

## COALFIELD AREA COMMITTEE

20<sup>th</sup> March 2019

### REPORT OF GENTOO

#### 1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 The following report provides an update from Gentoo for the Coalfield Area Committee from November 2018 to March 2019.

#### 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 The roll out of Universal Credit (UC) for all working age applicants in Sunderland has continued since July 2018. There are now just over 3,000 Gentoo customers in receipt of UC, which is 9.4% of all customers, and approximately 80 customers per week are migrating over to UC.

Within the Coalfield area we now have 492 customers in receipt of UC, of which 288 (59%) are in arrears, with an average arrears increase of £141.69 since the start date of the UC claim.

- 3.2 In light of changing demand and declining footfall, the cash office facilities at Houghton Skyline and Southwick offices will close at the end of March 2019. Cash payment facilities are available at Athenaeum and Galleries offices. Payments by other methods continue to increase, particularly standing order, direct debit, internet and telephone.
- 3.3 Anti-social behaviour during the period has been reported predominantly in the Peat Carr/Moorsley, Hetton Road and Easington Lane areas. This includes drug usage/dealing, assault and general disorder. These matters are being investigated by the police, SCC ASB team and/or Gentoo and in a number of cases where a Gentoo tenant has been/is involved, through the court process.
- 3.4 Gentoo are working with SCC and the Police in relation to the 12 streets project in Easington Lane where focussed resident engagement is aiming to improve community relations and reduce anti-social behaviour in the area.
- 3.5 Fly tipping remains an issue across the Coalfield Area with the Hetton Road, Park Estate and Easington Lane areas being the most targeted over the last 12 months. Gentoo work very closely with SCC in relation to this matter with identification of the perpetrators being a key priority for all.

#### **4. Investment & Renewal**

- 4.1 Planning permission has been granted to transform the Group's vacant land on the old Pennywell Estate at Chester Gate. The masterplan for the development features 500 new homes which will be available to both buy and rent, with the scheme worth around £74m in total over the lifetime of the development programme. The first phase will start on site soon, with 118 new homes all for sale.
- 4.2 As previously reported, Investment plan works in the Coalfields area are underway and will be continuing throughout 2019.
- 4.3 Construction is still underway at the Broomhill site named "Bramblewood". 128 new homes (2/3/4 bedroom properties) are being built 115 for sale and 20 for rent. 12 of the 20 properties for rent from the first phase of this development have now been released with 9 awaiting sign up and 3 pending.

#### **5. Recommendations**

- 5.1 Note the content of this report.

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