

South Essex Housing Group (SEHG)

Terms of Reference 2020/21

Purpose of the Group

“To contribute and influence the national, regional housing agenda through supporting developing and implementing local housing strategies forming part of a Joint Strategic Plan and 2050 Vision for South Essex including Brentwood (under preparation) being led by Association of South Essex Local Authorities (ASELA).

The group will maintain an understanding of the South Essex housing market and analyse national and local issues that impact on the South Essex housing market, its dynamics and housing needs. It will use this information to help influence and improve housing and related services focusing on the affordable sector. Key areas of focus currently include:

- Evidence base / Strategic Housing Market Assessment / quarterly market reports
- Affordable housing
- Planning and regeneration
- Homelessness: Homelessness Reduction Act
- Nominations, allocations and lettings
- Private Sector Housing
- Older People's Housing
- Asset management
- Housing Excellence Awards programme for 2020/21
- Housing recovery post Covid-19

Objectives of the Group

- To support the preparation, delivery and monitoring of local housing strategies across South Essex and the wider Joint Strategic Plan.
- To develop a work programme to ensure the strategies are delivered and monitored.
- To provide a framework for joint and collaborative working and commissioning between the authorities and developers on common cross cutting themes e.g. shared priorities and investments.
- Provide a forum for contacts and good practice between local authorities in South Essex, Essex Housing Officers Group, Essex County Council, Housing Associations, Developers, Homes England and other sub national bodies.
- Optimise housing investment.
- Ensure issues that affect South Essex are raised and actioned at the necessary level.
- Ensure there is an awareness of other strategies and agendas and analyse their likely impact on the South Essex area.
- Continue to develop / enhance the Housing Essex website to support the aims and objectives of the Group.

Membership

Representatives from each of the following local authority housing services:

- Basildon
- Castle Point

- Rochford
- Southend
- Thurrock
- Brentwood

And Essex County Council plus nine Housing Associations (HAs) who are also Members of the Essex Developers Group. The following HAs are currently members of the SEHG: Swan, Peabody, Moat, Estuary, CHP, Sanctuary, Eastlight Community Homes (after merger between Colne and Greenfields HAs) , Legal & General Affordable Housing and Rentplus.

In addition to the above Core Group, representatives as observers are invited from the following organisations:

- National Housing Federation
- Homes England (part of MHCLG)
- South East Local Enterprise Partnership
- ASELA / Opportunity South Essex Partnership (OSE)
- Local housing companies
- Essex Developers Group

Representatives from specialist services e.g. planning and other bodies such as the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) and East of England Local Government Association (EELGA) will be invited as necessary and appropriate.

External Liaison and Working Arrangements

The SEHG will report to a Chairs' Group who will provide direction and approve key decisions ensuring that the work of the Housing Group is consistent with the wider South Essex / Greater Essex growth agenda. South Essex local authority housing and planning portfolio holders will be kept informed on the work of the Group.

The Group will hold events to highlight issues facing South Essex to which a wide range of stakeholders will be invited.

Housing Strategy / Development and Planning Officers (or equivalent) from each organisation (LAs & HAs) will meet as and when required to take forward local strategies and the wider Joint Strategic Plan / South Essex 2050 Vision.

Where required the group will convene sub groups to take forward the work programme agreed by the group and in addition specific issues and projects relevant to the sub region sub groups will report back on a regular basis to the Officer Group via the Co-ordinator. Any recommendations made by the sub groups will need to be ratified by the Officer Group and in addition the Chairs' Group or any sub board if considered necessary.

Meeting Arrangements, Election of Chair, Voting Rights, Declarations of Interest

The Group will meet on a quarterly basis or more frequently when necessary. Meetings will usually be conducted in person, however, during the current Covid-19 epidemic all meetings have been suspended and partners have been invited to join fortnightly Essex Housing Officer Group meetings until further notice.

The Chair of the South Essex Housing Group will be elected for a period of three years from among the full members of the group at a meeting of members. The first election will take place on the 7 November 2017 and every three years thereafter.

The Chairs / Coordinator will agree the agenda for each meeting and distribute it one week prior to the date of the meeting. Any member of the group may suggest items for the agenda two weeks prior to the date of the meeting.

The current fifteen Core Members of the Group made up of the representatives from the five Local Authorities, Essex County Council and nine Housing Associations will have the following voting rights:

6 Local authority members – 6 votes

9 Housing Associations – 4 votes

Should there be a split vote, then the Chair will have the casting vote or if the matter is of high impact it will be referred to the Members Group.

Meetings will be deemed quorate when there are four or more representatives from Housing Group partners present (at least three members should be from the local authority sector).

All members must give a declaration of interest at the beginning of the meeting in relation to any specific agenda items where it might be considered they have an interest.

Funding

The South Essex Housing Group will be required to support and deliver local housing strategies and the wider Joint Strategic Plan and to keep them under review. In order to do this, it will need to undertake other research and policy production work. The source of this funding will inevitably be the group membership and the appropriate contribution from each member should be agreed annually, after agreement of a budget and then monitored quarterly. For 2020/21, the five Local Authorities, plus Essex County Council will pay a subscription of £10,000 per annum and the seven HAs members will pay £1,500 per annum to form the budget.

Termination Arrangements

The termination arrangements for the SEHG will be guided by the Memorandum of Understanding for the Opportunity South Essex Partnership (OSE), available on request.

In respect of the SEHG, all partners refer to the five South Essex Local Authorities plus Brentwood and the County Council. The seven HAs also contribute to the activities of the Housing Group and their membership will be monitored on an annual basis to ensure that their contributions accord with the overall budget. Should a HA member wish to leave the SEHG, this should be done before the beginning of the new financial year; otherwise the full annual subscription would be levied. For the avoidance of doubt, should a HA leave the Group, this would not render the Partnership void and annulled.

Reviewed by the Chairs Group on 17/06/20, ratified on 15/07/20.