

SOUTHWARK COUNCIL

COUNCIL ASSEMBLY

(ORDINARY MEETING)

WEDNESDAY 22 MARCH 2022

LATE QUESTION

1. QUESTION TO THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL FROM COUNCILLOR VICTOR CHAMBERLAIN

Last week, a cross party motion from Liberal Democrat and Green Party London Assembly members was passed in City Hall. The motion called for the creation and adoption of a 'Gold Standard on Damp and Mould' for social housing in London. Will the leader of the council confirm that Southwark will adopt this gold standard as soon as it has been developed and can be implemented?

RESPONSE

Keeping people safe in their homes is the number one priority for our housing teams. This means more than good building maintenance and crucial fire safety measures – it must also include work to ensure residents are warm, comfortable and do not suffer health consequences from damp and mould.

The council has developed a specific strategy to tackle the issue of damp and mould. Following a report by the Housing Ombudsman in October 2021, which urged housing providers to adopt a 'zero tolerance' approach to damp and to avoid blaming the lifestyle choices of residents, communication has been reviewed to ensure community engagement is appropriate and positive. This includes the provision of a new booklet which replaces the old 'damp pack', as well as updates to our website.

We have a programme of visiting estates through 'Estate Action Days', running alongside monthly inspections across the borough to improve our proactive working on damp and mould. A dedicated Damp & Mould Team has been set up, including technical staff, operatives and a back office function, to provide an end-to-end service for residents. Our new approach aims to eradicate any mould and put in preventative measures to help alleviate the risk of problems with mould in the future.

We will take a structure-first approach to preventing damp and make improvements including trials of new and innovative solutions, with a view to rolling out the most suitable for each situation. In cases of damp where fuel poverty is a contributing factor, we will make use of available grant funding, including affordable warmth grants to improve the thermal

efficiency of these homes as part of our sustainability measures.

The piloting of new technology, including smart devices that measure temperature and humidity, as well as detect operational faults with the heating systems, is currently underway on the Aylton Estate in Rotherhithe and the Kingswood Estate in Dulwich. The information from these pilots will be used to design potential cladding and ventilation solutions for Southwark's blocks, on a case-by-case basis.

In addition, a rolling stock condition survey has been commissioned and will begin in April 2023. Cases of damp and mould reported in the last year are being reviewed and residents contacted to ascertain the current status.

The council is committed to working with government, the GLA and other partners to ensure we continue to eradicate damp and mould across our council homes. We will work with the GLA on the development of any 'gold standard'.