

Although much remains to be done and individuals at times may well have a different story to tell, generally speaking there has been a big improvement in the management of social, (ex-council), housing since first, the Sunderland Housing Group and now Gentoo Sunderland, assumed the role from the Sunderland Labour Council. There is a pride and professionalism within the company's staff, certainly with whom I have had contact, a marked contrast to the bad old days of the PWD Management and allied negative issues involving some local Labour politicians. Indeed it was the poor standard of service and repair in return for the rents being charged, that were leading reasons why people from the early 1980's onwards bought their council houses under the right to buy scheme. Having been involved in housing for many years and met literally thousands of such people, this is a fact not an opinion.

However that is now firmly in the past and it is encouraging to see many of Sunderland's Council-built housing areas emerging as a positive combination of well-maintained owner-occupied and well-managed tenanted properties. This will not entirely eliminate some poor-standard occupiers from both these sectors, but it is a massive improvement to what was in evidence before.

To try and further enhance this situation, I would like to encourage Gentoo to consider acquiring ex-council properties where private landlords are willing to sell. A few carefully targeted acquisitions by Gentoo could make the world of difference to a street and the quality of the housing, as a better standard of management takes place over a period of time. Alternatively where it is possible, such acquired property could be always be re-sold for owner-occupation after improvement, at an appropriate future time.

Either way it is a positive move for neighbourhoods, with both improved housing and possible social issues addressed.

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