

Council – 7th September 2023

Notice of Motion

Motion for sheltered accommodation heating cost-reduction and energy efficiency improvements

The energy crisis last winter has left Southend residents anxious about their heating bills, with many desperately seeking better deals or introducing energy saving measures ahead of the winter. However, for residents in our sheltered accommodation, they are locked into communal prices, paying a portion of the bill based on the size of their home and are disempowered to take individual cost saving action.

South Essex Homes currently has just over 1600 residents living across 34 sheltered housing schemes. With many of these properties having been constructed decades ago, many have poor or no insulation, and rely on creaking communal heating systems. With limited zonal control, or even individual temperature control (TRVs) on radiators, residents have often paid for heating empty properties, corridors, and external doorways to scorching temperatures, even in summer months.

The combination of this poor energy efficiency and rampant price increases has resulted in residents facing huge bills. For example, some residents in 1-bed flats saw price rises shoot up from £10 pw to £30pw within months, equivalent to an extra 10% of their state pension. The impact has been severe, with many of these elderly and vulnerable residents cutting back on hobbies, travelling to see relations, or even skipping meals.

So, whilst recent reduction in energy bills has given some relief, these residents remain exposed to future rises unless long-term energy saving improvements are made.

Therefore, this motion calls on this Council to:

- Work with South Essex Homes to compose a ranked list of the least energy-efficient homes. Identify a seasonal heating schedule and appropriate zonal plan to reduce energy waste in the short-term;
- Negotiate with South Essex Homes for a reduction in the 15% administration fee on energy bills for properties with the highest equivalent energy bills;
- Form a long-term strategy for modernising legacy heating systems across our sheltered accommodation;
- Evaluate and identify appropriate insulation and energy-saving technology that could be introduced to legacy properties;
- Proactively engage with South Essex Homes, energy companies and the government to seek out grants, schemes, and price reductions to fund energy-saving improvements and provide financial relief to residents in the meantime;
- Send all residents of sheltered schemes a letter detailing all support schemes available through the Council.

Proposer: Cllr Anne Jones

Seconder: Cllr Lydia Hyde, Cllr Donna Richardson