

SOUTHWARK COUNCIL

COUNCIL ASSEMBLY

(ORDINARY MEETING)

WEDNESDAY 24 NOVEMBER 2021

RESPONSE TO URGENT QUESTION

1. QUESTION FROM COUNCILLOR HAMISH MCCALLUM TO THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL

As we enter winter and temperatures drop, and following recent reports of exploding radiators in Southwark and the council being ranked as one of the worst landlords in England for dealing with damp and mould, how worried is the leader about the danger our estates pose to tenants coming into Christmas?

RESPONSE

It is incredibly important that we do not spread unnecessary anxiety amongst our residents by exaggerating the scale of maintenance issues in Southwark. We take all heating breakdowns incredibly seriously. This is why specifications for new radiators in Southwark include that they are rated well above the usual operating water pressure. We also carry out quality control checks as standard following all installations to ensure compliance. I want to reassure residents that their safety at home is the council's primary concern and we do everything we can to ensure their pipework and heating systems are properly maintained throughout their operational lifespan.

As usage of heating systems goes up in winter months there will inevitably be more maintenance issues as wear-and-tear related problems emerge, but we prepare for these changes in the summer and autumn months as a matter of course. For example, we recently changed our internal processes to allow us to react more quickly in the high-demand months. We also take this opportunity to install new pipework and sensors where we deem necessary and conduct regular pressure testing across our estates. This year alone we invest £2.6 million in new heating infrastructure and preventative measures.

Similarly, in terms of damp and mould residents should be assured that Southwark Council understand and accept that this is a very significant and serious issue for many homes. As such we are reviewing our approach to prevention, treatment and monitoring of damp and mould across our 55,000 properties. For example, we will look to create a new route for residents to book an inspection of damp so that our teams can visit and tackle the issue early on. We are also trialling new technology

across two pilot estates to explore how we monitor temperature and humidity and analyse how these new approaches can help us get ahead of potential issues before they become serious.

I would take this opportunity again to ask all councillors to be responsible in the way they describe these issues so as not to cause unnecessary alarm on our estates.