

EAST AREA COMMITTEE

19 September 2023

REPORT OF GENTOO

1 Purpose of Report

1.1 The following report provides an update from Gentoo for the East 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 dates for East ward councillors are:

Tues 26 September	City Hall, Plater Way, Sunderland, SR1 3AD
Tues 17 October	Emperor House, 2 Emperor Way, Doxford International Business Park, Sunderland, SR3 3XR

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:

Ford Estate – 21.9.23 AM
Ashbrooke – 27.9.2023 AM
Hill View – 17.10.23 AM
Grangetown – 18.10.23 AM
Hendon & East End – 10.10.23 AM
Pallion – 21.9.23 AM
Hall Farm – 20.9.23 AM

3.3 **Tenancy Sustainment Fund.** In July 2023, Gentoo Board made 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 Gentoos 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.

4. Investment & Renewal

- 4.1 Hedworth Court – The modernisation programme is currently ongoing which will see substantial improvements to both the internal of customers properties as well as the communal areas. We are regularly meeting with our customers and partners to ensure that the customer experience is always taken into account.
- 4.2 Benedict Court – The lift refurbishment which had resulted in the lift being out of use of a number of weeks have now been completed.
- 4.3 New development schemes within the Silksworth Churchfield site have seen 8 properties being available for rent now allocated. The Ryhope Burdonfield site has seen a further 2 properties also allocated.

5. City Wide Schemes

- 5.1 Windows (City Wide)
Sekura is on site in various locations carrying out window replacements.
- 5.2 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. At last committee Councillors questioned why we were removing them and what safety measure where in its place. The fire alarms in the communal areas of several low-rise blocks are being removed and replaced with individual smoke detection within the flats themselves.
- 5.3 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.

6. Recommendations

- 6.1 Note the content of this report.

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