**Housing and Development Group (HDG)**

**(Working Group to SELEP)**

**18th January 2022**

**Video Conference**

1. **Introductions and Apologies**

The notes of the previous meeting were approved.

Brian Horton noted Nick Fenton’s apologies and informed the group that he would Chair the session.

1. **SELEP Update – Alex Riley**

The group were updated that SELEP is still awaiting the publication of the Levelling Up White Paper where it expected there will be a high-level presentation on the future position of LEPs.

It was also noted that SELEP, in partnership with Arts Council England, is publishing a report titled ‘Creative High Streets’ at the beginning of February 2022. This report will highlight the importance of the creative sector to high street development and rejuvenation.

1. **SELEP Terms of Reference**

Chair noted that an updated Terms of Reference will go to the next meeting of the group and this will reflect changes to be outlined in the Levelling Up White Paper.

1. **Lower Thames Crossing**

There was nothing new to add here other than re-emphasising the questions that Emily set the group at the previous meeting.

1. **Planning**

It was noted that a major issue in planning was the ongoing inability to recruit and retain staff. Material has been put in front of the Minister who needs further convincing with substantive evidence.

Multiple attendees stated that there was both a lack of quantity and quality of town planners. There is no easy solution to this issue, but fees need to be looked at, grant ring fencing and metrics on the performance of planning committees.

It was also stated that it is about perception and respect for planners other than just pay.

Mark noted his full support on this issue but emphasised that, equally, there needs to be a better understanding of lead-in time, and if fees were increased there is still an ongoing recruitment issue and member training issue. This is also part of a wider skills shortage in the sector at large.

Action: Brian will catch-up with planning leads offline on this concern.

1. **Carbon Reduction in New Developments**

Simon noted that the climate emergency agenda was still not a buyer priority at this stage. He put forward three suggestions to improve the situation in this area; consistency, marketing, and future homes requirements.

Alistair reminded the group that a charter exists in Essex outlining commitments for partners to work together on a roadmap to zero carbon. A toolkit for planners and net zero is also being developed. <https://www.housingessex.org/topic/climate-action/>

The view from Kent and East Sussex was sought.

Action: Brian to share the charter and take this forward with Kent and East Sussex colleagues.

1. **DLUHC and Homes England Engagement**

Chair noted that the shared letter was sent to Chris Pincher which sets out the focus for the next meeting – the date of this is to be determined.

1. **Phosphates & Nitrates**

There was no specific update on this other than to note work is ongoing.

1. **Affordability**

Paul sent his apologies for this item and it will be discussed at Essex Developers Meeting.

1. **First Homes**

Chair was interested in understanding the challenges local authorities are facing in bringing forward first homes. He asked individuals to feedback directly to him on this agenda.

1. **Homes England Update**

Shona sent her apologies. It was noted by Neil that Homes England are very aware of the staffing an recruitment point made earlier in the meeting and they are also feeling their own organisation being challenged by employees leaving to the private sector.

1. **AOB**

Meeting closed.