



Report to:

Northwards Housing Board
11th November 2008

Item No:

14e

Title:	Environmental Policy		
Date:	25 th October 2008		
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Confidential:	No		
For: (Please tick action required)	NOTING ✓	DISCUSSION	APPROVAL
PURPOSE OF REPORT			
At the request of Resource & Audit Sub-Committee, the Environmental Policy together with some more recent update information is provided for the Board.			
RECOMMENDATION			
The report is provided for information.			
IMPLICATIONS			
Equality & Diversity:	The policy development was impact assessed for equality and diversity		
Financial:	None directly although some budget provision may be considered in the future		
Staffing:	None directly		
Decency Target:	A number of environmental initiatives have already been implemented as part of the Capital Programme		
Governance:	None directly		
Risk Assessment:	Not a primary risk area.		

Equality & Diversity Implications (Please tick where relevant):

BME	<input type="checkbox"/>	Lesbian/Gay/Bisexual/Transgender	<input type="checkbox"/>
Gender	<input type="checkbox"/>	Single Parents	<input type="checkbox"/>
Age	<input type="checkbox"/>	Domestic Violence	<input type="checkbox"/>
Disability	<input type="checkbox"/>	Alcohol / Drug Mis-users	<input type="checkbox"/>

Consultation/Consideration:

	Yes, No or N/A:	Name:	Date:
Board:	No		
Area Panel:	No		
Forums:	No		
Ward Councillors:	N/A		

1. As attached, the Environmental Policy is presented for noting by the Board.
2. Since the Policy was approved by Procurement & Property Sub-Committee, the **Bronze Award** from the Council's Business Pledge Team has been achieved.
3. Current work includes:
 - staff research into attitudes regarding a Northwards travel plan, which would serve to diversify the way most of our staff travel to work;
 - liaising with the Transport Team from the Council who have provided advice;
 - the development of an 'Energy Initiatives Group Meeting', comprised mainly of officers from Property Services who have an agreed budget (£200,000) and have agreed ways to make properties more energy efficient.
4. Imminent work includes:
 - reducing work station energy consumption by installing screen saver software (this would have been achieved earlier but the software suggested by the Council has now deleted their programme);
 - influencing individual behaviour by following on from an employee suggestion to have a strapline in all email signatures promoting the reduction of unnecessary printing;
 - the Performance Improvement Group to take responsibility, led by our Performance Officers, for implementing the elements of the environmental strategy pertaining to changing individual behaviour and working practices.



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2008

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Introduction:

Northwards' current objective pertaining to the environment:

An attractive environment

To help develop a safe, sustainable and attractive environment within North Manchester, which contributes to the pride and well-being of local communities.

This policy will deal with the environmental sustainability aspect of Northwards' objectives. Housing organisations have a huge role to play regarding environmental sustainability, especially considering 30% of the UK's energy consumption and 27% of the UK's CO₂ emissions come from homes¹.

There are two major aspects to Northwards' role in achieving its objective of environmental sustainability. The first is concerning Northwards' role as a housing provider; the way Northwards promotes environmental sustainability amongst Northwards' tenants, how Northwards repairs homes and the consequences this has on the environment. The second is concerning Northwards as an employer; the way the Northwards' offices are managed, office facilities which encourage environmentally friendly working practices and the profile of environmental sustainability amongst staff. The two aspects will be dealt with in turn.

Purpose:

To ensure that Northwards recognises the impact it has on the environment. To consequently take action to make Northwards an environmentally friendly organisation and to facilitate environmentally friendly practices amongst its tenants.

Scope of the policy:

Northwards as a housing provider

Northwards has already gone some way to demonstrate commitment to the environment. Current action is summarised overleaf:

Table 1: Current action facilitating environmental sustainability.

Current Initiatives	Details	Current performance
Energy Efficiency (BV63)	BVPI measuring energy efficiency of properties, on a scale of 120 points.	In ALMO upper quartile. Figure based on a potential 120 marks, Northwards has been steadily improving to a current performance for the 3 rd quarter of 2007-08 of 74.1 (out of 120).

¹ Pg 6, 'Zero Carbon, what does it mean for homeowners and house builders?' NHBC Foundation.

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<p>Appointment of Strategic Asset Manager.</p>	<p>A new role in the Programme Planning & Asset Management team, the post holder will be responsible for developing and implementing energy strategies, procuring partners for asset management and energy efficiency, maximising the use of all available grants.</p>	<p>Current priorities include developing Northwards' Energy Action Plan and ensuring Energy Performance Certificates are available for void properties and right to buys by October 2008.</p>
<p>Decreasing the energy consumption of tenants.</p>	<p>'Here to Help' scheme to give energy efficiency advice to residents resulting in financial savings helping reduce fuel poverty. Information provided in partnership with British Gas whom provided 2000 energy saving guides.</p> <p>Northwards' Financial Inclusion Strategy includes plans to provide advice and awareness raising for reducing outgoings, including electricity and gas bills.</p>	<p>To commence imminently.</p> <p>The Rent Team includes a Money Adviser and a Debt Advise Officer, who work proactively with tenants to educate them on responsible budgeting. Plans included to deal specifically with reducing the amount of energy consumed.</p>
<p>Existing Homes Alliance</p>	<p>A coalition of organisations calling for urgent action to transform the UK's existing housing stock and make it fit for the 21st century.</p>	<p>Northwards recently joined this alliance.</p>
<p>Decent Homes Standard (DHS)</p>	<p>Included in DH improvements are modifications to properties that reduce energy wastage, such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Double glazing; • High energy efficient boilers (funded by utility companies such as Scottish Power); • Cavity loft and wall insulation (British Gas award £5 per property that receive insulation improvements that must be spent on 'community initiatives'). <p>Waste produced by achieving the DHS is minimised by working with partners (such as DEKURA and WREKIN) to recycle windows being replaced at Liverton Court, Higher Blackley. 95% of the original PVC frame is recycled (including rubber components and hardware) which</p>	<p>Northwards is on target to meet the DHS, for example last year 2007-08, the target was 549 homes to be made decent, Northwards excelled this and achieved 713 homes made decent.</p> <p>New window frames are made by up to 30% of recycled windows.</p>

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	<p>is then processed.</p> <p>Decent Homes improvements also include the following environmentally friendly initiatives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dual flush toilets with a maximum 6 litre flush (instead of standard 12 litre) to reduce water waste; • Spray flow taps to reduce water waste; • Electric showers fitted with 'eco-heads' to reduce the use of water; • Environmentally friendly roof slates that reduce Nitrogen Dioxide (NO₂) and Nitrogen Oxide (NO) from the atmosphere by absorbing these chemicals, then neutralizing them and finally washing the newly formed chemicals away with the rain in a none pollutant form. <p>The percentage of construction waste recycled has been agreed by the Procurement & Property Sub-Committee to increase annually. In 2007-08 the target waste 80% and in 2008-09 Sub-Committee, keen to increase recycling and make DHS more environmentally friendly, increased this to target to 90%.</p>	<p>2007-08 target of 80% achieved. Current performance for the 1st quarter of 2008-09 is below target at 84%.</p>
<p>Photovoltaic (PV) panels for flats which will produce electricity for landlord supply.</p>	<p>In partnership with MCC Green City and Solar Century 14 Multi-stories will be fitted with PV panels (match funding from BERR) and in partnership with MCC and British Gas 2 Maisonettes (Cheetham and Charlestown) will also receive PV panels (also funded by the BERR).</p> <p>It was agreed by the board that any financial savings from using PV panels would be reinvested in future environmental schemes.</p>	<p>Work due to commence in July, to be completed by September.</p> <p>Work on Queens Rd maisonettes has been completed, however further modifications are necessary to ensure the energy generated is not put back into the national grid free of charge.</p>
<p>MCC's Environmental Business Pledge</p>	<p>MCC awards companies and organisations who display demonstrative commitment to the environment. Awarded as bronze, silver and gold.</p>	<p>Northwards has applied for the bronze award, as a starting point, and is awaiting the outcome.</p>

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Thus there is significant work currently being undertaken that makes a contribution to environmental sustainability. However, there is more that Northwards can do to promote environmental sustainability.

The next section will firstly provide an initial summary of the proposed recommendations, followed by explanations behind each suggested action.

Proposed actions summary:

Senior officers scope out their commitment to environmental sustainability and what resources will be committed. The Board is approached to identify the extent of their commitment. This will allow the parameters of this policy to be realised.
Northwards engages with or becomes a member of the Manchester Strategic Transport Partnership structure, in an attempt to yield more influence regarding increasing public transport in North Manchester with an ultimate aim of reducing CO ₂ emissions.
Northwards considers the impact its partners are having on the environment. Accordingly, Northwards is committed to working with partners who offer plausible environmentally friendly work solutions.
Have a designated officer responsible for researching and checking funding opportunities, coordinating funding bids and considering appropriate businesses to approach for funding from the private sector.
An environmental sustainability officer group is established, composing of key officers within the organisation who have environmental sustainability related to their role in some way.
Raise the profile of environmental sustainability amongst tenants, recruit volunteers and invest in training.

Each proposal will now be elaborated on to justify its suggestion.

1. Proposal:

Senior officers scope out their commitment to environmental sustainability and what resources will be committed. The Board is approached to identify the extent of their commitment. This will allow the parameters of this policy to be realised.

Explanation: This action is the prerequisite of a whole range of environmentally friendly initiatives that could have a positive impact and ensure Northwards takes the consequences of its actions on the environment seriously. Before these initiatives are detailed, it is imperative to identify the resources and commitment for environmental sustainability.

2. Proposal:

Northwards engages with or becomes a member of the Manchester Strategic Transport Partnership structure, in an attempt to yield more influence regarding increasing public transport in North Manchester with an ultimate aim of reducing CO₂ emissions.

Explanation: The Institute for Public Policy Research prioritises transport as a key issue in promoting environmental sustainability amongst members of the public². In short, if Northwards aims to have a real impact on facilitating environmental sustainability then it is

² Pg 6, IPPR, 'Positive Energy, harnessing people power to prevent climate change'.

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crucial that it utilises its position as part of the Manchester Strategic Partnership. By doing this and by aiming to engage with (or sit on a particular partnership within the structure) the Manchester Strategic Transport Partnership structure, more of an influence can be realised.

This is by no means a novel suggestion; it is likely that many members within the Manchester Strategic Transport Partnership structure are already aiming for this. However, adding an extra member to advocate this goal may increase the chances of this becoming a reality. Increased availability of public transport will enable tenants to make their own contribution to environmental sustainability by avoiding car usage and increasing their use of public transport.

3. Proposal:

Northwards considers the impact its partners are having on the environment. Accordingly, Northwards is committed to working with partners who offer plausible environmentally friendly work solutions.

Explanation: One area of consensus amongst environmental lobbyists is that services produced and consumed locally are the best way to consume, if protecting the environment is a concern.

As many national companies have local offices, it is not proposed that Northwards must stop work with national businesses, as national businesses offered locally offer environmentally friendly solutions. Northwards should ensure that if partnerships are established with national companies, the goods and services they offer are provided locally.

4. Proposal:

Have a designated officer responsible for researching and checking funding opportunities, coordinating funding bids and considering appropriate businesses to approach for funding from the private sector.

Explanation: Many housing organisations have commented that while they would like to invest in making their properties more environmentally friendly, this has the potential to be an extremely costly process and all resources for improving homes are currently focussed on the Decent Homes Standard. This is also a view echoed by Northwards' own Programme Planning team. Thus, it is clear that extra additional funding needs to be sought in order to further Northwards' goal of being an environmentally friendly organisation. Extra sources are being made available by the government, for example £50 million from the Department of Business Enterprise and Regulatory Reform. Furthermore, as environmental sustainability becomes ever more pertinent to the government, media and population in general, there are opportunities to capitalise on private companies seeking to mitigate their negative impact on the environment who realise the business case and PR advantage gained from supporting environmentally friendly schemes³.

If extra resources are achieved then a proposed environmental sustainability group would consider how best to use the extra resources.

5. Proposal:

³ Pg 12, 'Ecohomes XB', Housing Corporation.

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An environmental sustainability officer group is established, composing of key officers within the organisation who have environmental sustainability related to their role in some way.

Explanation: The officer group would be responsible for considering funding opportunities and how to spend successful bids, in consultation with tenants. The team would also seek to ensure the organisation is perpetually aware of the environmental consequences of a housing organisation, encouraging all staff to seek ways and make suggestions for better ways of service provision. Furthermore the officer group could be charged with further development of the strategy. To ensure the group has real influence it could be given responsibility for a budget composed of successful grant bids, the funding provided from British Gas for 'community initiatives' and money saved from PV panels that the board agreed should be used for environmental initiatives.

6. Proposal:

Raise the profile of environmental sustainability amongst tenants, recruit volunteers and invest in training.

Explanation: By raising the profile of the importance of environmental sustainability amongst tenants, Northwards has the potential to positively change the behaviour of thousands of people. Housing organisations leading in environmental sustainability have found it effective to recruit volunteers from amongst their tenants, invest in training and then use the volunteers to hold workshops within their community about valuing the environment and encouraging 'micro generation'.

(End of proposals for Northwards as a housing provider)

Northwards as an employer

There are many aspects of the way in which Northwards' offices are managed, that could be changed for relatively quick wins environmentally. As these initiatives are related to Northwards as an employer, and not as a housing organisation, they are characteristic of many non-housing organisations, and in some organisations are commonplace. The details of suggested schemes are detailed below:

Proposals for internal changes

Initiative	Details
Each employee asked to make an environmental pledge for how they fulfil their role.	With increased mantra in the media about the government imposing targets on individuals for a 'carbon entitlement', this is not out of line with current thoughts on environmental sustainability. Examples of pledges could include 1 member of staff per team responsible for ensuring everyone turns off their monitors, one person per office ensures taps are properly turned off etc. These pledges could be promoted at the Cascade briefings and work with HR could help incorporate into regular 1:1's and appraisals.
Confirm commitment	Encapsulating the above point, each office commits to environmental sustainability collectively, ensuring this commitment is underpinned by individual responsibility. This is symbolised by environmental mission statements

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	displayed in each office which every employee is signed up to.
Energy saving lights	Lights could be replaced with movement sensitive lights that turn off when people aren't underneath them for a significant amount of time. This may be more readily achieved dependant on the office location.
Recycling	Recycling of office waste takes place in all offices, but it is not clear how many people ensure all their office waste is recycled. This could be promoted to encourage 100% office recycling.
Car sharing schemes	Northwards could potentially have a successful car sharing scheme depending upon where the bulk of the officers live. This could be made easy to operate by having a live system on the intranet which updates with who wants a lift from where etc.
Ensuring our partners our environmentally responsible	When we put work out to tender, one of the things we must ensure on is that the services will be provided in a way that does not have an adverse effect on the environment, and that the organisation we commission is environmentally responsible. This task needs to be considered comprehensively, for example down to the extent of negotiating with managers of Hexagon Tower to employ a more environmentally conscious food provider. In Northwards' 'Procurement Guidelines and Rules' document, it is stated that Northwards should seek to influence and develop commitment to the environment from companies that we buy services from.
Reduce the organisation's carbon footprint	This could be achieved by investing in environmentally friendly pool cars that will reduce the amount of extra additional travel that officers have to do during the day for duties of their role in their own car (that is more likely to be environmentally unfriendly). Smart cars for example have been highly publicised as one of the most common environmentally friendly cars.