

In accordance with Council Procedure Rule No.11 Councillor Fitzpatrick will ask the Leader of the Council the following question:

“With the written permission of Miss Claire Cadd, I would like to ask a question of the Leader of the Council regarding Miss Cadds’ experience of our council housing service.

I first met Miss Cadd, when I supported a fundraiser for Miss Cadds’ daughter Poppy in Summer 2021. Poppy has a very rare disease called Canavans, a disorder that damages the ability of nerve cells in the brain to send and receive messages. The villagers of Hatton have raised tens of thousands of pounds to support Poppy in her need of pioneering surgery in the United States.

In February 2022 I was contacted again by the family who had recently been accepted onto our housing register as a priority case and had bid for a property in Hatton where they needed to be close to their family support network.

They were unsuccessful in this first bid and in March 2022 asked about a second property in the area which already had some adaptations with a ramp and wet room. This property was not offered to the family either.

By July 2022, I was involved again in trying to help when the family asked about a property on Appletree Road in Hatton which was described as “being empty for some time”.

The family were keen to move into Appletree Road, but they claim that they were told that property would be too expensive to modify and that SDDC officers were looking at a more “suitable” property for them.

In Sept 2022 an offer of a property in Mickleover was made but because of the distance away from family this was not accepted. The family also asked that an empty ground floor flat in Hatton be considered for them.

In Oct 2022 after further assessment work by other agencies, a decision was made that the property at Appletree Road could meet the family’s needs and in Nov 22, the family accepted this without adaptations (due to waiting list for assessments). A schedule of other works was identified at the property.

By March 2023, I tried to move things on at SDDC with the hope that works could be completed by the end of the month. However, in both April and May 2023 further works are identified at the property which again prevented a handover.

The last issue was the need for a new EPC certificate and on Friday 26th May the family accepted the keys with an agreement that decoration would not be carried out by SDDC and that in lieu, decoration vouchers would be supplied to support their own decorating efforts.

The family with their supporters started the decoration works immediately only to find that huge chunks of plaster fell off the walls and that exposed electrical works and some incorrect pipework in the kitchen prevented them from completing several tasks.

This month, remedial works have been carried out by SDDC/Novus, which will finally let the family move into the property.

Although the family are now pleased to be in a property close to their support network, they do describe the process that they have been through as traumatic and highly stressful. At a time when they had a disabled daughters needs to attend to our processes and multiple delays caused them unnecessary added pressures and they hope that no other family has to go through the same ordeal to find a council property in South Derbyshire.

It also seems highly ironic to them that a property they identified themselves as long ago as July 2022 has taken nearly a year to become available to them and this is without the adaptations that Poppy will need as she grows and which will have to be fitted later.

I recognise that officers at SDDC have worked very hard on this case and I am in no way questioning their efforts. Despite these best efforts I am left with the feeling that we have failed this family and in presuming that the Leader of the Council agrees with me that this level of service to a family with a disabled child is not acceptable, can he please advise this council of what lessons can be learnt from this case and how we can improve our service in this area.”