South Essex Housing Group (SEHG)

Terms of Reference 2026/27

Purpose of the Group

To contribute and influence the national, regional housing agenda through supporting, developing and implementing local housing strategies, including Homes England's Strategic Plan 2025-30 and six connecting objectives aimed to drive regeneration and housing delivery to create high-quality homes and thriving places.

The group will maintain an understanding of the South Essex housing market and analyse national and local issues that impact on South Essex, 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 / South Essex Housing Needs Assessment (published June 2022) and other subsequent local updates.
- Affordable housing including social rent, discounted market rent, and shared ownership (Help to Buy finished in 2023).
- Planning and regeneration (including The Planning and Infrastructure Act 2025 and latest National Planning Policy (NPPF).
- the Government's £39 billion Social and Affordable Homes 10 year Programme.
- Homes England's Strategic Plan 2025-30 including the creation of Strategic Place Partnerships (SPPs). Homelessness: Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 and new duties.
- Supporting and facilitating engagement on Greater Essex Devolution and Local Government Reorganisation (current 5 Unitary Authority offer was withdrawn by Government on 7/09/2026).
- Nominations, allocations and lettings.
- Social Housing Regulation Act 2023 and new regulations governing social housing.
- Private Sector Housing including Renters Act.
- Specialist and Supported Housing .
- Asset management.
- Climate change / zero carbon / biodiversity net gain.
- Costing of living crisis.
- Essex Housing Awards programme 2026.

Objectives of the Group

- To support the preparation, delivery and monitoring of local housing strategies across South Essex.
- To develop a series of topic pages (see Housing Essex website).
- To provide a forum for joint working / commissioning and sharing best practice on common cross cutting themes between local authorities in South Essex, Essex Housing Officers Group, Housing Associations, Developers, South East Housing and Development Group, Homes England and other sub national bodies.
- Optimise housing investment / funding opportunities from both the public and private sector in South Essex.
- 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
- Brentwood
- Castle Point
- Rochford
- Southend
- Thurrock

plus six Housing Associations (HAs) who are also Members of the Essex Developers Group. The following HAs are currently members of the SEHG: Moat, Delta Housing, Sanctuary, Eastlight Community Homes, Rentplus and Home Group.

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 Housing and Development Group (SE HDG)
- Local housing companies
- Essex Developers Group
- Essex County Council

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 Spatial Development Strategy (SDS) for Greater Essex.

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 quarterly via Teams.

The Chair and Vice Chair of the South Essex Housing Group will be elected for a period of four years by the group at one of their scheduled quarterly meetings. The position of Chair and Vice Chair was confirmed on 4 October 2021 where Helen McCabe was re-appointed for the period 2021-2027. The next election will therefore take place during the summer of 2027. (This has been deferred for a another year).

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 twelve Core Members of the Group made up of the representatives from the six Local Authorities, and six Housing Associations will have the following voting rights:

6 Local authority members – 6 votes
6 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 Housing Chairs 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 support the delivery of local housing strategies and other initiatives. 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 2026/27, the five Local Authorities, will pay a subscription of £10,000 per annum and the six HAs members will pay £3,000 per annum to form the budget (PLEASE NOTE subscriptions remain under review until the budget is agreed for 2026/27). SEHG members will automatically become members of EDG.

Operational matters

In respect of the SEHG, all partners refer to the five founding South Essex Local Authorities plus Brentwood. The six 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 any member wish to leave the SEHG, this should be done in writing three months 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.

Updated: 7 July 2026 by Housing Chairs Group and wider SEHG Group on 5 October 2026.