

WASHINGTON AREA COMMITTEE

21 September 2023

REPORT OF GENTOO

1 Purpose of Report

1.1 The following report provides an update from Gentoo for the Washington 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 Washington ward councillors is:

Wednesday 27 September

Pennine House, Washington, NE37 1LY

3.2 Estate walks

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

The Dales	27 September 2023
Glebe	28 September 2023
Sulgrave	10 October 2023
Blackfell	3 October 2023
Concord	4 October 2023
Harraton	15 November
Rickleton	27 September 2023
Lambton	22 August 2023
Oxclose	4 October 2023
Coach Road Estate	2 October 2023
Albany	4 October 2023
Barmston	27 September 2023
Hertburn	10 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 are 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.

4. Investment & Renewal

Sekura are on site renewing single to double glazing. We have 70 properties remaining in Washington and works will be completed by December 2023.

Loft insulation top ups, Regen are our contractor to carry out loft insulation top ups to 151 properties within Washington. This scheme is due to start next month.

Low Rise Fire Alarm Removals, Isoler are currently on site carrying out the removal of fire alarms from 80+ low rise blocks scattered city wide. 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.

Washington internal modernisations are ongoing and Equans are our contractor. 158 properties are benefiting from internal works including rewire, kitchen and bathroom renewals. This programme is due to be completed by May 2024

The removal of Washington District Heating is ongoing; 369 properties are outstanding.

5. Recommendations

5.1 Note the content of this report.

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