

The Model Road to Cooperation

As the 'Birthplace of Cooperation', Rochdale is the perfect place to visit a social landlord to get an insight into the benefits of collaborative procurement - GM Procure founding member Rochdale Boroughwide Housing (RBH).

RBH is a not for profit company which has managed council homes on behalf of Rochdale Council since 2002. The man with responsibility for the housing investment programme and the in-house repairs service to the ALMO's 14,500 properties is Director of Property Services Eugene Wilson.

Eugene is clear about the benefits of continued membership of GM Procure.

'Our Decent Homes programme, on which we spent £130 million over three years, ended in 2006, which was the year GM Procure was founded, so although we didn't benefit from the scale of savings that other members did we have still found significant benefits. Our aim is to put as much as possible through the procurement frameworks; most of our current spend is on planned maintenance and products that offer a clear sustainable advantage.

'It's important to remember that GM Procure is not just a construction framework, and it's not all about price. It's about employment in our neighbourhoods, investment in our communities, sustainability – an area in which we are clearly leading - and helping small local businesses in the process.

'The extras alone are worth being part of the consortium, such as championing the workless and giving support to fledgling businesses like building services company B4Box and RMI Property Services. This GM Procure model of regeneration is how Rochdale Boroughwide Housing intends to operate. Consequently, we are putting £1 million-worth of work – above and beyond our usual spend – through an arrangement with B4Box and RMI for which they will hire eight local people from our estates. These local people will be provided with support, training and experience to enhance their employability. It's a great bonus for RBH, and an ideal way to get the unemployed into work.

'The future will see more members using the Frameworks for new-build projects and also a greater move into sustainable and low energy products. The new fleet vehicle Framework is also very exciting; when our vehicle contract is up in two years' time we will source all our vehicles through GM Procure, no question.'

As the target market has changed so has the consortium, moving quickly to service new members' needs. To enable this to happen, GM Procure has placed itself in the vanguard of procuring sustainable products across a wide range of services while using the regeneration model as a meaningful agent for change.

Eugene said: 'The success of GM Procure is reliant on the consortium's Chief Executive, Mike Brogan, building good relationships with outside agencies such as GMEC and Job Centre Plus. They pick up on Mike's enthusiasm – and a clearly demonstrated process that works - and help make these programmes happen.

'The merger with Impact Manchester can only benefit existing members of both organisations and also future ones. The GM Procure model is tried and tested and has proved its worth so now it is just a matter of bringing more members into the fold and benefiting from even greater economies of scale. The rate of change within the consortium over the last four years has been colossal and this success is based on what Rochdale is famous for – cooperation. As the market changes, so we will change; who knows where we will be in another four years?'