Group Operating Framework (public)

An overview of Orbit, our structures and how we work.

February 2017
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Orbit Group Operating Framework

Introduction
Orbit is a substantial business and a leading player in the housing sector. Our corporate and governance structures reflect this and the purpose of this document is to provide an overview of these structures, to explain what the Group does and how it operates on a daily basis.

This Framework is owned jointly by the Governance Team and Communications and Marketing Team and will be reviewed and updated annually.

About Orbit
Orbit Group is one of the largest housing organisations in the country. We own and manage over 40,000 homes, have around 100,000 customers and employ over 1,200 people. Our mission is ‘Building Communities’ and we generate profits to invest in our social purpose.

For information on our history and progress, please visit our website: http://www.orbit.org.uk/about/our-work/our-history/ or go to www.youtube.com and search for ‘Animated History of Orbit’ or ‘Orbit 2020 Vision’ to see some online animations.

Orbit has homes across a large geographical area. Because of this scale and spread, we have recognised that we cannot have the same role or level of impact in every community. We therefore maximise our scale and networks in the following 9 community hubs where 60% of our stock is situated:

- Bexley
- Coventry
- Hastings
- Northampton
- Norwich
- Rugby
- Stratford-upon-Avon
- Thanet
- Warwick

You can find out more about our priorities and ambition on community investment on our website http://www.orbit.org.uk/about/partners-and-suppliers/community-investment/

We operate from more than 20 office locations across our geographical areas in the Midlands, East Anglia and the South East of the country but our main offices are located in:

- Maidstone
- Norwich
- Stratford-Upon-Avon
- Coventry.

Our Work
We work across the Midlands, East Anglia and the South East, offering a wide range of services and housing options, including:

- General rented needs
- Supported housing (including mother & baby, ex-offender, homeless, victims of domestic violence and mental health)
- Sheltered and very-sheltered schemes
- Private retirement schemes
We also have a number of services which we provide to external organisations under our Service Matters brand, including:

- Customer Service Centre
- Internal Audit
- Data Protection
- Procurement
- Fraud Management
- Risk Management
- IT & Project Management.

Our Mission

Our 2020 Targets

Our Culture and Values

Orbit is a values-based business which makes a profit so that it can deliver its purpose of ‘Building Communities’. ‘Profit for a Purpose’ is about maximising efficiency and resources through a commercial approach; harnessing insight and innovation; and investing in our people to create a dynamic culture of trust, enterprise and achievement.
Everything we do is underpinned by our five core Values:

- Honesty
- Respect
- Innovation
- Partnership
- Excellence

These Values permeate through a set of Board Leadership Competencies and through the behaviours and performance of all staff in Orbit.

**Our Structure**

Orbit operates a structure which ensures control, local accountability and direct engagement with our customers. Our approach is to maximise the potential of the Orbit structure to drive economies of scale and support our service aims. All staff within Orbit operation under the single ‘Orbit’ brand and are committed to our ‘one Orbit’ way of working. We collaborate in agreeing our strategic direction and values to achieve a shared vision, for the benefit of our customers and Orbit as a whole.

**Orbit Group Limited (‘OGL’)**

An exempt charitable Registered Provider of Social Housing (RP) registered under the Housing and Regeneration Act 2008 with the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) (Registered No. L4123). OGL is also registered with the Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) as a Registered Society (Registered No. 28503R) under the Co-operative and Community Benefit Societies Act 2014.

OGL is the parent company and provides strategic direction and support services.

**Orbit South Housing Association Limited (‘Orbit East and South’)**

An exempt charitable RP registered under the Housing and Regeneration Act 2008 with the HCA (Registered No. L4060). Orbit East and South (OE&S) is also registered with the FCA as a Registered Society (Registered No. 27802R) under the Co-operative and Community Benefit Societies Act 2014.

OE&S owns and manages our homes in East Anglia, Kent, East Sussex, Surrey and London.

**Heart of England Housing Association Limited (‘Orbit Heart of England’)**

An exempt charitable RP registered under the Housing and Regeneration Act 2008 with the HCA (Registered No. L4526). OHE is also registered with the FCA as a Registered Society (Registered No. 30446R) under the Co-operative and Community Benefit Societies Act 2014.

OHE owns and manages Orbit’s homes in the Midlands, working for families, couples, single and older people living in a mixture of rented, leasehold, supported and home ownership properties.
Orbit Homes (2020) Limited (‘Orbit Homes’)

A non-charitable member of the Group. Orbit Homes is a limited company registered at Companies House (Company No. 6950748). OH is a wholly owned subsidiary of OGL and as such, OGL is the sole shareholder.

The development and sales arm of the Group, Orbit Homes has increased the range of tenures we can provide for our customers. It specialises in building new homes for Market Sale, HomeBuy Direct, Homebuy Shared Ownership, Affordable Rent and Market Rent. Orbit Homes invests its surpluses in making a difference to the communities where it works. OH has a target to deliver 12,000 new homes by 2020.

Orbit Treasury Limited (‘Orbit Treasury’)

A non-charitable member of Orbit. Orbit Treasury is a limited company registered at Companies House (Company No. 6264601). OTL is a wholly owned subsidiary of OGL and as such, OGL is the sole shareholder.

A special purpose vehicle created to co-ordinate borrowing for Orbit and offer advantageous interest charges. It is used to raise and manage the private finance needed to meet Orbit’s funding requirements.

Orbit Capital plc

A non-charitable member, Orbit Capital is a public limited company established to receive the proceeds of bonds issued on behalf of the Group. All funds received are routed through Orbit Treasury Limited for distribution to Group members.

We have recently reviewed our operational management structure, bringing together Orbit South, Orbit East and Orbit Heart of England under a single Executive Director for Customer Services and a shared board. We have retained the legal status of each of these parts of Orbit.

‘Orbit Living’

Under our operational management structure Orbit South, Orbit East and Orbit Heart of England operate under a single Executive Director for Customer Services and a shared board. This is called the Orbit Living Board. We have retained the legal status of each of these parts of Orbit.

Our Governance

Our federal governance structure is designed to enable Group members to fulfil their responsibilities and achieve more than would be possible by working independently. To discharge these responsibilities, each legal entity has a Board comprising Executive and Non-Executive Directors.
Our governance structure looks like this:

**Orbit Governance Structure**

The purpose of the Governance Framework is to ensure consistency across Orbit and to embed a culture of excellence in governance, allowing the Group’s parental responsibilities to be met and the Group members to manage their business effectively.

Within this Governance Framework, member Boards have the flexibility to reflect local circumstances and context, whilst incorporating agreed governance standards and best practice.

The Framework is supported by:

**Group Standing Orders**

Group Standing Orders (GSOs) provide a framework within which staff should undertake their day-to-day duties. All staff should be aware of, and be familiar with GSOs, especially in so far as they affect their own role and the extent of their own authority.

Compliance with GSOs is an implied term of an employee’s contract of employment for all legal entities within the Orbit Group. Staff are obliged to observe and fully comply with the provisions of Standing Orders and disregard for them may result in disciplinary action being taken.

A comprehensive review of the GSOs is currently taking place.
Intra-Group Agreement

The Intra-Group Agreement (IGA) describes the responsibilities and operational arrangements to support the effective delivery of the Group’s business. Each legal entity is required to be a party to the Agreement. It provides step-in rights for Orbit Group Limited:

(1) In the event that a Subsidiary or any of its board members are acting in a way which OGL considers:

(a) is bringing or is likely to bring the Subsidiary or any or all of the other Orbit Group members into disrepute,
(b) is having or is likely to have an adverse financial impact on the Subsidiary or any or all of the other Orbit Group members,
(c) is affecting or is likely to affect the Subsidiary or any or all of the other Orbit Group members in terms of financial viability or ability to perform in accordance with the business plan of that Subsidiary,
(d) is causing or is likely to cause the Subsidiary or any or all of the other Orbit Group members to fail to comply with any contractual, constitutional, statutory, regulatory or good practice requirement or expectation,

(2) Where litigation or other proceedings (including regulatory proceedings) are underway or threatened and these are having or are likely to have an adverse financial impact on the Subsidiary or any or all of the other Orbit Group members.

Internal Regulatory Framework (IRF)

Orbit has developed its own Internal Regulatory Framework (IRF) in order to confirm the standards of good governance, probity and sound financial management in the running of the business, to test that none of the members pose a risk to Orbit and to verify that the self-regulation arrangements are effective.

The IRF provides the Board with assurances that the Orbit business is operating in an efficient and effective manner, so as to ensure that the Business Plan is being delivered and areas where there are problems to address are identified. The IRF further promotes the organisation's effective governance arrangements to key external stakeholders and ensures that Orbit remains in a position to take advantage of opportunities to improve and extend its services.

The main objectives of Internal Regulation are to:

- Ensure that assurance activities are being delivered across the whole organisation;
- Ensure the effectiveness of Group member Boards’ governance aligned to the delivery of their Business Plans for which the Boards have delegated responsibility; and
- Share the outcomes of the IRF with all Boards in the partnership.

The IRF is essentially in three parts:

- Desktop Review
- Engagement Visits
- Reporting
For the engagement visits, the Group Chief Executive and the Chair of the Group Board will, on an annual basis, observe Board and Committee meetings in order to provide an assessment on how effectively they feel these are operating. The observations from these sessions are collated and fed into the IRF Annual Report which is presented to each of the Boards.

**External Regulation**

All Registered Providers (RPs) are regulated by the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA). The HCA has statutory powers of intervention for an RP found to be falling short of its regulatory requirements.

The HCA’s primary regulatory principle is co-regulation. This approach recognises that boards are responsible for their organisation’s performance, compliance with regulatory standards and adherence to their own selected code of governance.

The HCA Regulatory Framework for Social Housing sets out the regulatory standards and expectations of RPs. The “Regulating the Standards” document provides more information about how the HCA will regulate in practice.

**Policies, Strategies and Frameworks**

In order to help the Group meet its legal and regulatory requirements and achieve its key objectives a number of policies, strategies and frameworks have been developed for use across the business.

- **Policies**
  These set out the key principles adopted by members of the Orbit Group. They identify what members of the Group will and will not do, and set out the boundaries within which Orbit works. Members of the Group are able to also develop local policies to support the overarching Group policies.

- **Strategies**
  Strategies are overarching documents that identify a plan of action to achieve a long-term or overall aim, including the journey and key milestones for delivery.

- **Frameworks**
  These set out an overall direction and approach to a particular area of work, within which Group members can develop and produce their own strategies.

**Equality and Diversity**

We believe in a society that gives everyone an equal chance to live, learn and work free from discrimination, harassment, victimisation and prejudice; a society that respects and celebrates our differences, making for a stronger more vibrant community.

**Orbit Principles**

Equality is fundamental to us in the provision of homes, housing related services and the creation of communities. We recognise that within Orbit we have a key role to play in creating an equal society which ‘....protects and promotes equal, real freedom and substantive opportunity to live in the ways people value and would choose, so that everyone can flourish. An equal society recognises people’s different needs, situations and goals and removes the barriers that limit what people can do and can be’.
We understand that a person’s home directly influences their access to education and employment; it affects their health and wellbeing and access to social and economic opportunities within their communities. We are committed to tackling discrimination and disadvantage through positive action, fairer policies and programmes, services, training and changing how we use resources.

We recognise that people from different backgrounds and with different experiences bring fresh ideas and solutions, which can improve what we do and make us more efficient. We recognise that the diversity of our customers and our employees enables us to:

- develop and improve our services and explore new ideas and business opportunities
- respond to the changing needs of our customers and partners attracting new customers
- attract, keep and motivate the best people to work for us
- deliver excellent services to all our customers

**E&D Frameworks and Policies**

There are a number of important documents relating to Equality and Diversity within Orbit. They cover everything from general cultural awareness issues to making sure all correspondence and meetings organised are accessible to all. These are:

- Equality and Diversity Policy/Framework
- Equality Impact Assessment Policy
- Accessible Information Policy

We also have the following operational policies which support our residents:

- Hate Crime
- Domestic Abuse
- Safeguarding
- Child protection

All of these can be found on our internal intranet – The Orb.

**Strategic Focus**

We have an Equality and Diversity Strategic Forum which ensures:

- Equality and Diversity is embedded in Orbit’s business objectives
- Strategic direction and priorities for the Equality and Diversity agenda
- Sharing of best practice and raising the profile of Equality and Diversity
- Legal and regulatory requirements are met.

**Health and Safety**

Orbit recognises that effective management of health and safety will assist in meeting our organisational objectives and in maintaining and improving standards in all of our activities.

**Objective**

The overriding objective of the health and safety service is to ensure that there is **safe and secure environment** for employees, residents and key stakeholders in order to deliver services on behalf of Orbit.
Key Aims

In order to support the overriding objective the Health and Safety Team has seven key aims:

1. A robust Health and Safety Strategy is in place and signed up by senior management
2. Robust policies and procedures to support the strategy are in place and owned by the appropriate parts of the business
3. Policies are in line with current statutory requirements
4. Programme of training and awareness of health and safety risks is in place for employees
5. Robust system of risk assessments across Orbit; the outcomes from which are addressed by management
6. Auditing the impact of the strategy in order to ensure that a safe and secure environment is in place across Orbit and reporting the findings to management
7. Support a health and safety environment which promotes a culture of management ownership and continuous improvement.

Our People

Orbit believes that its people are one of its most important assets. The objectives of the People Strategy are to:

- Support transformation of the organisation and ‘living’ the Orbit culture
- Build on our transformational leadership capability at every management level
- Support managers with the development, engagement, motivation and management of their people underpinned by robust performance management, talent management and coaching
- Provide great HR services covering people, process and technology

You can read more about the Executive Team and Leadership Team on the ‘About’ section of our website www.orbit.org.uk

Leadership

Our Future Leaders Programme sets out what we expect from our leaders to enable Orbit to deliver on its business plans and ensure the organisation is able to sustain its success in the future. It is a key part of the Orbit People Strategy. The programme:

- Provides our managers at all levels with 21st Century leadership skills to drive Orbit towards its 2020 vision
- Gives them the capability to maintain a ‘relentless focus’ on delivering the day job, manage change and look to the future as a ‘thought leader’
- Is based on:
  - The ‘best’ future thinking on leadership
  - Achieving outcomes linked to managing people, performance, change and talent, underpinned by key themes of commercial approach, culture of achievement, coaching, engagement, innovation and emotional intelligence
  - ‘Outside in’ – bringing in people from outside who can challenge and add value to our thinking
  - ‘Inside out’ – taking individuals and teams to outside organisations that can share experiences and learning
Leadership Competencies

To enable Orbit’s Managers to achieve its vision they are required to perform against a number of competencies and management standards. These are:

- Model the Way
- Inspire a Shared Vision
- Challenge and Improve
- Encourage and Enable Others
- Recognise and Celebrate

All Managers and Leaders take ownership of and deliver on Managing Performance, Change and Engagement through an approach of balancing the following:

- Delivering the Day Job
- Managing Change
- Conceiving and Creating the Future

The narratives in our Competencies Framework and Leadership Competencies can be found on our intranet site – The Orb.

Communication and Engagement

Orbit recognises the importance of staff engagement and receiving feedback from its employees. We use three key mechanisms to achieve this:

- Your Say Survey
- Your Orbit
- Building Communities Awards

Your Say

Orbit conducts a yearly staff survey called ‘Your Say’. Every employee has the opportunity to express their views on Orbit, their job and other aspects of working for the organisation. We actively encourage employees to tell us how they feel, and how we can better support them in meeting our aims, putting customers first and living our values. The survey is 100% confidential and is conducted by an independent research organisation.

Your Orbit

Orbit recognises the importance of employee input and feedback and has therefore established Your Orbit as a framework for discussion and consultation on matters affecting all employees.

The Your Orbit forum represents colleagues as a whole and aims to reflect their opinion. It discusses influences and makes recommendations on the development of policy and relevant key strategic issues.

Your Orbit has been in place since late 2008 and during that time has evolved into what is now in place - an active, influential and engaged forum making a real difference and impact on the organisation and its colleagues.

Local Your Orbit Forums are held monthly within each area of the business (Orbit Corporate Services, Orbit Group and Orbit Homes (as one joint forum), and Orbit Living).
Your Orbit objectives are to:

- Work in partnership with senior management teams representing the views and voice of staff
- Act as a communications link on key business issues
- Work towards improving the quality of working life for all staff
- Help to inform and improve decision making within the organisation

Your Orbit is not a decision-making forum or negotiating body and any decisions taken regarding the business are the responsibility of Orbit Group Limited. The remit of Your Orbit will not include negotiations on terms and conditions of employment. However, concerns or questions regarding pay and benefits may be raised by Your Orbit for consideration or referral to the appropriate individual/team.

Engagement

We want to inform staff of important messages in a clear and consistent way and to do this we operate using a two-way communication model; we communicate messages to staff and staff can comment and feedback on those messages. We aim to do this across all of our communication channels. We also consult with Your Orbit on key communications projects and plans to make sure our staff have a say on the communications they receive. There are three key engagement tools which we use:

- **Orbit Voice**
  The Voice is Orbit’s monthly staff newsletter on which all managers brief their teams. It informs, consults and engages staff on important business information and updates, as well as celebrating our Housing Choice, Community Investment, Customer Offer, and Organisation successes towards achieving our 2020 Vision of Building Communities. We have an established feedback mechanism for staff to send comments to local Senior Management Teams and the Executive Team.

- **Yammer**
  All Orbit staff can access social media at any time throughout the working day but the most used social site is Yammer. Orbit has a wide network of colleagues from all levels and areas of the business – it is an open stream of conversation. Yammer promotes a collaborative culture and offers a space for staff to come together to share, chat and innovate.

- **The Orb**
  The Orb is Orbit’s intranet and hosts our latest news, polices, procedures and documents, and is the hub of business information. The Orb also hosts the Orbit Twitter, a scrolling newsfeed that staff can use to update colleagues – anything from celebrating success to happy birthdays. The Orbit Twitter is a key engagement tool as staff often feedback views on projects and systems enabling the Communications Team to balance what messages staff need to hear, and what they want to hear.

Staff Awards

The Customer First Awards, developed in consultation with Your Orbit, launched in April 2013 with the purpose of awarding colleagues who lived our values and put our customers at the heart of all they do. The awards aim to recognise true excellence and innovation with categories such as: Working in Partnership Award, Living Innovation Award, and The Naseem Khan Celebrating Diversity Award. Winners of the regional award categories, picked quarterly by local senior management teams, are recognised at our annual staff Roadshows.
Business Planning

Orbit has set a seven-year business strategy to 2020. In 2013-15 we focused on ‘Creating the Platform’ to enable us to start to deliver against our nine targets to 2020. In 2015-17 our focus was on ‘Delivery and Growth’ as we increased our development programme of new homes, delivered quality services, increasing profits to enable us to invest more in our social purpose and develop our people and organisation. Our 2017-2020 Business Plan will focus on ‘Improvement and Evolution’ as we also celebrate our 50th anniversary in 2017 and start to plan for beyond 2020.

Orbit drives its targets through a single Business Plan, supporting by Operating Plans for Property Investment, Customer Services and Business Services (Corporate Services, Finance and People). This integrated approach is set out below. The Corporate Services Directorate co-ordinates the Orbit Business Plan and reports on progress against targets to the Executive and Group Board on a quarterly basis.

Project Management

Change within Orbit is a constant and at any one time there are numerous change activities happening across the business introducing new and more efficient ways of working and impacting upon our staff and customers.

To ensure consistency, alignment to 2020 Vision and clear focus and priority for change a standard Project Management approach is used to ensure successful outcomes and clear benefits are achieved for the organisation.

Our approach is a flexible one that is tailored to the size and type of change being delivered. Each project has an assigned Project Manager who is responsible for delivering the change and they deliver this within the agreed framework that consists of 4 phases designed to ensure the best outcomes.
Orbit Project Lifecycle:

- **Concept – What we will do**
  This phase is all about getting early buy-in from senior management and key stakeholders to developing the idea further and ensuring that there is a valid business case for doing so.

- **Investigation – How we will do it**
  This phase is about understanding the detailed requirements, potential risks, confirming the scope, establishing resources and developing a project plan.

- **Implementation – Doing it**
  During this phase the project plan is executed and regular progress updates are issued to stakeholders.

- **Post Project – Was it successful?**
  This is the opportunity to reflect on the project, identify what went well, what did not go so well and what should be done differently next time. Was the project delivered on time, to budget and to the required level of quality? Will the benefits be achieved?

The Programme Management Office (PMO) acts as the centre of excellence for project management and provides best practice and tools across the business, helping to drive forward change. They are supported by the Digital Programme Management Office.

All change activity across Orbit is approved, prioritised and monitored by a Change Approval and Prioritisation Group made up of representatives from each business area who approve new change activity and ensure alignment to the 2020 Vision and key business initiatives.

The Executive Team are responsible for ensuring Orbit’s resources are working on activities that bring the most benefits to the Group; and to create a clear picture of the priorities across the Group.

The Executive Team ensures that approved change will enable Orbit to meet its business and transformational objectives and is aligned to the 2020 Vision and targets. Conflicts around prioritisation, scheduling or resources will be resolved by CAP and will result in change being put ‘on hold’, pushed back or stopped altogether if necessary.

**Further Information**

If you have received this document as part of a tender exercise any questions should be raised through the tender portal in the normal way. If the document has been provided in any other context, queries can be referred to Lesley Mason, Procurement Compliance Manager at lesley.mason@orbit.org.uk in the first instance.

You can find further information on our Group website [www.orbit.org.uk](http://www.orbit.org.uk).