

27 September 2023

REPORT OF GENTOO

1 Purpose of Report

- 1.1 The following report provides an update from Gentoo for the Coalfields Area Committee for the period June to September 2023.

2 Background

- 2.1 Area Committee agreed that regular updates from Gentoo would be provided to each Committee meeting to enable members to be up to date on current Gentoo developments, projects, and priorities and to ensure members are fully aware of their opportunities to work collaboratively with Gentoo.

3 Update on Neighbourhood Services

- 3.1 **An Invitation from Louise Bassett, CEO of Gentoo Group.** The relationship between Gentoo and Sunderland City Council is very important to Gentoo's CEO and she would welcome the opportunity to further strengthen this and has arranged dates (which you should have received), to meet with you in each of the City's localities. The date for the Coalfield councillors is:

19 September The Skyline Centre, Houghton, DH4 4AJ

- 3.2 **Estate walks** are now all arranged within the wards, and invitations sent to you all should you wish to attend. The dates for the wards are as follows:

Shiney Row & Penshaw	10 October 2023
HALO area	6 October 2023
Racecourse/ Hetton Road	5 October 2023
Fencehouses	4 October 2023
Houghton / Burnside	2 October 2023

- 3.3 **Tenancy Sustainment Fund.** In July 2023, Gentoo Board approved several measures to support tenancy sustainability. These measures include interventions such as, providing carpets for new customers who have been housed with us on a priority basis and below the age of 25. Supporting this group of customers to have their water rates paid if they are really struggling financially (for a limited period). We also identified measures such as the provision of Ring Doorbells for victims of domestic abuse or antisocial behaviour, and a small budget to support these customers with house removals for those who need to move in an emergency and can't afford to pay for it.

In addition to these measures, we have increased resource in the Money Matters Team and now have four Support Coordinators working with our customers who have complex financial needs across the city. We will also be recruiting for two 'Pre-Tenancy Coordinators', who will work with new applicants to the Gentoo housing register, their aim will be to provide support and advice across a range of issues, these include assessing any priority needs, identifying vulnerability issues, offering money management and the costs of running a home support advice, income maximisation, energy advice and signposting to low-cost furniture and fittings, to ensure we prepare and support applicants to have the best possible start to tenancies.

- 3.4 **Recruitment Activity.** In the coming months, we will be looking for passionate, engaged tenants to join a brand-new paid Tenant Committee. The Committee will be made up of 6 Gentoo customers and it will form an important part of our governance structure. It will be chaired by Group Chair – Emily Cox - and it will fulfil a critical role, advising Group Board on all tenant-related matters. The Committee will help us to better understand the challenges facing tenants and it will drive purposeful, positive change across the Group.
- 3.5 **Sunderland Foodbank, Churchill Square Community Centre.** Our partnership with Esh Construction has supported the opening in August of Houghton's first Durham & Sunderland Foodbank, which will provide residents in the Coalfields area with access to vital food resources during the current cost of living crisis.
- 3.6 **Event at Cragdale Gardens.** Customers from Peat Carr and Moorsely were invited to have their views heard regarding the use of Cragdale Gardens play park on 11 August 2023. The engagement event was an opportunity for customers to tell us what they want to see from the park and area. Partners from Northumbria Police, HALO Project and Tyne and Wear Fire and Rescue supported Gentoo on the day. The results of the consultation will be collated and reviewed in the coming weeks.

4. **Investment & Renewal** – see attached report

Internals (Villa estate)

ESH are practically complete on Villa Estate and will be off site by the end of September. There are approximately 15 to 20 properties that have not been able to have the work completed due to access issues and ill health. Gentoo's Asset team are working through these addresses to include them in a mop up programme later this financial year.

External Decoration (East Rainton/Rainton Bridge/Eskdale Street)

Bell Group are currently working in these areas for the next 4-6 weeks carrying out External Decoration Works to over 200 properties.

Sprinkler Installation (Cherry Tree Gardens)

Equans have just started the installation of sprinklers in Cherry Tree Gardens with works expected to take approximately 3 months.

City Wide Schemes

Windows (City Wide)

Sekura is on site in various locations carrying out window replacements.

Low Rise Fire Alarm Removals (City Wide)

Isoler are currently carrying out the removal of fire alarms from 80+ low rise blocks scattered city wide. They are being removed and replaced with individual smoke detection within the flats themselves.

Loft Insulation Top Ups (City Wide)

Regen Solutions are due to start next month on a scheme of over 1000 properties where we are providing loft insulation or loft insulation top ups.

5. **Recommendations**

- 5.1 Note the content of this report.

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