



Top flight ALMO retains 'excellent' three star status

Press release

Dated: 2 October 2006

Top flight ALMO CityWest Homes has retained its three-star 'excellent' status in a recent re-inspection by the Audit Commission.

This success follows hot on the heels of Derby Homes and Ashfield Homes in Nottinghamshire, who also retained their three-star rating earlier this year. There is currently a total of eleven ALMOs across the country holding the three star highest ranking available across the council housing management spectrum. This puts these ALMOs in the top one percent of all housing management services in the UK; in contrast, no traditional local authority and only one housing association has achieved three-star status in the last three years.

These results have been achieved with a serious commitment to service improvement, which at CityWest has led to a focus on green issues, modern apprentice schemes, and most importantly, resident involvement every step of the way.

ALMOs are leading the way amongst council housing options across the country – ALMOs, the council housing management option that empowers tenants, currently manage 910,000 council properties. This figure is set to grow to one million by March 2007, which will then include half of all council dwellings in England. In the four years since they were established, ALMOs have brought over 100,000 homes up to the Government's Decent Homes standard. The first ALMOs have achieved this across their entire housing portfolio five years ahead of the 2010 target date.

While ALMOs are accountable to their local council, day-to-day management of council housing stock is handed over to boards made up of tenants (who constitute at least a third and more in some cases), councillors and independent members. This ensures that services directly meet the needs and aspirations of residents and the individual needs of the communities they serve.

From improving the fabric and facilities of council homes, since they were introduced in 2002 ALMOs' remit has grown to encompass innovative social inclusion and community safety agendas including the Government's Respect Agenda.

Brian Johnson, Chief Executive of CityWest Homes said: "I am extremely proud that we have retained our 'excellent' rating from the Audit Commission, and our priority is to make sure that our residents continue to benefit from our desire to continually improve the services we offer. We will not be resting on our laurels following this announcement, but have an exciting range of improvements planned for the forthcoming year which will continue to have a hugely positive impact on residents."



Chairman of the National Federation of ALMOs, Dennis Rees said: "I am delighted to hear that CityWest Homes, Derby Homes and Ashfield Homes have retained their excellent ratings. Getting to the top is difficult enough; staying there is another thing entirely. These three ALMOs lead the way in terms of their culture and attitude, continually striving to improve and deliver excellent, customer-focused services to their residents. My congratulations go to everyone involved."

Ends

For further information please contact Louise Vaughan at louisev@ram-pr.co.uk or Cas Park at caspr@ram-pr.co.uk, or by phone on 01423 720000.

Notes to editors:

Ten facts about ALMOs

There are currently 61 ALMOs in operation across 56 local authorities, managing 910,000 council properties. By March 2007 this will have grown to one million council homes – half of all council properties.

Since their introduction just four years ago, over 100,000 homes have been brought up to the Decent Homes Standard by ALMOs – equating to one every fifteen minutes.

ALMOs not only improve properties, but the lives of tenants. In the four years since ALMOs were established, 77% of ALMO tenants have reported satisfaction with their housing management – more than achieved either by local authority owned council housing or housing associations (HouseMark survey 2005).

The first ALMOs have already achieved the Decent Homes Standard across their entire housing stock five years ahead of the target date of 2010.

ALMOs are cost-effective – although they currently only manage less than half of council housing stock, they contribute to two-thirds of all local authority housing efficiency savings.

Tenant involvement – both at board and operational level - is key to ALMOs' success. Three out of the four local authorities recently awarded Beacon Status for 'improving housing services by involving tenants' are ALMOs - Bolton at Home, Carrick Housing and Kirklees Neighbourhood Housing.

Properties remain council owned with rents and key policies, like lettings, set by the local authority.

ALMOs deliver much more than improved housing. They are important and proactive partners in delivering innovative social inclusion and anti-social behaviour programmes, which enhance safety in their communities, including combating domestic violence and racial harassment.



Of the 46 ALMOs inspected by the Audit Commission, 11 have been awarded three stars (excellent) and 29 have been awarded two stars (good) for performance and service delivery. No traditional local authority, and only one housing association, has achieved the three star standard in the last three years.

Funding for ALMOs is directly linked to their success, not only in delivering high quality housing, but tenant empowerment and efficiency. The results speak for themselves; over £4 billion has been secured by ALMOs to bring houses up to the Decent Homes Standard and improve the lives of over a million tenants.