



## THE ISLE OF THANET NEWS

### MUM PLEADS FOR HELP AFTER CATCHING 42 MICE IN HER CLIFTONVILLE FLAT IN LESS THAN A MONTH

January 9, 2021 Kathy Bailes

A mum-of-one from Cliftonville is pleading for Environmental Services to get involved after catching 42 mice in her flat in less than a month.

Millie Sparks, 25, says she has previously found mice in her 15-month-old daughter Tazanna's bed.

Just before Christmas she used humane traps -due to worries her daughter might touch them – and ended up with nine mice that she put in a cage. But the sheer number of rodents getting into the building meant she could no longer cage them.

The vermin problem at the 18-flat block in Athelstan Road has now been ongoing for 18 months but because the flats have different landlords Millie says it won't be resolved until Environmental Health step in.

Millie, who suffers from a painful back condition following a trampolining accident several years ago, said: "My landlord is trying to help get this problem fixed but with it being a whole building problem it's very very hard as the mice will remake new entry points.

"I was hoping Environmental Health would have been able to contact landlords, agents and land owners who are responsible and they would be forced to fix these issues so the problem can be solved.

“But with no tenants having any of the relevant information it makes it harder which is why I’ve been continuously trying to get help for this.

“I have a 15 month old daughter and we are sharing our home with many many mice. Within 48 hours before Christmas I caught 9 mice. I think the entire block, every flat, has mice. It is a shame some other tenants haven’t got the funds to afford glass jars for food and other measure to help prevent this. Some people leave food around so this encourages the mice.

“Environmental Health said it’s mine and the landlord’s job to deal with it. I’ve done more than my fair share and changed entirely how I live even with my severe health problems but one flat out of 18 will not make a difference.

“They seem to have pretty much washed their hands of this case although they are still on the case of cockroach issues after a flat in the building was found to be the source of an infestation, but even this isn’t resolved yet.”

Millie says her health issues prevent her from being able to move at present, adding: “I struggle doing the weekly shop and day to day living, let alone the massive work and stress of moving.”

She has turned to ward councillors Heather Keen and Alan Currie for help and says Cllr Keen has contacted Thanet council’s housing and environmental health teams to push for action.

Cllr Currie said: “I feel really sorry for Millie, the mouse problem in her flat seemed to have improved but as we have come into winter it has returned and seems as bad as ever. I visited Millie a year ago and immediately contacted Environmental Health, after a couple of visits to the property they told me they had thoroughly investigated the problem and various things were done to deal with the rodent problem.

“The landlord was advised to contact a pest control company, bait and traps were laid, possible rodent entry points blocked and all the other flats in the block were contacted by EH and given advice if they too had the same problem.

“Other areas of concern with the building were identified and these were communicated to the land owners. Private Sector Housing, which enforces housing conditions and selective licensing, checked all electrical certificates were up to date and advised that the landlord should have an electrician check internal wiring as Millie had concerns about this.

“Unfortunately due to the Covid-19 situation and social distance guidance, Environmental Health have informed me that they are not at this time performing internal visits to properties but will re-visit again when possible.”

Deputy council leader Helen Whitehead, who has responsibility for housing, said efforts are being made to deal with the mouse problem.

She said: “I visited before lockdown to look at the issue directly and have been working since that point with selective licensing, private housing and environmental health to try and find a solution.

“We have been aware and working on it for a long while, but it requires approaches across all three areas to address long term, but we are all putting effort in to resolve it.”

Millie says she just wants some help, adding: “I am a mother, I am civilised, clean and tidy and myself and my daughter should not have to suffer this.”

### **‘Not the freeholder’**

When contacted about the infestation last February a Thanet council spokesperson said: “Pest control in a tenanted flat is primarily the responsibility of the occupiers. The landowner would only become involved if the issue was associated with something beyond the tenants’ responsibility, such as problems within communal areas or clear structural issues with the building.

“The council is not the freeholder of this property and has no duty to provide a pest control service. It has the responsibility for ensuring that landowners and landlords take relevant action to resolve infestations.

“Environmental Health team has conducted numerous visits to the building to investigate the issues that have been raised. As part of this investigation, the team has written to all tenants on two occasions – requesting information in the first letter and giving general advice in the second. We have been unable to identify a specific party who is causing or adding to the issue. The council therefore cannot take any further action as there is no clear evidence.”

Thanet council has been asked if there is any further update on the issue.

The council has negotiated a reduced rate for pest control services in Thanet. Visit [www.thanet.gov.uk/pest-control-services](http://www.thanet.gov.uk/pest-control-services) for information.



A month on, termite infestation still not cleared from JNU's state-of-the-art lab, claim researchers, JNUSU

Termite infestation had allegedly destroyed rare samples from the lab. The situation of the lab is still the same, they say

Parvathi Benu

Edex Live

The researchers at JNU's Centre for the Study of Regional Development claim that the university administration hasn't taken the initiative to clear the termite infestation and damage caused to its TL/OSL (thermoluminescence/optically stimulated luminescence) laboratory. Over a month ago, the researchers had shared photographs of the lab, which was locked since March, owing to the nationwide lockdown. Most parts of it, along with the equipment and the samples that the researchers had collected were destroyed, after being exposed to seepage and termite infestation.

A few researchers whom we spoke to at the time had said that they had lost their entire PhD research work owing to this and would be forced to start their work from the scratch. A major reason for the damage, according to them was a large amount of scrap left on top of the building by its previous occupants. "The JNU administration had told us that it doesn't have enough money to clear the mess and restore the laboratory. Now, our supervisor has moved a some of the equipment from the terrace, spending money out of his own pocket," says Ishita Manna, a fifth-year PhD researcher. "However, the lab's condition is still the same. It is impossible to work there now," she says.

She adds that the researchers are now working on collecting samples outside the lab as much as they can. In December, the researchers and the JNU Students' Union had written a series of emails and had met the authorities seeking appropriate action. The JNUSU President Aishe Ghosh had then claimed that a rector had promised speedy action to solve the situation soon. "However, the administration has remained mum upto now. No one from the administration is ready to meet us nor are they responding to our emails," she says.