Purpose: The purpose of the paper is an attempt to define sustainability in a Facilities Management context and to present a methodology for facilities managers to reflect on their role as system builders. Theory: Theory of transition of large socio-technical systems are used to show the complexity of reorganising public building administration into FM for sustainable development. Design/methodology/approach: Understandings of the term Sustainable Facilities Management is identified through reviews of FM literature as well as literature on sustainable buildings and sustainable urban development. The empirical research is focused on facilities management in a local authority, where action research is used as the main methodological approach. A process of rethinking facilities management is thus facilitated with the aim of finding ways for facilities management to contribute to a sustainable transition of society. The research is carried out in collaboration with a Danish local authority which is recognised internationally for its frontrunner initiatives as a green local authority. An ongoing Ph.D. study is included in the research. Findings: SFM is argued to be a holistic FM strategy which contributes to a sustainable development on societal level. The empirical research points out some of the obstacles for a holistic approach and give suggestions on how to initiate a change process, where facilities managers are empowered to better address sustainability on strategic, tactical and operational level. Originality/value: The paper presents suggestions on the role of facilities management in a sustainable transition of society by changing focus from a typically instrumental approach towards a more holistic management of its facilities. The research provides an insight into the context of FM in a local authority for the benefits of other local authorities as well as their collaborating FM partners.