

Washington AREA COMMITTEE

29 June 2023

REPORT OF GENTOO

1. Purpose of Report

1.1 The following report provides an update from Gentoo for the Washington Area Committee from April 2023 to June 2023.

2. Background

2.1 Area Committee agreed that regular updates from Gentoo would be presented to each Committee meeting to enable members to be up to date on current Gentoo developments, projects, and priorities.

3 Update on Neighbourhood Services

3.1 Performance update

Activity	Target	Actual
Rent Collected as % of rent due	100.10%	101.28%
Cash Collected	£131,166,762	£132,851,479
Arrears and Housing Benefit Recovery	£2,585,553	£2,273,917
Total Current Tenant Arrears as % of Debit	2.73%	1.58%
Relet times (overall)	44 days	69.41 days

3.2 Our Neighbourhood Coordinators offer practical advice and support to help tenants sustain their tenancy. If the Neighbourhood Coordinator is unable to support tenants, they will refer into our specialised support teams or to a partner organisation.

Neighbourhood Coordinators manage vacant properties, ensure the neighbourhoods are well maintained, clean and tidy. They will address any issues in the area including Anti-social behaviour and work with our partners and community groups. They will support tenants to maximise their income and pay their weekly rent payments. We have recently changed our model and each area now has two Neighbourhood Coordinators, one to support with any tenancy issues and one to support with any rent queries. Our website is updated with all changes and all contact details can be found online.

3.2 This Easter, instead of donating Easter eggs, we asked colleagues to bring in a donation for Sunderland Foodbank (The Trussell Trust). The result was an impressive 175.4kg of food donated. This equates to 219 meals, which will be distributed to those most in need.

Sunderland Foodbank and Sunderland Mind are our Sunderland based nominated charities for 2023. Our colleagues will support both charities through foodbank donations and raising money through fundraising and our regular payroll deduction scheme.

The charities spend 100% of their funds in Sunderland, meaning the money raised will benefit Sunderland residents and communities.

3.3 Our specialist Money Matters Team generated more than £1.5m in additional income for tenants during 22/23. 977 tenants were supported to make financial gains, claiming money, they didn't know they were entitled to.

The team also provided more than £34,000 in crisis funding to families across the city, supporting 899 tenants. We also helped more than 5,900 tenants utilise Northumbria Waters discount scheme.

Activity	Actual
Tenant Gains	£1,578,091
Debt advised upon	£1,120,481
Water Rates Support Claimed on behalf of tenants	£768,353
Money Matters Team Referrals	957
New Universal Credit Claims - Tenants Supported	1,298
Crisis Fund	£34,251

3.4 Ready, set, grow! Our annual gardening competition is now open to tenants, community groups and local schools. With £200 up for grabs for winning gardens, we are looking for submissions for:

- Best garden, sponsored by RE: GEN – this category is open to all tenants
- Best Community / School garden, sponsored by Esh Construction – this category is open to all local community groups and organisations and schools

If you know anyone with a beautiful garden, don't forget to let them know about the competition and encourage them to enter. Applications must be submitted by Friday 16 June, 2023. Judging will take place the start of July with the winner being announced shortly after.

4 Investment & Renewal

4.1 We recently shared an investment programme for Washington in our Scrutiny group, we have now completed this for each area and have attached it to this report. This shows the planned works for 2023/24 in each Neighbourhood and how many tenants are benefiting from these works.

5. Recommendations

5.1 Note the content of this report.

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