EPSOM & EWELL TIMES
For the community, by the community. A not-for-profit service

12th November 2026

ISSN 2753-2771

EPSOM & EWELL TIMES

Up to £1 where sold

Breaking the mould for Ukrainian refugees

13 March 2023



Families fleeing war-torn countries such as Ukraine should not be placed in “derelict” and “mouldy” homes run by a Surrey council’s housing association partner, a councillor has claimed.

Mole Valley District Council’s scrutiny committee met to discuss the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities £500million funding for local authorities to provide homes to Ukrainian and Afghan families via the resettlement and relocation schemes.

Councillor Paul Potter. Image credit: Surrey Live – Grahame Larter

If fully progressed, the council would receive about £1.5m to help deliver up to nine properties for families seeking refuge. These would then become part of the area’s long-term affordable housing stock – available on a rental basis of 80 per cent market value.

The move was widely supported by members at the March 7 meeting but the council’s main social housing provider, **Clarion** was criticised by councillors.

The housing association said it was investing £5m and “hiring 100 new staff” to tackle the problem.

Councillor **Paul Potter** (LD, Brockham, Betchworth and Buckland) said: “Great that we are helping people less fortunate than ourselves but I did have a couple of concerns, the first was that affordable rent was not actually affordable. My bigger concern is Clarion, if you are going to pick someone to do houses we should be doing it ourselves because my dealings with Clarion over the last God knows how many years has been a nightmare. It has got better, the chap they got now he’s done more in seven days than they have in 10 years – so something is happening there. But to put someone in the houses I’ve seen, in the state they’re in.

“I had a family actually move into Tanners Meadow from a house that was quite frankly derelict, mouldy, the kids area all on inhalers. These people have come from a war zone. They really don’t want to be going into a damp house, like that young kid last year. So I do have a big concern that Clarion is taking over.”

Cllr Potter was referencing the decision reached at Rochdale Coroner’s Court which said two-year-old boy Awaab Ishak died following prolonged exposure to mould – three years after his parents first complained about damp in their one-bed Rochdale Boroughwide Housing association flat.

It also follows a statement issued in December 2022 when district leader, Cllr **Stephen Cooksey**, said he would write to Clarion Housing to address “widespread issues of mould and damp problems” and urged the association to give the problem “higher priority”.

He said he was “fully supportive” of the **Housing Ombudsman’s** report – where Clarion Housing was one of the six housing associations highlighted for multiple failings of damp and mould, complaint handling and record-keeping.

Cllr **Caroline Salmon** who presented the local authority housing fund report to the committee agreed that there has been an issue with damp and that efforts were underway to remedy the situation in Mole Valley.

The Lib Dem member for Beare Green said: “Clarion have been trying to improve damp, and we’ve been working with them too. There have been some really good changes.”

The meeting was wound up with the select committee chairperson, Cllr **Joanna Slater**, recommending that cabinet moves forward with the proposals with a preference for freehold housing and a discussion over the choice of partners.

A Clarion Housing spokesperson said: “Members of our senior management team recently met with cabinet members of Mole Valley District Council to outline Clarion’s strategy to address the conditions of a small number of our properties in the region, including issues with leaks, damp, condensation, and mould. Housing for refugees was part of the discussion and we look forward to working closely with the council to provide essential housing for those in need. We at Clarion are determined to resolve condensation, damp and mould in our homes promptly and effectively.

“As part of this effort, we have increased the ways residents can get in touch with us to report it and are investing an additional £5 million annually to tackle the issue, including hiring 100 new staff – which will include specialist surveyors and new Resident Liaison Officers to deal specifically with leaks, condensation, damp and mould cases.”

© 2021-2026. No content may be copied without the permission of Epsom and Ewell Times Ltd. Registered office: Upper Chambers, 7 Waterloo Road, Epsom KT19 8AY