

WASHINGTON AREA COMMITTEE

14 March 2024

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 December 2023 to March 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 **Visit from the Police and Crime Commissioner:** In January we welcomed Northumbria Police and Crime Commissioner, Kim McGuinness, to discuss anti-social behaviour (ASB) and how best to tackle it with involved residents. During the informative session, Kim discussed the force's approach to tackling anti-social behaviour across Wearside whilst giving our customers the opportunity to voice any concerns in their area and share how ASB has had an impact on their lives.

3.2 **Corporate Charity:** In December staff were able to vote for who they would like support via Gentoo's corporate charity in 2024. Love Amelia was the chosen children's charity who provide support to families experiencing poverty and hardship right across the Northeast.

They accept donations of great condition, pre-loved baby items and gift them to families who need them most. They support children from birth to 16years old to ensure no child goes without. Many of our families have benefitted from this charity and therefore we will be fundraising throughout the year to support they great work that they do.

3.3 **Update on Tenancy Sustainment Fund:** You may recall in Septembers committee, Gentoo updated members that Gentoo Board approved several measures to support tenancy sustainability. These measures included 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.

At the time of writing this report the current spend is circ £500,000, note this figure also includes an additional member of staff in Money Matters and two Pre-Tenancy Support Coordinators who support the SCC team to pick up those customers who need support to sustain a new tenancy.

- 3.4 **Estate Walks:** next round of estate walks will be being arranged for April 2024, if there were any area's you would like to focus on then please email your Neighbourhood Coordinator and they can ensure that specific area is covered prior to the invites going out to you all.
- 3.5 **Site Garages:** we will no longer be proceeding with the Site Garages Demolition project and no provision has been made to complete these works in future years. Whilst this may be disappointing news, the decision was made to help protect investment into our customers' homes. The £700k required to deliver the demolition works to garages (which do not belong to Gentoo) would mean 70 of our customers would not benefit from a new roof or a new kitchen and internal rewire.

4. **Investment & Renewal (yearly plan attached)**

- 4.1 **Damp & Mould:** Update from Steve Lowther (Head of Property) regarding damp and mould, see presentation attached.
- 4.2 **Cherry Tree Gardens:** Sprinkler Installation Scheme, completed prior to Christmas break. Lunch was provided to residents as a thank you for the patience in enabling this work to be completed in their homes.
- 4.3 **Eskdene Rise:** Work has restarted at our Eskdene Rise housing development, thanks to a new partnership with affordable house builder Adderstone Living. The new development, in Hetton-le-Hole, will feature 86 new homes, including two, three and four-bedroom houses, two-bedroom bungalows and two-bedroom apartments. The properties will be available for rent, Shared Ownership and Rent to Buy. Progress on the site was halted in February 2023 when Tolent Living went into administration. Since then, we have worked hard to appoint a new contractor who can deliver the project to the standard required.
- 4.4 **Albany Internal Modernisations (Washington):** Completed 99 properties (Jan 2024) for Kitchen modernisations and asbestos checks/removal in association with Contractors Equans. 80 properties remaining on programme, for completion by end of March 2024.
- 4.5 **XL Bullies:** Changes were made to the Dangerous Dogs Act 1991 to include the American XL Bully dog and it is now against the Law to:-
- sell an XL Bully dog
 - abandon an XL Bully dog or let it stray
 - give away an XL Bully dog
 - breed from an XL Bully dog
 - have an XL Bully in public without a lead and muzzle

Any customer who has an XL bully is required to provide an exemption certificate from 1st February. For those customers where we know there is an XL bully within the household we have sent letters advising of the changes to the Act and requested a copy of the exemption certificate. Some customers have returned these, and we have added them to their records and for those customers who have not provided the exemption certificate we have reported these to the Police to investigate. The tenant's handbook under the section 'Pets in your Home' and our website within the Neighbourhood/ASB section will also be updated shortly to reflect these changes.

- 4.6 **Concord/Usworth Roofing (Washington)** – Due to commence in April 2024 taking around 12 months to complete (each home has a 4-6 week completion timescale depending on whether roofing replacement required). With contractor RE:GEN. The following work will be carried out as part of the programme:
- Roofing replacement
 - brickwork and pebble dashing repairs where required
 - wall tie replacements where required
 - canopy replacement
 - external decoration
- 4.7 **Lambton Communal Decoration Programme (Washington) Feb to April 2024:** re-decoration of any previously decorated areas within the communal area of the communal block areas - works are anticipated to take two weeks to complete.
- 4.8 **District Heating Scheme (Washington – Albany & Oxclose):** 769 new boilers installed with 185 remaining (954 total) – expected completion 2024.

5. Recommendations

- 5.1 Note the content of this report.

Contact Officer

Mark O'Connor, Head of Performance.

Tel: 0191 525 5004

Email: mark.oconnor@gentoogroup.com