

Council to spend £7.5 million in Muirhouse

The city council will spend £7.5 million to renovate six blocks of high rise flats after squalid living conditions were revealed.

Earlier this year, council tenants spoke out over damp and mould in the Muirhouse high rise blocks – and called for action to improve living conditions.

Now the council has committed £7.5 million of investment over the next five years to repair the properties.

Two of the blocks, Birnies and Fidra Court, have had “external fabric improvements” – while the remaining four high rises are included in the council’s investment plan for significant modernisation, which the authority say will “help eradicate dampness and mould”.

Detailed proposals for the £7.5 million will be brought forward next month.

Peter Strong, north west locality manager, said: “We are also looking at income maximisation.

“Some of the early findings from the surveys, we have got tenants saying that although they are aware of the need to ventilate and heat their properties, there’s a real issue of fuel poverty. They feel that their heating systems are too expensive to run.”

A total of 68 properties across the six blocks, where dampness has been reported over the last two years, will be surveyed by Christmas – with council officers confirming that 88 per cent of them would be completed by the end of November.

Conservative Cllr Graham Hutchison had put forward a motion at

the previous committee – calling for a report into the situation. He said: “I don’t think the tone is necessarily right in terms of the way se’ve set out the background.

“It seems almost congratulatory in terms of the work that’s already been done. I think it should have been framed very much in terms of the issues that had been brought to our attention.”

He added: “There obviously were issues raised over the lack of a complaints system for emergency repairs from residents. I’m delighted to see that’s been addressed.

“On the whole, I do think this is an excellent report. I’m extremely happy with the approach that’s been taken very quickly by council officers to address these concerns. The engagement that has taken place with residents directly is excellent. I’m keen to see how that £7.5 million is going to be spent.”

COMPLAINTS

In the last three financial years, there have been 30 complaints made by residents from the six Muirhouse blocks in relation to repairs. Nine of these complaints were upheld, 18 were not upheld and three are being investigated.

Liberal Democrat Cllr Louise Young said: “I have seen a notable decline in the number of complaints I am getting from residents in the high rise flats.

“I think the level of communication is making a huge difference.”



Councillor Kate Campbell Housing and Economy Convener Photo
The Edinburgh Reporter

Housing and economy convener, Cllr Kate Campbell, welcomed the improvements.

She said: "Investing in existing council homes is as important as building new ones. The report sets out the planned work in the blocks and it was good to see that being welcomed by committee.

"It's really important that tenants are kept informed and have confidence that the long term investment will address the issues they are facing. It was also encouraging to hear that local councillors are receiving feedback that communication has improved."

David Bol is the Local Democracy Reporter