

EAST AREA COMMITTEE

20th June 2021

REPORT OF GENTOO

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 The following report provides an update from Gentoo for the East Area Committee from June 2021 to September 2021

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. Update on Neighbourhood Services

3.1 Gentoo are in the process of pulling together a media campaign aimed to support tenants on universal credit who will be impacted financially when the £20 uplift comes to an end in September 2021. The Money Matters Team will be leading on this project and supporting tenants with budgeting advice, debt management advice, utility suppliers, benefit checks etc.

3.2 Gentoo are supporting the Afghan Resettlement Scheme in Sunderland and have offered properties to support rehousing the refugees.

3.3 Gentoo in partnership with Newcastle Furniture Service (NFS), are offering new and existing tenants a furnished tenancy package, to allow tenants to live comfortably with new furniture and appliances at an affordable weekly cost. If you are in receipt of benefits, the furniture may be covered by the Housing Element of Universal Credit or Housing Benefit.

3.4 Gentoo's 'Poverty Action Group' a new initiative aimed at addressing poverty in the City, looking at a collaborative approach at times of need such Christmas, Easter, 6 weeks holidays etc. Organisations such as Sunderland Council, Foundation of Light, Sunderland Foodbank and members of the voluntary sector will be involved in this new group.

3.5 Gentoo's 'Tenants Voice Team' are continuing to modernise the way in which we engage with tenants and residents to help transform our business. We have recently implemented a new digital engagement platform that allows us to ask tenants and residents their views and opinions on specific projects, as well as identifying issues they are experiencing within their communities. We also have the more traditional methods of engagement such as the Tenant and Community Voice groups and Scrutiny Panels to ensure a diverse range of voices are heard.

The team also investigate and respond to issues that are raised via social media, whether this be on one of the official Gentoo Group pages or one of the pages that are monitored for posts. Where possible the team will contact the person directly to address and resolve any specific issues and challenge inaccuracies and untruths.

4. Investment & Renewal

- 4.1 Silksworth external painting program progresses.
- 4.2 Churchfields, Doxford Park update – works on the final phase of the Doxford Park masterplan are progressing well. The show home opened early August. Current sales figures are: 14 reservations, 9 have exchanged legal contracts and 3 have legally completed. Work is expected to be completed by mid-2024.
- 4.3 Belman Green (old Silksworth Housing Office), this scheme will deliver 13 new homes (2 and 3 bed) all for affordable rent. Works are ongoing with brickwork to all plots progressing well. Practical completion is estimated to be February 2022.
- 4.4 From January 2021 all new build affordable homes will have Air Source Heat Pumps this is in line with supporting Gentoo's Carbon footprint agenda.

5. Recommendations

- 5.1 Note the content of this report.

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