

COALFIELD AREA COMMITTEE

14 NOV 2018

REPORT OF GENTOO

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 The following report provides an update from Gentoo for the Coalfield Area of Sunderland from June 2018 to October 2018.

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 Universal Credit (UC) went live in Sunderland in November 2015 for all single working age benefit applicants; a full service roll out for all working age applicants in Sunderland then took place on 25 July 2018. This has significantly increased the numbers of customers moving on to UC, as it replaces all 'working age' benefits. Since 25 July we are experiencing approximately 100 customers per week migrating to full UC. There are now 1,872 Gentoo customers in receipt of UC, of which 1,176 (63%) are in arrears, with an average arrears increase of £126.51 since the start date of the UC claim.

Within the Coalfield Area we now have 293 customers in receipt of UC, of which 195 (67%) are in arrears, with an average arrears increase of £115.06 since the start date of the UC claim.

- 3.2 In response to this we have realigned our local services to assist customers at the crucial application and first payment stages of the benefit. From July each local area now has a 'UC champion' who manages all local cases alongside local neighbourhood staff. The 'UC champion' manages each case until the customers' initial UC payday; this is to ensure the customer is fully aware of the details of their monthly UC allowance, and of their obligation to make rental payments from that allowance that were previously met by Housing Benefit and in most cases paid direct to Gentoo.
- 3.3 There have been a number of accidental house fires in the area during the period. To confirm where the tenant is responsible for the fire they are responsible for the property clean up and disposal and replacement of damaged personal items not Gentoo. Gentoo are responsible for making sure that the property is structurally safe and secure.
- 3.4 Further, at every tenancy sign up Gentoo always recommend the tenant takes out personal contents insurance to cover against instances such as this and gives customers a Fire Safety Leaflet produced by Tyne and Wear Fire and rescue for their perusal/consideration.
- 3.5 Anti-social behaviour during the period has been reported predominantly in the Peat Carr/Moorsley, Racecourse and Easington Lane areas. This includes car and motorbike disorder, drug usage/dealing and general disorder. These matters are being

investigated by police, SCC ASB team and Gentoo (where Gentoo tenants are believed /shown to be involved) and action taken accordingly where possible.

4. Business Update

- 4.1 Our new CEO Nigel Wilson will be joining us in January 2019.

5. Community Partnership Coordinator Activity

- 5.1 We continue to work with local groups in the area. Supporting residents groups in Moorsley and Cherrytree Gardens. Our CPC Ann and Scheme manager Jean Short, have been co-opted onto Cherrytree committee to help them keep going as they do great work within the scheme, helping at their fortnightly events and activities, also supported Cherrytree staff & customers with a fantastic MacMillan Coffee Morning.
- 5.2 CPC supported Hetton New Dawn at one of their lunch clubs and attended MacMillan coffee morning on behalf of Gentoo.
- 5.3 CPC supported Space4 over the summer school holidays with several events for children in the area based around holiday hunger, also popping in to give advice and support to customers at their regular weekly sessions when available.
- 5.4 CPC supported new St Aidan's Community Group in New Herrington over the summer holidays, arranging 4 litter picks/community clean ups and a final fun event, all based around holiday hunger again.
- 5.5 Houghton Feast Trust held their 'Voice of Houghton le Spring' Talent Competition with the Aspire grant awarded by Gentoo who were also part of the judging panel. The winner, from Hetton, Anne Marie Gray sang at the start of the Houghton feast Celebrations.
- 5.6 Our CPC is currently acting Vice Chair for the 3 Together Big Local and meets Chair and support worker fortnightly to help get the newly agreed 3 year spending plan into action. She will be helping work on this together with local residents and 3 Together staff where the new themed steering groups will be set up over the forthcoming months.
- 5.7 The lunch club at ELCAP for vulnerable and elderly residents is now being run almost entirely by volunteers with Ann only supporting when volunteers are on holiday. Discussion held with ELCAP staff around other activities they can do to tackle social isolation over the forthcoming months.
- 5.8 Our CPC sourced a large donation of toiletries from a local company which have been distributed to local groups in our area who have food banks along with food collected by our CPC team from Gentoo staff, beneficiaries in our area were New Dawn, Space 4 and ELCAP.
- 5.9 Aspire grant funding was awarded to Eppleton Cricket Club, St Aidans Community Group, Craftastic Group from Hetton New Dawn & Culture for Hetton.

6. Investment and Renewal

- 6.1 The investment plan for 2018/19 has now been finalised and the following activity is on either completed, on site or planned in the Coalfields area during the year:

- Roofing and Gables Scheme – Variety of individual works identified totalling 358 properties across the Coalfields area.
- Window replacements – across 184 properties in Hetton Le Hole area.
- Heating Replacement – across 47 properties (various areas).
- Kitchen and /or bathroom replacements – across 14 properties (various areas).
- North View – External Refurbishment Works – 10 properties.

6.2 **Avenue Vivian** – We are currently looking at development options for our Avenue Vivian site with a view to progressing to planning next year. Residents who still reside on the current site will be contacted shortly to discuss plans.

6.3 **Meadow View** - work is now completed - with 74 properties made available for sale and 4 for rent; consisting of 2/3/4 bedroom properties.

6.4 Construction is still underway at the **Broomhill** site, Hetton. 128 new homes (2/3/4 bedroom properties) are being built, 115 will be for sale and 20 for rent. This site is due to be completed by 2020. We are aiming for 12 of the rental properties to be released by end of March 19.

6.5 Further afield but worthy of note, a planning application was submitted earlier this year to Sunderland City Council to transform the Group's vacant land on the Pennywell Estate at **Chester Gate**. The masterplan for the development features 500 new homes which will be available to both buy and rent. The proposed masterplan currently allows provision for 10% affordable rental units, excluding the first phase of homes which will be solely for sale. There have been detailed discussions with Sunderland Council in relation to ecology and landscaping aspects of the proposed scheme, and we now anticipate commencing construction works in March next year.

7. Recommendations

7.1 Note the content of this report.

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