

£35 million to be spent on council house building and improvements

More than £35m will be ploughed into improving existing council homes next year – and the council will spend £72m on the house-building programme in 2019/20.

The council's Housing and Economy Committee agreed the authority's housing capital programme which means that £109m will be spent in the next financial year.

Upgrades to existing council homes will include installing new kitchens and bathrooms in 600 properties, new modern heating systems in 1,000 homes, electrical and smoke alarm upgrades in 500 homes and 200 homes will be given new water tanks. Secure door entry and CCTV upgrades will also take place at 200 blocks as part of the £35m of spending. Council rents are going up by two per cent in 19/20 to, in part, fund the capital programme.

Almost £44m will be used next year to begin work on more than 1,000 affordable and low cost homes across the city – all to be completed by 2022.



Councillor Kate Campbell Housing and Economy Convener Photo
The Edinburgh Reporter

Cllr Kate Campbell, Housing and Economy Convener, said: “We have huge pressures on Edinburgh’s housing market which is why we agreed the largest ever annual investment programme for council housing.

“The £109m budget for 2019/20 – a 35 per cent increase on last year – will allow us to expand and accelerate our ambitious affordable and low cost house building programme. Our programme is the biggest in the UK and we have more than 1,000 homes already under construction. This is transforming residents’ lives and creating places where people want to live.”

She added: “While we’re building new homes it’s also incredibly important that we invest in our existing housing stock. We’re undergoing a major programme to improve and modernise existing tenants’ homes and to improve the customer service that tenants receive.

“The current programme will provide 600 new kitchens and bathrooms, 1,000 new heating systems and secure door entry systems for 200 blocks across Edinburgh.”

The council will also spent around £28m on acquiring land to proceed with more house-building aiming at implementing its pledge to build 10,500 affordable homes by 2024.

Conservative housing spokesperson, Cllr Cameron Rose, said:

“Some people suggest to me that the council actually has quite a lot of land where there is already housing, that could be intensified.

“We are all looking for more opportunities to produce more homes. There are a number of areas where there are significant areas of housing already. There are a lot of not just small site gap sites but a fairly major potential for increasing and renewing the whole area – not necessarily knocking down houses, but actually adding in and re-shaping the landscape, but getting a much greater response in terms of houses from it.”

Officers said the council was “always looking for additional opportunities in existing areas for building”, while Labour Cllr Gordon Munro questioned whether spending millions of pounds on improvements would result in a reduction in maintenance call-outs.

Green Housing spokesperson, Cllr Susan Rae, said: “I am pleased to see ambitious plans to improve the quality of day to day living standards in existing council homes as the conditions some tenants are having to put up with are a disgrace.

“However, ambitious plans need to be matched by getting the basics right and making sure that neighbourhood housing officers are leading from the front in getting repairs carried out swiftly.”