

# The Sustainability Reporting Standard (SRS) for social housing


The Sustainability Reporting Standard consists of 12 themes and 46 criteria for us to show our performance against. These criteria align to international frameworks and standards, including the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

This ESG report covers our performance for the 2023/24 financial year.

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While we are able to demonstrate a strong commitment against all core criteria, we recognise there are some enhanced criteria where we need to develop our approach. We are proud of our achievements in putting the customer at the heart of what we do. We remain focused on investment into our existing homes and have been updating the information we hold on the overall standard of our properties. This information will help us plan the investment needed and we expect to launch this plan in April 2025. We estimate spending over £57 million in the first five years, with a focus on enhancing key components in homes (such as kitchens, bathrooms, heating) and works to improve energy efficiency.

# At a glance



**6,978**  
Number of properties



**80%** Customer Satisfaction  
10% higher than our peers



**100%**  
of homes meet the Decent Homes Standard


**G1/V2/C2**  
Highest rating of governance  
(GI/V2 in 2023-24)



Official adopter




Together with Tenants



**68%**  
Our rents are an average of 68% of the Local Housing Allowance

**101**  
new homes completed in  
2023 - 24



**£1.9 million**  
of extra benefits raised for our customers, who were missing out on what they were entitled to



**100%**  
of new homes have an EPC B or better



Saxon Weald pays the living wage

# About us

Saxon Weald manages close to 7,000 affordable homes across Sussex and Hampshire, providing essential services to more than 10,000 people. As a community benefit society, we reinvest our income into the management, maintenance and building of homes. Over the last 20 years, we have built nearly 2,000 new homes, making a valuable contribution to easing the chronic shortage of affordable housing in the South-East.

## Our values and focus

Saxon Weald's values are what matter to us most. They guide us every day in everything we do. At Saxon Weald we will:



**Be customer led**



**Be one team**



**Be forward thinking**



**Be inclusive**



**Do the right thing**

## Our Purpose

**We enable positive life chances by providing safe and secure homes.**

## Our corporate plan sets out three clear priorities:

### Focus on our customers:

We will engage with customers in a positive, open way. We will listen to their feedback and use it to ensure we are providing good quality services that meet customer needs.

### Invest in our homes:

Our homes must be safe, warm and affordable while communal areas should be well looked after. We will invest in improving the energy performance of our homes, reducing our customers' fuel bills while improving our carbon footprint.

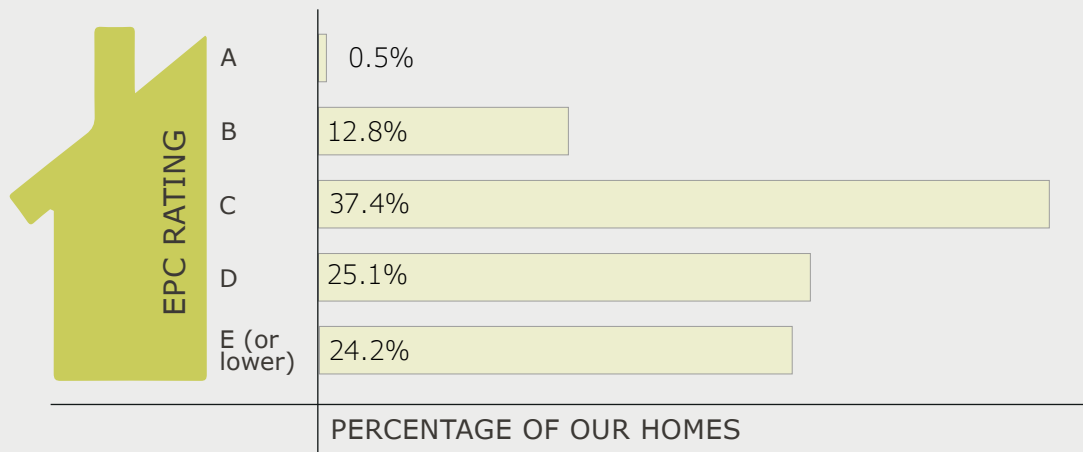
### Be a great place to work:

We seek to create an environment where everyone feels welcome and valued. By investing in training, development and staff wellbeing, we equip our staff to deliver the best services to customers.

## Climate change

### C1 – EPC rating of our homes built prior to 2023

We want to ensure that all our homes meet EPC-C by March 2029. In the last year, we have acquired data on the homes for which we didn't previously have an EPC rating. This has shown around half of our properties need investment to bring them up to a C rating. We have set aside £57m to invest in our properties over the next five years, which will include improving energy efficiency to achieve our EPC C goal.



### C2 – EPC rating of new homes

All 101 homes that were completed in the 2023-24 financial year achieved EPC B. Looking forward, all the homes we build will be designed to achieve a minimum of EPC B in operation, with the aspiration for some of them to achieve net zero carbon.

### C3 – Our Net Zero target and strategy

We aim to reach Net Zero Carbon by 2050. This goal is integrated with our Asset Management Strategy and our 30-year investment plan which underpins it.

# Environmental criteria



## C4 – Retrofit activities undertaken in the last 12 months in relation to our Net Zero strategy and target

During the 2023-24 period we invested £1.54m to improve the SAP rating for our homes and improve energy efficiency.

The improvement works included the installation of modern and energy efficient heating systems, thermal insulation, and structural works.

This included:

ENERGY IMPROVEMENT WORK	No. of HOMES IMPROVED	SPEND
Structural Works (including insulation)	59 properties: 31 individual properties + 3 blocks	£616,423
Roofing (including insulation)	71 properties: 2 individual properties + 3 blocks	£75,210
Heating Systems	57 individual properties	£270,946
Boilers	232 properties: 162 individual properties + 2 blocks	£580,087

We have recruited Savills to assess 25% of our housing stock during 2024 and will be working with Sava using the Sava Intelligent Energy to review the energy performance of our entire stock (looking at EPC and NZC). This will enhance the data quality of our homes to better understand their energy performance and this information will help model our future investment and upgrade programmes planned from 2025-26.

We are also exploring funding options to support us with our retrofit projects and Net Zero goals. This includes an application to the Government’s Warm Homes: Social Housing Fund.

Internally, we have a PAS 2035 retrofit training workshop planned for our colleagues. This will help ensure upgrades that we do to our properties, are done in a way that is effective and sustainable for the long term.

## C5 – Greenhouse gas emissions

The table below provides a summary of the carbon data we have been able to validate as our baseline.

ACTIVITY	SCOPE	% OF TOTAL CO2e	CO2e EMISSIONS (TONNES P.A.)
HomeFix fleet	1	3	513
Communal and office electricity	2	4	630
Communal and office gas	1	12	2,213
Housing assets	3	81	14,506
<b>TOTAL</b>			<b>17,862</b>

# Environmental criteria



We run a cycle to work scheme for staff and in 2024, we will be introducing an electric vehicle leasing scheme to try and cut down our commuting carbon footprint.

We are also working with our company van leasing partner, Venson, to seek solutions to improve our fleet emissions.

### C6 – Mitigating climate risks

Our new developments are fitted with sustainable drainage. All our new homes undergo flood risk assessments where required and mitigation measures including permeable paving, green roofs and sustainable drainage are incorporated into schemes. We also ensure that our new homes are designed with adequate provision for ventilation and shading where possible.

In terms of existing homes, we use local authority flood risk management strategies to highlight areas where our customers may be affected.

Where necessary, some older properties are being retro-fitted with new extraction and ventilation systems, which will help mitigate some excess warmth and damp.

## Ecology



### C7 – Enhancing green space and promoting biodiversity on or near our homes

Open spaces are vital to creating sustainable and vibrant neighbourhoods. They connect people to place and promote social, environmental, and economic wellbeing. Our homes are in areas with rich biodiversity next to open spaces, near or in the countryside, and with woodland and nature conservation areas not far from them.

The Sustainability Plan we are working on for 2025/26 recognises the importance of playing our part and will map out our plans to make a positive contribution to open spaces, green space and local ecosystems that are located on or near our estates.

We recently established Green Team, a customer engagement group, where residents from our estates complete a monthly audit to rate the quality of grounds maintenance in their areas. The monthly audits help us to identify areas performing well and those needing improvement.



## **C8 - Identifying, managing and reducing pollutants that could cause material harm**

Our grounds maintenance and tree management contracts include measures to mitigate environmental impact. These measures include using electric tools, vans, and equipment whenever possible and applying environmentally safe weed killers.

We have a cycle-to-work scheme in place, and have procured an employee electric vehicle leasing scheme - both with the aim of reducing our carbon footprint.

Our new build town centre developments have a sustainable travel plan, with a survey that residents are encouraged to complete when allocated a property.

## Resource management

### **C9 – Increasing the use of responsibly sourced materials for building and repairs works**

We are committed to working with our partners and contractors to responsibly source building and refurbishment materials while ensuring all our new homes, planned works and repairs are energy efficient. We make every effort to ensure the materials we use come from sustainable sources.

We work with our suppliers and contractors to obtain new and innovative products that are more environmentally friendly, sustainable, and sourced regionally. This includes using UK manufacturers for the majority of building materials we use on new development sites, refurbishment and programme works. This in turn helps to reduce long lead times and transportation of these materials.

Our new materials supplier Jewson Partnership Solutions (JPS) has a sustainability framework that addresses the key risks and opportunities from raw material extraction to product end-use along their value chain. Their sustainability reports can be found here: <https://starkgroup.dk/sustainability/reports>

Our building specifications have been developed to maximise the use of responsibly sourced building materials. As part of our decarbonisation approach with suppliers, we only consider materials which reduce carbon emissions. For example, we ensure the majority of the timber is purchased from Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) or Programme for the Endorsement of Forest Certification (PEFC) certified sources.

### **C10 – Waste management incorporating building materials**

We partner with our external partners for waste management and recycling, including our building materials for repairs. We recycle and separate where we can, and have various disposal options with our local council such as different waste bins for electrical items, hardcore and household items.

Our Environmental and Sustainability Plan will highlight further areas we can develop.

### **C11 – Water management and playing our part**

Our main business activity is in Horsham, West Sussex, which is an area earmarked for water neutrality standards. Water neutrality is defined as development that takes place which does not increase the rate of water abstraction for drinking water supplies above existing levels.

Recognising the asset we have in our existing homes, we have been working together with Horsham District Council to implement a water management scheme that will see up to 50% of our existing homes built before 2010 installed with specialist devices that help economise water use, while providing cost savings for our customers.



## Affordability and Security

### C12 – How our rents compare

Overall, our rents are an average of 53% of the median private sector rent in the area in which we work. Furthermore, our rents are an average of 68% of the Local Housing Allowance.



### C13 – An overview of our existing owned and managed homes, completed before the last financial year (31 March 2024)

TENURE TYPE	NUMBER OF PROPERTIES	PERCENTAGE OF STOCK
General needs (social rent)	3,408	54%
General needs (leased)	44	1%
Intermediate rent	1	0%
Affordable rent	1,047	17%
Supported housing	19	0%
Housing for older people	1,270	20%
Shared ownership	345	6%
Shared equity	157	2%
<b>TOTAL PROPERTIES</b>	<b>6,291</b>	<b>100%</b>

### C14 – Building new homes and disposals of housing stock

We completed 101 new properties during the financial year 2023-24. Of these, 64 properties were for affordable rent and 37 for shared ownership.

Sometimes, we need to sell our properties. The decision to sell a property is not one we make lightly as we are acutely aware of the shortage of affordable homes.

However, we have a responsibility to ensure our homes are of the right quality and standards. This includes being energy efficient and cost effective for residents to run. With limited funds with which to maintain our properties, we must make sensible, sustainable decisions about when it is financially viable to do the work needed to bring a property up to modern standards. Where the cost cannot be justified, the responsible decision is to sell that property.

We reinvest the money made on the sale in building new, energy-efficient, affordable homes that better meet our



customers' needs. We aim to build more homes than we sell, and are proud to have contributed 2000 new affordable homes to the community.

Last year our Sales team sold 17 properties.

#### Disposals April 2023 - March 2024

All general needs properties with a mix of assured and protected tenancies

3 x One-bedroom flats

6 x Two-bedroom flats

2 x Two-bedroom houses

6 x Three-bedroom houses

## C15 – Reducing the effect of high energy costs on our residents

We regularly offer our customers advice on how to find the best energy deals and save energy within the home. We publish this in our newsletters that are sent to all our residents and keep our website updated with new information as we receive it.

Every six months we update and publish a 'Helping Hand Guide' which contains lots of information to help with the cost-of-living, including a guide to government support with energy costs and information relating to the costs of running different heating systems and domestic appliances.

We are committed to playing our part to help mitigate the impact of energy price rises on our customers. We create equity in energy costs by providing homes that are energy efficient. Our 30-year property investment plan allocates the necessary resources to factor in component replacement, renewals and improvements that will ensure homes are energy efficient and we have a dedicated budget to enhance homes to the EPC-C rating by 2030.

During 2023/24, we invested a total of £1,323,633 in improvements to thermal efficiency. We spent £632,000 on replacement windows and doors that improve insulation; £75,210 replacing roofs with defective underfelt, protecting the home from the effect of windchill; and we invested £616,423 carrying out brickwork, structural repairs, and cavity wall and roof insulation to help minimise heating bills.

## C16 – Security of tenure

We provide long-term security of tenure with assured tenancies.

We want our customers to feel able to put down roots. We provide all our social housing customers with long-term security through assured tenancy agreements, following the successful completion of a 12-month starter tenancy. Our 108 private market rent customers have assured shorthold tenancies on a rolling term.

We actively support the opportunity for customers to stay in their homes longer by, for example, providing aids and adaptations so individuals can remain in their homes longer.

We also have a Money Matters team that supports tenants with benefit claims to maximise their income, helping to prevent arrears and sustain tenancies. We see eviction as a failure and the absolute last resort.



## Building safety and quality

### C17 – Housing condition

We are building a clearer picture of our housing stock condition and last year instructed Savills to inspect a large number of our properties. We recognise that there are still a few gaps, but will be working to improve the statistics we have on those properties.

COMPLIANCE AREA	Properties inspected	March 2024
Gas - Commercial	104	100%
Gas - Domestic	3894	99.9%
Electrical - Commercial	386	96.7%
Electrical - Domestic	5942	96.8%
Fire	450	98.9%
Asbestos - Communal	424	100%
Asbestos - Domestic	3419	75.9%
Legionella	324	86.6%
Lift - Personal	3	100%
Lift - Passenger	69	100%

### C18 – Meeting the Decent Homes Standard

100% of our homes meet the Decent Home Standard.

### C19 – Managing and mitigating the risk of damp and mould

We understand that damp and mould can impact the quality of life of our customers affected by it. In the 2023-24 period, we reviewed and enhanced our damp and mould policy, incorporating the twenty-six-point recommendations made by the Housing Ombudsman.

We have also enhanced our systems to ensure damp and mould cases are tracked to completion and established a dedicated damp and mould response team to address remedial work.

Where issues have been identified, we have been installing effective ventilation, undertaking structural work, and enhancing thermal efficiency to address the root cause of damp and mould.

Our customer communications have also been reviewed to ensure they are supportive, removing any perceived blame of customers for damp and mould. We continue to actively communicate and encourage customers to report cases to us.

In 2023-24, we commissioned two independent audits to scrutinise our approach to damp and mould so that we can continue to improve.

## Resident voice

### C20 – Measuring customer satisfaction

For 2023/24, our overall customer satisfaction was 80%, putting us 10% above the benchmark average for the sector.

We use the full suite of data from the regulatory Tenant Satisfaction Measures survey to help prioritise areas for improvement.

One of our lower satisfaction scores was for time taken to complete repairs, so during the year, we have worked to reduce the waiting times for our repairs service. Our new materials supplier, with more stores available to collect parts, will further reduce driving times and improve these timescales. We have also made improvements to the process for re-booking repairs when an operative is unable to gain access to a home for their appointment.

We know that complaints are closely linked to overall satisfaction. We worked with a group of customers to review our communications related to our complaints process, improving satisfaction in this area by 7% up to 44%. This compares favourably to the sector average of 34% satisfaction for complaints handling.

### C21 – Enabling residents to hold management to account for the provision of services

As adopters of the National Housing Federation’s Together with Tenants charter, we are committed to having an open, honest and transparent relationship with our customers. This means listening to customer views, using this feedback and being accountable to customers for our decision making.

At strategic level, we have a Customer Experience Committee as part of our governance structure. Four out of the six members of this committee are Saxon Weald customers, giving them a powerful channel to hold Saxon Weald to account. We also have two customers on our Board, including our vice chair.

We have an annual customer engagement plan, setting out opportunities for customers to have their say at individual, neighbourhood and strategic levels. This plan is co-ordinated by our dedicated Customer Experience team. An annual assessment of the impact of our engagement activities is reported to our Board.

Our ‘task and finish’ group has proved a particularly effective way for customers to look at a service area in-depth and make recommendations for improvement. These recommendations are presented to our Customer Experience Committee, with service managers held accountable for responding to suggested actions.

We publish our performance against the regulatory Tenant Satisfaction Measures on our website and in an annual customer report. Wherever possible, we include benchmark information so customers can compare us to our peers.



## C22 – Managing complaints

In the last 12 months, the Housing Ombudsman determined that maladministration took place four times at Saxon Weald.

Complaints are a critical source of feedback from customers, and we use them to inform learning and service improvement. Learning is identified either by the service manager investigating at stage one, or by the Customer Experience team who may spot trends in our reporting. We track agreed improvement actions on a complaints learning log, which is reviewed monthly.

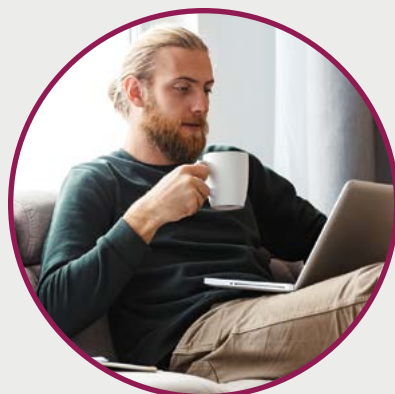
Where we receive an Ombudsman determination on a case, we hold a case review meeting with relevant teams to discuss what we can take from the situation. A case report is then produced and shared with our Executive Team and relevant service managers, before changes are made to improve our processes.

Examples of changes in practice resulting from complaints include:

- Introducing a process for operatives to take photos before and after carrying out repairs. This provides an added level of quality assurance and speeds up investigations where complaints are reported.
- Re-designing our authority to act form to include what responsibilities have been designated.
- Introducing a new process for mutual exchanges whereby surveyors visit properties prior to exchange completion if there are any concerns about property condition. Exchange is delayed until problems are resolved meaning the incoming tenant does not inherit undisclosed property issues.
- Introducing a survey so that residents will be asked if they still wish the repair to be carried out following an appointment where we have been unsuccessful in gaining access for the work.

**You said...** A surveyor visited my property and said I needed a repair, but I haven't heard anything since.

**We did...** We have introduced a new procedure. The surveyor and customer can now call in to report repairs during inspections.



**You said...** I was looking for some information on antisocial behaviour on your website and couldn't find it. It slowed me down in reporting the problems I was having.

**We did...** We updated the search facility of our website to include more abbreviations and misspellings, so that people are more likely to find the information they need.

## Resident support

### C23 – Supporting customers and improving outcomes

Our Money Matters team help our customers maximise their income by ensuring they are getting all the financial support they are entitled to. They can help customers to claim welfare benefits, including supporting applications for PIP and pension credit, tribunals and claims for backdated benefits. In 2023/24, the team supported hundreds of customers and helped generate an additional £1.9 million in extra income for them. We also provide an annual financial support fund, to assist customers who are facing a financial crisis. Last year, we spent £106k supporting 465 customers with items such as food/fuel top ups, essential white goods, contributions towards school clothing and help with utility debts.

We have a Wellbeing Adviser to support our most vulnerable customers with sustaining their tenancy. This has been vital with adult social care funding being reduced significantly. Forty-three customers were supported last year, with 27 of those receiving ongoing support for issues such as hoarding, damp and mould and social isolation. The success rate of this support can be seen in marked reductions in the number of Notice of Seeking Possession orders and evictions in 2023-24 for breaches of tenancy, which were not rent-related.

We're proud to say that we are part of the Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance accreditation scheme, and became accredited in October 2022. Our staff are, and will continue to be, educated on how to support victims of domestic abuse, working in partnership with agencies to help keep individuals and families safe in their homes. Last year we supported 17 domestic abuse cases that were reported to us and supported eight customers with moving.

Roughly a quarter of Saxon Weald's housing is for those aged 55 or over. The majority of those customers have a Scheme Manager or Extra Care Services Manager to offer support with services such as managing their rent, logging repairs, testing pull cords and signposting other services. The service also plays a vital role in bringing individuals together and helps prevent social isolation through regular functions such as coffee mornings and entertainment events. A regular newsletter helps keep residents informed on business and scheme activity and news.

## Placemaking

### C24 – Supporting communities with placeshaping activities

This year, we held our second annual youth awards, aimed at recognising the achievements of young people in our community. We had four awards covering achievement in learning, sports and physical activity, young carers and contribution to the community. This helped us build links with local authority youth teams, community organisations and schools.



# Social criteria

We are in talks to partner with Raven Housing Trust and Rosebery Housing Association to launch Work Smart, an initiative to help people either into work or into better paid employment. The project has received funding from the National Lottery and is looking to support at least 450 people over a five-year period.

### Community day at Medway and Norfolk Courts

We held a successful community day at Medway and Norfolk Courts in Horsham, providing skips and a helping hand to clear any unwanted items. We also offered support and advice, including helping a customer begin to tackle an extreme hoarding issue. We complemented this with a community drop-in event at a local Children and Families centre, helping us support customers while building links with the community healthcare team.



### Living Lab at Downlands Court

We have worked with Sussex University and East Sussex County Council to launch a 'Living Lab' at Downlands Court, one of our extra care retirement schemes. The initiative involves the use of an interactive games table and virtual reality headsets. This will promote social interaction, improve sensory co-ordination and enable residents to virtually experience activities they may be unable to do in reality, such as swimming in the ocean.



### Community Tree Planting

Saxon Weald was proud to sponsor Henfield Parish Council as they set out to brighten up the Wantley Estate, where we have a number of properties.

The first phase involved planting crocus bulbs on the verges, which are typically planted in the autumn and will bloom beautifully in the spring. Earlier this year we got together with residents and Henfield Parish Councillors and were busy planting some apple trees. As the project progresses, more trees, shrubs, and other finishing touches will be added, making the area a pleasant place to live for our Wantley residents.



## Structure and governance

### C25 – Registration and regulation

We are registered with the Regulator of Social Housing (registration no. L4299).

### C26 – Achieving regulatory excellence

Our 2023-24 regulatory review shows our rating as G1/V2/C2.

### C27 – A recognised code of governance

Saxon Weald follows the National Housing Federation Code of Governance 2020.

### C28 – Providing a not-for-profit service

Saxon Weald is a community benefit society registered with the Financial Conduct Authority (number 7971). As such, the money we receive in rents is re-invested in the management, maintenance and building of homes.

### C29 – Risk management framework

The key ESG themes are cross-referenced with the key strategic risks within the corporate risk register. These risks are reported to the Board and Audit and Risk Committee on a regular basis throughout the year.

We also are enhancing the capability of our risk register and its ability to link strategic risks to the ESG areas and themes.

### C30 - Risks identified and reported in the last year

Our Audit and Risk Committee provides assurance to the Board on the systems of internal control, risk management and the internal and external audit functions to ensure that they are effective and well managed.

In the last year we had no risks we needed to report.



## Board and trustees

### C31 - Equality, diversity and inclusion and resident voice at Board level

MEASURE	OF 10 BOARD MEMBERS
% of board that are women	40%
% of board that are BAME	7 white (English/Welsh/Scottish/N.Irish/British) 3 prefer not to say
% of board that are residents	20%
% of board that have a disability	0%
Average age of board members	55 years
Average board tenure	2.5 years



We strive to have a diverse Board and Leadership team, representative of the communities we operate in and ED&I is built into the recruitment process.

Resident voice plays a key role in the governance process and in shaping our services.





Two of our ten Board members are residents and we have a Customer Experience Committee with two residents as Independent Committee Members. The Committee's aim is to ensure that the customer voice plays a key role in shaping and improving services and is heard at Board level.

### **C32 - Board and senior management turnover**

We have seen a 10% turnover in our Board in the last two years, with both members leaving the Board at the end of their six-year term.

During the same period, we have seen a 30% turnover in our Executive and Leadership teams, with two roles being made redundant and four people leaving for personal reasons.

### **C33 - Members of the Audit and Risk Committee and their financial experience**

Saxon Weald has three board members on the Audit and Risk Committee with recent relevant financial experience. The Chair of the Audit and Risk Committee is in a senior leadership role for one of the largest NHS Trusts in England, where he contributes to shaping, designing and influencing healthcare outcomes for the local population including children, young people and adults. He operates at a strategic, operational and financial leadership level and has considerable sector specific and relevant cross-sector Board and Committee Chair experience.

The Vice Chair of the committee (during 2023-24) has broad international experience as a senior finance professional, with particular emphasis on the property and financial sectors. She has a particular interest in the intersection of finance with corporate purpose and ESG.

The third committee member spent most of his career as a partner in a major regional firm of chartered accountants in London, before being appointed to multiple non-executive director and committee roles in both the commercial and social housing sectors. He is currently Committee Chair of a G15, community-focused subsidiary housing association.

## **C34 – Non-executive directors**

As at 31 March 2024, 80% of our Board members were non-executive directors.

## **C35 – Succession planning**

A succession plan was approved by our Board for key roles in the business in March 2024. It includes a leadership development programme, as well as coaching, support and job shadowing (where appropriate), to ensure we have a healthy pipeline of people ready to progress.

## **C36 – External audit arrangements**

Our current external auditor, Beever and Struthers, has been responsible for auditing our accounts for the last four years.

## **C37 – Independent Board review**

We commissioned Campbell Tickell to carry out an independent review of our Board's effectiveness in March 2023. We repeat this process at least every two years.

## **C38 – Managing conflicts of interest**

Our Code of Conduct for Board members, staff and involved residents sets out the association's approach to managing conflicts of interest. All members are required to complete a declaration of interest form annually, and should declare any relevant interests at the start of each Board and committee meeting. How any conflicts of interest declared are dealt with is dependent on the circumstances. This can range from requesting that a member withdraw from meetings or discussions on specific matters, to requiring a member to resign from the Board.

## Staff wellbeing

### **C39 – Commitment to the Real Living Wage**

We apply, and operate within, the provisions of the Real Living Wage in all areas of our business.

### **C40 – Gender pay gap**

Our median gender pay gap for 2023-24 was 10.4%. We are confident that we offer equal pay, with employees paid equally for the same or equivalent work regardless of gender.

### **C41 – CEO-worker pay ratio**

The Chief Executive to average pay ratio is 6:1.

### **C42 – Ensuring equality, diversity and inclusion (ED&I) is promoted across the business**

Our approach to ensuring ED&I is promoted across the business begins at the recruitment stage. We have made our application process more inclusive, adding read aloud technology to the recruitment section of our website, using gender neutral language and implementing the Rooney Rule. This allows us to take positive action to shortlist at least one person from an under-represented group for specific roles.

To help adopt great practice throughout the company, all colleagues attended a training course 'Fostering a Diverse Workplace', while managers also attended training focusing on 'Creating an inclusive leadership culture'.

# Governance criteria



'Be inclusive' is one of our core values, and this year we introduced quarterly values awards which recognise, celebrate and promote our colleagues' positive behaviours in line with our values.

Throughout the year, we promote activities and events that embrace 'being inclusive' such as International Womens' Day, PRIDE, and being an ally. We have recently set up our first employee-led diversity group focusing on menopause.

Our progress against the 'Be inclusive' action plan is shared with colleagues. This year, as a result of feedback, we changed the font we use on our written communications to ensure it is inclusive to those with reading difficulties.

We also share the progress we are making collecting customer data, in particular their ED&I information, and how this information will help us better understand individual customer needs and adapt our services accordingly.

## **C43 – Supporting the health of our staff**

We are committed to colleague wellbeing and supporting people both with their physical and mental health. We seek regular feedback from staff to help inform our wellbeing offering. Throughout the year, we promote a series of wellbeing events and communications focusing on areas such as mental health, sleep, exercise, and healthy eating.

As part of our work offering, we provide:

- a health cash plan with money back on day-to-day medical expenses
- an employee assistance programme, including access to counselling
- generous life assurance, pension and company sick pay
- discounted gym memberships

This year, we also introduced pension salary exchange and a new cycle to work scheme.

We offer a range of different working patterns and hybrid working for many roles, providing a mix of working from our offices or home. Our offices have been especially designed for collaborative working and to be an inclusive environment. Our Health and Safety team supports the business to ensure health and safety risks are minimised and well managed.

Colleagues are encouraged to talk about any physical/mental health concerns they may have during their regular check-in meetings with their manager, so appropriate support can be provided.



# Governance criteria

## C44 – Supporting the professional development of our staff

We support the professional development of colleagues through both internal and external training, and by funding professional qualifications. This year, we appointed an in-house Learning & Development Specialist to design and deliver tailored training to support the delivery of the corporate plan and associated strategies. A training needs analysis was developed, with behaviours linked to our values and the competence and conduct standard.

A company-wide customer service training programme was created and rolled out across the business. Other training courses have been developed which included assertiveness and resilience.

All colleagues are issued with a suite of e-learning training courses each year, covering health and safety topics, GDPR and data protection. Other more role-specific courses are rolled out to colleagues or teams who need them.

Approximately 4% of colleagues completed a personal qualification in 2023-24 that was relevant for their professional development.

- 6 technical/trade related
- 3 IT related/Data Protection
- 2 housing/leasehold related

One BINDT accredited training course (British Institute of Non-Destructive Testing) in 'Thermography - Category 1'

One assessment by the NICEIC to be registered as a Qualifying Electrical Supervisor

One Data Protection Officer Certification

Two ITIL exams (IT Service Management certification)

One Level 3 Housing and Property Management Apprenticeship, passed with a Distinction

One Level 3 Associate Course and Exam in Leasehold Management, and ABBE Level 3 Certificate in Residential Property Management to become an Associate of the Institute of Residential Property Management



## Supply chain

### C45 – Commitment to creating social value through procurement

Ensuring contracts bring added value is an increasing concern, with Saxon Weald keen to develop a consistent approach.

#### Jewson Partnership Solutions (JPS)

Early in 2023, we tendered for a new materials' supplier for our in-house repairs. With one central hub for supplies, our operatives were travelling long distances to get materials, and frequently had long waits for parts. This not only impacted customer satisfaction, but colleagues were frustrated at not being able to deliver good service.

Over an eight-month period we consulted with a number of companies, saw presentations and assessed costs and credentials.

We selected Jewson Partnership Solutions (JPS) to be our new materials supplier. They offered a Hub and Spoke Model, with one central branch, exclusive to us, but with a number of other branches in our operational area that our colleagues could drop into to pick up parts, without travelling too far from the job at hand. Our JPS contract went live in April 2024.

JPS is backed up by excellent ESG credentials. This was of utmost importance to us throughout the tendering process, and our own drive to form good relationships with good suppliers.

Going forward, JPS has offered us sponsorship for events later in 2024, offering social value to our customers and communities.

JPS is part of STARK Building Materials UK Limited. Their sustainability reports can be found here: <https://starkgroup.dk/sustainability/reports>



#### Venson Automotive Solutions

Our van leasing contract sits with Venson Automotive Solutions. In December, they held a Christmas raffle and approached us to nominate a charity to donate the £800 they raised to. We chose Horsham Matters, a local foodbank, for the invaluable support they provide to those who need it most in our community.

Venson offers a full set of ESG credentials: [www.venson.com/about/sustainability](http://www.venson.com/about/sustainability)



## Other working partnerships and how they support our approach to social value

**OCS** [www.ocs.com/uk/esg/](http://www.ocs.com/uk/esg/)

Our catering contractor for our 11 extra care schemes, OCS, helps organise monthly themed events for the residents as part of their contract. These can be anything from summer barbeques and Christmas parties, to afternoon teas and royal celebrations.



## The Connectives

[www.theconnectives.com](http://www.theconnectives.com)

We employed the services of The Connectives to help us re-evaluate what it is we do, what is important and why we do it. Their workshops helped us focus on what we should prioritise, and whether there is anything we should let go of. We selected The Connectives through the procurement process due to their outstanding social values. As they say, "We are a social enterprise and as such we invest time, intellectual capital and profits in social programmes/organisations who cannot pay for our services. We see this as an act of investing in the knowledge that their success will enable them to 'pay it forward' as they become established and grow. Buying from The Connectives therefore is an act of Buying Social". In addition, The Connectives is a member of the SEUK and Social Economy.



## C46 – Environmental impact and sustainability performance across the supply chain

We do not have a procurement policy yet at Saxon Weald. However, we have a working awareness regarding the importance of minimising our environmental impact wherever possible. When procuring contracts, colleagues are encouraged to appraise our suppliers' environmental credentials as part of the process.

## Grounds maintenance

We are pleased that our new grounds maintenance contractors, after a full year in position, have improved our residents' satisfaction levels with the quality of their work. The four teams were selected with a focus on covering smaller areas, more local to each team. This ensures their workforce are working closer to their homes and take more pride in working in their communities. Each brings their own set of ESG credentials; from the equipment they use, to the communities they support and methods they employ.



# Governance criteria

**Greenserve** [www.greenservegm.com/company-profile/](http://www.greenservegm.com/company-profile/)

Electric tools and vehicles where possible. Waste removal: Remove of waste, shred, recycle, control waste.

**Groundscapes** [www.groundscapes.co.uk/social-responsibility/](http://www.groundscapes.co.uk/social-responsibility/)

Groundscapes is an ISO 14001 accredited company and an environmental management programme is deeply embedded in their culture.

**Grounds Care Group** [www.gcgrp.co.uk/the-company/why-choose-us/](http://www.gcgrp.co.uk/the-company/why-choose-us/)

Grounds Care Group is constantly looking for new ways to increase efficiencies and to reduce waste to ensure a positive long term effect on the environment. Operating locally ensures they can give back to the local community.

**Newman Thomson** [www.newmanthomson.com/about-us/environmental/](http://www.newmanthomson.com/about-us/environmental/)

While we do our bit to try and minimise printing, it is still a valuable way of communicating with some customers. Using a company whose ethos minimises the effect on the environment is really important to us. Newman Thomson is a local Sussex business and is proud to do just that.

**Phoenix** [www.phoenixs.co.uk/corporate-policies/corporate-social-responsibility/](http://www.phoenixs.co.uk/corporate-policies/corporate-social-responsibility/)

Phoenix provides us with IT solutions and managed services. They pride themselves on conducting their business ethically by considering human rights and taking account of their social, economic, and environmental impact.

**Gamma Communications Group** [www.gammagroup.co/company/esg/](http://www.gammagroup.co/company/esg/)

Gamma is another of our IT solutions partners. Gamma was the first to go carbon neutral in its sector and has remained fully CarbonNeutral® certified since 2006. They believe that work should be a force for good, whether for our employees, customers or for society. Their drive towards responsible and sustainable business starts with people.





Saxon Weald is a housing association, established in 2000, managing close to 7,000 homes across Sussex and Hampshire. We provide affordable rented and shared ownership homes for individuals and families, as well as properties exclusively for the over 55s. We also provide homes for market rent and shared ownership sale through our Weald Living brand.

We are a charitable community benefit society, with the money we make from rents being re-invested in the management, maintenance and building of homes. We are regulated by the Regulator of Social Housing.



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