

**Statement: PS05.03**

**Cabinet – 3<sup>rd</sup> February 2021**

**Re: Agenda item 5 – Housing Revenue Account Budget Proposals**

**Statement submitted by: Kerry Bailes**

I am writing to you in deepest dismay regarding a previous agreement you made to raise council rents by a nominal amount, it now transpires that you have taken a complete U-turn on this important decision.

I understand the dichotomy you are facing and that you assume that not raising council rents now will help the poorest and most vulnerable in the city recover financially from COVID-19 related financial circumstances that council tenants may be living with.

This is a false economy, not raising council rents will cost tenants more in the long run through heating homes with inadequate insulation, heating systems, windows, and doors. Far too many council homes fail to meet the governments decent homes standard:

[A decent home: definition and guidance - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](http://www.gov.uk)

a policy brought about by the last labour government to ensure that tenants were living in warm homes with decent and modern facilities such as kitchens, bathrooms, homes which provide a “reasonable degree of thermal comfort”. I have been a council tenant for 20 years; I grew up in council housing, I have never lived in anything else, I realise that has meant that although my many obstacles in life I have managed to keep my head above water. Despite that, as a council tenant I have also been a victim of lack of investment in council housing, with many of the council’s legal requirements to repair my home falling solely on my head, costing me money I do not have, not to mention paying ever-rising heating bills to keep myself and my children warm. No other landlord would get away with passing the buck literally onto the tenant. Waiting any longer might mean that in future, we are back in the same position we are in now, 30 years from now future generations will still be fighting for their right to a decent affordable home. Do not let this happen, raise the rents now, invest in our lives by investing in our homes.

(Below) is an email I sent to various Bristol politicians 3 years ago. My MP’s office called and said it would be investigated, but I never heard anything back, nothing at all from anyone else I contacted. I have brought this issue as well as other repairs and maintenance issue up at various council meetings prior and since writing the attached email only to be told that the shed roof policy is under review. The shed roof is not my responsibility, no other landlord would get away with passing the buck onto the tenant. I do not have the money or skills to do the work myself. The same could be said about kitchens, bathrooms, doors, windows, loft insulation cladding etc, by not raising rents now, you are continuing to shirk your responsibility as my landlord to repair and maintain my home, you will not save me money in the long run. Please reconsider raising the rents this year by a nominal amount, invest in existing council homes now, before it’s too late.

Dear all,

I'm writing to you all in relation to a repair I've requested to my shed at my home in Hartcliffe where I have now lived for 4 years. When first moving into the property I was very pleased with the condition and overall look of the property, however the shed was in poor condition as was the neighbour's at number [redacted].

At the time I took the tenancy the property next door, number [redacted] was being refurbished ready for the new tenant after being left empty for over a year.

As part of the refurbishment repair work was done on the neighbouring shed in the way of a new door and window. I requested the same repairs be carried out on my shed as my door and window were in a worse state of repair, I was concerned that this could attract thieves or vandals especially as the windows had been smashed at number [redacted], these repairs were carried out by the council.

A large amount of Maintenance work was also carried out in the garden of number [redacted] once tenanted. The council Contractors laid a new path which was soon removed as it was poorly laid, trees and large overgrown shrubs were dug up and removed and the ground then levelled off with several tons of soil (trees and shrubs so big that the private property at number [redacted] built their boundary wall to accommodate the overgrowth), fencing was repaired at the back of the property and a new gate fitted leading into [redacted] park where rubbish was removed along with rubbish that had accumulated in the garden. After quite some complaining maintenance work was carried out on the very large [redacted] tree in my garden as the branches had reached so far across my own garden that they were dangling into the private property at number [redacted] as well as [redacted] park.

Both shed roofs were in poor condition, rotten timbers and leaking profusely. Leaks were made worse after contractors climbed onto the roofs when clearing rubbish. I enquired at the time about having the repairs done to the shed roofs, a council surveyor came and looked at my shed roof and said that the council would remove the roof and not repair it as this was my responsibility. I explained that I was not in a financial position to do this and the work would not be covered by any home insurance as I don't own the property. My home insurance only covers the contents and not any building work needed to protect my belongings from damage. At the time the surveyor said that I would be well within my rights to take the shed roof with me if I carried out the work and then decided to move at some point in the future. I felt at the time and still think to this day that his comment was rather bizarre to say the least!

I shouldn't be put in a financial position where I either have to claim on my home contents insurance to replace the contents of my shed (which would interrupt my no claims as well as put my premiums up) or be burdened with replacing its contents from my own pocket, nor pay for building work to protect my belongings, belongings that I am unable and shouldn't be expected to keep inside my home. Throughout my working life I've never earned more than £6,000- £8,000 a year on average, at the moment I am earning less than in previous years, as a single working parent I am

just keeping my head above water therefore not in a position to take out a loan large enough to afford this work to be done either.

As you're all aware there is rather a lot of money accumulating in the housing revenue account, I see no reason why this money cannot be used to repair my shed roof. As it's a one of Cost and has had no previous maintenance work done on it I don't see this to be an unreasonable request.

The house and shed was built in the 1950's which means the shed roof is around 60 years old, the fact that it is still in place is astonishing. A replacement roof would hopefully last another 60 years or so and would cost very little money as there should be no maintenance costs if the work was done to a decent standard.

As you can see from the email attached from the council they claim not to do much of the maintenance work described above, yet the work was carried out regardless at the request of myself and the previous tenant at number  at no cost to either of us.

I'd be very grateful if you could look into this matter. Imho if I were renting privately pressure would be put on the landlord to do such repairs, I feel as a council Tennant I should also be able to apply the same rights.