

15 July 2020

REPORT OF GENTOO

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 The following report provides an update from Gentoo for the Coalfields Area Committee from March to July 2020.

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. Neighbourhood Services Update

- 3.1 As members will appreciate there is currently a significant amount of recovery work taking place due to the Covid 19 lockdown period, and the impact that this has had on the business and our customers.

- 3.2 We experienced a large increase in rent arrears during “lockdown” and the teams have been working hard with our customers to deal with this. I am pleased to report that there has been a significant decrease in rent arrears for the area since our teams have been able to recommence recovery action. However, Gentoo, like all Social Landlords, is currently unable to progress action to legal stage until 24 August 2020, as per Government guidelines.

- 3.3 As with arrears, we experienced a large increase in accumulated void properties, during this period. Again the Neighbourhood Teams, along with Repairs and Maintenance are working hard to relet these properties. Again I am pleased to report the number of void properties in the Coalfields Area is reducing and we are currently allocating approximately 15 properties per week. Although, there is still a significant amount of work to be done.

- 3.4 As members will be aware there was an increase, nationally, of Anti-Social Behaviour during the “lockdown” period. Gentoo did continue to address this during lockdown with the limited powers and resources available and of course, in close partnership with Northumbria Police. All issues that we are experiencing across the area are being dealt with in conjunction with our partner agencies including Northumbria Police, Sunderland City Council and the Youth Offending Team.

- 3.5 There has also been a change in personnel during lockdown. I have joined the teams at Houghton Skyline office, from North area as the new Head of Operations, replacing Samantha Humble. In addition Claire Uren, Neighbourhood Operations

Manager, has replaced Emma Smith-Lane. There have been several changes at these operational levels across the city. These were planned prior to the Covid 19 outbreak and are not as a direct result of the impact of the virus on Gentoo.

4. Investment & Renewal

- 4.1 Members are requested to note that most of the ongoing projects that were previously reported on are at the same stage of development due to “Lockdown”. Progress updates will be given in subsequent reports.

5. Community Partnerships Coordinator Activity

- 5.1 As members will appreciate there has been very little activity due to lockdown. However, Gentoo staff have continued to work with our customers, where possible, engaging with Local Community Support Hubs and Foodbanks. Gentoo also contacted all customers across the City, with repeat contacts for our most vulnerable or isolated customers.
- 5.2 We will resume our work with local groups and partners in the area when current restrictions are relaxed.

6. Recommendations

- 6.1 Note the content of this report.

Contact Officer: Michael Donachie, Head of Operations.
Tel: 0191 525 5729
Email: michael.donachie@gentoo-group.com