golding Homes, are currently recruiting so engaged but representation at group meetings may be limited but still supportive of KHG.  | **ASAP** | **RS** | **RS to share updated paper with notes** |
| **Digital Innovation** | SI is currently Head of Service Transformation, and looking at Operational Model pre Covid-19. Recognise that need to move forward further with digital transformation, eliminating the reliance on a certain location to deliver services but to accurately and confidently have access to the systems required to deliver services. A number of surveys undertaken about the return to work with a high number not confident to return to the office, some are keen to see a hybrid version of working remotely and with flexibility. Real chance to effect radical and balanced change to the work place, moving to a truly agile and digital lifestyle.Transition issues are about data and resource issues, those who will succeed will be those who embrace the learning from this experience and push forward with the positives, technology is available to use for those who want to. Covid-19 has and change how we work moving forward, organisations need to learn and listen to staff and their experience and outcomes from the homeworking over the Covid-19 lockdown period. SI shared some data from surveys about homeworking undertaken for commercial companies and the learning about trust and the transition from office to home working. Some companies are setting up virtual spaces where teams can feel like they are working together, with call free zones and other examples of enabling colleagues to have the contact with their peers.TCH have made important decisions quickly and efficiently over the period of the Covid-19 lockdown. Implemented Clarity Mail, working with UK Post Box (handle and send digitally post), implemented virtual viewings and sign ups via DocuSign, set up lessons learnt project called ‘Shaping the Future’. Project team is representation from across TCH and surveyed all staff in April, what has gone well and should continue, what hasn’t and should stop and have identified 7 key themes with projects now in place, including making more use of DocuSign and learning of Teams. Also looking at wellbeing of staff and the overall culture of the organisation, working to a set of guidelines and standards to set out what the new normal will be like for TCH moving forward.What to think about next? Many areas including continuum of the service for customers, resistance of managers to change, reduction of social interaction and managing social isolation. What is right for your individual organisation?Discussion session – TS shared best practice from Golding Homes who are currently £150 working from home grant to enable staff to be comfortable working from home, embracing working from home. Agreed with SI about the trust in staff about remote working, the barrier is how to evidence the outputs for homeworking and productivity. LH advised that TMBC are finding the health and wellbeing of staff challenging, especially with instances of difficult calls and how to manage the impact of these on staff. SI advised TCH have set up support groups for colleagues to help with managing these situations, a weekly catch up and a buddy to call upon when required. TCH have also set up a virtual kitchen, this is open all the time, non-work related space for colleagues to chat. SE asked about the office foot print and the nature of these and if these spaces are fit for purpose moving forward. SI advised that TCH have two offices in Kent, currently thinking for TCH is about a split between office and homeworking, the challenge will be managing the experience and balance of how to manage expectations of staff, TCH will be out of the office until January 2021. SI advised that they work with a company who is a key holder, using two schemes locally to the main TCH office, also exploring the options of key safes or use of lockers to manage the key process. LC asked how managers can help colleagues to embrace and keep productivity up through emotional intelligence and investment into working from home. SI suggested more one to one conversations, weekly catch ups, keeping the dialogue and being open and transparent with staff about the standards of service and expectation. TA advised that at WKHA some staff are trained as Mental Health Workers so they are assisting staff and the feedback from teams working at home can benefit to manage difficult calls or conversations. With regards to productivity Team Managers are in contact with teams regularly and about to survey staff about their working day at home, work routines, to understand what teams are struggling with and how to support. SH thanked SI for his information sharing regarding digital transformation, especially the management of post handling. Have got their service centre back in the office to help manage some health and wellbeing issues, on a rota basis and have access to Mental Health first aiders, also considering use of office space and what is required moving forward to remain effective use of space.  |  |  |  |
| **KRF Financial Hardship T&FG** | ZC if the Corporate Director of Finance at KCC, chairing the Financial Hardship Recovery Group as part of the wider KRF work across Kent and Medway. Need to proactively mitigate the impact of Covid-19 and the impact of Furlough and the impending recession. ID what actions across the agencies would be needed to make a fundamental difference. A key element is to analyse and predict as early as possible to avoid crisis, data sharing and collaborative analysis is key to this so have been considering use of software that can be used to look at residents in the round. Have had some presentations and information of products, Maidstone BC and F&HDC are using one or both of two products under consideration. This isn’t focused on those who are just in receipt of welfare benefits but others within communities, can share the actions the group have committed to take on. Keen to explore with KHG how to make sure issues such as rent arrears, evictions are understood and that the collaborative information sharing will enable early prevention and referral pathways. Also keen to understand where there are any gaps that need plugging or can be tackled through joint working. JL advised that the use MBC has made of the predictive analytics have been positive and interesting, identifying clients that would not normally be on the radar for the normal daily business, this does provide a preventative contact step, allowing intervention and to enable changes before sanctions are even considered. TA interested to understand the management of Data Protection. ZC advised that one of the products used have worked in London and the understanding is the Information Governance and Data Protection is all specifically signed off for each legal gateway in advance of working in this way. JL advised that the majority of Information Governance has been completed through the work with MBC and KCC. MM advised ZC that she would be happy to be a point of contact for the PRS. The CEO for NRLA is working at a national level with regards to the stay on court proceedings and possessions. There does need to be some dialogue about possession proceedings within the private sector, especially with regards to ASB and Domestic Abuse. One of actions for the FH T&FG is to mitigate and reduce the number of those using pay day loan lenders so grateful to have an update from Kent Savers on this agenda.   | **ASAP** | **ALL/****ZC** | **ZC to share action plan for the group and colleagues to feedback on this.** |
| **Kent Savers** | CP is that CEO GR is a volunteer Board Member for Kent Savers. Credit Union movement is about a mutual community lending organisation.Membership eligibility and loan information shared within the slides. Key reasons for not lending are about bad debt/credit but also behaviour and attitude to this, keen to work with those who are working or attempting to change their outcomes.Also those with high debt and provide a high risk for Kent Savers.Differing offer than other main stream lenders, can respond to the changing needs of those accessing the service, reaching out and engaging with clients who are vulnerable to manage the payment expectations moving forward, sign posting and advice has helped build trust between the client and Kent Savers.Affordability assessments and credit checks are in place for loan applications, can provide top up where appropriate, the loan repayment includes a saving element, statistics show this sets up positive saving behaviour moving forward. Looking to capture those who are vulnerable to the pay day loans. Have the option to repay through child benefit, a key group impacted by Covid-19 are self-employed so Kent Savers can support these. Areas to work together include – to help promote Kent Savers as an ethical lender, Sign Posting and Save as you Earn. Happy to have conversations with colleagues about opportunities to work together and assist with financial sustainability events locally to Kent. Save as you Earn – to improve independence and resilience and attitude to savings, working with local authorities but would like to work with housing associations. Offer discounted interest rates for those willing to pay back a loan through pay roll. Underwritten Loan Funds – specifically for housing crisis and likely to be an issue going forward, a fund holder deemed to be credit worthy can set up a ring fenced fund and can elect and have the discretion as to who can have access to the funds, the loan is put in place and issued the document and payment, manage the collection and payments on behalf of the fund holder. The key point is that the fund holder takes all the risk for the fund. TS questioned about loan shark repayments, CP advised that Kent Savers are in touch with the national body in this area, a big concern is the legal loan sharks, the use of marketing and access to these products, easy access to cash for those in deprived communities.  | **As Appropriate** | **ALL** | **JE urged colleagues to make contact with CP at Kent Savers** |
| **Black Lives Matter** | Discrimination and injustice experiences of BAME communities should not be highlighted through the impact of the BLM movement and Covid-19. The Kings Fund report <https://www.kingsfund.org.uk/blog/2020/04/ethnic-minority-deaths-covid-19> JE urged colleagues to consider this work as very insightful and that we remain in a place where more can be done. KHG EXB are clear that there is action required but not just about making a general statement. JE keen to understand what KHG members feel we can do about this issue. TA advised that WKHA are considering this issues, trying to understand the data and information, challenging what good looks like, need to understand what issues we can come together on, recruitment of staff out of area into Kent and what this experience is like – sharing across KHG and learning more generally. BH is participating on this issue as a Board Member at WKHA and is very passionate about this. BH is keen to see a statement made by KHG but does need to be supported by actions, a set of words that KHG are prioritising as a group and working on how would be useful. Mary the CEX at CHP has released a statement about this, as has TA more recently. Staff and tenants that experience racism in a less diverse area are more likely to be impacted, isolated and a loan voice, therefore timely to embrace and should be an equal priority in the response to Covid-19.LC asked about the BAME representation within KHG, suggested a first step is to understand this and how to make KHG is more accessible. JE advised that this will be on the KHG EXB meeting for August and will feedback to the main membership. | **26th August** | **RS** | **RS to note for KHG EXB Agenda August** |
| **SELEP & KDG Updates** | NF reminded colleagues about the correspondence to and from Robert Jenrick MP, there have been regular meetings with MHCLG since lockdown, meetings are now monthly and can correspond by email if required between meetings. The letter from Government was comprehensive and specific response to the letter sent by KDG. Now working on more details about the askes, the SME issue and smaller sites, getting Government to address these issues. Trying to steer and advice Government, to represent all Kent groups and colleagues. Any askes or feedback to be shared with Nick or Brian so that these can be raised as part of the correspondence.BH confirmed that arrangements are in place for NF to meet with Chris Pincher after summer recess, engagement is set to continue and be open ended which is positive. Next steps in terms of correspondence is a draft response to the letter from Robert Jenrick, NF also working with the All Party parliamentary group for House Builders with planning for a virtual event through Localis. Moving into an interesting and challenging time with regards to Planning and the impact on supply of affordable homes and SME’s. Colleagues urged again to feedback any issues. BH urged JE to liaise with the Chair of KPOG about the changes for planning.BH advised that there was a request for details of ‘shovel ready schemes’ SELEP awarded £85mil and £35m into Kent Schemes, RS to share details. Quality of joint working and ability to work alongside local ambitions has resulted in new money coming forward. Autumn statement will be a watching brief, likely to focus on recovery. NF stressed that focus is recovery and focus in the market, avoiding any H&S issues on site and productivity issues, welcome views from colleagues, including the impact of furlough ending, reintroduction of stamp duty and extension of Help to Buy. TA commented on the challenge of the removal of affordable units on smaller sites, especially for rural sites, BH did confirm that this is a proposed temporary measure while the bigger planning reforms are considered. NF advised that developers are not keen on this proposal. JL advised that in Maidstone BC the local authority are stepping in and actively negotiating to buy the small sites, BH advised that being unable to use RTB receipts to do this does provide a barrier to this for some local authorities. HSEG has been tasked with sharing information about these issues locally and this will be shared with Homes England, Medway are developing a report on this.BA advised that the more evidence that can be provided on these issues will be welcomed by Homes England, a coordinated approach would be great. JE urged colleagues to ensure that this conversation is feedback through respective organisations. | **ASAP** | **ALL** | **Colleagues to make contact with NF with any additional feedback** |
| **K&M Infrastructure Proposition** | DG provided an update on the K&M Infrastructure Proposition. Since June DG has been to Kent CEX and Leaders, the latter are keen to understand the deal in more detail, new investment and planning flex in return for acceleration of housing delivery. To get the clarity that Kent Leaders are after is to establish a base line about what delivery is currently and then what the increase may be, for example looking at investment into East Kent, Empty Homes, and Extra Care Housing, all of which can accelerate delivery. Fundamental to all this is the affordable homes and how to look to highlight this issue, really understanding projections of delivery and what may be possible with support, through grant or other flexibilities or investments. What increase may be possible and DG will share a note for KHG to follow this meeting and update, especially around acceleration of social and affordable housing delivery. This work is linked to the Kent Resilience Forum and recovery to Covid-19.David also mentioned the launch the Kent & Medway Renewal & Resilience Plan and encouraged colleagues to attend – details available via [www.kmep.org.uk](http://www.kmep.org.uk) JE advised that this work will make a significant impact to Kent and Medway and urged colleagues to have input and share details when requested, this will enable DG to have the maximum amount of information to assist with the proposal. |  |  |  |
| **AOB** | RS reminded colleagues about Prevent Training dates for 2020-21, 17th September, 20th November and 12th January. All to be delivered online, details to be shared with the notes. Two new sessions with the Housing Ombudsman – ASB and Conflict Resolution on 11th September, Repairs on 13th October, both virtually from 10am for 2.5 hours.  | **ASAP** | **ALL** | **Colleagues to share information about access to training through KHG** |