**Present**: Emma Bartlett, Chair - Canterbury; Brian Horton - SELEP; Liz Crockford - Sevenoaks, Naomi Palmer - Thanet; Perry DeSouza - Dover; Sarah Williamson - Dartford; Lisa Webb - Medway; Kimba Layton - Folkestone and Hythe; Gillian Aylett - Tonbridge and Malling; James Young - Thanet; Jodie Stringer - Home Buy Agent; Mark James - Ashford; Nicola Bowen - Choice Support; Tessa O’Sullivan - Action with Communities Rural Kent and Kent CLH Hub;

**Apologies:** Helen Miller - KHG; Sarah Holmes and Sonya Hothi - Tunbridge Wells; Sharon Donald - Gravesham

| Reference | Notes/Outcome | When | Who | Action/Decision |
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| Admin note | As **Helen Miller** could not attend, **Mark James** and **Emma Bartlett** produced the notes for this meeting. The group noted that until HM returns all correspondence with the group should be sent to HM and EB. |  |  |  |
| Matters Arising | **BH** noted that the letter from the three developer groups chairs to the minister to set out key issues re: First Homes has not been finalised yet but will be shared with HSEG soon.  Agreed the notes from the September 2021 HSEG meeting are accurate. |  | BH | Send copy of letter to HM/EB to circulate to HSEG. |
| Home Buy Agent | **Jodie Stringer** gave a presentation.  3 main teams – customer service, agency and programmes teams. Cover Norfolk to Cornwall. Been in place since 2020. Promote a range of affordable housing options. Anything that is grant funded. Equity loan scheme- support RPs with grant funded housing. Support LAs, Newsletters, meetings.  Offers webinars, training videos and support is available from the Help to buy team. Use the affordable home ownership portal for RPs promoting S/O properties.  Annual statistics – LA stats produced annually, focus on completion data from the previous financial year. Report will be coming after delays. Not a contractual obligation to provide them but useful to LAs and RPs. Should be out in the next couple of weeks.  Lenders are currently dropping their rates – one lender is offering 95% (unnamed)  HOIS replaced with the AOHB – the affordable home ownership hub. The Hub has had some issues during set up but is working ok now.  Shared ownership eligibility question – family with a disabled child that cannot be adapted. They are looking at S/O, have equity in their existing property, any exceptions? As long as at completion they’ve completed on their previous owned property they’d be eligible. |  | JS  ALL | Share slides with EB to circulate to HSEG - NOT FOR PUBLIC SHARING - INTERNAL ONLY.  Contact Jodie for any questions or need for the training. Access to the portal – a stakeholder request (via a link) will help. |
| Rural housing update | **Tessa O’Sullivan** - Rural housing and Kent Community housing hub. RHE – 9 housing needs surveys undertaken so far, some capacity up to the end of March. Still two schemes on site – Staple rural exception site to handover next month and Herne Hill due to complete in May – 11 households have registered an interest. English Rural advertising more locally to boost numbers. Newington site planning application due to be submitted in the next couple of weeks. Chiddingstone to be worked on by English Rural. Busy but a lot of objections to large developments are now filtering down to smaller schemes too. Objectors are scuppering the smaller schemes. Generally still busy. Lots of surveys still.  Kent Community Housing Hub – funding period ended on 1st October. Funded by government grant for the first year. It’s not been renewed and there have been no budget announcements. Community housing fund – for groups who have got to start on site progress. Working at a similar capacity as they were. Supported by Rural Kent. In the meantime other funding sources are being looked for. High demand after pandemic. 13 events and 13 active groups being worked with across Kent. 11 received technical advice.  Inequality of access to land is the biggest barrier. Trying to compete with developer prices is hugely challenging. Trying to bring forward land at a lower cost is very difficult. Higher the cost of the land the more finance the groups have to pay. Developers have engaged. Quinn in Maidstone for example.  Suggestions to bring land forward in Kent:   * looking at s106 site elements. * Church of England – coming home report… tackling the housing crisis. Could any of their land be used for properly affordable housing? – hard to get through to. Pursuing that with Kent contacts.   Event on 26th November in Rainham – live event on housing co-operatives. 3 groups interested. Specifically aimed at them. 30 spaces with some spaces left. Opening up to others now they’ve all booked on from those groups.  Questions: Binberry – Quinn garden community at Detling… looking to bring that scheme forward as policy compliant for affordable housing and self-build. Maidstone is aware of conversations with Quinn. Would Maidstone be after an RP not a CLT or a co-operative group? |  |  |  |
| SELEP Update | **Brian Horton** - The letter to Chris Pincher is in draft awaiting confirmation of the date of the next meeting. Once that date is agreed the letter will be in there. That’s why they are sitting on the draft. The SELEP is waiting on ministers in the department for levelling up homes and communities (DLUHC) to make a decision on what to do with LEP’s. So SELEP are in a state of flux for what the role of LEPs is. Seems likely that levelling up will be a key part of the LEPs at the moment. The uncertainty is unsettling.  Main focus of their work – continued problems with cost inflation, labour costs, and materials costs. Market is seeing strong demand. There is increasing productivity in the coastal areas due to higher demand. Land – demand and also the phosphates and nitrates issue (aka Stodmarsh issue) in East Kent is creating inflation in land price in areas that are unaffected by the issue. Planning embargos in Ashford and Canterbury are not helping with this. These planning issues are beginning to hinder Dover. Ashford is trying to find its own solution through creating wetlands.  New challenges in Sussex. Water neutrality. Retrofitting over half of the existing homes in the area.  Planning officer shortage – hard to recruit right now. Planning departments and developers.  Legal dispute in Wealden – has affected the confidence of RPs. Dispute between RP and a LA that on a site where the RP provided 100% affordable housing the LA required a CIL obligation (most LA’s waive the CIL obligation on affordable housing). The case went to judicial review and the judge found in favour of the LA not the RP. Now RP’s are concerned that other LA’s will follow Wealden’s example, therefore affecting the viability of providing additional affordable housing.  Michael Gove at DLUHC is interesting as he is supportive of more affordable housing. Concerns around competing narratives, from government, sometimes help or hinder confidence. Recent government confusion regarding the difference between Greenfield and green belt sites have meant that local groups that want to reject greenfield development can quote that the government is unsupportive, which can cause issues when developments come forward. First Homes impacts: Mixing shared ownership and rent to get viability on schemes. SELEP meets monthly with DLUHC officials.  A letter will go from the three developer group chairs to the minister to set out key issues to prepare for a meeting after the party conference. HSEG comments will be covered under ‘First Homes’ item. |  | BH | Send copy of letter to HM/EB to circulate to HSEG. |
| First Homes | **LC** - Sevenoaks have a report going to members. Looked at housing needs and that is putting forward a recommended level of discount at 50%. Capping income level at £55,000 – also seeking local connection criteria which tallies with housing policy. To ensure parity with the other affordable housing tenures allowed under the NPPF any discounted market sale housing also has the same discount level. An annual review will take place. Admin fee for purchasers applies after the house builder has done initial checks.  Suggestion: Could a Kent-wide solution – customer facing paper be produced? Developers could be brought into the debate about a customer-focused document. So this group could link up with the Kent Developer and Housing Group to move this forward. Could put the groups at an advantage if working together.  **LW** - Medway – First Homes position – had a first site with 2 homes on it approved this week as part of the pilot. Small site.  **MJ** - Ashford will be adopting a position statement that is to be agreed. Local Plan policy only just adopted 2 years ago, don’t believe the WMS supersedes what our plan says – so not proposing discount levels until we review our local plan, nor eligibility criteria.  Scope to have differing levels of discount would be useful.  Ministerial view is that this will lead to an increase in affordable homes. Some learning from the pilot should finesse policy as it becomes mainstream.  **JS** - First Homes is not a help to buy product so the agent does not have much more information. Hoping it won’t hit too much shared ownership. Sevenoaks feel S/O is more affordable to those in their borough.  **GA** - Asked how First Homes might affect the viability of developments. LC advised that Government guidance states that FH’s is not additional affordable housing and will not increase the developer contributions. Therefore, Sevenoaks have concluded that no further viability testing is required to implement FH’s.  HSEG comments/questions for BH to take to DLUHC (as mentioned in item above):   * Has the application and guidance document pack been issued yet? * Is there any guidance on how to apply different levels of discount **within** a district/borough in areas where house values vary? For example the values and housing needs in rural areas differ from urban areas. * Will there be some feedback/lessons from the pilot areas? * As the first sale of first homes can not be sold for more than £250k (after discount) there is a risk that homes will be sold for less than their value. This will mean that the first owner of the home will greatly financially benefit from the resale of the home (as there is no upper limit). Are there any suggestions how to avoid this or guidance relating to a resale policy? * Will there be guidance relating to the collection of, and spending of, First Homes commuted sums? * Re: restrictions on letting, will there be guidance on the repercussions of a breach (enforcement powers, legal action etc.)?   We also discussed that, according to government guidance First Homes are to be applied within the Local Authorities existing housing policy and developer contributions remain the same as before. Therefore, LA's are not required to carry out further viability assessments.  BH will share that letter. |  | All  LW | Consider - would all local authorities sign up to a Kent wide customer First Homes guidance paper?  Share Government template and guidance pack with HM/EB to share with the group. |
| Homes England | No update has been received from Becky Ashley – EB to ask BA if she would send written update. |  | EB | Ask Becky Ashley if she would like to provide a written update. |
| K&MHS and HSEG work programme | The Kent and Medway Housing Strategy is on the website [here](https://www.kenthousinggroup.org.uk/assets/uploads/large/FINAL-Kent-Medway-Housing-Strategy-2020-2025-29.7.2020.pdf). It will inform the backbone of joint working that we do at the group as a whole. HSEG identified workstreams from the K&M Housing Strategy to help deliver it. This was shared with the group prior to the meeting but we ran out of time to discuss it. BH advised that this should be discussed as a joined up conversation and will request Sharon Williams invites EB to next meeting. |  | **EB** | Attend meeting with other KHG groups to discuss HSEG contributions. Ensure the item is included on the next meeting agenda. |
| Volunteer for vice chair role | EB is now the new chair but the vice chair role is yet to be appointed. There were no volunteers for the role in the meeting. EB requested that everyone consider volunteering and contact her soon. There is a description of what the group does on the website at [Kent Housing Strategy and Enabling Sub Group (HSEG) - Kent Housing Group](https://www.kenthousinggroup.org.uk/subgroups/kent-housing-strategy-and-enabling-sub-group/) |  | **ALL** | Email HM/EB if willing to stand as vice chair |
| Terms of Reference review | Group agreed these are still relevant. Can pick this up at the next meeting. |  | **ALL** | Everyone check the TOR so that we can agree to it for another year at the next meeting. |
| AOB | **EB** Asked if anyone else in HSEG is responsible for the self build register. No one else is but as this role is often with the Community Led Housing role it may move into the enabling role in other authorities in the future. |  |  |  |