

# **Environmental Sustainability Policy**



## Scope of Policy

This policy sets out how Platform Housing Group (the Group) will fulfil its commitment to reduce any harmful effects on the environment by any of its activities, and to promote sustainability.

## Applicability

The policy applies to all members of the Group.

### 1. Policy Statement

1.1 The Group recognises that our work may have a direct or indirect impact on the environment and is committed to reducing any harmful effects caused by our activities. We also wish to promote sustainability in its broadest context, and to contribute to the quality of life of the neighbourhoods and communities we work with. The Group will commit resources and expertise to ensure the aims of this policy are successful.

### 2. Context

#### 2.1 Legislation:

The Group aims to comply with all relevant legislation. This includes:

- Waste Management (England & Wales) Regulations 2006
- Waste Packaging Regulations (as amended) 2013
- Environmental Protection Act 1990
- Control of Waste Regulations 2011
- Climate Change Act 2008
- Environment Act 1995
- Building Regulations 2010
- Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment Directive
- Energy Act 2010
- Construction (Design and Management) Regulations 2015
- Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981

#### 2.2 The Regulatory Framework for Social Housing in England

The Neighbourhood and Community Standard states that “Registered Providers shall co-operate with relevant partners to help promote social, environmental and economic wellbeing in the areas where they own properties.” The Value for Money Standard states “boards must maintain a robust assessment of the performance of all their assets and resources (including for example financial, social and environmental returns).” We are committed to complying with all relevant environmental legislation, regulation and codes of practice.

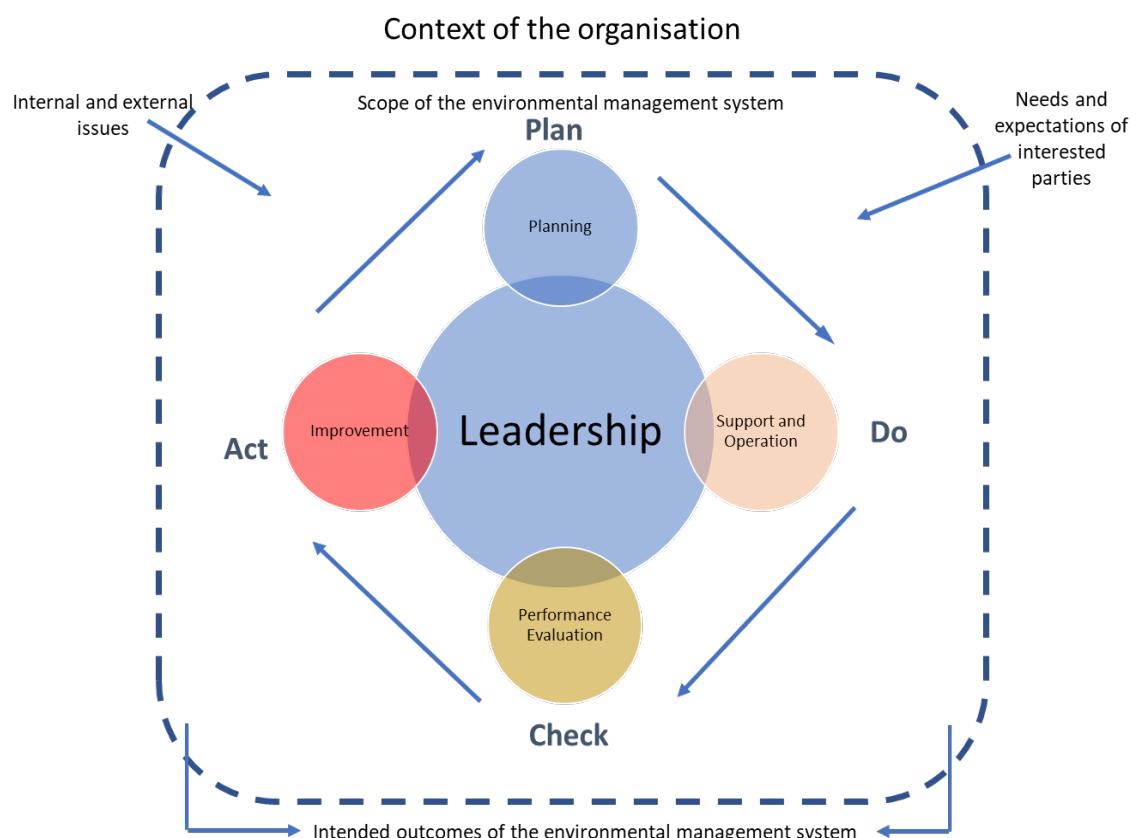
2.3 We will work to comply with the measures set out in the updated Regulations.

### **3. Aims and Objectives**

3.1 The Group's main aims are as follows:

- To meet all relevant environmental and energy efficiency standards set by government, regulators and funders
- To work with key stakeholders such as contractors and local authority partners to achieve our overall objectives in this area
- To consider environmental and sustainability issues when developing and maintaining our homes
- To support our customers to adopt environmentally sound practices that encourage sustainable tenancies
- To provide a high-quality living environment with all new developments
- To reduce the environmental impact of the daily operations of the Group
- Reduce waste produced, encourage recycling and reuse materials where possible
- Reduce waste which goes to Landfill Sites
- To operate an Environmental Management System across the business consistent with a Plan Do Check and Act framework

3.2 **Environmental Management System framework**



The Group will ensure this framework is adopted and used by all Directorates.

## **4. Policy Outline**

### **4.1 Development of new properties**

- 4.1.1 The Group aims to develop homes in areas where customers will want to live – both now and in the future. In the case of redevelopment and refurbishment, we work with existing communities to help new customers become an integral part of their communities from the outset.
- 4.1.2 We work in line with current adopted local and national planning standards and liaise closely with local authorities to ensure that we have due regard to local housing needs identified in their housing strategies. We also aim to take account of legislative and political changes to ensure that our properties are sustainable over the long term. We work closely with local authorities to ensure that our development plans reflect, and address, the impact of welfare reform changes and local housing need.
- 4.1.3 The location of our properties is carefully considered in terms of access to local amenities and services to ensure that our homes encourage sustainable tenancies. Schemes are developed to ensure that they make the most efficient and effective use of land, in a way that is appropriate to the local community. We will take into account information that local authorities may have about local infrastructure, as well as other information such as flood warning information. The Group aims to develop high quality desirable housing that reflects the local area, whilst allowing for flexibility and growth over time.
- 4.1.4 We aim to consult with local communities on the general design of our properties prior to submitting plans for new schemes. Residents moving into a new build property are sent a survey nine to 12 months after they have moved in. The results from the surveys are reported and discussed at the relevant Board meeting each year. The analysis is also used to inform decisions around the design of future schemes.
- 4.1.5 All development consultants and contractors that we work with are required to provide copies of their environmental and sustainability statements and action plans. The Group has signed up to the Client Commitments. This contains a section on our plans around sustainability. Progress against the actions is reviewed on an annual basis.
- 4.1.6 Where possible, we will aim for Energy Performance Certificate Level B (equivalent to SAP rating of 81-90). Housing Quality Indicators (HQI) and waste management plans are adopted on all projects, which receive grant funding.
- 4.1.7 All our new properties are fitted with ‘smart meters’ for measuring water use. Where possible, we will ensure that we use responsibly sourced materials when developing our homes, including increasing the use of recycled material.

#### **4.2 Property care and maintenance of existing properties**

- 4.2.1 The Group aims to maintain the condition of our properties to a high standard. Ongoing maintenance will allow us to update properties to ensure that they meet the objectives stated in this policy.
- 4.2.2 Improving energy efficiency is a key consideration for us. We will adopt a proactive approach to ensuring we address issues of energy efficiency and fuel poverty. The Group's Asset Management Strategy also reflects the principles of this policy. We aim to achieve good performance against Energy Performance Certificates (EPC) assessments for our properties.
- 4.2.3 We aim to comply with all relevant industry standards such as the Decent Homes Standard. The Group is fully compliant with the Decent Homes Standard.
- 4.2.4 Where possible, we will look to use specialist funding in order to provide our residents access to free insulation for lofts and treatable cavity walls. Where existing stock cannot reasonably meet energy efficiency targets set, this will form a basis for considering the disposal of a property.
- 4.2.5 All sub-contractors that are employed by the Group are expected to comply with all relevant legislation referred to in 2.1, including waste management requirements. In the areas where we have our own direct labour workforce, we will aim, as far as possible, to use locally based suppliers, and stock our operatives' vans once a week in order to help reduce the amount of travelling. Where required for our own workforce, we will ensure we have the appropriate licenses for waste management.
- 4.2.6 The Group aims to maximise the life cycle of components used in our properties by installing high quality products. Repairing rather than replacing major items such as kitchens and bathrooms, where this is feasible, will also help us minimise unnecessary expenditure, and the impact on the environment.
- 4.2.7 The Property Care Maintenance business will set high standards around sustainability and hold relevant certifications, Waste Carrier Licences and external audit records - consistent with ISO 14001.

#### **4.3 Employment and work practices**

- 4.3.1 The Group aims to reduce the amount of travelling carried out by colleagues. The Group has flexible working practices that encourage the use of mobile and remote working. Customers are encouraged to meet employees either at their home, or somewhere local to them, removing the need for our customers to travel to our offices.
- 4.3.2 Colleagues are encouraged to adopt behaviours that reflect the principles of this policy. They will be supported to do this where necessary. For example, teleconferencing facilities through the use of Microsoft Teams reduces the amount of travelling that colleagues are required to do between offices.

4.3.3 We aim to reduce the energy consumption of office equipment by purchasing energy efficient equipment and through good housekeeping. We will as far as possible, arrange for the reuse or recycling of office waste, including paper, computer supplies and redundant equipment. ICT equipment that cannot be reused will be disposed according to Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment Directive.

#### 4.4 **Communicating with customers**

- 4.4.1 The Group aims to educate our customers to adopt environmentally sound practices when managing their homes. This includes providing relevant and safe information on energy saving tips and environmentally sound practices. A range of tools will be used to provide such information, including our website, social media tools, community events and newsletters.
- 4.4.2 We will train our colleagues so that we are able to internally carry out assessments for Energy Performance Certificates. This will help us support our customers to identify ways they can save money by reducing their water and heating bills.

### 5. **Equality and Diversity**

- 5.1 We are committed to fairness and equality for all regardless of their colour, race, ethnicity, nationality, gender, sexual orientation, marital status, disability, age, religion or belief, family circumstances or offending history, as referred to in our relevant Group policies. Our aim is to ensure that our policies and procedures do not create an unfair disadvantage for anyone, either directly or indirectly.
- 5.2 An Equality Impact Assessment has been undertaken in respect of this policy and which identified no negative impact on any person/group with a protected characteristic as a result of this policy.
- 5.3 The Group aims to meet the needs of its customers by providing an excellent service. However, it is acknowledged that occasionally things go wrong and customers may wish to complain. Should the need arise to make a complaint, please refer to the Group's Complaints, Comments and Compliments Policy.

### 6. **Training and Awareness**

- 6.1 All new colleagues will be given awareness training in relation to this policy during induction and on-going training will be provided by Learning and Development as needs arise within the Group.
- 6.2 All awareness training will include the most up to date legislation and guidance available at the time. The Group will ensure full training is provided in relation to the Environmental Management System and records maintained in The Academy.

## 7. Monitoring, Audit and Review

- 6.1 The Group will monitor the effectiveness of the policy, arrange internal audits, evaluate KPIs and recommend policy changes to improve service delivery.

This policy will be reviewed every two years or on the introduction of new legislation or best practice guidelines, whichever is the sooner.

- 6.2 Approved documents are valid for use after their approval date and remain in force beyond any expiry of their review date until a new version is available.

## 7. Associated Documents/Policies

- 7.1 List of documents/associated policies/publications:

- Group Asset Management Strategy
- Group ICT Strategy
- Procurement tender documents
- Asset Maintenance Policies

<b>Author:</b>	Mark Lane
<b>Document type:</b>	Policy
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