

AVONDALE DRIVE TOWER BLOCKS

Cabinet Member	Councillor Jonathan Bianco
Cabinet Portfolio	Finance, Property & Business Services
Officer Contact	Perry Scott, Residents Services
Papers with report	None
Reasons for urgency	To ensure the necessary information is available to the Cabinet Member and petitioners for the meeting.

HEADLINE INFORMATION

Purpose of report	To inform the Cabinet Member that a petition was received on 4th March 2015. The lead petitioner is the Chairman of the Avondale Residents Association. With 101 responses it requests that the Council considers rectifying the issues of damp, condensation and related health and safety risks to avoid litigation. This is eligible for consideration at a Petition Hearing with the Cabinet Member for Finance, Property and Business Services.
Contribution to our plans and strategies	Putting our residents first: Our built environment
Financial Cost	TBC and dependent upon future decisions
Relevant Policy Overview Committee	Corporate Services & Partnerships Social Services, Housing & Public Health
Ward(s) affected	Townfield

RECOMMENDATION

That the Cabinet Member:

1. **Meets the petitioners and considers their request that the Council investigates and rectifies the issues arising from damp, condensation and related Health & Safety issues.**
2. **Decides on the appropriate course of action having met with the petitioners.**

INFORMATION

Reasons for recommendation

To allow the Cabinet Member to consider the petition with the petitioners.

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Alternative options considered

These can be identified from the discussions with the petitioners.

Comments of Overview Committee(s)

None at this stage.

Supporting Information

1. A petition was received on 4th March 2015 with 101 responses requesting that the Council considers rectifying the issues of damp, condensation and related health and safety risks.
2. The residents have completed questionnaires regarding their individual dwellings in respect of the issues of damp, condensation and related health & safety risks.

Background

The three high-rise tower blocks on Avondale Drive are contained within the Birchway Estate in the Townfield ward of the Hayes and Harlington constituency: Fitzgerald House, Glenister House and Wellings House. Each block is 12 storeys high, with each containing 48 flats. The blocks themselves were constructed in the late 60's and are of the "Bison Wall Frame system" type although the blocks were cladded in brick post-construction.

The three tower blocks are all of mixed tenure as follows:

Fitzgerald House

38 Owned flats
4 Leasehold flats
4 Short-life properties
2 properties currently being processed under Right to Buy

Glenister House

37 Owned flats
7 Leasehold flats
1 Short-life property
3 properties currently being processed under Right to Buy

Wellings House

36 Owned flats
8 Leasehold flats
3 Short-life properties
1 property currently being processed under Right to Buy

A resident survey of the estate organised by the Avondale Tenants and Residents Association in March 2015 received 101 responses, 49% of which referred to condensation, damp or mould issues in their home. The Council's own records for repairs to these blocks list 36 separate instances tackling dampness or mould issues since 2009.

The Council carried out stock condition surveys to 112 of the 144 flats in 2010 but none were identified as having dampness or mould growth issues of more than 'moderate concern' (and that only to one flat). Further, a specialist investigation was carried out in 2010, following resident complaints of dampness and mould. Findings indicated that the four flats surveyed had damp and mould caused by condensation. The survey identified failings with, and recommended upgrades to, the heating and ventilation systems within the flats.

In 2012, the Council arranged for a pilot project to be carried out to one void flat to install internal insulation and a mechanical heat recovery system at a cost of approximately £30k. The Council decided not to proceed with rolling out this work further at that time as it proved to be more intrusive and time consuming than had been predicted.

A programme of electrical upgrades to all three tower blocks (including new storage heaters and extractor fans) was then prepared for the HRA Works to Stock Programme for 2013/14. This was subsequently placed on hold whilst the Council undertook an independent stock condition survey of the HRA stock to inform a wider programme of works.

Current situation

The results from the recent stock condition survey are currently being collated and assessed and will be used to inform a recommended works programme for Avondale Drive tower blocks. This will require leaseholder consultation.

Energy Efficiency

Whilst the energy efficiency Standard Assessment Procedure (SAP: method for calculating the energy consumption of dwellings) are above the Council's average, the Council would look to improve this with any future agreed works to address the condensation issues.

The blocks differ in the way ventilation is provided. Ventilation was installed during construction:

- Glenister House has a negative extraction system through the roof of the building. (It sucks the dirty / damp air out of the flats)
- Fitzgerald & Wellings had the main shaft constructed in preparation for the same negative extraction system but this was never installed as individual ventilation systems were installed in each flat which have proved to be less efficient.

When new double glazing was fitted approximately four years ago, there was a reduction in drafts within the properties. As a consequence, this has increased the incidence of condensation within the flats especially in Fitzgerald and Wellings with less of an issue at Glenister House where the negative extraction is in place.

Therefore, consideration will be given to whether it is feasible to install negative extraction ventilation systems at Fitzgerald and Wellings as there are far fewer issues at Glenister House where the original ventilation system is still in place.

Financial Implications

Should the Cabinet Member request a programme of works is prepared this will be costed by officers. Additional funding is likely to be required depending on the final recommended solutions.

EFFECT ON RESIDENTS, SERVICE USERS & COMMUNITIES

What will be the effect of the recommendation?

The recommendation will enable the Cabinet Member to discuss with the petitioners their concerns, and allow him to consider whether or not to agree to their requests.

Consultation Carried Out or Required

This Petition Hearing is an established part of the Council's consultation and Democratic process.

CORPORATE IMPLICATIONS

Corporate Finance

Key stock condition works being considered for the Avondale tenants to include heating renewals and fire door replacements. Additionally, the installations of negative extraction systems for ventilation are being considered for both Fitzgerald and Wellings House. These costs are likely to be significant although they are not quantified at this stage. However, as the ventilation works are to the building as a whole then a proportion of the costs could be recharged to the leaseholders.

The report outlines significant works which could require significant funding from the Works to Stock budget. Investigative work is to take place to provide robust data for considering future options, and a structural engineer is to be engaged within existing budgetary provision.

The next stage of work should provide a framework for proceeding with an indication of likely costs. A financial appraisal can then be undertaken on the VFM implications of progressing the work and identifying budgetary provision if required.

Legal

The Council's repairing obligations towards its tenants include dampness or condensation in its properties; it is obliged to rectify these issues where the problems have arisen because of the condition of the property. Also, Section 4 of the Defective Premises Act 1972 requires the Council to ensure that its tenants are not at risk of personal injury arising from the state of the premises.

The report explains the steps that the Council proposes to take in order to comply with its repairing obligation. Further legal advice will be provided whenever necessary.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

Questionnaires from 101 residents.

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