
Rising Stock is High on the List

Burnley-based Calico Housing is one of two GM Procure member landlords based outside Greater Manchester. The RSL – which grew from a 4,500-home stock transfer from Burnley Borough Council in 2000 - was rated 28th in the 2009 Sunday Times Best Companies To Work For list so Chief Executive Michael Birkett has a lot to live up to. One of his responsibilities is to balance the needs of efficient procurement of supplies and services with the longer term goal of regenerating neighbourhoods.



Mike said: “If efficient procurement was only about screwing contractors down to the cheapest price it would never work. The regeneration feature is a fundamental facet of what our work is all about.

The decision to become a founding member of GM Procure in 2006 was a really good move for Calico Housing; taken as a whole, it’s been a very productive association for us. Although some members have realised bigger savings than Calico – which may be due to the fact that our in-house procurement was already very efficient – those savings were significant enough to make membership more than worthwhile.”

But for Calico the greater benefits lie elsewhere. Because GM Procure is responsible for putting together specifications and running the tendering process, Calico need not employ staff to undertake such work, which ensures lower head office costs. The arrangement also keeps Calico abreast of new legislation and EU regulations. Consequently, they can make do with a small team that liaises with the procurement Frameworks, saving considerable expense.

“To complement the reduction in our fixed staffing costs, it is important for our reputation to be associated with a company that commands respect in the housing sector more generally. There are also networking benefits, not least when we can benchmark ourselves against other social landlords. Other less tangible spin-offs include staff training and development, acquired by learning from other social landlords and from influencing the Frameworks that GM Procure provides.

“We were so keen to make regeneration central to our operation that in 2007 that we set up a separate initiative called Calico Enterprise, a charitable arm of Calico Housing. The Lancashire Housing Partnership, which is an affiliate consortium to GM Procure, uses the GM Procure Framework but the regeneration scheme and apprenticeships – aimed at people who may be ex-offenders or young people who struggle to engage with the world of work - are organised through Calico Enterprise. Whether it’s providing new training and employment opportunities through employee apprenticeships on the Building Foundations programme, or activities and social skills for families through our partnership with Burnley Football Club, we will continue to make this fundamental

to our work. Membership of GM Procure has certainly helped us grow this aspect, and we have been pleased with the structured way in which we can leverage this social benefit.”

Calico Enterprise was recently contracted to provide the same service to Cumbria Housing Partners, which is also a GM Procure affiliate and operates on similar lines.

All of Calico Housing’s eligible spend goes through GM Procure, which over four years has amounted to £20 million. Now that Decent Homes is winding down, Mike is looking forward to achieving even more procurement savings in other areas.

“GM Procure is growing and will inevitably move into new areas of procurement. We would also like to source more material supplies for day-to-day maintenance and we will certainly be looking into sourcing the fleet buying Framework - we have over 50 vans that will need replacing at some point.”