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‘Good’ rating gives multi-million pound boost for Doncaster’s homes

The housing services provided by St. Leger Homes of Doncaster (SLHD) are ‘good’ and have ‘promising’ prospects to improve, according to an independent report released today by the Audit Commission.

On a scale of zero to three stars, the Audit Commission inspection team awarded the service a two star, ‘good’ rating. This opens up extra funding of some £58 million over the next few years, rising to a potential total of £234.5 million if progress is maintained.

Graeme Foster, Audit Commission lead housing inspector said: ‘SLHD has a comprehensive understanding of stock condition and is therefore in a strong position to deliver property improvements. Crucially, tenants are influencing decisions about how services are delivered, including the setting of challenging and realistic service standards. However, some services are relatively undeveloped, such as the market testing of the house maintenance service and offering a choice of housing options to people on the lettings waiting list. There are however plans in place to address these in the near future.’

The inspectors found:

- Consistent services for all tenants, including those living in rural areas.
- Decent Homes property improvements are being appropriately prioritised.
- Successes in addressing or diverting anti-social behaviour, including effective joint working with partners.
- A range of ways for tenants to be involved or consulted on service delivery.
- An awareness of service weaknesses, with steps taken to review delivery arrangements involving tenants to drive improvements.

However, issues which need to be tackled include:

- The absence of a strategy to co-ordinate the delivery of access and customer care objectives.
- Limited analysis and reporting of tenant satisfaction.
- A property standard which has not been reviewed to take into account improvements in component specifications and rising tenant aspirations.
- Delays in delivering some recommendations from previous inspections.

Copies of the report are available from St. Leger Homes of Doncaster or on the Audit Commission website at www.audit-commission.gov.uk/reports

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NOTES TO EDITORS

1. Doncaster Metropolitan Borough Council established SLHD - an arms length management organisation (ALMO) - in October 2005 to take responsibility for providing housing management and maintenance services to around 22,000 homes in the area.
2. The Audit Commission is an independent body responsible for ensuring that public money is spent economically, efficiently and effectively, to achieve high-quality local services for the public. Our remit covers around 11,000 bodies in England, which between them spend more than £180 billion of public money each year. Our work covers local government, health, housing, community safety and fire and rescue services.
3. As an independent watchdog, we provide important information on the quality of public services. As a driving force for improvement in those services, we provide practical recommendations and spread best practice. As an independent auditor, we ensure that public services are good value for money and that public money is properly spent.
4. For further information about the Audit Commission, visit our website at www.audit-commission.gov.uk.

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