

Council have a new 'streamlined' approach to dealing with some common housing issues

At the Housing and Homelessness Committee on Thursday there were many discussions around improving the condition of the council's housing stock.

One report set out what the council regards as improvements in the way the council deals with dampness, mould and condensation. The council says it now has a revised "robust streamlined process from start to finish" to deal with these issues.

Councillors agreed that officers will log data in relation to such problems and will use this as evidence for any future capital investment, including the planned whole house retrofit programme. This will help to ensure that homes are better insulated, ventilated and affordable to heat. The committee also agreed to have a follow up report on progress in six months time.

Robyn Kane, Chair of the Moredun Multis and Maisonettes Residents' Association, and a member of the Gilmerton and Inch Community Council, explained to the committee in her deputation: "The residents association I represent has six high rises and two blocks of maisonettes totalling over 500 homes.

"I personally have lived in the high-rises since early 2017 and have had to get in touch with repairs over the years for multiple reasons. When I moved in I had to ring for several different repairs as the flat was not in a fit state to move into when I first signed the lease.

"The overwhelming issue myself and the tenants I represent are having is with the windows in the tenancies, and the surrounding problems because of the windows being in disrepair.

"This includes mould and condensation on or inside the double glazing. The issue of mould, damp and condensation is causing damage to people's physical and mental health. The overwhelming number of the tenants I represent are in fuel poverty, having to choose between food and heating. "What makes this even worse is that because the windows are not airtight the cost of keeping the home warm goes up as the hot air escapes.

"Reading the council report I was disappointed to read that a lot of the issues are being blamed on Covid-19. I am aware that issues have been going on longer than the pandemic. For example, Paragraph 4.40, we have Automatic Opening Vents that had the wrong fitting on our landings that are now being held open with a nail and some wiring.

"Another example is how The City of Edinburgh Council are passing the buck to Changeworks who themselves are overrun to the point of non communication for months as the waiting lists to get help are so long!

"Lastly before my time ends I would like to ask how the City of Edinburgh Council plan on actually bettering the system to help prevent the formation of mould, damp and condensation in tenancies, how the new resolution team are going to effect the complaints procedure, and if this will make it even more difficult for someone to file a complaint with either the council or the Ombudsman?

"Lastly I'd like to know how the City of Edinburgh Council

plan on making these reports more accessible to the public and associations. This report as well as the repairs report was passed on to me by a local councillor. Lack of transparency hinders my ability to best help the community I represent.”



Moredun Flats

Local Ward councillor, Cllr Lezley Marion Cameron said: “It is vital that the Council fulfils all of our legal obligations as a landlord, to all of our Council Housing tenants, including ensuring properties are in a state of good repair, decor and cleanliness prior to tenants moving in. This must also include dealing with dampness, mould and condensation in new and existing Council tenancies, which adversely affect tenants’ cost of living and their health and well-being.

“I have been saddened and shocked to see the conditions of Council homes many of my constituents are living in, and the difficulties they’ve experienced in securing repairs for items like boilers, windows, fitted kitchen appliances and bathroom suites needing fixed or replaced.

“In light of today’s decision taken by the Housing, Homelessness and Fair Work Committee, I very much hope our tenants will swiftly see and experience a significant step change in the responsiveness, support and services they receive from their Council landlord.”

The report today arose from a motion at the March meeting demanding information on the process for dampness, mould and condensation, and asked for “an improved and effective approach”.

The committee stated that the procedure had to include confirmation that an issue has been resolved, and any other steps taken, including referrals to Changeworks. It was important to ensure that “no tenant falls through the cracks”.

Council policy is to examine a property when any damp is reported to investigate underlying issues such as poor heating

or extractor fans. Dehumidifiers are also provided to tenants to help dry properties out where condensation is an issue and the cost of running the dehumidifier is refunded to the tenant. One example where damp affects many homes in one block is in Muirhouse where the council plans to spend significant sums to remedy the root cause.