

STATES OF JERSEY

OFFICIAL REPORT

WEDNESDAY, 14th MAY 2025

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[9:30]

The Roll was called and the Deputy Greffier of the States led the Assembly in Prayer.

PUBLIC BUSINESS

1. Draft Elections (Jersey) Amendment Law 202- (P.28/2025)

The Deputy Bailiff:

Turning to the Order Paper, the next item is the Draft Elections Amendment Law, lodged by the chair of the Privileges and Procedures Committee, and the main respondent is the chair of the Corporate Service Scrutiny Panel. I will ask the Greffier to read the citation.

The Deputy Greffier of the States:

Draft Elections Jersey Amendment Law 202-. A law to amend the Elections (Jersey) Law 2002, the Elections (Jersey) Regulations 2002, and the Political Parties (Registration) (Jersey) Law 2008. The States, subject to the sanction of His Most Excellent in Council, have adopted the following Law.

The Deputy Bailiff:

Chair, do you wish to propose the principles of this law?

1.1 Connétable K. Shenton-Stone of St. Martin (Privileges and Procedures Committee):

Most of the proposed changes to the Elections (Jersey) Law 2002 are administrative in nature and designed to improve the electoral system for candidates, voters and those tasked with running the process. They are based on the recommendations contained within the C.P.A. (Commonwealth Parliamentary Association) E.O.M. (Election Observers Mission) report 2022 published after the last elections and also the reports of the Jersey Electoral Authority R-3-2022 and feedback from the electoral administrators. Probably the most contentious element is an amendment to Article 4 of the Elections Law in response to one of the Election Observers Mission's recommendations and would extend to voting rights to all prisoners based in Jersey. Currently those detained in Jersey for longer than 4 years are disqualified from voting. In 2005, the European Court of Human Rights ruled that the U.K. was in breach of Article 3 of Protocol 1 of the European Convention on Human Rights in relation to prisoner voting rights. The central element to the ruling was that the U.K.'s then blanket ban on prisoner voting was indiscriminate and disproportionate. The U.K. now allows those on remand and awaiting sentencing to vote but does not extend it to all prisoners. Northern Ireland follows the same rules. Scotland has extended the vote to those serving a sentence of less than 12 months, while Wales has been considering employing the same 4-year sentence limit as currently exists in Jersey. Ireland has extended voting rights to all prisoners irrespective of length of sentence, and it did this in 2006. Both Guernsey and the Isle of Man offer full enfranchisement, and prisoners are able to vote by post for representatives of the district in which they were ordinarily resident prior to incarceration. P.P.C. believes it is time for Jersey to make voting available for all prisoners, irrespective of their sentence length. Other changes, as I have said, are mostly administrative and include a revised definition of a spoilt vote. Alterations to how candidates' addresses are published, if they wish to use an alternative; changes to some of the processes around pre-poll and postal voting, mostly to accommodate the move to a Sunday election; and an extension of the Jersey Electoral Authority's remit to include the consideration of complaints from the public about the elections process and candidates and also creating a co-ordinating role for the J.E.A. (Jersey Electoral Authority) around the arrangements for hustings. I should point out that there is a typo in the report accompanying the legislation on page 5, in that the section referencing Article 41 is superfluous, as no change is made to that Article. I hope that Members will be supportive of these changes to the Elections Law.

The Deputy Bailiff:

Are the principals seconded? **[Seconded]**

Deputy R.J. Ward of St. Helier Central:

Before we start, may I raise the défaut on Deputy Tadier?

The Deputy Bailiff:

Are Members content to raise the défaut on Deputy Tadier? The défaut is raised. Does any Member wish to speak on the principles of this law?

1.1.1 Deputy M.R. Scott of St. Brelade

I must apologise to States Members because I actually raised this point in respect of the proposition that was debated yesterday, so I have unwittingly taken 2 bites of the cherry. Article 5, I did ask the chair of the Privileges and Procedures Committee just to give a little bit more information about the complaints process that is going to be used by the Electoral Authority. Article 5 extends its ability to look at complaints. Members of the public can complain about candidates or election officials, and Members are aware that generally I have been looking at complaints, and I have been seeing complaints processes popping up all over the place. Some not very well-publicised, some not very clear. In addition, I have asked if somebody is not happy with the complaints process, with the way that the complaint is handled, to whom will they appeal. Would that be ... well, actually at the moment I do not believe it can be the Jersey Complaints Panel because that tends to relate to departments and Ministers of Government, so is that going to be to the P.P.C. (Privileges and Procedures Committee). How will they handle it? Clearly that has not been addressed at the law currently. My question had been whether the P.P.C. has considered that, is it going to consider that, is it going to resolve that, what would its proposals be? Because I feel that this particular part of the law is not particularly clear and it would be helpful for those details to be sorted before we expand the powers of the authority in this way. Sorry, somebody is frowning at me. **[Aside]** Okay. Sorry, Sir. But, generally, in terms of what is trying to be achieved by the law, then I am supportive of it.

Deputy R.J. Ward:

Sir, may I ask for a clarification?

The Deputy Bailiff:

Of the last speaker?

Deputy R.J. Ward:

Yes. It was not a frown, it was a genuine question.

The Deputy Bailiff:

If she is prepared to give that clarification.

Deputy R.J. Ward:

Does the speaker mean Article 13D part 5 of the report? I do the same thing all the time. Because we are looking at right things then. Because Article 5 is about becoming a resident and becomes ordinarily resident of the Articles. Is it paragraph 5? Just so I know I am looking at the right thing.

The Deputy Bailiff:

Yes, you referred to Article 5, Deputy Scott, in your speech. Did you meet Article 5 or another Article when you addressed ...

Deputy M.R. Scott:

I am looking at Article 5 of the law, Sir, which refers to Article 13D, resolution of disputes amended. I hope that clarifies things for the Deputy.

The Deputy Bailiff:

Yes, Article 5 of this law, which refers to Article 13D. Does any other Member wish to speak on the principles of this law?

1.1.2 Deputy K.F. Morel of St. John, St. Lawrence and Trinity:

I have to admit I am not particularly supportive of this change. I do think that when it comes to voting, it does pay to have spent some time, probably more than a year, living in a jurisdiction to fully understand. [Aside] My apologies.

The Deputy Bailiff:

We will come to that when we come to that Article on the amendment.

1.1.3 Deputy P.F.C. Ozouf of St. Saviour:

After having learnt yesterday that despite the valiant attempts and the good attempts of P.P.C., we learnt that legislation, as had been custom and practice for P.P.C., had not received the constructive second pair of eyes review by the Corporate Services Panel. In supporting the principles, may I respectfully suggest that the chair could pause for consideration of the Articles so that they can be reviewed, no doubt, from the questions that have been raised. I do have one question. I know that there is hustings fatigue; in the super-constituencies that has certainly been an issue for those Parishes that have multiple Parishes. We have already passed the principle of Senators, and there is going to have to be consideration in any event of should this Assembly finally assent to the arrangements for the Senatorial hustings.

[9:45]

This is going to have to be dealt with in that way. For that reason, but not exclusively, I would respectfully suggest that this Assembly takes the good practice of not passing a piece of legislation First Reading, Second Reading and Third Reading in one go, mindful of the fact that it has not had that constructive second pair of eyes, which could be probably quite quick, by Corporate Services, and I would encourage them to do that. I would make that suggestion, but I am sure the chair may wish to do so, and that may avoid Members having to pick on Articles at speed during the course of this, and we could use this Assembly's time more constructively with the full report coming back. So I support these changes. It is good that election observers have come to Jersey, having been one before. Their report has obviously been taken seriously, but it needs a second pair of eyes in Corporate Services, and I am grateful.

1.1.4 Deputy I.J. Gorst of St. Mary, St. Ouen and St. Peter

I was not expecting to follow Deputy Ozouf, but I agree with him, because I do have some concerns, as the chair mentioned, about Article 4. We seem to have taken a view based on an E.C.H.R. (European Convention on Human Rights) ruling in relation to another jurisdiction, which had a blanket ban. We are not in that position. We did make those changes to eligibility for voting some time ago. I cannot remember quite at the time whether I was convinced that it was necessary, but I think I was. But removing that restriction in its entirety is something that I would not be able to support. I do wonder if more work and review of that should be appropriately considered, and I make no disrespect to the Electoral Observers Mission, just because they have made a recommendation, we have to carefully consider it and see whether it fits in with what we think is appropriate for enfranchisement. When yesterday we were talking about strengthening penalties for inappropriate behaviour in our Island, today we are making an alternate position, and I think we just need to be joined up in that regard. I do not know whether the chair of C.S.S.P. (Corporate Services Scrutiny Panel) is thinking of calling it in, as is her right, under Standing Orders, I just want to say that I can vote in principle for this, but I would support that review.

The Deputy Bailiff:

Does any other Member wish to speak on the principles? I call upon the chair of P.P.C. to reply.

1.1.5 The Connétable of St. Martin:

I want to thank Members for the points they have raised. P.P.C. took a pragmatic approach to the recommendations made by key stakeholders and the election observers after the last elections. I was mindful that after implementing major changes in 2022, it was more a case of evolution than revolution this time round, and we are confident that these mostly administrative amendments will allow the elections to run smoothly in 2026. Deputy Ozouf said that he was unhappy about scrutiny, but these are purely administrative changes. Deputy Gorst mentioned the E.O.M. recommendations. It is entirely for this Assembly to determine, which is why the committee is putting this for Members to choose, and P.P.C. has no strong view on this. I was going to take the Articles separately.

The Deputy Bailiff:

In due course, after the principle has been adopted, yes.

The Connétable of St. Martin:

Yes, please.

The Deputy Bailiff:

Before we do that, we will need to obviously deal with the principles.

Deputy M.E. Millar of St. St. John, St. Lawrence and Trinity:

Sir, may I lift the défaut on Deputy Farnham, please?

The Deputy Bailiff:

Are Members content to raise the défaut on Deputy Farnham? Yes, the défaut is raised on the Chief Minister. The appel has been called for. I invite Members to return to their seats. I ask the Greffier to open the voting. If all Members have had the opportunity of casting their votes, and I asked the Greffier to close the voting. I can announce that the principles have been adopted:

POUR: 44		CONTRE: 1		ABSTAINED: 0
Connétable of St. Lawrence		Deputy K.F. Morel		
Connétable of St. Brelade				
Connétable of Trinity				
Connétable of St. Peter				
Connétable of St. Martin				
Connétable of St. John				
Connétable of Grouville				
Connétable of St. Mary				
Connétable of St. Saviour				
Deputy G.P. Southern				
Deputy M. Tadier				
Deputy S.G. Luce				
Deputy L.M.C. Doublet				
Deputy M.R. Le Hegarat				
Deputy S.M. Ahier				

Deputy R.J. Ward				
Deputy C.S. Alves				
Deputy I. Gardiner				
Deputy I.J. Gorst				
Deputy L.J. Farnham				
Deputy K.L. Moore				
Deputy S.Y. Mézec				
Deputy P.F.C. Ozouf				
Deputy Sir P.M. Bailhache				
Deputy T.A. Coles				
Deputy B.B. de S.V.M. Porée				
Deputy D.J. Warr				
Deputy H.M. Miles				
Deputy M.R. Scott				
Deputy J. Renouf				
Deputy C.D. Curtis				
Deputy L.V. Feltham				
Deputy R.E. Binet				
Deputy H.L. Jeune				
Deputy M.E. Millar				
Deputy A. Howell				
Deputy T.J.A. Binet				
Deputy M.R. Ferey				
Deputy R.S. Kovacs				
Deputy A.F. Curtis				
Deputy B. Ward				
Deputy K.M. Wilson				
Deputy L.K.F. Stephenson				
Deputy M.B. Andrews				

The Deputy Greffier of the States:

Deputy Morel voted contre.

The Deputy Bailiff:

Deputy Miles, does the Corporate Services Scrutiny Panel wish to scrutinise this matter?

Deputy H.M. Miles of St. Brelade (Chair, Corporate Services Scrutiny Panel):

After what happened yesterday, the answer is yes, Sir, we will be calling this in. But I would undertake to do this as quickly as possible.

The Deputy Bailiff:

A date must be set when the Second Reading will take place no more than 4 meetings' time. When do you propose? There is a meeting at the end of June and there is one in early July.

Deputy H.M. Miles:

Did you say 4 meetings' time?

The Deputy Bailiff:

No more than 4 meetings time. There are 2 meetings in June and one in July, and then of course we are into the autumn.

Deputy H.M. Miles:

Let us go for the end of June, but obviously if we are able to bring it back sooner, we will bring it back sooner.

The Deputy Bailiff:

Yes. So deferred to the end of June.

Deputy I.J. Gorst:

Sir, I note that there is an amendment to one of the Articles, and I wonder if the chair of the C.S.S.P. might also consider reviewing that amendment in the course of the panel's work, please.

Deputy H.M. Miles:

Yes, that was my understanding.

2. Social rents plan to reduce rental stress for tenants (P.29/2025)

The Deputy Bailiff:

Yes, thank you. The next item is Social rents plan to reduce rental stress for tenants, lodged by Deputy Kovacs. The main respondent is the Minister for Housing. Deputy Kovacs, there is an amendment lodged by the Minister. Do you accept this amendment?

Deputy R.S. Kovacs of St. Saviour:

Yes, Sir.

The Deputy Bailiff:

Are Members content for the proposition to be read as amended?

Deputy A.F. Curtis of St. Clement:

No, Sir.

The Deputy Bailiff:

Thank you very much. In that case, we will deal with the ...

Deputy P.F.C. Ozouf of St. Saviour:

May I ask, about this amendment? Is this a Government amendment that has the support of the Council of Ministers? Just that I understand that Deputy ...

The Deputy Bailiff:

You will learn in due course the answer to that question, I imagine. I do not know the answer to that question. I ask the Greffier to read the proposition in its original form.

The Deputy Greffier of the States:

The States are asked to decide whether they are of opinion – to agree that, from January 2027, social housing rents should be set at a rate that does not put tenants in rental stress and to request the Minister for Housing (in consultation with the Minister for Treasury and Resources) to plan a revised housing rental policy on the basis of this principle and to bring that policy to the Assembly for endorsement by January 2026.

2.1 Deputy R.S. Kovacs:

The proposition before you today is simple in wording, but profound in implication. It asks this Assembly to agree to one clear principle, that social housing rent in Jersey should not push people into rental stress. This is not a theoretical debate. For many tenants, it is a matter of daily survival. The stress of opening a rent bill and realising that paying it means cutting back on food, heating or essentials for their child. I brought this proposition forward after 2 key moments. First, seeing the 2024 Jersey Opinion and Lifestyle Survey, which showed that over half of our social housing tenants are struggling with rent, even with support from benefits. Second, a media article about social rents in the Isle of Man where similar flats, even by the same developer, are being let at around a third of the cost of equivalent units here in Jersey. This raised the fundamental question, how did we end up in a position where our safety net - social housing - is pushing people into poverty? Let us look at the facts. The average social rent in 2023 was £1,118 per month, unaffordable for many pensioners and low-income families; 24 per cent of people live in households earning below 60 per cent of the median after housing costs; 38 per cent of low income households are pensioners. Those in the lowest income decile are spending up to 56 per cent of their income on rent, even after benefits and 53 per cent of social tenants still say their rent is unaffordable. This tells us one thing. The system, even with its good intentions, is not working the way it should. Our current model is based on cost recovery, covering loans, maintenance and past under-investment. But the burden of that cost is falling directly on tenants, many of whom are now paying not just for their homes, but for decades of neglect and delay. Estates like Le Squez and Ann Court and others were left to decay. When the solution finally came, we borrowed to rebuild and those loans are now being repaid through rents. In effect, tenants who lived through that period of under-investment are now being charged to fix it. Income support helps, and I do not dismiss its value, but it masks the problem rather than solves it. You cannot fix structural issues with just temporary subsidies. What we need is a shift in principle. This proposition does not ask the Assembly to set a specific rent cap or implement instant changes, it asks us to support the direction that social rents must be generally affordable. That tenants should not need state support just to survive in a system designed for affordability, and that housing policy must be built on dignity, fairness and long-term sustainability, not just financial spreadsheets. I want to accept the Minister's amendment because it preserves the heart of the proposition while enabling the proper review process, while not tying the hands of the next Assembly and informing the decision of the plans that will be brought. Consultation, financial modelling, tenant engagement and practical planning for the future would be with that. As I said, this is not about tying future Ministers' hands, it is about giving this issue the urgency and direction it demands. Yes, this is a complex process. Yes, it will take time. But if we do not take this step now, we are simply going to keep spinning the wheels of a broken system, relying on subsidies to paper over unaffordable rents. We need to ask ourselves if the housing model is not viable without setting rents people cannot afford then it is the model, not the people, that need to change. This proposition is an important starting point, I would say. It opens the door to policies that align social rent with what people can reasonably pay and ensures that social housing delivers real social value. This Assembly has often said that housing is a priority. This is a chance to show we mean it. By backing this principle today we take a thoughtful, necessary step towards a more just, stable and affordable housing system for all of Jersey, allowing the Minister for Housing to bring back viable plans to address these issues without impacting development. I make the proposition.

The Deputy Bailiff:

Thank you, Deputy. Is the proposition seconded? [**Seconded**] Thank you very much.

2.2 Social rents plan to reduce rental stress for tenants (P.29/2025): amendment (P.29/2025 Amd.)

The Deputy Bailiff:

There is an amendment lodged by the Minister for Housing, and I ask the Greffier to read that amendment.

The Deputy Greffier of the States:

After the words “to agree” insert the words “with the principle”. After the word “that,” delete the words “from January 2027,” and insert the word “the”. After the words “social housing rents” insert the words “ and system and income support policies”. After the word “should” delete the words “be set at a rate that does”. After the words “in consultation with the Minister for Treasury and Resources” insert the words “and Minister for Social Security”. For the words “plan for a revised housing rental policy” substitute the words “assess options for a revised social housing rental policy”. For the words “to bring that policy to the Assembly for endorsement by January 2026” substitute the words “to present those options to the Assembly by January 2026, to inform future decisions of the Assembly”.

2.2.1 Deputy S.Y. Mézec of St. Helier South (The Minister for Housing):

I am very grateful for Deputy Kovacs for bringing forward her proposition. I think that she touches on something that will be of great interest to many people across our Island. I would say that it is very timely in that we have very recently celebrated the 10-year anniversary of the establishment of Andium Homes, something that I think history now teaches us was a very good thing to have done, and something that will have benefited many Islanders in the improvement in the quality of the homes they live in, and a building programme, which is providing more and more homes for people who need them. Deputy Kovacs is right, though, that when Andium was established, it came at a point where there had been decades, I think it is fair to say, of social housing in Jersey not being managed properly, not being invested in at the rates it should have been. In order to overcome that and facilitate the creation of Andium and the new model for Jersey, a rents policy was put in place, which was put in place for that moment in time and the judgment of those around at the time that it was the right thing to do. We are now 10 years on from then, so let us have a look at it to see if it is still fit for purpose, to see if there are tweaks that could be made to improve it, to see if there is a better balance that could be come up with that meets the needs of tenants to not be put into rental stress, while supporting the broader financial model of Andium and its ability to deliver its building programme. So what is being asked to conduct that review, I regard as a useful exercise.

[10:00]

Following discussions with the Minister for Social Security, the Minister for Treasury and Resources and the proposer of the proposition, I think we basically managed to workshop a wording on this that I think better fits for the moment to enable us to do this work without tying our hands behind our back and committing us to actions in the future that fit a timetable we might not be ready to consider, or without asking Members to agree to the wholesale reform of the social housing rent system without knowing what those changes will be. I am very grateful to Deputy Kovacs for supporting that and indicating to the Assembly that she is happy to accept the amendment. I would love to know if there was any specific reason, beyond his absolute democratic right on this, if Deputy Alex Curtis had particular concerns about it because I would have wanted to have tried to address them in my opening speech. But of course I will be happy to do that in a closing one if he has particular points or argument he would like to make as to whether the amendment is suitable. But I would urge Members to support the amendment because it does better enable me, as Minister for Housing, to conduct a review of the social housing rent system and do that in consultation, not just with the Minister for Treasury and

Resources, but with the Minister for Social Security, who is responsible for income support policies, which are inevitably going to be a part of this. Also to highlight to Members that this amended version of the proposition would result in me bringing a report to the Assembly before the end of this term of office, and it is not tying our hands to agreeing in this moment in time to any future reform later on without knowing what the implications are of that. It simply gives me the authorisation to go ahead and do some work about what is possible, and in finding out what is possible, Members then can think whether any changes are necessary, but we are not tying our hands to do that. That is why we came to the conclusion all round that this amendment would be a good way forward on this. So I make the amendment.

The Deputy Bailiff:

Thank you, Deputy. Is the amendment seconded? **[Seconded]** Does anyone wish to speak on the amendment?

Deputy M.B. Andrews of St. Helier North:

Sorry, Sir, I just want to declare I have an interest. I am an Andium tenant. I think it is probably best that I abstain, because I just do not think it would be right if I vote on something that potentially could benefit me.

Deputy M. Tadier of St. Brelade:

Is there a requirement to abstain? Could you rule on that? It is an interest shared by a large member of the public, albeit not of States Members.

The Deputy Bailiff:

I will just consult Standing Order 106. Certainly, any interest in terms of being an Andium tenant, as it is shared with a large number of people, would not prevent anyone from voting on this proposition. I do not think in the circumstances it is necessary for a Member to declare an interest, but if he or she wishes to do so as an Andium tenant they may, but they are certainly able to vote on this proposition, and indeed speak upon it, if they wish. Does any other Member wish to speak on this proposition?

2.2.2 Deputy A.F. Curtis of St. Clement:

Firstly, I would like to thank Deputy Kovacs for raising with the Assembly an important topic and question, as is her right to do so in a proposition. The Minister has proposed amendment and, as he said, it is our right to debate that separately. I have to say, I do not think it is right that the Assembly would have taken this as amended without a debate. The proposition is dramatic. Members will read that either way. It is dramatic in a progressive sense. It is dramatic in a sense that it proposes change very quickly. But that is what the proposer asked for. They asked for clear dates, they asked for a very clear requirement, and they provided their reasoning and their rationale in what was a multipage report with statistics data and their urge. The result of a Ministerial amendment is, in essence, to water it down so far that we may ask why we are debating this. The Minister, in proposing his amendment, said that it is a good thing that we do this. I would agree that the principle to which he most spoke about, which was that of evaluating how our social housing system is funded, and ultimately the cost of that, that is a really important job. I wish we had someone to do that. We do. He is called the Minister for Housing. That sounds like business as usual to me. Reviewing how social housing works, whether it still is appropriate to the needs of the Island, to those who use that service, should be business as usual. I think it is a genuine question. We are ultimately asking to accept something that in some ways is so benign, I do not see the value in doing so. We have a chance to take a really poignant vote, if we vote unamended on this. We can decide do we agree with Deputy Kovacs or do we let the Minister for Housing follow his usual work of reviewing social housing. That is my first question. My second one is, this gives the Minister 3 bites at the cherry to talk today, and I think that is really important. If I did not do this, I am sure he will have a lot of

valuable things to say, including explaining in more detail, perhaps than just his opening, what was wrong with the first proposition, the value in amending it, and also maybe a little more detail as to how he engaged with the proposer prior to any lodging. I think that is really important to understand, notwithstanding the fact that the Minister and the proposer are in the same party. We know, and it is a credit to them that they work really well together as a party to bring cohesive propositions to the Assembly, which have had so much success. I do not say this negatively. It is interesting to read a proposition, quite frankly, from one party member amended so drastically by the other. I do not say this to be negative or to have a go at either the mover of the original proposition or the amender, but it is something we have to talk about here to understand the processes behind what is happening in this Assembly, how the Assembly can work valuably together to make good propositions and work with the Government or challenge the Government. I think that is a conversation we need to have. This amendment, as I say, is such a dulling down of the actual contents that we almost do not get to have that debate now. I say it dulls it down, but in some ways it also does not. The amendment still keeps in the phrase: "To agree with the principle that the social housing rents system and income support policies should not put tenants in rental stress." That sets anybody who disagrees with that up for a fantastic attack on austerity, on increasing inequality. Because let us be honest, at a principle level we do not want anyone in our society in rental stress. We do not want anybody to have a hard chance to live on this Island. We know there are challenges. So how in the world could anybody disagree with that? I take a challenge with that when we move to the original proposition. The original proposition opens by defining rental stress. It says: "Rental stress is defined in the *Housing Affordability in Jersey* 2015 document as where individuals or families spend more than 30 per cent of their gross income on housing costs leading to financial hardship and instability." Are we agreeing that the principle that those in social housing should not be put in a position, either by lowering rent or increasing income support, that their gross income, no more than 30 per cent of that, goes on their housing? Well, we are not because the Minister in his amendment in the report says "My amendment therefore proposes a high-level review of the social housing rents policy as a first step, including (a) understanding the policy intent behind the use of the rental stress calculation, examining its application and relevance in the context of Jersey." So we are agreeing to the principle of a definition of a phrase the Minister wants to review as part of his review. I find that quite hard to understand. The principle of we do not want rental stress. No. Now what are we defining that principle by so this Assembly is united in which way the Minister goes. But we are not agreeing that, we are agreeing for the Minister to question that, to understand its applicability. That is quite a dangerous thing. Members may walk away today saying this Assembly believes one thing. We believe that no person should be put in rental stress. They will all leave perhaps with 49 definitions of what that means, until the Minister comes back. I do not say that lightly, because when we put something down as an in-principle decision this Assembly quite rightly holds weight to that, and we will be standing here with 49, or maybe 30 or 25, definitions of rental stress, and a Minister setting that through review to a principle we have already agreed. That does not feel like a good process to me. That is a challenge. Lastly, the challenge I have is this review may be coming too soon, or if it does, it is missing elements. I highlighted yesterday in an oral question to the Minister the importance of data. Deputy Kovacs rightly highlighted the challenges that Andium had to face, as did other social housing providers as they purchased land at very low costs obviously to reinvest, that building and upscaling the quality of social housing took ... sorry, Sir, I will just pause there, because I was just getting a little distracted. Social housing providers have had to invest an awful lot of money. We saw the quantum of that in a written question Deputy Andrews asked. I think the total liability of borrowing on Andium, and he may nod, is in the region of £400 million across the revolving credit facility, across a private bond, and across the bond and loan from government. That is a significant amount of money, and to an extent costs incurred, historic costs, as Deputy Kovacs says, are not there to be fully borne by the renter but they do have to be borne somewhere. The Minister could not give an answer yesterday as to what it costs to build a one-bedroom flat, nor a 2-bedroom flat, nor a 3-bedroom home. That might sound reassuring that he is happy that Andium can provide that assurance to him but I personally find

it quite concerning that we are fundamentally agreeing a definition ... or not agreeing a definition, we are agreeing a principle to something we do not have a definition of, when we do not even know what it costs to build a house and the impact that this will have on our housing providers. Are we setting ourselves up for a situation that we fail to invest again because we no longer can invest in that accommodation? Will it go down in quality and will we see a return to the lower-quality accommodation we had and the reason we set up Andium in the first place? Will it be borne by the taxpayer? If the Minister for Treasury and Resources could no longer accept a £30 million dividend, where will she get that money from? Deputy Mézec in his summing up might say: "That is a point of a review." I would say that is a point of business as usual, working out the machinery of government as to how the Minister for Housing ensures the best provision of social housing in conjunction with his Ministers on a daily basis. Lastly, I do want to understand the intent behind amending this, as I have said, the Minister forging his own path. I have to say I am reminded to a recent proposition by Deputy Warr. Deputy Warr had a principle in mind, his principle was that the asset cap for social rented housing was wrong; he believed it should be different. He proposed within that detail ... his detail was, remind me, £80,000 up to £200,000. He made maybe some omissions in what he proposed. He did not propose to put them in band 3, they would have fallen anywhere and there was a slight challenge in that. A Minister could read into this and the Minister could say: "I see where you are going, it is noble, it is where I want to go too and I am going to amend it. I will agree with the principle and I will bring the Minister's tax on top of this and understanding." The Minister did not, the Minister voted it down, urged the Assembly to vote it down and say: "Follow me, I have got a path and it is in train." Did the Minister not have this work in train? Are we to expect the Minister has been in the role for 12 months and not done this work? I really want to know in his summing up, what was so different between Deputy Warr's proposition and Deputy Kovacs's? Why has he taken a different approach to co-operation versus combat? Because it is important, no matter what this Assembly go through - and we have been through times - that we do work together and I want to hear that. If we vote for this amendment we are ultimately voting, as I say, not just for something that could be read as relatively benign but something with a huge amount of ambiguity in there. If we vote against it we allow Deputy Kovacs the floor to sum up and those to speak really against some hard principles, and I think that is a more valuable debate. The Minister will do this work anyway. If we accept the amendment the debate will be washed through, I reckon 3 or 4 people might speak very lightly because there is not much substance to talk on, other than the ambiguity I mentioned. Let us have a proper debate. I suggest Members do not accept this amendment. We hear a full debate. We respect those who speak and value them for bringing these to the Assembly.

[10:15]

We vote how we do and we let the Minister get on with his job.

2.2.3 Deputy M.R. Scott of St. Brelade:

The previous speaker raised some interesting points, which I believe can be considered whether we are voting on an amended proposition or not. I am just going to speak to why it is better amended rather than not amended in my view, and of course the Minister for Housing can come up with his own justifications. But, first of all, Deputy Alex Curtis mentioned the definition of rental stress. I think that is something that needs to be explored. Because I was thinking about the definition and if we are just looking at the straight percentage of income, I realised that when I was working as a trainee lawyer in London most of my income did go on rent. But I did have enough to lead a reasonably comfortable lifestyle from what was left over. The actual percentage itself perhaps is not really the determinant. I do think that looking at the principle and what we mean by that and where we can really say: "Are people in rental stress?" is worth looking at. The other point - and I think we all agree this as a community - we would like Jersey to be affordable for everyone. When it comes to the rents that are in place or what is going on in this Island, some can afford it, some cannot and there is a cost to making it affordable for everybody. Generally, when I have tried to bring

propositions to try and help people who are not finding things affordable, particularly pensioners, the policy principle I keep coming across is we do not want to put up pensions for everybody because some people do not need the pensions put up; that is why we have income support. Then we can look at all the individuals and we can decide who really needs some help and who does not. Then we can manage public finances better. I think that the merit of the amendment, whether you choose to vote on the amended proposition or not, is that it does invite a more holistic way of a joined-up thinking way whereby the Minister for Housing would be consulting and working together with the Minister for Social Security. Because we already know that some people might not technically be able to afford their rent but they get income support so, therefore, they can afford it. Because of our way in which we support people in this community generally through income support, that is the way it works. I think there are other questions about the whole Andium funding mechanism and these things which, should it be the rate it is at the moment or not, when you bring into account how much housing do we need. All those things need to be considered. But, generally, I would suggest to Members that they should support the amendment and then perhaps the Minister for Housing can ... I think there has been, dare I say it, a suggestion of favouritism here, that maybe the Minister for Housing has worked with this amendment because it has been a fellow party member. He can answer all that if this amendment is accepted accordingly in his summing-up speech.

2.2.4 Deputy M. Tadier:

I wonder, listening to the speech of Deputy Alex Curtis, whom I normally listen to and enjoy listening to but always listen to attentively, if we are reading the same amendment. Because I do not see anything problematic with the amendment; quite the contrary. In fact I think the proposition is good and I think the amendment makes this much better. It allows for much more flexibility and allows for a much more holistic approach to be taken. Because we are talking on the amendment at the moment, I would like to say why I think the amendment is better for all of us, not just from a Ministerial point of view but to try and get to the point of maybe understanding the problem that we have got and allowing the Minister ... and it could be a future Minister of course; the work may not all be done in this term. Again, that is recognised, I think, by this current Minister for Housing. I think it is really important that income support policies are also taken into account, something which was not in the original but something which I know the Minister has been in conversation with the proposer, it absolutely makes sense to make sure that income support policies are taken into account. Why is that? It is because we know that there are not sufficient resources within the current social housing stock, whether that is in Andium or in the other trusts that provide housing, to support the overwhelming need that there is in Jersey. We know that the private sector, therefore, has to fulfil a certain social function. It is Income Support that pick up the bill. Ultimately the taxpayer picks up the bill for that through the subsidy that goes, ultimately, to private landlords. I have yet to receive the actual up-to-date figures but I know that historically it has always been a figure of around about £10 million of income support money that goes to pay for tenants who are in the private sector. The tenants themselves do not keep that money, that goes to the landlords; that is why we talk about £10 million of taxpayers' money going to subsidise private landlords. Do we think that is a good idea? It may be, it may not be. But it is certainly a necessary evil at the moment and it is something that, I think, needs to be taken into account in any wholesale review that is going on about rental stress. I promised a tenant, a St. Helier resident, who has come to me over the years and highlighted a particular issue which was an unfairness. It was particularly problematic, especially when the income support components for housing were set at a much lower level than were realistic. We had this strange situation when income support would cover Andium tenants' rents fully, even if they were above the income support component that would be provided to a private tenant; I hope that makes sense. For example, if you are a tenant who is in the private sector, it might be because you are a single man or a single person who is under 65 without a disability, no children, effectively social housing will say to you: "You are not eligible, you have to go and find somewhere in the private sector." It may well be that you rent a one-bedroom flat or more likely a studio apartment and that

your rent could be the same or less than an Andium property, but the Andium property would be fully covered by income support. But if you were in the private sector it would not be, and that is still the case today. There are anomalies that need to be taken into consideration, especially if the Minister is to look at areas of rental stress and what that means. I am not just applying it to Andium tenants or perhaps even social housing tenants but to those who are latent, who would like to be social housing tenants who are provided for in the marketplace, so to speak. I think it is absolutely correct that that is taken into account. I will just look at some of the other parts and the advantages that are being proposed. Of course there is an inclusion here for the Minister for Social Security to be included in this: "To assess options for a revised social housing rental policy." Why I think that is really important is that of course there are lots of iterations that are possible. The current model that has prevailed up until now was one of 90 per cent of market rates for Andium. I think, is the current policy 80 per cent? I am not sure ... yes, that is where we are now. But of course the real argument is why a social housing price is being linked to the market at all because of course we do not have any control over the market. The forces that affects market rents and the vagaries of that do not really necessarily have any meaning to where social rents should be set. I think that there needs to be a much more flexible approach or certainly it would be beneficial for any Minister for Housing to look at the approaches that social housing could take. I will give an example, so if somebody is an Andium tenant and they come into a lot of money, what do we do? Do we kick them out? The policy is that, no, we do not, we let them stay there, and I think that is probably the right policy. Certainly if you have got lots of housing stock you would want to do that. It becomes slightly a problem if somebody is in Andium Homes who could afford to rent in the private sector. But what you might want to say to them is that: "We recognise that this has been your home for the last 20 years. Just because your circumstances have changed financially for the better we are not going to kick you out. We will allow you to stay." But it may well be that it is appropriate for them to pay a higher rate of rent. It might well be that Andium would want to charge them a market rate on that. Rather than obliging them to have to pay 80 per cent of the market rate, you might want to have a means test which would allow in certain circumstances for those tenants to be able to pay 100 per cent of rent. But the trade-off is that they get to keep that property, their home, as Deputy Ward would want me to say because that is what it is for them, rather than moving out. But it is a trade-off for them and if they do not like that offer they could of course go and seek something in the private sector. That additional money which they can afford to pay could then go back in to cross-subsidise those who might only be able to afford a percentage of their income. We really should be allowing the Minister and the Ministerial team to look at this in the round because I think it is more complex than meets the eye. I do not think that any one of us has the answer to solving the issue of rental stress. But the point is that rental stress does not just affect those in social housing, it really does affect those in the private rental sector as well, including those who are on income support. But of course there is a bigger picture out there for those who do not get access to income support who are paying very high prices for their rentals and, ultimately, they will need to be brought into the considerations in the future. I think a valiant effort from Deputy Alex Curtis who did ask some valid questions. What about this, what about that? Ultimately, I think this amendment is the right thing to do. It does allow for a more holistic consideration of the issues. Clearly, it is also something that is supported by the mover of the proposition.

2.2.5 Deputy P.M. Bailhache of St. Clement:

I thought that Deputy Curtis's speech was spot on, if I may say so. If I may encapsulate what I think he was saying, it is that it is important that we should know what we are voting for, what we are agreeing to when we come to vote on a proposition of this kind. It is very difficult, as Deputy Mézec says, to disagree with the principle that tenants should not suffer rental stress. Who could disagree with that? Of course there are issues as to what rental stress means. I know that there is a definition which has been put in the proposition but there are others that could be adopted as well. But my problem in particular with the amendment is that it seems to me that the answer lies not in the social

housing rental system, which sets a maximum of 80 per cent of market rent; that maximum is important because it underlines fairness as between the social housing sector and the private rental sector. It seems to me the answer to any problem that there might be lies much more in the income support system. But that, unfortunately, is not what the amendment says. The amendment can be divided into 2 parts. Firstly, it says: “To agree with the principle that the social housing rent system and income support policies should not put tenants in rental stress.” I could not disagree with that. Then it goes on: “And to request the Minister for Housing to assess options for a revised social housing rental policy on the basis of this principle.” But that may not be the answer. It may be the answer lies in the income support system, but that is not what we are being asked to agree with this amendment. The other very significant factor, again touched on by Deputy Curtis, is the question of cost. I have a concern that we are advancing here by stealth. Amendments of this kind and indeed propositions too have financial consequences; what will it cost to do what perhaps we wish to achieve? I do not personally want to agree to any principle without knowing what the cost of it is.

[10:30]

I hope that does not sound too negative. It seems to me that the Minister for Housing has an absolute right to conduct a review of the system off his own bat. He does not need a resolution of the Assembly to achieve that. He has the power to consider all these issues and to come back to the Assembly with a fully costed proposal which we can then consider.

2.2.6 Deputy I. Gardiner of St. Helier North:

I am grateful for all speakers ahead of me and my speech probably will take a minute. The Minister for Social Security just left the Chamber and if somebody can update her because there are questions to the Minister for Social Security and I hope she would be speaking in this debate. I rise to speak to raise questions based on the speeches. My first question would be to the Minister for Social Security, what discussion she had with the Minister for Housing and if it was to define the framework or define the boundaries of the review of the income support policy that was added to the amendment in the proposition? For example, has it been a discussion that an income support policy review in line with the housing would include residents under 5 years? Would this include residents under 10 years, who are allowed to work but not allowed to access the houses? Would it include residents that are just above the threshold to access social housing but they are still experiencing, I would think, rental stress day to day? What I would like to understand, what discussions the Minister for Social Security had with the Minister for Housing when it was proposed to review the income support policies? What will be the reference of this review? Another question that I have and I would like to understand from the Minister in his closing speech, in his view, why he amended was clear for me, the intention of Deputy Kovacs to have an endorsement by the Assembly in 2026. If I interpret it correctly, we will have a debate and we can amend and we can make a decision of the Assembly ... in my interpretation, endorsement by 2026 compared to options will be presented to the Assembly. Will they present it as a report and if somebody will pick up or will there be a debate on why it was important to amend this part and if the Minister envisages changes coming from January 2027?

2.2.7 Deputy M.E. Millar of St. John, St. Lawrence and Trinity:

I would like to speak in support of the Minister for Housing’s amendment. I will be honest, I would not support this proposition if it was not amended. I would find it very, very difficult - and I have discussed this with the Minister - I would find it very difficult to agree to a matter of principle without fully understanding the implications and the impacts and the consequences intended and unintended of doing so. We have to bear in mind that this proposition does not just affect Andium, it affects all of our other social housing providers and also affects the Parishes to the extent they have social housing on their books that they make available to parishioners. The Minister has emphasised the complexity of a review that by necessity will require looking at both income support regime, which is very sophisticated in its operation and the social rent policy. It is worth reminding ourselves that

the previous such review that results in the incorporation of Andium Homes took several years. Deputy Tadier has also commented on the complexities of this question. Therefore, as a consequence, however well-intentioned Deputy Kovacs's proposition may be, the timelines within it would be unachievable, is my understanding. I am assured by the Minister for Housing that a preliminary view of options will be achievable within the timeframe specified in this amendment. I am further assured by the Minister that what will return to this Assembly will be no more than options and that may provide guidance to a future Assembly and will not bind that Assembly. It is a discussion for another date. It is worth putting on record my concerns that in reviewing options we should not approve anything that will negatively impact the business holders of Andium or the other social housing providers, including the Parishes. We need them to maintain their homes to a decent home standards by comprehensive maintenance programmes. In the case of Andium, we want them to continue their capital development programme. Deputy Curtis and in fact Deputy Moore yesterday both commented on Andium's £400 million of borrowing; that is the case. I am confident that that can be repaid but we must ensure that it is repaid. We must consider the implications for Andium carefully, and I would expect that their board will almost certainly be required to put repayment of debt above new building and maintenance if it came to that decision. The impact on Andium is very important. I have also discussed with the Minister that I would find it impossible to approve anything that required Andium and other social housing providers to undertake means testing in order to assess rental stress. That is the job of income support, and they have the mechanisms and the staff and the systems to do that. If social housing providers were asked to look at means testing it would make them more inefficient and significantly increase their costs. In any event, in my view, rents should follow the nature and the value of the property and not the means of a tenant. I think there are issues in doing that - and just these are some of my thoughts - that will come forward in the final debate. At various points in my life I have heard people saying things like: "In the U.K. (United Kingdom), well I could get a new job but that will take me into the higher tax bracket, so it is not worth my while, so I am not going to try and get a better job." Over here I have heard people say: "I could apply for a better job at a managerial grade but then I will get overtime; it is not worth my while." I think there is a risk here that by tying rents to income we have people saying: "I could get a new job but my rent will go up, so I am not going to bother." There are numerous issues that have to be considered here. That is the reason why I support the Minister's amendment, because I could not support the proposition. Since we are discussing a review to determine potential options, one of which could of course be to retain the status quo, I would urge Members to support the proposition as amended.

2.2.8 Deputy J. Renouf of St. Brelade:

I think once again we are indebted to Deputy Alex Curtis for bringing up some very important issues. The nub of the issue for me is that the Minister is free to do everything in this amendment anyway. He does not need our permission.

The Deputy Bailiff:

Whose device was that, the loud noise it made? Any volunteers? We must be careful to have our machines on silent at all times I think. It is distracting for speakers.

Deputy J. Renouf:

I do not think he needs our permission to review the rental policy. If this amendment is defeated he can still get on and do everything that is in the amendment. The Assembly cannot take away the Minister's duties as a Minister. He can still, and the amendment says: "Assess options for a revised social housing rental policy." That is surely something that the Minister for Housing is empowered to do regardless of whether this amendment is passed or not. He can do that in line with whatever view he wishes to take about rental stress and the wider issues around the rental market and Andium's viability. It was interesting to hear Deputy Millar's argument that the reason she wants to support

this amendment is because she cannot support the original proposition. That makes it feel to me like this amendment is a little fudged to enable the Council of Ministers to unite behind something and rather reinforces the point made by Deputy Alex Curtis that the original proposition has been stripped of all meaning in order to create an acceptable compromise. There is nothing of great substance in this amendment and the only reason it seems to be supported by the Government is because it does very little. The reason to vote against this amendment - and this, I think, is the absolutely key point - is to force a debate on the original proposition, which is a much more substantive, much more interesting, much more significant, possibly more controversial proposition but, nevertheless, involves some very meaty issues. I think we can have our cake and eat it. The Minister for Housing can do what he wants to do and we can have a debate about the much more substantive issues in the original proposition. I think that would be a reasonable reason for voting against this amendment and pursuing the original proposition.

2.2.9 Deputy K.F. Morel of St. John, St. Lawrence and Trinity:

It is just really to ask a question, if the Minister might respond in his summing up. It was just the Minister in his report says that he will: "Bring policy options for the Assembly's careful consideration and endorsement by January 2026." While I appreciate that can be done for a report, when it comes to actual debate and voting in the Assembly we cannot, as I understand it, really vote on options in the Assembly. We can only vote on one thing and then a yes or a no. To me, I cannot see how the Assembly can vote on options; you are presented with options in that way. I would be very pleased if the Minister could explain how he plans to present options to be voted upon by the Assembly.

2.2.10 Deputy L.K.F. Stephenson of St. Mary, St. Ouen and St. Peter:

I am pleased to follow Deputy Morel because that is one of the questions on my list too, and I do have a number of questions that I really hope that the Minister can respond to at the end. I do hope he has got a pen, there are quite a few questions going on here. But I would just start with a comment first that I am really pleased that we are back to calling a spade a spade and we have got a review called a review, rather than an evaluation. But now on to the questions, my first one is similar to Deputy Morel's one and I would like to know how the Minister envisages bringing those options back and whether they are options that the Assembly can choose to say A, B, C, for example. I would also like to know whether he envisages the existing system as being one of the options. Also, whether it comes with a commitment to engage with Members ahead of any such debate because I think something like this, if we are then going to be voting on options or even a single option, I think it is a duty of everyone in this Assembly to really put some hard work into properly understanding it, because it is a very big area of work. Which I think brings me on to my final question, which is around the comments made about resourcing of this piece of work. The amendment states that there is no need for extra resources and it will be undertaken from within existing capacity, time and staff like. I would just like to understand from the Minister a little bit more about how that is possible. There is a comment in the report that accompanies the amendment, and if no one minds I will read it. It says: "It should be noted that this review is consistent with the commitment that the Council of Ministers has made within the Common Strategic Policy 2024-2026 to review the social housing rents policy." My final 3 questions are to the Minister for Housing, has work on that C.S.P. (Common Strategic Policy) commitment started and at what stage is it, if it has started? If it has not started, why has it not started?

2.2.11 Deputy P.F.C. Ozouf of St. Saviour:

I also celebrate the 10-year anniversary of the founding of Andium. It was such a good day to remove the responsibilities of the Minister for Housing for what we used to call in this Assembly the dripping tap, just as the Minister for Health and Social Services is making proposals that he is a policy individual and not simply running the Executive.

[10:45]

We were trying in those days to pull a policy off a policy Minister because we knew that housing was so important. Because housing stress has been a stressful issue for generations, decades of Islanders. We thought what we were doing by separating and putting Andium into a separate entity, having a board ... I think we can all salute and commend the work that Andium have been doing in terms of not only dealing with the prejudice of you used to live in state housing, and that was in the accent of a well-esteemed Member who I joined. It was pejorative but now we do not have that, and that is a system which is really good. Andium have delivered, effectively, equality and fairness in terms of what they deliver. But there has been a flaw since the start of this, and this goes to the heart of the amendment of why I am really quite - I do not know - I think, flabbergasted, then I was surprised and now I am confused as to what the Minister for Housing is doing here. I also thank very much Deputy Alex Curtis and the other Members, Deputy Bailhache and Deputy Renouf, for asking. Because really what are we doing here? We have got a Minister for Housing that is supposed to be responsible for policy. I would like to remind the Minister for Housing that in the last 10 years since the creation of Andium, the private sector rental rent ... because I think what is being driven at here - and the Minister can say whether or not he is really after this - is it really a stealth proposition to bring down the percentage of the social rents the social renter pays by income support? Is that really? I suspect that is where we are heading. I suspect that the problem is that the Minister did not like the 90 per cent, he did not like the 80 per cent and now they have got problems with people with stress on 70 per cent. I agree there is a problem. There may well be a problem with private sector rents having increased since those days of Andium 10 years ago by 50 per cent. In the last 5 years rentals have risen by 25 per cent. Even after adjusting for inflation, that means that increases in rentals have been 10 per cent to 12 per cent more in real terms; that is a burden. I understand why people are in stress. But of course it is not only housing stress, as we discussed yesterday in this Assembly, it is the cost of living. Basically there are people in housing that are in more stress because of their circumstances. Just to make this absolutely clear about what we are dealing with, in 2019 the average rental for a 2-bedroom flat was about £1,400, now today the figure is at £1,750. That is an increase of £350 a month; that is more than £4,000 a year. For a 3-bedroom house the typical rent 5 years ago, just 5 years ago, was £1,850, now it is £2,300, an increase of £500. Wages have not gone up by that much, no matter what income and other earnings are. That is equivalent to a second car, that is equivalent to a term's school fees; that is equivalent to making the difference between making ends meet and going into debt for other families. What the real debate is, which I think is what Members want, is what is driving this? What is driving the stress? Have we had a debate about what driving this stress is about? Can we simply carry on passing money, public money? Because I think this is where the policy is going because we have got Reform, which I fully accept, they are in Government, they are in the majority Government. We have got the Minister for Housing and Minister for Social Security and a Back-Bencher, well-intentioned. My good Deputy friend from St. Saviour is seeing the people in rental stress and in other stress that we are seeing. But what are we tackling? Are we just going to simply allow this almost elephant in the room of why rentals are going up and not say why families are struggling? I know why, I think we all know why. It is because the Bridging Island Plan did not put enough supply. When we originally put Andium rents in place, I think it was the Minister for Treasury and Resources, Deputy Gorst was the Chief Minister, we put 90 per cent. We put the right checks and balances in place so we would get the Minister for Housing to deliver on the big portfolio of making sure that we not only had the supply but we also had all the mechanisms in place to provide a whole range of 10 years of accommodation, not just social renting. The ability to have affordable homes to buy, first-time buyers, down-size homes, identifying, as Deputy Warr did the other day, those hidden households of those older people who we had forgotten, and I commend Deputy Warr for doing that. What is the Minister for Housing up to? Is he going to come forward with a proposal to bring forward a 70 per cent increase and get his friend, the Minister for Social Security, to come forward and then use the Minister for Treasury and Resources, who is not in the Assembly but is clearly very concerned about this? If we basically move down, if the policy option that is going to come out of this is going to come to 80 per cent to 70 per cent, that is going to cost

taxpayers £7.35 million a year. That is £7.35 million a year on income support additional budget. I have worked it out, if the Minister wants to correct it I would like to know. That is basically £3,500 social rental units. Basically I have worked that out on the basis of those increase in supply on that basic £1,750 per rent. I thought what we had done with income support is we got away from subsidising in a disjointed way. We were bringing all income support, just as they have tried with the U.K., they followed us with Universal Credit, a one-stop-shop for assessing need. Income support was supposed to be that one-stop-shop. What we would not be doing is we would be subsidising housing in that box but we would then be giving people income support. It was the big reform of welfare, I would remind the Constables, which saved them quite a lot of money. It was basically the reform of welfare. What we were trying to do was basically make sure that the market for social rented housing, for private sector housing, for lodging accommodation, for purchase, first-time buyers, was going to work. But the Minister for Housing in recent months has basically said that he does not want to have a private sector rental market. I do not think I am entitled to be interrupted, Sir. I think ...

The Deputy Bailiff:

No, and he will wait for your speech in due course.

Deputy P.F.C. Ozouf:

Yes, exactly. I am quite clear that the Minister is no particular fan of the private sector rental market, certainly that is the impression I have got. If he would like to correct the record, then I would be very pleased for him to do so. But all the evidence is that basically we are seeing a growing number of social rented properties. I have described in another speech, and he did not disagree, and Members have basically started now understanding the consequences of, effectively, creating a larger and larger social renting housing stock. If we continue to create just simply a social rented housing provision without private sector rental arrangements, then we are going to create more and more money. That is more and more revenue money for income support because we are going to have to subsidise. The market is being increased in rents. Of course markets will increase when you put things like the surcharge on. I know Members do not agree with it but if you create the disincentive to get private sector investment into private sector rentals, then you basically create only the social rented housing provisions. I do not know of a single rental property or a single construction of a private sector rental accommodation that has been built recently that is funded. I am really worried about it. I know that there is social housing provision but I am not sure that there is anything in the private sector rental market that is coming. Because why would you when you have basically got the surcharge? There is great worry about the future rental plan; I know that that is going to be debated. But I know that there is the private sector rental market, which is a market. Whether we like it or not there is 10 per cent of Islanders that are in the private sector rental market. It is not just about social renting. It is not just about them; it is about others as well. What about all those non-qualified people? They are in terrible stress. I have got example after example in my own constituency of people, non-qualified. I can see the Minister for Treasury and Resources nodding, maybe they are in her constituency too and she certainly sees them. They will be and I make no joke about it, it is absolutely problematic; £600 a month we have been asking our migrant workers to pay per month for their non-qualified accommodation. We have got stress in all parts of the market because the market is not working. The problem with some policies is eventually you run out of other people's money, and that is what I think is happening. I think we are creeping towards basically shovelling more money in income support by going towards a 70 per cent rental thing. We are going to create more and more subsidies for Andium to build more and more homes and we are crowding out the private sector rental market. Our esteemed planning panel and our esteemed Minister for the Environment has got a Bridging Island Plan which failed to deliver the right levels of supply. I know there are some fantastic developments. I commend the Constable of St. John with his designed development. I went to go and see it the other day; fantastic. But there are not enough social rented

3-bedroom houses. In fact Andium sold off more than they have created; I know because I have checked every single record on confidential.je. There have been more in my constituency and in my good friend from St. Clement. There have been more 3-bedroom social rented houses sold off by Andium than there is being created. This is not the way to run a country and it is not the way to run a housing market. I am sceptical about this proposition. I am sceptical because it does not deal with the real supply issues. We still have not dealt with the Bridging Island Plan having failed to deliver hundreds of units of accommodation. The reasons are well known. I know the Minister for Planning is doing some work about it. The private sector rental increase continues to rise. Nobody is asking the reason why. It is because the market is not working because the market is not working because of the fear, because of the surcharge. Nobody is investing in private sector rentals. Have we had a debate about why rents are rising, have we? I do not think so. I say if we are going to help social renters with their stress let us do it with our eyes wide open. Let us do it with our eyes wide open and let us also think about those people who are in private sector rentals. Let us think about those people who are in non-qualified accommodation. Let us think about all those people that want to sell their houses but they cannot; they want to down-size. There are lots of down-sizers but the market in terms of its purchase is not working. The market is not working. What I would like to do is I would like to suggest, because I asked in the start of this, I asked whether this is a government proposition; it now seems it is. The Minister for Treasury and Resources is nervous, she should be because I think she knows what is coming in terms of the 70 per cent. I think the only thing to do is a reference back, reference it back to the Minister to come forward with some of his proposals so we are not going to do anything by stealth. I would like to say on the basis that this is now a government amendment, which is asking to do what some of us think they should do anyway. I think we should have a reference back to the Council of Ministers asking what the cost implications are of what could come for something that we do not do, so we do not have a situation that they are doing things without our knowledge. On the basis that we need more information, what is the cost of, for example, removing the rental burden of 70 per cent? How is that going to be paid for? I would like more information on the other people who are suffering stress in terms of the private sector rental market and the lodging. I think those are good questions because we represent everybody in Jersey. I think the Council of Ministers should not be ... I am not suggesting that they are playing games with us but I think they should be absolutely transparent and clear. I have heard one Minister just now asking a question about something that I assume that the Council of Ministers is a collective of. The Council of Ministers, I understand the nervousness of the Minister for Treasury and Resources, the Minister for Sustainable Economic Development did not know what he was doing. I think I am perfectly in my rights to ask, can we have a reflection back? Can the Council of Ministers come back with a proper set of options which is, I think, the Minister for Housing's job anyway? On that basis we can have a constructive discussion on the facts because the Council of Ministers need to do some more homework.

The Deputy Bailiff:

Are you proposing a reference back?

Deputy P.F.C. Ozouf:

Yes, that is my reference back, Sir.

Deputy M.R. Scott:

Sir, point of order, please.

The Deputy Bailiff:

Point of order from Deputy Scott, yes.

Deputy M.R. Scott:

If there is a reference back of this amendment, then surely we are left with the main proposition alone.

Deputy P.F.C. Ozouf:

No.

Deputy M.R. Scott:

I just would like to understand what would be the consequences if we referred back an amendment to the Minister for Housing and we still have the main proposition left.

[11:00]

The Deputy Bailiff:

Deputy, as I am slightly concerned about your suggestion of a reference back because of course Standing Order 83 refers to reference back of a proposition, so that would be, in effect, a reference back to Deputy Kovacs whose proposition this was.

Deputy P.F.C. Ozouf:

I realise the uncertainty and I do not wish to cause any difficulty. The fact is, is that we do not have enough information. I was trying to find a polite way of dealing with the lack of information.

The Deputy Bailiff:

You could have done it under Standing Order 79, it asks for suspension of the debate for the purposes of scrutiny of the proposition.

Deputy P.F.C. Ozouf:

I would like the Council of Ministers to come back with more information on the financial implications of what the options could be for dealing with this rental stress and covering the other issues, which I know I and other Members wish to do. Because, effectively, we are at risk of agreeing something which then we will come forward and then be told that we have agreed something and then be further surprised at the cost of it. I think that Members are entitled - if this is a government amendment, which I think it is - to have estimates of cost. I have done some estimates ...

The Deputy Bailiff:

The proposition is a proposition of Deputy Kovacs.

Deputy P.F.C. Ozouf:

But it has become a government amendment proposition, Sir.

The Deputy Bailiff:

You are dealing with the amendment. The amendment has not been accepted by the Assembly.

Deputy P.F.C. Ozouf:

Do I do a reference back on the basis of accepting amendment then? Because it just is not fair to Members to agree something without the full financial implications. If I am not in order at this stage, I will do it at that stage. I will do that, Sir.

The Deputy Bailiff:

I do not think it is in order at the moment and it may not be in order then. It may be in order then but it would simply be a reference back to Deputy Kovacs, whose proposition this is.

Deputy P.F.C. Ozouf:

It seems that Deputy Kovacs is being inadvertently used as a mechanism for the Minister for Housing to achieve something. I want to just be clear about it.

Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

Sir, can I raise a point of order? He has clearly imputed improper motives on me and what he says is completely false. That is against the Standing Orders of the Assembly.

The Deputy Bailiff:

We will take one thing at a time. You were not imputing any improper motives, were you?

Deputy P.F.C. Ozouf:

Not at all, Sir. I think it is fine that they operate as they do. It is fine but we just need to be clear about it.

Deputy M. Tadier:

Sir, can I ask for a point of order? Is it in order to refer a proposition? We should not be dealing with this now at all is the first point. You cannot refer back an amendment ...

The Deputy Bailiff:

My current view is it is not in order to attempt to refer this proposition back to the amender because he is not the proposer of the proposition.

Deputy M. Tadier:

Sir, is it in any way possible to refer back to ... I thought we had to refer back to a Minister or to a committee, you do not refer back to a private Member.

The Deputy Bailiff:

It is an unusual situation. It is not one we have come across before.

Deputy P.F.C. Ozouf:

Sir, I will make matters easy for you. Thank you for ruling, I am grateful for that. I withdraw my proposition to refer because that is under Standing Orders. I thought it was helpful to do that. But if you cannot basically refer that, then the right thing to do is when the proposition is, hopefully, as amended ... I will agree with the amendment brought by the Minister for Housing. But I think before we agree it we will need to make the Council of Ministers come back with the financial implications, which is the right thing to do at that stage. I will sit down and thank Members for their time. I hope that I have elucidated some of the issues that are important and underlying this issue and that we do not have, effectively, a creeping approval process of something that we should put our Minister for Treasury and Resources and our public and our public finances in difficulty, and I think it is important to have the overall debate.

The Deputy Bailiff:

Chief Minister, your light was on briefly, did you want to make a point of order?

Deputy L.J. Farnham of St. Mary, St. Ouen and St. Peter:

No, thank you, Sir, not following the Deputy's withdrawal of his proposition.

2.2.12 Deputy R.J. Ward of St. Helier Central:

It is very interesting. I am so pleased, and I think there will be so many people out there who are struggling on this Island and glad to see so many Members of the Assembly who suddenly have an awareness of rental stress and the difficulties people are facing in their rents. It is as if there is an election coming, I do not know. I want to start off by saying that I know Deputy Kovacs and I have worked with her for a number of years and went for an election campaign. There is nobody more principled, I think, in this Assembly, even myself, who can be a little over-principled at times, than Deputy Kovacs. There is absolutely no way that you can browbeat Deputy Kovacs into anything at all. I know, I have tried it and it does not work. When we disagree we disagree for the right reasons.

As a Member of this Assembly, she sticks to her guns and she works incredibly hard to not only represent her constituents and her beliefs but also to bring forward pieces of proposition. In this case, in accepting this amendment, the acceptance was there because she believed it was the right thing to do. That is the reason it was accepted, because it is the right thing to do. If all that people can do in this Assembly is question that underlying principle, we are in a very difficult position. Let us move on from that. Let us look at what the amendment says because I think what we have got here is a debate that will try to undermine the amendment so that we can get on to the main proposition and then Members can vote against that and criticise it and say that cannot be done. The word “nihilism” sprang to mind and I think we need to move forward. I am absolutely in recognition of the fact that a number of people in this Assembly have a problem with Reform being anywhere in the Government and some members of Reform even being in the Assembly; that is fine, that is politics. That is the way politics goes and that is okay. But let us talk about what is happening here. Because the amendment added in the Minister for Social Security, because Social Security is such an intrinsic part of the way we run our social housing and because people are involved in the social security system and social housing. If we are going to review rents and look at the way in which we can remove people from rental stress, and I am glad that everybody agrees that we should be removing people from rental stress, we go through the navel-gazing of what is the detail in what that means. Because we cannot do anything with it because we do not know the detail of what that means and we have spent years doing that. We take a definition of rental stress and we say that one works and we are not going to have people on this Island in rental stress because we think their lives should be better. It is great that we all agree on that now, fantastic, what a step forward we have moved today, marvellous. How are we going to do this? It has been said in so many ways, and it is a very strange debate that we have had, talking about Andium borrowing, so we need to sort out the costing of this and so the Minister for Treasury and Resources is involved. We need to sort out the role of Social Security and whether it is successful or not and where is the money going from Social Security, both private and Andium tenants? Yes, absolutely right. The amendment brings in the Minister for Social Security, the right thing to do. It then says: “The Minister for Housing”, who is not the shareholder for Andium by the way, that is the Minister for Treasury and Resources, who has much more control over what Andium Homes does in terms of cost: “to present options to the Assembly by January 2026.” So it is quite a quick piece of work that can be done in-house. Because I think the Housing Department know an enormous amount about housing, certainly this Housing Department does about Andium Homes and then: “To inform future decisions of the Assembly.” That is a really important time to do that, to say these are the decisions that we want to make. Are we going to make these decisions? Because what we are going to have if we do not accept this amendment is a debate around the main proposition to say we cannot possibly do that now, that is too quick and it is too expensive; we do not know the implications. We would not understand what is going to go on if we do that. But the amendment, it says, okay, let us look at that properly and let us involve all the Ministers that are involved with this and produce something for this Assembly and come back and say: “These are the decisions, here we go, this is what we need to be doing. These are the possibilities of doing this.” If, as we have all agreed, that we do not want people in rental stress, marvellous, well done to the Assembly for that. I thank everybody for that because we are all on the same platform there, marvellous. I was going to say you are all on the Reform platform but I do not want to infuriate people, I am only joking. We are all on the platform and not wanting people in rental stress. How are we going to do that? It will be interesting to see how many people, if they do not vote for the amendment, then to speak against the main proposition and then vote against the main proposition because that is too difficult to do as well. Because we can search around for reasons why that cannot quite be done because this is not precise enough or that cannot be done. What the amendment does, as was said, and I just want to make sure: “To agree with the principle”, we agree with the principle, that is marvellous, we can agree with that, “social housing rents and income support policies should not put tenants in rental stress.” That to me is why this amendment is very important. I believe that is the reason why Deputy Kovacs also saw the importance of it because Deputy Kovacs knows a lot

about income support. She used to work there for years and understands it. That will be one of the reasons why that is an important amendment to this proposition, it has improved it. "... and request the Minister for Housing in consultation with the Minister for Treasury and Resources and the Minister for Social Security", Ministers working together around the Council of Ministers. They may not have the same political underlying beliefs but they need to work together to get something done, otherwise we will come to the Assembly and things will be lost and we will get nowhere. So we have worked together in consultation to assess the options for a revised social housing rental policy. What are the genuine options that we can do; that can be done? In the next election we can all talk about the options that we want to have. They are wonderful, we can go out to the electorate and say: "This is the way it should be done." You can have as many ideas as you want, that is great. Do it. That is my advice, go to the electorate, be honest with them. Form a party, not a pseudo-party, a party. Then work together and give a real option, a vision for the electorate about how you are going to remove rental stress. That is the important thing to do. Present these options to the Assembly, come back to the Assembly in January 2026, have the debate then to inform future decision-making. Then the Minister can go away and say: "Okay, we have done all the work, here we are. We have given the decisions by the Assembly, we have got support of the Assembly, we can put these in place for the next Assembly because this Assembly was certain of what we are doing." So this amendment not only makes sense, it is a way forward. We might make a step forward. I have to say, I am afraid, the cat was let out of the bag when Deputy Ozouf talked about his issues over what he believes is going to happen because of this. So I recognise there may be a lack of trust. A lack of trust that, going through options and coming to the Assembly might come up with different options. The idea is that the decision has already been made and this is just a smoke screen. So we are in a wonderful Catch-22 situation. If you do not consult and come back to us, we will not listen to you. But, if you do that, you are not listening to us. Which is it? You cannot have both. So, to finish, the original proposition by Deputy Kovacs was based upon strong principles and political principles that she has. She came to speak to the Minister, improved it with reference to income support because there is an understanding of income support policies to include the Minister for Social Security so that a genuine outcome could be brought back to this Assembly that might work. That is where the amendment is going. It is not about doing some sort of deal because you are in the same party. You could not be further from the truth there. I know that because I had Deputy Kovacs on the other side of something and it was really quite tough. But we got through it in the end and we worked together. That is okay because that is what happens when you have got principles. So I would urge the Assembly to support the amendment because the work will be done. We can include everyone. It will come back in January. You can have the debate in January. We can go through the genuine options then, which have been thought through and costed, et cetera.

[11:15]

Then we can all talk about how we are going to relieve rental stress and remove it from people and underline that is the message that people in Jersey want; that this Assembly wants to remove rental stress in the best way possible so that they have better lives and they are not living their life simply to pay their rent and get through to the next week or month. So I urge Members to support this amendment.

Deputy A.F. Curtis of St. Clement:

Would the Member give way for a point of clarification? Thank you; I really appreciate him. It was early in his speech but I wished to wait until the end. The Minister remarked that we all agreed on the definition of rental stress and that it had been long agreed as to what the definition is. I just wanted to clarify which definition, if there was one that we had agreed?

Deputy R.J. Ward:

Sorry, I do not think I said we agreed on the definition. I said I think we agreed on the principle that we need to remove rental stress. If I did say definition, I should not have said that because I recognise that. I did also say, just for real clarification, that at some point you have to choose a definition of rental stress and you have to work with it.

Deputy A.F. Curtis:

I thank the Minister.

2.2.13 Connétable P.B. Le Sueur of Trinity:

I just rise to say that I will be supporting the amendment because I found myself in great difficulty in supporting the original proposition if it had been unamended. I do that, I support the amendment because I am encouraged that the Minister is going to go away and do a review. I would ask him that, when he is doing that review, would he also consider the many members of our society, young families who are also in mortgage stress. They are paying their taxes, raising their families, and they get very little or no support from the States in doing so. So really I am looking for a balance and fairness across the piece in society. As suggested, we are coming up towards an election and I certainly will not be re-standing, and I am sure there is nobody here who does not know that already. I would say that socialism is a very laudable principle but in fact it only works until you run out of other people's money to spend. So, in doing that review, please consider the whole of our population and those people who are also struggling to pay their mortgages as well as pay their rent.

2.2.14 Deputy L.J. Farnham of St. Mary, St. Ouen and St. Peter:

I am pleased to follow the last speaker because I think he wisely elucidated why we should support this and quite rightly he pointed out rental stress is not the only type of stress that Islanders face when related with housing. We all know that one of our biggest challenges is the cost of housing and the cost of homes for pretty much all Islanders. Even if Islanders are not under financial stress it is still a big consideration, and this amendment commits the Government, the Minister, and this Assembly to absolutely nothing. What it is doing is making sure we get on with the work that was promised as part of the C.S.P., we perhaps accelerate that work and produce a review. There are one or 2 of us getting a little bit excited about it, but just to be clear, the proposition requests the Minister for Housing in consultation with the Minister for Treasury and Resources and the Minister for Social Security to bring forward a revised social housing rents policy on the basis of this principle for the States Assembly endorsement by 2027. Now that is just not possible with the best will in the world. We cannot achieve that. So, I am going to read the amendment out. The Minister for Housing, after discussions with other Ministers, is bringing forward an amendment which reads: "To agree with the principle that the social housing rent system and income support policies should not put tenants in rental stress." Should not put tenants in rental stress. I am sure we all agree with that as a high-level principle ... I will wait for the Connétable of St. Mary to finish.

The Deputy Bailiff:

Connétable, under Standing Orders, one can converse but not converse noisily. So it is important not to distract speakers. Thank you. Yes, Chief Minister.

Deputy L.J. Farnham:

Should not put tenants in rental stress, and I am sure that is a high-level principle with which we all agree if we are serious about bearing down on housing costs for all Islanders. To request the Minister for Housing, in consultation with the other relevant Ministers, to assess options for a revised social housing rental policy on the basis of this principle and to present those options to the Assembly by January 2026 to inform future decisions of the Assembly. To inform future decisions of the Assembly. Now, I understand from the Minister that piece of work will be presented to the States as an R. with options for consideration to address aspects of the cost of housing in this instance, the cost of rental housing provided by Andium Homes. I want to reiterate it would not be possible for a

comprehensive new social housing rents policy and fundamental review of the income support system to align with the new model in the timescales proposed by Deputy Kovacs. If the Assembly approves the amendment, the Minister for Housing is proposing to undertake a clearly scoped review of the social housing rents policy and to bring those options by 2026 in an R. I am repeating it again because it is important. Those options will be set out as an R., in a report for consideration. I think that is important. I agree with Deputy Bailhache. We would not expect this Assembly to make big policy decisions without considering all sorts of different options and costings and understanding them fully. That is what this report will do. It will provide that information to help this Assembly and future Assemblies. It will require very careful consideration to ensure we arrive at a model that, not just in housing policy terms, also addresses the sustainability of social housing provision and our income support system, which are intrinsically linked. The Minister, I know this, and people are throwing words around such as socialism, one thing or another. Some bits of socialism are quite good. Not many, but one or 2 bits. I am disappointed that Deputy Ozouf made a reference to the fact that this was some sort of secret pact between Members of the non-Ministerial and party members of the Reform Party to slide something past the Government and the Assembly. Simply not true and very disappointing that that kind of accusation should be made. The Minister for Housing recognises concern among States Members that the current social housing rents policy could place social housing tenants in rental stress. Importantly, the review must assess how any changes to the current social housing rents policy could be made without creating financial uncertainty for Andium Homes and the housing trusts. It is vital that the financial sustainability of our social housing and all of our social housing providers and their ability to invest in homes is and will be placed at the centre of the review and the decision-making process for any Assembly moving forward. Because without that we will have an unsustainable model. If we look back to where we were 20 years ago, and the improvement since Andium have taken over 10 years ago, we will see that we have been moving in the right direction. But we cannot ignore the cost-of-housing stress that the majority of Islanders are facing. This is an important piece of that work. Now, in relation to the amendment, of course, I am not sure if the Assembly has noticed, but we are at Council of Ministers a broad church of political views. We try to work where possible - it is not always possible but where possible - collaboratively, not just across the Council of Ministers table, but with Members of this Assembly. We will always try to find practical solutions moving forward. That is exactly what we have tried to do with Deputy Kovacs and this proposition. I thank her for her discussions with the Minister for Housing and for accepting it, because that is a practical way forward, as the Constable of Trinity alluded to. So, I ask Members and I urge Members, please, in the interests of getting things done, because not only as a Council of Ministers do I think we have a responsibility to work collaboratively, I think in the interests of Islanders, this Assembly should occasionally accept reasonable compromises in the interests of getting things done. If we accept the amendment, the Government will then move forward a piece of work led by the Minister for Housing, present it in a report no later than January 2026, which lays out all of the relevant options and important information which will enable this Assembly to make future decisions, to make the right decision in the future. Ironically, we could all vote against everything and the Minister could still do that anyway. So let us work collaboratively, support the amendment and get this done so we can get on with the work.

Deputy J. Renouf:

Can I ask a point of clarification?

The Deputy Bailiff:

Are you prepared to accept a point of clarification? Yes.

Deputy J. Renouf:

If I heard correctly at the end, the Chief Minister said that, even if this amendment was defeated, the Minister would be able to do all the work that he currently wishes to do in this area. Can he confirm that this is the case?

Deputy L.J. Farnham:

I think I was just repeating the words the Deputy said earlier on, but practically maybe I should. Technically, that might be possible, but I think it would be unwise to do that work if the Assembly were to reject an amendment which asked him to do it, then he ignored that decision and went on to do it. So, technically, he probably could, but I think in practice it would not happen, and this review that is badly needed would be curtailed.

Deputy L.K.F. Stephenson:

Can I ask a further point of clarification?

The Deputy Bailiff:

Are you prepared to accept another point? Yes, Deputy Stephenson.

Deputy L.K.F. Stephenson:

Just a clarification on that last point. Does the Chief Minister believe a decision on this amendment would then override a decision on the C.S.P., which contained that commitment to it?

Deputy L.J. Farnham:

I think perhaps a bigger piece of work in relation to housing costs could be carried out, but that is a discussion I would need to have with the Minister for Housing. But I think potentially the Government and the Minister ... I certainly would be uncomfortable, although we have agreed it in a previous C.S.P. last year, this is a later decision. If we make a decision on an amendment which asks the Minister for Housing not to produce a review with options in, I think that we would be unlikely to do that. But again, that is a discussion we would have to have within the Government.

2.2.15 Deputy L.V. Feltham of St. Helier Central:

I am pleased to speak after the Chief Minister and hope that I can provide some further clarity. I am minded to answer the question that Deputy Gardiner asked earlier around the conversations that I had had as the Minister for Social Security with the Minister for Housing and the Minister for Treasury and Resources in agreeing this particular amendment. From my perspective, this does do something important, the amended version of the proposition. What it does is it shows commitment from this Assembly to a point of principle. That very clearly then guides the work of officers as they then do the work as was planned within the Common Strategic Policy. To answer Deputy Gardiner's question about some of the thought process behind this amendment, as a former civil servant I do look at processes and think pragmatically around what can be achieved and what is the best way of achieving it. In my view, it is absolutely the role of this Assembly to be the leaders and to approve in principle things like our social rent system and income support policies should not be putting people in rental stress, and be setting that direction then for civil servants to follow in their work. The timing of the report to the Assembly, and we had discussions around this, I think it is timely because, in January 2026, I am reminded that by mid that year there will be a new Common Strategic Policy. So, for me, the importance of this review as well is to inform the next Assembly as it develops its Common Strategic Policy and give it the backing and information that it needs to make the right decisions at that time.

[11:30]

Then of course inform future budget decisions. The unamended version did leave out reference to income support, which is a really important and vital component of our system at the moment and how we manage rental stress and support for people on low incomes. What the amended version also

enables us to do I think is consider have we got that balance right. I am always very conscious that we have got a group of people just on the cusp that do not meet the requirements for income support. So, how does the current system and process and policies suit those people and are they in rental stress? I was interested to hear the Constable of Trinity. We have different politics but I was pleased that he took a sensible view of this amendment and sees why the amendment is important. I think that pragmatic view transcends politics and it is why we are here. So I was pleased to see him take that view on the amendment. I think that the amended version, if adopted, will put us in a really good place as an Assembly. It will show that we, as an Assembly, are committed to affordable social housing rental policies, and let us remind ourselves that it is not just Andium that provide social rented housing. It is a really complex landscape but it is not just people that are on income support that we are looking at. It gives me, as Minister for Social Security, the opportunity to look at have we got that balance right. I do hope that Members support this amendment, as supported by the original mover of the proposition, and I think that is important to note as well. I think the amendment gets us to a place where we will be able to deliver something that will inform future work and put the next Assembly in the very best place to have the very best policies into the future. Just as a note on the original proposition, when I was speaking to Deputy Kovacs, and I know that she thinks very much about what she does, and was moved by the conversations that she has on the doorstep, and I am sure we all have, when people say to us: "Why can we not go back to the system we used to have?" Of course that system preceded income support. We are in a different income support landscape now and that needs to be brought into this piece of work as well. So I urge Members to support this amendment. It is supported by the mover of the proposition. Then I urge Members to support the amended proposition when it comes to the final vote.

2.2.16 Deputy I.J. Gorst:

It is 10 years since Andium was created as the then Minister for Treasury and Resources reminded us. If we step back from purely should we review government policy that has been in place for 10 years, then a sensible answer to that question is, yes, it would benefit from a review because we should always check and adjust the implementation of government policies and just not assume that they are working. Having said that, of course, I think the creation of Andium is probably one of Jersey Government's most successful policies and, as I would say to parishioners or anyone that speaks to me, despite the excellent speech from Deputy Alex Curtis ... he is sort of shaking his head there, but I do think it was. But then, as you can all say, both Deputy Ozouf and I would say that, would we not. The answer that we give to Islanders about why can we not revert to where we were is quite simple. If you transported those Islanders back to my former Parish, which I was privileged to represent, there were house upon house that had completely inadequate provision. I visited constituent after constituent who were being asked by Government to live in totally inappropriate provision. It was that underinvestment, and the underinvestment was because of, to a large extent, 2 things. One is it was always easier to give away repairs budget from any given department, and we see that the Minister for Infrastructure is dealing with that in his department now. Secondly, was the rental policy. The rental policy was based upon affordability and had no relevance at that time to the condition or repairs and renewals of those buildings. So, over decades, the social housing that we provided as a States Assembly was appalling and was an embarrassment. For my part, I am strongly against us going back to any system which would start us again on that trajectory. Therefore, I know that we come to the review from a different side of the political spectrum - that is an argument that we will have to have in due course - because I know my colleagues with whom I am in coalition with have a different view and believe that affordability should be part of a rents policy. They have been quite clear about that in the platform that they stood for election on. My argument is, and remains, and I think we have heard it today, that the affordability issue is dealt with through income support policies. The model that Andium was able or the Government was able to go out and get borrowing in order to do that massive capital investment in Andium was based on 90 per cent of market rents. Deputy Ozouf is right, the private sector market is not functioning. We may disagree or it might be

different levers which have resulted in that dysfunction of the private sector, but both parts of the market, be that social provision or private provision, need to work together. Therefore, if you have a dysfunctional or a congested private sector, that does affect the rents and the comparability between private sector and social sector. So, for that reason alone, a review would be a good thing because I hope that out of such a review there is this acknowledgement that perhaps, in hindsight, the introduction of the adjustment on buy-to-let property is not working and it was introduced for all of the good reasons, but, as with any legislature and Government, we can be so slow from the inception of an idea to the implementation of it that the conditions into which we implement a lever have totally changed. Therefore, we see in hindsight that maybe that has made things worse rather than better. So we cannot do anything from my perspective, and we heard the nervousness of the Minister for Treasury and Resources about the Andium model because that £400 million in borrowing has to be paid back, otherwise ultimately we will be in that situation where the great new accommodation that people are living in will not be repaired and it will fall into disrepair as it has done in the past. I sometimes think, listening to some of my colleagues, that perhaps Andium has been too successful and we now have some arguments being made from some parts of the political spectrum that they would like to see more social housing and the contracting of the private sector. That is a perfectly legitimate political position to take. These are the arguments that we should be having in this Assembly. These are the very things that we should be debating and asking ourselves what is the structure of the market and what is the provision that we want Islanders to be able to access. So I do now worry that, in a dysfunctional housing market, the social sector is crowding out the private sector. Certainly it is, and this is where Deputy Alex Curtis was asking questions yesterday, in the rental of one or 2-bedroom flat markets where, as Deputy Ozouf reminded us, in the private sector it just does not financially stack up now to build those new developments. So we are in a situation where we are sat with lots of permissions but nobody going to start developing because they just cannot make it financially stack up, and therefore they cannot get the borrowing and therefore we do not have the supply. Not to mention the other focus, which I know the Minister for Housing is really keen on adjusting us to, which is the 3-bedroomed house rather than the flats in an urban setting but the 3-bedroomed or greater in a rural setting. That again has to be a split between private and social housing. We might have come at this from different angles, and I really enjoyed listening to some of the speeches of Members who are going to vote against this review, because much of what they said I agreed with, I just come to a different conclusion that a review can be beneficial. Hopefully I have set some of the parameters around what I would be prepared to support but that will not come as any surprise to the Minister for Housing or the Minister for Social Security because they would say: "Well, he would say that, would he not, coming from his political persuasion." But a review therefore I think can add value and can be important because, to be clear, like the Connétable of Trinity, I could not support Deputy Raluca's original proposition for all of the reasons that I have just articulated, but I can support a review.

The Deputy Bailiff:

Thank you, Deputy. Deputy Kovacs, you are the next to speak. I know you are in some discomfort and of course you may address the Assembly seated if you wish.

2.2.17 Deputy R.S. Kovacs:

Thank you so much. Yes, I am in a bit of pain and thanks to all the Members that tried to mitigate that. What I want to highlight is the way this Assembly works, with every proposition we try, at least myself, no matter which Government it was, I always tried to find a common ground, to try to find a way forward wherever it was possible, and it is no different in this case as well. No matter who the Minister is, if it is a party colleague or not, I am approaching the Minister responsible of that proposition to see if we can find a common ground forward. Obviously, I am very grateful that wider acceptance within this amendment was found with the Council of Ministers and conversations we were having with the Minister for Social Security, and I know we have heard from the Minister for

Treasury and Resources as well. I do not want this to be targeted in any different way than it is and we should look at the principle of what this proposition does and what this amendment will do. While I am mindful to accept this, it is purely because I think that it is a way forward and would be more meaningful to have that happening rather than trying to tie it to a deadline, to one option, when the plans that could be brought forward could be multiple, we could have a committee debate, we could have each of us contribute, even combine what those options will come and decide further. So my proposition asks the Assembly to support a clear principle that social rents in Jersey should be set at levels that do not cause rental stress. On purpose, I did not put any definition within the text of the proposition because I do not want to tie it to the definition. That is the definition we have at the moment but that is why the reference in the report, but does not say nowhere that this cannot be reviewed to make it brought to the realities of the social tenants currently.

[11:45]

So, the definition as it stands today is based on spending 30 per cent or more of one's income on rent. It has been in use for decades and, while the definition may still be useful, I agree that it is worth reviewing during the course of this work to ensure it still reflects particularly tenants' experience in light of rising prices and persistent affordability pressures across many aspects of life. I have accepted the Minister's amendment as it does not remove the heart of the proposal but instead adds a structured path forward without tying the hands of a future Assembly. It allows a full review to be undertaken alongside consultation, engagement, and the necessary financial modelling. I could have come with a certain proposal, a certain way forward, and that is how my proposition started, but I realised it will not be fair because, as a Back-Bencher I will not have the resources to cost everything. It is a very complex matter and in no circumstances I do not want any developments to be halted because that is also needed. I had conversations with Andium, with the Treasury officers responsible of that, with the other social housing providers, with Social Security officers, and that brought the wider view of how complex this process would be and why it needs to be looked at more than one option to make sure that on long term this would be a sustainable option brought back. I believe that is a responsible approach and one that ensures any future changes are based on proper analysis and dialogue with tenants and social housing providers alike, making sure that, while we find options to reduce social rents for tenants, these do not halt the development. I am also mindful of the roadmap that was referenced presented in July 2023 by Deputy Warr, the then Minister for Housing, for improving access to social housing in Jersey. That roadmap outlined the need to review the social rents policy as part of the long-term housing strategy with the focus on ensuring rental subsidies are targeted to those in greatest need. It is clear that this work is timely and we all want the same thing, to improve lives of tenants, to make them have affordable rents, name it rental stress, name it in any way, but it needs to be truly affordable because that is why social housing was created. So, although the amendment removes a fixed date for implementing the policy, accepting it I believe is the right decision for several reasons. It locks the principle that social housing rents must not cause rental stress, a powerful and long overdue acknowledgement that affordability must be at the heart of housing policy. It allows in-depth work to begin immediately. By accepting the amendment, we give the Minister the space and flexibility to explore practical affordable models that do not halt development or weaken housing providers. It secures cross-Ministerial commitment. The amendment brings Treasury and Social Security into the conversation, ensuring the policy is financially sustainable and linked to wider social and fiscal strategies. This is very complex work. It improves our chances of success for tenants on long term too. With proper research and collaboration, we can build a plan that works, not only in principle, but also in practice. Ready to inform decisions in this Assembly's term for implementation in the next one, but not tying their hands. Being an electoral year next year, obviously the capacity and the work would be reduced, hence the timeline not being necessarily achievable. So, in accepting this amendment, I did not feel that we are watering down the purpose of this proposition. We are laying the groundwork to align

social rents with affordability and to shift from managing the symptoms to addressing the cause. I urge you to support this amendment.

2.2.18 Deputy H.L. Jeune of St. John, St. Lawrence and Trinity:

I absolutely support that there needs to be the principle that we need to work out how to support those in our community on rental stress. But I would like to just ask the Minister, because we are still on the amendment of the Minister, in his summing up I would just like to ask, just reviewing in the past what has happened around rental stress. Of course, the last Government, Deputy Moore's Government, in the common strategic priorities specifically pulls out decreasing rental stress as a key priority within that. As Deputy Kovacs has just mentioned, from following that, the then Minister for Housing set up this roadmap and I believe in July 2023 there was a report put to the States Assembly, R.121/2023, that was very clear in saying that there is going to be a review on the social rent policy. So it was very clear in July 2023 that we, as the States Assembly, were informed that there was going to be a review of the social rents policy. Of course, a couple of months later we had a change of Government. I would like to ask the Minister why he did not carry that particular element of work forward. He carried others forward like reducing the criteria for access for age, for example, for the Gateway. But I would like to understand that because in his transcript to a Scrutiny Panel when he first came to us as a new Minister for Housing, he was quite clear about the need for looking at reducing rental stress. He said specifically, and I take from the transcript of March 2024: "I want to see the numbers of low-income Islanders living in rental stress reduced." So he is very clear to us in the Scrutiny Panel at that time when he first comes in, in the first few months of his reign, that this is something that he would like to do. Of course, in the past, there is already this decision on this roadmap that there would be this review. So I am assuming, and it would be interesting to hear if officers had started working on this review in the past Government, so there was already something and, if it is not, okay. But why did the Minister not carry on with this? Because we are 15 months into this new Government and now this is an amendment to say: "Oh yes, now we have to do something. Now we have to do a rental review. It is a good idea. Thank you, Deputy Kovacs, for bringing this to us that this is what we should do." Why was it not already done, already 15 months ago, when the Minister for Housing told the Scrutiny Panel that this is a concern. So I would really like to hear from the Minister because this is where I think the discussions are happening in this Chamber around it. It is not about whether myself, I will not put words in anyone else's mouth, but for me it is an extremely important point absolutely, this principle that we look at ensuring that a government institution like Andium does not put Islanders at rental stress. This absolutely should be an absolutely key principle. But what I do not understand is why we are having to spend now the whole morning discussing this when potentially we could have been already doing this when it had started to be identified and already doing it in the last Government. It was in the roadmap, it was already in the report in July 2023, it was already highlighted as an important point by the Minister in March 2024, and now we are in the middle of May 2025 and this will potentially come to us in a very packed agenda at the end of the year in January 2026. So I would like to hear from the Minister and how he feels that he has now the resources to do that if he felt that for the last 15 months he has not had the resources and offers this time to do that, how is he going to have suddenly the time when he has still important R.T.L. (Residential Tenancy Law) amendments to get through as well.

The Deputy Bailiff:

Thank you, Deputy. Does any other Member wish to speak on the amendment? I call upon the Minister to reply.

2.2.19 Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

Can I thank all Members for taking part in this debate. There was a suggestion relatively early on in the debate that I might have shown a degree of favouritism towards the proposer of this proposition compared to how I have approached other things in the past. So I wanted to start by absolutely

pleading guilty to that. Deputy Kovacs is without a doubt one of my favourite States Members. I am in constant awe at her tenacity and energy that she brings and her deep care and compassion for the people that she represents. It is an absolute privilege to count her as a colleague. I am also happy to say that the other 47 of you come in a close second place to that. Some Members have made a bit of a mountain out of a molehill out of this, if I may say so. The amendment, which in a sense I think has been co-produced by myself, the Minister for Social Security, the Minister for Treasury and Resources, and the proposer, outlines a solid way forward that we can all get behind, notwithstanding the fact that we are not always aligned completely on our political outlook anyway, but it provides a good way forward to address that, will help us look at how we could address issues to do with rental stress and social housing in the future without committing us to unintended consequences at this point. So, I think that there is a really legitimate reason for voting against this amendment and that would be, if you were a States Member who believed that today must be the day that you vote in support of committing us to change our social housing rent system by January 2027, irrespective of knowing right now what the consequences of that would be. Now, obviously, that is a legitimate position to take and any Member who wanted to oppose the amendment on that basis so they could take that position would be completely within their rights to do so. But I did not hear any Member specifically advocate against the amendment so they could do that. What I did hear I think were several Members I think get it wrong about what I am able to do with or without a resolution from the States Assembly and how I am able to pursue an agenda in line with our democratic norms. Deputy Curtis, when he kicked this off by raising his concerns about it, towards the end of his speech, and I made a note about this, he said that he wanted to find a path forward that would let the Minister get on with his job. But of course he is advocating a course of action which I say does not help me get on with my job. Deputy Renouf had said that the Minister would be free to do this work even without this amendment and proposition going through. I do not believe that is the case and I do not believe that for 2 reasons. One is that if the Assembly has a resolution before it asking a Minister to do something and the Assembly specifically votes against that resolution and the Minister then the next day goes ahead and starts doing it anyway, I think there would be justification for saying the Minister is in contempt of the Assembly for doing that. The most recent decision of the Assembly would be the one that stands. If Members vote against me conducting a review of something, I am not going to ignore that and then go ahead and do it anyway, which is why the amended proposition is very helpful and enables me to go ahead and do that. But crucially, and Deputy Curtis was absolutely wrong when he said that that kind of review could be business as usual, it cannot because, though the responsibility politically for the social housing rent system sits with the Minister for Housing, and there are lots of things within that that I can do and minor things that I can tweak that make things a little bit better ... I have been working with Andium to try to have a better right-sizing policy because we know that is an issue that the rent system makes complicated. I can work with them to try to come up with tweaks that help overcome that. But, on anything more substantial, I am absolutely powerless to come up with drastic changes to the system that do not have huge implications for the remits of other Ministers. I am the Minister for Housing; I am not the shareholder representative for Andium, I am not politically responsible for the governance and the financial arrangements of Andium, and of course the financial return that they provide to government. I am not the Minister for Social Security who is responsible for income support policies. So there are all sorts of changes I could, using my existing political authority, unilaterally pursue on the rents policy that would have potentially dire consequences for other parts of government or have dire consequences for the social housing system.

[12:00]

If I wanted, I would have to double check I have got the *vires* to do this, but I think I could decide that I do not want social housing rents capped at 80 per cent of the market rate anymore, I want them capped at a different percentage, a lower one. If I go ahead and do that I would be destroying Andium's building programme because their model is based on the current system. That is the

projections that they have and, though of course that would be great for the tenants who would immediately benefit from a fall in their rents, it would be betraying people who might need social housing in the future who will not have it available because the building programme would have been disrupted by that. As an individual Minister, I am powerless to do anything to avoid that because the power to potentially avoid that would sit with the wider Government. So I cannot unilaterally go ahead and do that. Of course, if I wanted to find any other kind of tweak that imposed requirements on social security to work with Andium on a more bespoke affordability-based rent setting, again I would be creating all sorts of bureaucracy and potential income support consequences that I, as Minister, do not have the authority to go and do unilaterally. If I attempted it, I would be causing way more problems than I would be solving. That is why it has to be cross-Ministerial, to ensure that anything that is looked at is done credibly, that we are able to identify unintended consequences, able to report back to the Assembly what those consequences would be, because the Assembly would be free to say that it is prepared to stomach particular consequences and it would be free to say that it is not prepared to tolerate other kinds of consequences. But my team in isolation are not able to do that. We would have to be working alongside Treasury and Social Security, and that is why parts of the amendment address that to make it clear where that will sit. There were questions that were put to me by other Members. Apologies if I miss any, and if I do obviously please feel free to call for clarification on that. I will try to address them, and some of them were similar questions, so I will not necessarily answer them twice. Questions were posed to me about previous commitments to review the social housing rent system and why that had not been proceeded with so far. I will try to be charitable in some of my response to this but when I took on the role of Minister for Housing I very quickly got to work in realigning the agenda and my priority in doing that was to ensure that there was a decent and credible chance of getting things delivered in this term of office that would be to the benefit of Islanders who were in need of that kind of action from government. It was not to spend time on things that were hopeless and were not going to be achieved even with the best will in the world, and it was not to spend lots of time and resources on things that do not help people but exercises within government that involve going around in circles or analysing things to then do nothing with the analysis that you come up with. I very quickly realigned what the existing agenda was to maximise the chances of things getting over the line. The key thing I did there was to realign the proposed reforms to the Residential Tenancy Law. I do not believe that there was the faintest chance of anything making it to this Assembly in its format that it was that I inherited, and I made changes to that to make sure something could come to the Assembly, which obviously I have been able to do because it has been lodged. That meant of course directing people in my team to spend their days coming into work and doing that work. They have only so much capacity to do what they can with the time that they have got. But, having been able to do that and get a draft Residential Tenancy Law ready to go and now being at a point where we are soon to be launching the next round of First Step, and that will be the final round of it this year, there will be some capacity available soon, which means that I have an officer who is able to take the lead on this, where beforehand I did not have that capacity to do that. So, in that sense, the timing of the proposition and now amended version of it is very helpful, and I think it is credible that we will get done what this proposition will ask us to do. Where, beforehand, I have to say I was sceptical about whether there was any realistic chance of things that were items on the agenda being delivered. That, I believe, we will be able to proceed with. Deputy Morel had asked about how this would be presented to the Assembly, and I confess that I think it is worded better in the wording of the amendment than the report to it, which referred to seeking endorsement from the Assembly. I should clarify that it is not my intention to seek endorsement from the Assembly in the form of a proposition that lays out options. It is my intention, as the Chief Minister mentioned, to present a report to the Assembly. If you do it as a report rather than a proposition, you can put multiple options, you can outline in them what the implications might be, you can look at options that involve keeping things as they are, you can look at options that involve tweaking things but based on where we are today, or you can look at more wholesale changes. But it would not be my intention to ask the Assembly to immediately commit to

anything like that. Certainly today we have no idea what that would look like or what the financial implications of it would be. But I hope that report would shine some light on it and that could inform future debates and, if Members found those options particularly attractive, they would be free then to pursue them politically, and the next Government of course would be free to use that report to inform its agenda or it could decide that it is not a priority. That will be down to the democratic will of the Island ultimately. So that is why I think that the amended proposition paths out a good way forward. We will be able to have a review and discussion on something that is of interest to many thousands of Islanders who live in social housing and the rest of the Island who care about living on a socially and economically just Island. We can do so working together, bringing the relevant people around the table and coming up with something that is informative and useful for the rest of us, that is credible in the information that it contains and does not sign us up to pursuing unintended consequences right now when we do not know what those would be. I think that that is a really sensible way forward and I am very grateful to the Minister for Social Security, the Minister for Treasury and Resources, and of course my favourite States Member, Deputy Raluca Kovacs, in putting this on the agenda so that we can move forward and that is why I would urge Members to support the amendment, and I call for the appel.

The Deputy Bailiff:

Thank you, Minister. Deputy Gardiner, I think you had your light on first. Have you got a point of clarification for the Minister?

Deputy I. Gardiner:

The Minister answered the question, he is not bringing it to the Assembly.

The Deputy Bailiff:

Do you have one as well?

Deputy J. Renouf:

A point of order, if I may. The Minister argued that if there was a vote against the amendment, then he would not have the *vires* to pursue a review. I wonder if the Chair can confirm that the vote is on an amendment, which is about one particular version of a review with one particular timetable, and if the vote is against the amendment then we would return debate to the main proposition, which contains a different version of a review. So, if a vote against this amendment does not, even on the narrow terms of this debate, ignoring the previous debate votes on the C.S.P., prevent the Minister from conducting a review of his own choosing?

The Deputy Bailiff:

Yes, that is right, but I cannot comment on what he said about a *vires* because I am in no position to do so but, you are right, we will simply continue the debate on the proposition as unamended if the amendment is rejected. The appel has been called for. Members are invited to return to their seats and I invite the Greffier to open the voting on the amendment. If all Members have had the opportunity of casting their votes, then I ask the Greffier to close the voting.

Connétable D.W. Mezbourian of St. Lawrence:

I beg your pardon, it is the Constable of St. Lawrence here. I could not find where I was meant to vote this time. I managed it last time. I wonder if I can just record my vote orally, please?

The Deputy Bailiff:

Yes. I had not quite finished my sentence when you came online, so yes.

The Connétable of St. Lawrence:

Thank you. I would like to vote pour.

The Deputy Bailiff:

Thank you very much. Any more online votes, Greffier, I need to be aware of?

The Deputy Greffier of the States:

One more.

The Deputy Bailiff:

One more, and what was that? Thank you. The amendment has been adopted:

POUR: 32		CONTRE: 12		ABSTAINED: 2
Connétable of St. Helier		Deputy L.M.C. Doublet		Deputy H.L. Jeune
Connétable of St. Lawrence		Deputy S.M. Ahier		Deputy M.B. Andrews
Connétable of St. Brelade		Deputy I. Gardiner		
Connétable of Trinity		Deputy K.L. Moore		
Connétable of St. Peter		Deputy P.F.C. Ozouf		
Connétable of St. Martin		Deputy D.J. Warr		
Connétable of St. John		Deputy H.M. Miles		
Connétable of Grouville		Deputy J. Renouf		
Connétable of St. Mary		Deputy A.F. Curtis		
Connétable of St. Saviour		Deputy B. Ward		
Deputy G.P. Southern		Deputy K.M. Wilson		
Deputy M. Tadier		Deputy L.K.F. Stephenson		
Deputy S.G. Luce				
Deputy K.F. Morel				
Deputy M.R. Le Hegarat				
Deputy R.J. Ward				
Deputy C.S. Alves				
Deputy I.J. Gorst				
Deputy L.J. Farnham				
Deputy S.Y. Mézec				
Deputy Sir P.M. Bailhache				
Deputy T.A. Coles				
Deputy B.B. de S.V.M. Porée				
Deputy M.R. Scott				
Deputy C.D. Curtis				
Deputy L.V. Feltham				
Deputy R.E. Binet				
Deputy M.E. Millar				
Deputy A. Howell				

Deputy T.J.A. Binet				
Deputy M.R. Ferey				
Deputy R.S. Kovacs				

2.3 Social rents plan to reduce rental stress for tenants (P.29/2025) - as amended (P.29/2025 Amd.)

The Deputy Bailiff:

We now return to the proposition as amended. Does any Member speak on the proposition as amended?

2.3.1 Deputy A.F. Curtis of St. Clement:

I am really glad we had that debate. I think this made it a far more meaningful discussion about the proposition in otherwise what would have been perhaps a quite short debate. So I thank Members for their contributions in that regard and giving the Assembly the chance to debate it separately. I voted against for the reasons I stated. I think they were clear. But I would like to highlight a few things now we are in the main debate on the proposition as amended. Firstly, straight to what the Minister said which is he believes he would not have the *vires* to do this work (a) if we vote against this now as amended, and (b) should this not have been tabled to the Assembly in the first place. At the end of the day, the Minister can interpret his portfolio and has a wide mandate to pursue policy. This is a particular wording, as Deputy Renouf highlighted, and it not only is about a review but it asks us to agree to a principle to a definition of something we do not know, and I will return to that. The second one is, I am surprised the Minister does not feel he has a mandate to pursue policy options without the Assembly's support. Most work of government is cross-cutting; the Council can set up cross-Ministerial working groups. Only yesterday in the Future Economy Programme update did the Minister for Sustainable Economic Development highlight how he works on what could be broad policy changes in his portfolio with other Ministers, whether Financial Services or the Minister for the Environment. Indeed, his Future Fit Retail Roadmap or strategy highlighted direct changes in legislation that other Ministers may want to do. He did not make those changes but he certainly worked across the Government to pursue a cross-government approach to challenging complex issues. I do not see how the Minister does not have the power to walk across the Ministerial floor and knock on the door of the Ministers for Social Security and Treasury and Resources and ask for their support in considering options. He would not be, I hope anyway, looking to bring wide wholesale changes interaction without either the support of those Ministers or the Assembly, so the ability to do the work I think is fine. Deputy Tadier brought up an interesting question about assets and how we evaluate this, which then came up with a slightly contradictory point from Deputy Millar in not wanting to see means testing - or was it Deputy Gorst; one of the Ministers - on the point of the social housing provider but on income support. The Minister, without consultation, brought through a change to the social Housing Gateway criteria, despite Members highlighting concerns, in which he fully removed the asset cap for those who could be in social housing. The definition is currently presented for rental stresses out of income, not of assets. One could reasonably be sitting in social housing under this new policy with well over £1 million in assets with a low income and their rent would be set on that. I guess that highlights the challenges with how we bring this forward. Deputy Bailhache re-raised - and I would like to highlight this in the main debate since we now have to agree this - what are we voting on? What is the vote for a principle decision on rental stress? Is it the definition Deputy Kovacs highlights, which is the 2015 definition of 30 per cent of gross income or is it up for debate? Because I am going to have to explain to my constituents what I vote for, to parishioners, maybe to the media, and they will say: "Why did you vote for or against this?" They

will say: “So, you agree with that definition?” I go: “Well maybe not. The Minister said it needs a review.”

[12:15]

So if the main mover could clarify the principle we are addressing, I think that is really important. Deputy Stephenson then highlighted that this is the work already committed by the Government, and I think this a really good reason you can vote against this if you wish. It would set a very dangerous precedent I think that any Member could bring a proposition reaffirming a Minister’s legislative or policy programme, and the Assembly would be bound to accept that proposition by fear that if we do not agree it we are nullifying a Minister’s own portfolio. I say this with perhaps apologies to the next mover of a proposition today, where I may be unable to support them because the Minister has said: “Well, I am doing the work; I am in fact statutorily obliged to do the work.” We have a choice as an Assembly, do we either agree to things because it is already being done or reject it because it is already being done? I think it would be informing a higher quality of debate and work if we understand what a Minister’s work programme is - and we know this is on the work programme from the C.S.P. - we allow them to do the work, and the propositions that we bring to the Assembly should really address things beyond that. I leave it there, I think much of the principles are important, I look forward to hearing the rest of it. I could still have my mind changed on this one but I really want to know, if I am voting for a principle, that somebody could lay down what that principle is, otherwise I will feel I am signing up to an open-ended journey.

2.3.2 Deputy P.F.C. Ozouf of St. Saviour:

I am sorry if I put the cat among the pigeons earlier but I am pleased that we have got the Government clearly now explaining. I think the reason why ... I almost was going to support the government amendment, but then I heard, I think, the Minister for Housing say he was not going to bring forward his proposals for a debate. There I heard effectively another example of what we saw with Deputy Warr’s proposal that I think this Assembly expressed a view with the portent of Deputy Warr. Then the Minister issued a - it is not an encyclical for a Ministerial decree - but he issued a Ministerial direction to effectively not use the consensus form of government, which I thought we had. I think the proposal was that it should go to a Scrutiny Panel, so I think that is what the debate was. I think the Scrutiny Panel engaged in wanting to have a debate about the issue but they did not, the Minister just did what he wanted, and we heard it and we had to read it. I was sorry about that. I think that overall now this amendment is a tepid review. It is tepid, and it is by January 2026, and basically I have heard nothing from the Minister for Housing. I wanted a Minister for Housing that was going to be banging on the doors of all the relevant Ministers to make sure that there was not rental stress and housing stress in any part of our housing market. But where is the Minister for Housing banging the doors? This is a proposal just about social rent. I agree with my friend - and I salute Deputy Kovacs; I know she is in some difficulty today and I really think she is showing enormous courage, as she does - and she will know that there is stress in our constituency in St. Saviour, but it is not only social rented - it is not only social rented - it is across the whole housing market. If she were to have asked - and I do not blame her for not because I am not a member of the Reform Party - but if she had wanted to do a St. Saviour proposal, I think that we would have agreed, because I agree with her that there is social stress in social housing but there is housing stress in all sectors of the market. The private sector market is in disarray. Average social rents are £1,180 for a month according to the 2024 numbers; we have got a completely unknown picture in relation to the private sector market. The Minister says that he does not not like the private sector rental market, yet I have asked him in this Assembly and he is giving mixed messages. We have got the tenancy agreement coming forward; I am not sure whether this is a fully signed-up proposal by the Council of Ministers. I know that there are some dissenting voices, I think, even from within the ranks of the Council of Ministers on this. I do not know where the Chief Minister is in relation to the rental market. All I know is it is causing landlords to take fright, they are getting out of the market. As the former Minister for

External Relations and Financial Services said, there are issues with the private sector rental market. He put his nail right on the head, you would not invest in a private sector rental property. As I had to explain to a Member yesterday, the surcharge is on the whole amount; it is not just on the incremental amount, it is on the whole amount. The first pound of a second home is 3 per cent, so it is not like the stepped change of stamp duty where you basically pay more; stamp duty is a friction on the market. That is what Dame Kate Barker, our past eminent chair of F.P.P. (Fiscal Policy Panel) said: "I tried to deal with stamp duty to basically remove the friction to make the market work." Well the market is not working in terms of people buying homes. We have got stress with people sitting on homes that they cannot sell, down-sizers that cannot sell their homes to people who want family homes. I would say that we should give them a stamp duty holiday to incentivise them to get out of their large homes, which Deputy Warr and others have said they cannot afford, and give them an incentive. Maybe buy some of these surplus to requirement 2-bedroom and one-bedroom flats which the Constable of Trinity and his planning panel have passed that cannot get built. But nobody is going to build a rental property and a lot of people are not building sale properties because the market is in such uncertainty. We have seen a plunging of prices. I know that is lovely because we all thought that the housing market was out of control, but is it going to come into some sort of control? Are we going to see an end to spiralling falling prices because that is about confidence. When is the Government going to say enough is enough with the housing market, that it is in freefall? We have seen housing prices fall in real terms by a larger amount that I think we have seen ever. We have seen a fall in the number of properties being transacted and people think that it is fine. It is a bit like the discussion we had yesterday about inflation. When inflation goes up, and then it goes down again, and you basically link into prices, you have got the baked-in increase that you have already got. It is already baked in. You have got the increases in the higher cost of inflation in Jersey having been then fixed but if inflation simply just carries on, you have got those higher prices baked in. What we are seeing with the housing market is basically housing prices fall and they are in freefall and so where is the confidence? Are banks lending? No, it is very, very difficult to get mortgage situations now, as the Minister for External Relations said. It is very difficult to get a mortgage because you cannot get a valuation. It is very difficult when you have got to get a 90 per cent mortgage, which a lot of people have to get. While I am on my feet, if I would see a Minister for Housing that would be knocking at the doors of our Constables and our other opponents of the Bridging Island Plan who said no to greenfield sites in their Parishes, I would have some sympathy to him, but he voted against every single greenfield site and he has done nothing to basically bring forward the supply side. The supply side. I will say it again, the supply side is the problem. It is the supply side in social renting, in private rental, in first-time buyers, in down-sizers, it is the right type of supply. This Assembly has failed. It has failed since the Bridging Island Plan failed to deliver hundreds of units based upon the actual data that was there. I am afraid that the people leaving the Island and people now losing confidence and basically getting out of Jersey, that is not good enough to say that we do not need to build supply. I have been going on about the fuel farm to try and give the Chief Minister the opportunity of having some brownfield land that he can bring forward some of those brownfield sites all over the countryside, put them down at La Collette and build some homes in the Parishes. It is to do with creating employment land and housing land that I want to basically liberate my friend the Minister for Infrastructure so that he does not have a Buncefield designation on the fuel farm. Anybody that thinks that Jersey Gas is going to be there in a few years' time after what we have heard, I do not know, but we will see. Basically we need to be using the land we have got for housing and employment land in the right way that Deputy Curtis says. Are we doing that? No, we are not. This proposition, while commendable by Deputy Kovacs, is right. If we had our time again we would not be having a situation where we would be needing perhaps to bring forward a situation that social rents would be 70 per cent, 60 per cent of market, because the market would be working. The real problem, and the real elephant in the room, is the market is not working, and the market is not working because there is not enough supply. Some Constables may huff and they puff, and some Members may not like it, because nimbyism and not building in Parishes is a real

problem. It is always a problem but it has got to be dealt with. We have to be honest with our constituents. If we want in St. Saviour to give a hope of housing ... I met a resident of St. Saviour only yesterday who said: "Deputy, I am never going to get on the housing ladder" and I said: "I would like to work every single day to get you on the housing ladder, to get you to buy a home." I can see my Constable nodding, and I am pleased about that because maybe we need to rethink carefully - very carefully - some of the decisions that were taken in the Bridging Island Plan. That is not a threat, that is not in any way saying that, but we are going to have to deliver some of the supply. I am delighted with St. John's, I can see their proposal up at Sion, I think it is marvellous. I think that was the Constable bringing forward to it. The Constable of St. Martin has brought stuff forward as well. We all have a responsibility. I do not want to see any more homes sold off because Andium need to pay for their building programme without a commensurate replacement unit of a 3-bedroom house. I have counted the number of Grasett Park units that have been sold and Gordon Le Breton Close and all the others in my constituency. I would like to see a commensurate replacement. We were all against Margaret Thatcher's sell-off of social housing units, everybody does not like that, but I can say to Members it is happening now because we need to fund Andium's Home improvement scheme, and I would be happy with that. I am delighted for the people that have got on the First Step scheme; I really am. They have got on the housing ladder - fantastic - but you have got to create the equivalent social housing unit to somebody to rent. That is not being done and that is my problem. I commend Deputy Kovacs for bringing forward her proposition but I do think we need to review - and a frankly honest review - about all the issues of housing stress because there is housing stress in social rented, private rental, non-qualified rental, people trying to sell their homes, first-time buyers, down-sizers, and the whole of the market. If that is uncomfortable to listen to, I think there is an element of truth in that. I would like this Assembly to end its term of office in a few months' time, in a year's time, with some confidence being put back into the housing policies, joined-up policies in relation to planning, the Ministers for Housing, Treasury and Social Security, having policies that work in the interests of Islanders overall, not in the interests of just a few, because it is the many we need to look after and I do not think we are doing that.

Connétable A.N. Jehan of St. John:

Could I ask for a point of clarification?

The Deputy Bailiff:

Are you prepared to accept that?

Deputy P.F.C. Ozouf:

Yes, of course.

The Connétable of St. John:

Would the Deputy, who said that the Minister for Housing was not working with Constables to provide additional homes, accept that the Minister for Housing is working with this Constable to find right-size homes?

Deputy P.F.C. Ozouf:

If that is a result of a Minister in the Council of Ministers working together, great, but is he doing that same thing with the more populous Parishes? I do not know and I have not seen it. I have been trying and I have not done it. Well done, St. John, and the Minister for Housing, but it is not enough is what I am trying to say.

2.3.3 Deputy M. Tadier of St. Brelade:

I have been starting to read Bill Bryson recently. The beauty of Bill Bryson is that he is an expert on everything but sometimes I realise I do not need to be reading Bill Bryson, I can just come to the Assembly and listen to Deputy Ozouf talk and it is a lot quicker. You wonder if some of these people

who are speaking have not been in Government ever because I look back and think of who was it that set Andium up under its current constitution where essentially we really set Andium up in many ways to fail and it has succeeded despite that. We set up Andium with a £400 million debt, I think it has been alluded to today, it has to pay a return back to the Government of Jersey. It was not set up with that but we set it up on a model that they had to make a certain return to the Government of Jersey every year because it was saddled with debt from the beginning.

[12:30]

There is absolutely nothing to stop the Government or future Governments to say to Andium, which we own outright: “We are going to write off that debt. You can completely redesign your business model if you want to so that you do not have to give us that return. You can invest all of that money which your tenants are paying”, including some tenants of course who may not get any access to income support, some who are partly on income support, and they could have a completely different model of rents which ensures that their tenants are not in rental stress. Members are talking as if they do not have any concept of what rental stress might mean, whereas we know that, although there are various different definitions, as a rule of thumb, it is reckoned that a household spending 30 per cent or more of its income can be considered under housing stress, and under extreme housing stress if it is spending more than 50 per cent. So let us look at what some of those figures might mean in reality for our constituents in Jersey. If we take an example of an income support component, the maximum component that would be granted to somebody who lives in a private 2-bedroom flat would be £362.74 a week which equates to about £1,572 a month. Now if we look at that individual who, let us say they are paying that rent, they are paying £1,572 for a 2-bedroom flat to a private landlord, they would need to be earning at least £5,239 or having that as their family income to be able to pay that, otherwise if it is any less, they would be in rental stress. I would ask, are there many people who get an income, and is that a net income? Is it a gross income because presumably that is what they need to live on. That is still quite a high amount for an individual. It could of course be a one-parent home with a child who is having to rent a 2-bedroom flat, so these are quite significant figures. Let us not fool ourselves that for centuries, and even recent decades, and I would say even today, this Assembly has been full of the wrong tier class. So it is the class who themselves do not live in Andium normally, they might be the exceptions, but they have a number of properties which they will rent out and get a rental income for. It is that class which has been making housing policy up until this point. Of course, it is understandable that when some Members stand up to pontificate on the plight of the poor and what rental stress might mean, it is that those words might ring hollow in the ears of some listening outside the Assembly. Let us bring ourselves back to reality because I cannot help feeling that there has been deliberate heavy weather being made by a would-be opposition rabble in this Assembly because unfortunately they are not organised. Not organised like we were when we were in opposition, trying to find fault with something which fundamentally should be axiomatically obvious to all of us, which is the amended proposition that says the principle is that social housing rents and the income support policies should not put tenants into rental stress. What is wrong with that? What is wrong with that that we cannot agree to that? Why should we not give a further mandate to the Minister for Housing to say: “Please go ahead and do that” because we have a situation now in Jersey where many people in our community are living under rental stress. I hear absolutely what the Constable of Trinity is saying, that there are individuals in mortgage stress, and they may well be in mortgage stress, of course, depending on what their rates of interest are and whether they are fixed, et cetera, whether they are on interest only. I suppose the key difference there is that people make a choice to buy a house which becomes a home for them, hopefully, and not everybody has that choice. That is something which the Minister I think wants to give to more people, is an opportunity to buy their own homes. But of course the more private rentals there are out there, which are being effectively cross-subsidised by the income support system because tenants cannot otherwise afford to pay them, then the more private rentals that there are out there, the less homes there are for first-time buyers to buy. That is just simple mathematics. I do not want to make heavy

weather of it, simply to say that I think we have had a good debate on this, this morning. If Members feel so strongly about housing matters and they wish to seek re-election, then that is what the manifesto is for, come up with coherent positions that will make people's lives in Jersey better but of course you cannot be all things to all people. You cannot, on the one hand, go to those who own their properties and say: "We want to make sure that your property prices never come down" and go to people who cannot afford house prices in Jersey and say: "We want to make sure that you can afford to buy houses." I think there is that conundrum, which I think Deputy Gorst touched on, is do we use the income support system to cross-subsidise unaffordable and unsustainably high rents or do we say that when it comes to social rent, be it in Andium or in the trust sector: "No, we are not forced to set those prices at such a high level because we have a different operating model. Our operating model is not one of profit but it is one of sustainability and providing for our tenants. Therefore, we do not have to have any regard for market rents and we can just set them at a rate which simply would cover our costs and enable us to reinvest in our stock to pay for the maintenance and to pay our staff to do their jobs properly." I think it is very much the latter of those proposals which the public would want us to do and not to follow a broken private rental model which puts so many into rental stress. There are just one or 2 considerations I do want to raise at this point because this is an opportunity for us in fact, if we want to be constructive, to tell the Minister what we would like him to do or to give considerations which he and his team might not necessarily be thinking of up until this point. There is a consideration of course about how we do work with the private sector because there is this idea that was set up that the private sector were somehow to fulfil the shortage of homes that were being provided by the social sector. For example, is there an option that we could give to private landlords to make them social landlords? Is there some kind of scheme that we could ask private landlords to sign up to that would give them some of the benefits of being social landlords and give some of their tenants the benefits of having some kind of social tenancy? What might those benefits be? Let us just look at one of them, is the fact that social landlords do not pay tax on their rental income, and I do not think we are suggesting that they should. You could of course say that the Andium return to government is a form of tax that they are paying back to government but it is not exactly that. But of course the private landlords on their profits from their rental income will have to pay 20 per cent to the Government; Andium and the trusts do not have to do that. Could it be possible that if a private landlord was willing to sign up to a social framework and keep their rents at a social level and make sure that their properties were maintained in the same way that Andium maintain their properties, that they could also get those benefits of not having to pay tax on their rental income because effectively they are being a social landlord. But they might have to sign up to other criteria such as security of tenure and whatever the social housing providers do. These are just some ideas which the Minister might wish to consider. Because one of the concerns I have got is the disparity between those who find themselves in Andium who have got the security of tenure and those who would like to be in Andium but, for whatever reason, are not able to qualify for social housing. I give that example if we have got somebody receiving £1,500 a month to pay for a private tenancy, somebody might be getting exactly the same money to get an Andium flat but with no idea whether or not the 2-bedroom flat is the same standard as the social rental flat. I think there is an issue that we should be handing taxpayer money out for properties that may not be fit for standard. I know the Minister would argue there is a Residential Tenancy Law there, there are minimum standards, but I would say that the minimum standards in the private sector vary greatly, whereas we know the beauty of social housing providers is that there is ... they are not perfect by any means. I have seen some terrible provision and some terrible damp conditions in the past, hopefully not so much today, but they vary less when it comes to social provision. For my part, I wish the Minister luck, I wish the Council of Ministers luck. We do need to all take collective responsibility when it comes to these issues but I think we need to accept that taking the profit element and the profit motive out of social housing and talking about sustainability, reinvestment and maintenance, something which in decades gone by was not the case, where social housing was simply seen as a cash cow for

government, that has to stop. I think that is being recognised, certainly by this Minister, and hopefully this Council of Ministers.

Deputy D.J. Warr of St. Helier South:

Could I have a point of clarification?

The Deputy Bailiff:

Are you prepared to give that, Deputy?

Deputy M. Tadier:

Yes, Sir.

Deputy D.J. Warr:

Yes, could the Deputy say what he means by “the model is broken” or “a broken model”?

Deputy M. Tadier:

Where does he want me to start? I would probably have to make a second speech and it would take me over my 15 minutes, so happy to speak to the Member privately.

LUNCHEON ADJOURNMENT PROPOSED

The Deputy Bailiff:

I see the time; is the adjournment proposed? Do Members wish to adjourn? 2.15 p.m.

[12:40]

LUNCHEON ADJOURNMENT

[14:15]

The Deputy Bailiff:

We resume the debate on the proposition as amended. Does any Member wish to speak on the proposition?

2.3.4 Deputy D.J. Warr:

I would just like to say about Deputy Kovacs’s proposition here, and that is I totally agree with the sentiment. I think none of us in the Assembly feel that rental stress is ... it is a really serious issue and absolutely right to be paying attention to it. Just to move on though, there have been some interesting debates and some interesting commentary here. I would just like to remind the Minister for Housing, because it almost seems like this is some new territory for him, back in P.31/2021 Housing Affordability: actions to be taken by the Government of Jersey, they included rent stabilisation, a timetable included as well for July 2021 to deliver on his proposition. The current Minister for Housing already knows there was an issue way back in 2021. It surprisingly now needs a Back-Bencher to drive him to action on this occasion. I am also very concerned about the Minister for Housing saying he is working all by himself, that somehow other Ministers cannot co-operate with him; he does not have the power to ask Ministers to co-operate with him. When I was Minister for Housing, I had the Minister for the Environment on board in terms of trying to get greenfields sorted out with regard to planning matters, I had the Minister for Infrastructure on board because we had a drainage issue, it is a cross-Ministerial issue. Housing is just not the Minister for Housing’s remit, it is everybody’s worry and everybody’s concern. I am just slightly worried that the Minister for Housing feels that he is quite so siloed at this moment in time. To go back to Deputy Kovacs’s commentary about cost recovery; yes, it is about cost recovery. There are incredible costs involved in trying to make sure we get a well-developed social housing provision which does not fall back into the trap of where we were when it was all government-run and it was the dripping tap scenario. That

has taken up vast sums of money and vast amounts of resources to get there. Another commentary made was about £10 million going into the private sector. Well I would refer that to Deputy Ozouf's commentary; that is a building issue, that is a supply issue. If we cannot supply sufficient homes, therefore we cannot open up the Gateway sufficiently for people, therefore we need the private sector to support us, the private sector to mitigate this issue around rental stress, we have to make a payout. Sadly, that is £10 million. Now if we develop policies appropriately then that number will no doubt reduce. At the beginning I thought Deputy Tadier should be the next Minister for Housing; however, his broken model theory kicked that one into the long grass, I am afraid. But the harsh reality about all of this is, this is business as usual for the Minister for Housing. This is not anything special, this is business as usual. Thank you to Deputy Jeune for pulling out my previous policy. That was what we were trying to do, is review these policies because they constantly need reviewing, things are dynamic, things change, so that is absolutely the purview of the Minister for Housing to be doing. It is rather depressing to be even having this debate when the Minister for Housing should already be doing this stuff, so I find that rather sad. Just to put this into big number perspectives, Andium currently have 4,800 tenants, 58 per cent of them, that is 2,800 tenants, already have all of their housing need covered by the current setup. Also it has been pointed out to me that the average rent paid by someone resident in Andium is around 70 per cent. Although we have an 80 per cent cap on Andium, the average household is paying 70 per cent. I think that again reflects the fact that there are an awful lot of people paying an awful lot less than 70 per cent. We need income support, absolutely, and, yesterday, the other point being made about the dividend being paid by Andium to the Minister for Treasury and Resources, that is again a very tricky thing. It is a difficult political decision but the Minister for Treasury and Resources was absolutely clear yesterday, she is not going to move until somebody says: "Where is another £30 million?" I would say it is nearer £50 million because a lot of this is wooden dollars, but where is that money going to come from in order to finance other issues? Are we going to put taxes up in other areas? I talk about all of these different areas, and we are very, very well aware of them all: right-sizing policies, better efficient use of housing within the housing stock of Andium. One stat which really always bugged me was 2 per cent of the families who live in Andium homes are in the top quintile of earners on this Island. My question is: what are we doing about that? There are lots of tweaks and things that can be done but the most important thing is we cannot break the Andium model. We can play with things on the edges but the model is the model right now and it is very, very difficult to do a huge amount more. I absolutely empathise with people who are in rental stress, totally empathise with that, and we have got to try and minimise that number as much as we can. We do that by such things as opening the Gateway, policies which I brought in, which was also about reducing the age of access, which thankfully the current Minister for Housing continued on that route with. He also continued on the route of the policy of increasing the extent of the Gateway so that people's income levels ... I recognised very early on that the restriction on the Gateway was too much and too many people were falling out and not getting access to housing. The people that are the most vulnerable in the Island are already being catered for and a very, very high level of concern is being aimed at them. As I say, I just come back to this whole point, this is business as usual for the Minister for Housing, it is nothing special. I find it deeply disappointing that a Back-Bencher has had to bring forward such a proposition.

Connétable K.C. Lewis of St. Saviour:

May I raise the défaut on the Constable of St. Clement who is joining us online?

The Deputy Bailiff:

Are Members content to raise the défaut on the Connétable? The défaut is raised. Does any other Member wish to speak on this proposition? .

2.3.5 Deputy J. Renouf of St. Brelade:

We have had a much longer and more thorough debate than would have been the case if the amendment had not been separately debated. I hope that those Members who have expressed perhaps some exasperation with the debate will in the end come to welcome that. I certainly recall many occasions where members of Reform Jersey have championed the importance of debate in this Assembly, and I certainly do not dissent from that, and I hope that once the dust is settled they will agree that it was useful to have a debate rather than wave through the amended proposition. I want to make clear that I support the idea of a review, I have no problem with that at all, it is a very important issue. I just did not realise a proposition was needed to make it happen since it is already in the Common Strategic Policy and, as Deputy Jeune pointed out, the Minister had already committed to doing one in a meeting of Scrutiny. The debate about the amendment was about whether we go a bit further and have a more substantive debate on hard policy choices. It was worth having on many levels. One outcome of the debate was that it exposed considerable tensions within government over social rent policy and the funding model for social housing providers, so I think the debate we have had, thanks to Deputy Curtis, has been useful. Now we are debating the amended proposition, which is generally fairly anodyne and so, as I say, I will support it. Since others have raised broader issues that relate to the general issue of cost of housing and, I confess, I have been triggered, I am going to address some of them as well. Deputy Ozouf made the point that house prices have fallen and that the market is dysfunctional but I would say they are still way, way higher relative to average earnings than they were even 15 years ago, and I checked that over the lunch break. Housing affordability did increase last year with the fall in prices coinciding with a rise in average earning. For all Deputy Ozouf's talk of crisis, that is a good outcome. Affordability is still very poor, house prices still need to fall further if we are going to make houses affordable to more people. That would bring down rents in the private sector and, therefore, of course, in the social housing sector. Now it might cause other problems but all that does is emphasise that tackling housing affordability is a highly complex matter with multiple interactions and it will not just be solved by ripping up the Island Plan and building on lots of greenfields, quite apart from the other policy considerations that might be engaged were that to happen. I would say that Island Plans are not just for Christmas, they are long-term planning documents, and stability around them is important. There is not a Member of this Assembly who will not disagree with something in the Island Plan, myself included, but in the longer term we will do ourselves no favours by repeatedly attempting to relitigate issues that were lost in an Island Plan debate just because we disagree with them. Stability in planning is important and following the processes laid out in the Planning Law is also important. Another point that was made is that transactions have fallen. Yes, they did, but they are now rising again. I think that crisis has passed as interest rates have started to fall. The buy-to-let surcharge is there to reduce the risk that cash-rich landlords are able to bid up the price of housing to the detriment of owner-occupiers. In an Island with no capital gains tax and no inheritance tax and where the long-term house prices have risen significantly above earnings and inflation, property is a high-quality investment. The surcharge is intended to rebalance the market towards owner-occupiers by reducing investor demand; that is the intention. I have to say, it looks like it is working, and I hope the Minister for Housing will stick to his guns on that. We all have an interest in increasing housing supply, for affordability of housing and for rents. Greenfields are certainly going to be a part of the answer, rezoning greenfields, but the obsession with rezoning is the only solution is misguided. There is one supply-side policy that could work to increase supply relatively quickly: we could tackle the hundreds of empty houses already connected to the utilities, already with planning permissions already built and sitting empty. I hope the Minister remembers his commitment to that as well. My fellow Deputy for St. Brelade, moving on a bit, decries a rabble of a supposed opposition. I do not know if he intended to include me in that definition; Deputy Mézec thinks he should. He did so of course without knowing whether or not who was going to oppose the vote and whether there was an opposition to say: "I am going to support it." I would also go further and say I am not part of any opposition. I have supported Ministers on many issues, just now in this speech, in fact, but on others I have policy disagreements. That is not a fault in the machine or a failure in the system, it is

called being an independent. On the basis that we are voting for something that we have already agreed, that rental stress should be reviewed and then addressed, and with the important addition of a date by which it will be done, I am supportive. I would also like to reaffirm the principle that policy should be preceded by a review and that that is also a principle worth supporting.

2.3.6 Deputy L.K.F. Stephenson of St. Mary, St. Ouen and St. Peter:

I also rise to speak in favour of the proposition. I was, until the very last minute, going to vote in favour of the amendment as well but the Minister then said that he would be bringing a report to the Assembly rather than a proposition and that made me rethink that, and I will come back to that point shortly. In my manifesto at the last election I did say that I believed we should reconsider how we link social housing rents to the increasingly unaffordable private sector market, and I stand by that today. I will, as I say, be supporting this proposition, and I would probably have supported the proposition unamended as well. I want to just go back to a comment I made in the debate about the amendment, where hopefully it was taken as a joke, but where I talked about the word “review” and the use of it. We have seen this Government initially did seek to rebrand reviews and I think that was quite right because reviews had become kind of associated with inaction and not doing anything. I think in the eyes of the public, when the public see this Assembly or Ministers or Government talking about reviewing something, there is, quite rightly, I think, an expectation - or perhaps maybe not an expectation but a hope - that something will happen, that things may get better, that there will be some kind of action from that review.

[14:30]

We should not forget that time and resources and energy all go into those reviews as well. I think it is probably quite a right expectation that the public see a review and then have a hope associated with that, that something might change. In an ideal world I would like to see this Minister for Housing and this Council of Ministers make some kind of commitment that there would be some action following this review, but I think perhaps we may be out of time on that, as the timescales put it. What this review will do is set up very nicely a very perfect election platform for anybody who chooses to take it with the research, the data and so on. I think that is the reality of where we are now in going forward. Maybe there will be those who choose to take that opportunity to make some kind of commitment and say: “On the basis of this research, I think this should happen. If you elect me or us, this is what we will do.” The reality is that we will not, any of us here today, or the next Assembly, be helping those who are experiencing rental stress for quite a few years yet, that is with a good wind as well, and that is really the reality of where we are. What I would say, just to return to the review side of things and what will happen if this is approved shortly, I would request that the review does look very closely and really does interrogate the evidence and the data and the projections around cost and impacts, to really come up with something that is robust and represents the opportunity for meaningful change. That is why I did ask in the debate on the amendment if the Minister for Housing would be bringing forward the current system alongside any new options to enable it to be compared to because there is no use just changing things for changing sake. I think there is sometimes, whether it is the reality or it is a perception, a feeling that around election time we need things to say we want to change them because that makes good lines in manifestos and that makes good things to go out and talk to people about. We should not change things just for change’s sake, so let us try and get some really good robust data and evidence, really challenge it, interrogate it, compare it to what we have now so that we can have a meaningful review, that then action can follow from. I remain hopeful that from something like that, that piece of work, we can have that meaningful action which will make a difference to people’s lives here in Jersey. Maybe not today but in a few years’ to come and into the future as well.

2.3.7 Deputy K.L. Moore of St. Mary, St. Ouen and St. Peter:

“Action, no more reviews”, I think those were the words that we heard last January, were they not? What has it taken? It has taken nearly 14 months to come back to this Assembly and say: “Please, Sir, can we have a review?” It is absolute hypocrisy, I am afraid there is no other way of explaining it. We were told that the current Minister for Housing was going to call a housing crisis in line with his manifesto, and I am afraid the left wing are not the only people who consider housing a crisis and a priority in their manifestos. It is a matter that concerns many of us but there are other ways of looking at it and approaching the answers. Deputy Ozouf talked earlier about supply. I am a supply-side politician; yes, absolutely. I believe that that is the way we approach the issues of housing and how we resolve the funding issues that are within our housing system. I cannot possibly support this proposition because it is not doing what we were promised by this Government in January of last year. It is not bringing forward action, it is simply bringing a report. Another report to sit on the shelf? Brilliant. Well that is exactly what the people did not want to see, that is not what we were promised in January of last year. All that has been achieved in the past 14 months has been delay, delay and finally: “Let us get back and finish those reviews that were underway.” It just beggars belief, I am afraid, and I am sorry to voice these thoughts in this Assembly. I generally keep my counsel to myself but I am afraid, after hearing what I have heard today, it has to be said, and, so, there be it.

2.3.8 Deputy L.V. Feltham of St. Helier Central:

I am sorry to follow the previous speaker; I had wanted to respond to Deputy Stephenson’s rather more positive speech. Deputy Stephenson is on the Scrutiny Panel that I work with, that is ably chaired by Deputy Doublet, and I would hope that they know and they feel assured that, as Minister for Social Security, I have always taken the opportunity to take action and not wait for lengthy reviews to be completed. I did want to take the opportunity now to give my word, as the Minister for Social Security, that in the time we are undertaking the work that we will be doing as a result of this proposition, if I see quick wins and things that can be changed, that are not wholesale changes but can make a real difference to people’s lives and that comes out of this work, I will seek to make those changes as quickly as possible. I wanted to give Deputy Stephenson my assurance on that.

2.3.9 Deputy S.Y. Mézec of St. Helier South:

As it feels like we might be getting to the end of this debate, I thought I would just contribute some final words towards it. You do not take anything for granted but it feels like hopefully a majority of Members will be in support of us going away and doing this work. I look forward to seeing what it leads to. I mention of course that it was my intention to produce a report that outlined what potential options for a revised system would look like and what that might involve, how deep potential changes might be or otherwise, and what potential implications there would be, and that could be an informative exercise. I think Deputy Stephenson was right to bring up the prospect of that then going on and perhaps being a consideration for future election platforms. I personally hope that that is the case because if an election manifesto policy has come about as a result of looking at a comprehensive review that is done on something, then you can bet that that policy is more likely to be credible because the person adopting it will know what the implications are, they will know what the funding is, et cetera. It will not just be a case of making a popular statement without having done any real thinking underpinning it. Which, I think, nicely brings me back to the previous election platform because Deputy Moore, of course, is right that there have been many of us in this Assembly agitating for more action and less reviews and consultation. I am pleased now that I am in a position where there is a lodged Residential Tenancy Law amendment on the table, action which, if adopted by the Assembly, will make meaningful change to improve the lives of people who rent their homes in Jersey. I look forward to the support from all of those Members who have made reference to that before. If Members were interested enough to go back and look at our previous election manifesto in 2022, which had a housing crisis action plan in it which outlined very clear action points, which our record is abundantly clear we are pursuing. I was very grateful to Deputy Warr for pointing out

P.31/2021 which highlights just how consistent I have been on all of these subjects in recent years. In fact, in that last manifesto, the line that referred to social housing rents said that we would review social housing rents. It is one of the few areas where we held our hands up to say: “We have an idea of what the answers are quite clearly for all of these issues but on this specific subject, on social housing rents reform, we are not in a position yet to tell you exactly what the solution looks like. It is something we think would need to be reviewed before we can get to a position where we know what the solutions are.” This proposition is absolutely in line with that election manifesto and the promise that was made, and so there can, I think, be no accusation of hypocrisy against us on that front because we are to the letter doing what we said on this. There have been Members who have attempted to repeat what I think is a misnomer, that this is otherwise business as usual, when I think I comprehensively dealt with that in the debate on the amendment to this, to make clear why that is not strictly the case but to reiterate, because again Members have continued down this line, the reason that this review is now possible and can happen is because of the realignment I took to the housing agenda when I took over to make sure that there would be capacity to do this. Had I not done those things there would not have been capacity to be able to do these things. I believe, had the previous Government continued in office, there was not the faintest chance that a review of social housing rents would have taken place because of all the weird and wonderful different roads to nowhere that were already set on that point. Empty homes of course being one. Since Deputy Renouf has mentioned it, I can point out that the previous government had half a million pounds to spend on an empty homes project. They spent 10 per cent, gave the other 90 per cent back just in time for me to take office. They gave it back as an underspend but had already committed to unfunded spending in managing the glorified spreadsheet that was the empty homes service. We can very clearly identify why there has not been action on that. We will, if this amended proposition is adopted, get to a position where the Assembly can be much clearer about what those options are. That will be presented in a report. If Members felt that it was helpful to not simply have a report that is produced and sat on a shelf and does not go anywhere, but if Members felt that it would be a good opportunity for an in-committee debate on that report to test what people’s initial responses to it are and what other issues they would want to be considered, I would be more than happy to do that. That could potentially be a really good opportunity to test some of these things, so we can watch this space on that. That could be a really positive thing to do there. Otherwise, I hope that Members will get behind this amended proposition, see where it goes, and send a message out to people in Jersey who are concerned about rental stress that the Assembly, for once, after years of rejecting proposition after proposition that have been brought in this vein, will put their names to something that will signify something positive to those people.

The Deputy Bailiff:

Does anyone else wish to speak on this proposition? I call upon Deputy Kovacs to reply.

Deputy R.S. Kovacs of St. Saviour:

Can I continue sitting?

The Deputy Bailiff:

Yes, of course.

2.3.10 Deputy R.S. Kovacs:

Thank you. My pain calmed down a bit, but from the painkillers I am a bit drowsy. It might be a more cheerful side. But the matter I want to address is serious and I want to thank everyone that contributed to this debate and to the amendment. The debate was wide and varied and I welcome the debate. I always welcome different views as long as they are targeted to the proposition and not to the person. Different views are always bringing a different perspective that maybe we did not think of, worries that have been brought, hopefully they have been addressed, but now is to look how we

can generally do something, to start to do something in the sense of helping the ones that struggle. As we close this debate, I want to bring us back to the heart of the matter, the people behind the numbers. We have talked about statistics, and they are stark. Over half of our social housing tenants are saying their rent is too high, even with financial support. Households on the lowest incomes are spending over half their income just to keep a roof over their heads, and these are not just figures, they are lives. They are a single parent choosing between rent and food, the pensioners switching off the heating so they can afford to pay the landlord, the family trapped in a system that is meant to support them but instead is adding to the stress. We are not here today to fix everything overnight. What this proposition does is ask for a shift in how we think. A shift towards fairness, sustainability and dignity. I have heard the concerns about the process, and that is why I accepted the Minister's amendment. It ensures that the work ahead will be done properly through consultation, modelling, engagement with tenants and housing providers all grounded in evidence.

[14:45]

To respond to Deputy Alex Curtis's definition of rental stress, I repeat I did not want to put the exact definition of how it should be in the proposition, but to me is in the sense of no one having to choose between rent and food, rent or healthcare, and that is how I see rental stress. Obviously the definition can be reviewed in the sense to show the reality of life lived experiences. But this work needs a foundation and that foundation is this principle that social rents should not cause rental stress. That is not radical, it is common sense, it is compassion. Because we cannot keep relying just on benefits to do all the heavy lifting. Benefits might help people survive but they will not help them thrive. We need to deal with the real issue, the underlying cost of rent itself. Affordability could come through different means, different routes, and that is what accepting this principle would lead to reviewing. I know some will say: "But what about investment in housing? What about financial viability?" Of course that matters, but affordability is not the enemy of development. We can find the balance, and that is exactly what the upcoming review is meant to explore. If the electorate will want me back in the Assembly next term, I will for sure push for the best viable plans brought to be also implemented. This is not about ideology, it is about people. People who deserve not just a roof over their heads but security, stability and the life of dignity. The proposition we are voting on today is fair, realistic and overdue. It does not demand instant solutions but it does demand that we finally face the problem head-on and stop designing systems that quietly accept an affordable rent as normal. If we want to say that housing is a priority, really say it, then this is how we show it. Let us take this first step, let us show tenants they have been heard, that we recognise housing is not just a market, it is a human need, and assess best options where we can then contribute to the details within an in-committee debate, which the Minister has confirmed, so we can all have a say on those plans. I ask the Assembly to support this proposition in principle, to allow the Minister to assess feasible options and bring such plans back by January 2026 so the next Assembly is equipped with the evidence and recommendations it needs to tackle this affordability issue effectively. This is how we help build a future where no one in Jersey has to choose between paying rent and feeding their family. I maintain the proposal as amended and I call for the appel.

The Deputy Bailiff:

The appel has been called for. Members are invited to return to their seats. I ask the Greffier to open the voting on the proposition, as amended. If all Members, including those attending remotely, have had the chance to cast their votes then I ask the Greffier to close the voting. I can announce that the proposition has been adopted.

Pour: 34		Contre: 4		Abstained: 2
Connétable of Trinity		Connétable of St. Brelade		Connétable of St. Clement
Connétable of St. Peter		Deputy S.M. Ahier		Deputy M.B. Andrews
Connétable of St. John		Deputy K.L. Moore		
Connétable of Grouville		Deputy B. Ward		
Connétable of St. Mary				
Connétable of St. Saviour				
Deputy G.P. Southern				
Deputy M. Tadier				
Deputy L.M.C. Doublet				
Deputy M.R. Le Hegarat				
Deputy R.J. Ward				
Deputy C.S. Alves				
Deputy I. Gardiner				
Deputy I.J. Gorst				
Deputy L.J. Farnham				
Deputy S.Y. Mézec				
Deputy Sir P.M. Bailhache				
Deputy T.A. Coles				
Deputy B.B. de S.V.M. Porée				
Deputy D.J. Warr				
Deputy H.M. Miles				
Deputy J. Renouf				
Deputy C.D. Curtis				
Deputy L.V. Feltham				
Deputy R.E. Binet				
Deputy H.L. Jeune				
Deputy M.E. Millar				
Deputy A. Howell				
Deputy T.J.A. Binet				
Deputy M.R. Ferey				
Deputy R.S. Kovacs				

Deputy A.F. Curtis				
Deputy K.M. Wilson				
Deputy L.K.F. Stephenson				

The Greffier of the States:

Those voting contre: the Connétable of St. Brelade and Deputies Ahier, Moore and Barbara Ward.
The abstentions: Deputy Andrews and online, the Connétable of St. Clement.

3. Review of the impact of increases to the Minimum Wage on the recruitment and retention of trainees (P.32/2025)

The Deputy Bailiff:

The next item is the Review of the impact of increases to the minimum wage on the recruitment and retention of trainees lodged by Deputy Andrews. The main respondent is the Minister for Social Security and I ask the Greffier to read the proposition.

The Greffier of the States:

The States are asked to decide whether they are of opinion – to request the Minister for Social Security to refer to the Jersey Employment Forum for review the impact of any increases to the minimum wage from 2024 onwards on the recruitment and retention of trainees, and to present the Forum's report to the Assembly no later than September 2027.

3.1 Deputy M.B. Andrews of St. Helier North:

Originally it was myself who brought forward a proposition to amalgamate the then training minimum wage rates into the minimum wage. Back then the minimum wage was set at £9.50. Of course, we have seen a new iteration of the Council of Ministers being formed. I do support the moves that they have taken to increase the baseline wage to support those who are low income earners. I think it is only right that we are doing that. People need to see that they can have more disposable income, but they can also increase their ability to save as well. But, of course, there are always going to be implications when you are increasing the baseline wage, and that impact could potentially be seen within the economy in terms of when we are looking at domestic inflation, and that is something Deputy Ozouf has mentioned a couple of times in this sitting already, and also in a few previous sittings as well. It is something that has been mentioned to me, especially in the building trade. There have been a few cases where the trainees who were, for instance, on a rate of £7.87 or £9.19 and now they are on a rate of £13, but people who were supporting them, say, 3 years ago were maybe on a rate of £10.50. So, their wages have also increased. It has been a cascade all the way through the building trade because of the wage increases, and that has obviously led to higher costs as well for those who are utilising the services of those in the building trade. Now I know that the Minister has touched upon that it is in law that in 2027 she is to review the rates, however, having spoken to a number of different individuals, I think efforts ought to be made to speak to as many individuals as we can in different organisations when the Jersey Employment Forum can engage those individuals from April of next year, because there are implications for some of Jersey's young people in particular, some of whom have really struggled to find a job. Also some of the students up at Highlands, they have started a course and then when they go to interviews it is soon decided upon that they are not going to be recruited. They do not really know what to do. Young people should feel that they can aspire, they can follow a career path that they want to do very well in. But that entry into the labour market at the moment is proving to be potentially prohibitive. I think there has to be work that is done to ensure - yes, let us ensure - that people are supported. Let us ensure that young people feel appreciated and young people can be supported when they enter the labour market.

That might be the case that we need to support firms as well who take on trainees. Obviously, we have got the Skills Development Fund, but that funding at the moment is limited and we might need to increase the funding for those individuals. At the time when I lodged my proposition, and it was actually the Jersey Employment Forum who recommended that such trainee rates should be amalgamated into the minimum wage rate, there were only less than 100 individuals on the training minimum wage rates. However, since then, it has been quite clear that the baseline wage will become the living wage. So what that means is in quite a small period of time the wage hikes are going to be fairly considerable. For instance, if you are looking at a trainee on year one, they were on about £16,00. Now they are on about £27,000. As you can probably imagine, if you are a small business, maybe an electrician or a plumber, you maybe have 3 or 4 people working for you and the tradition is you employ a trainee every single year. But for year one trainees, it tends to be the case that they are there to learn. So you cannot really rely upon them to deliver a service as such until maybe year 2. Definitely year 3, they would be in a really good position where they could be providing a service and they could be independently providing that service for a firm. There are of course higher input costs for employers, and I think it is absolutely paramount that we look at this in a different way compared to some of the other jurisdictions, who quite simply have no sub-minimum wage rates for trainees, a minimum wage rate, but with us because we have a higher rate, that being the living wage, that we need to potentially be open to reintroducing the trainee minimum wage rates depending on what the consultation brings up. We also need to look at the evidence in that respect because there might be an increase in demand for trainees since the baseline wage has gone up. I think we just need to ensure that we are engaging with those stakeholders who want to be part of the consultation that the Jersey Employment Forum will commence with. When I was looking at some of the minimum wage rates in Europe, it was quite interesting information. There were about 6 states with a minimum wage rate of about 1,500 euros per month. When we are looking at Jersey at the moment, I think the living wage rate is about £29,000 and it potentially could go up again next year. We are definitely going to be in a position where we are setting a baseline wage that is probably one of the more costly rates across some of the European states. In Europe, the data is made available. Of course, that is going to have some implications for young people when, for instance, they were on £16,000 and £19,000 and then, say, 3 years later, they could be on something that is maybe in excess of £30,000. I just think that is something that we need to be cognisant of. Having spoken to the vice-chair of the Construction Council, there was one thing that they highlighted to me. Last time when this consultation took place, it was not quite clear to them that it was also involving the trainee minimum wage rate. When they were approached, they did not really consider the impact on the training minimum wage rates. I just think it has to be made very explicit in the detail and the literature that is made available that there is trainee minimum wage rates, the minimum wage rate, and the living wage, just so it is more conspicuous for some people. Otherwise, we potentially could be missing out on gathering certain evidence that some people feel that they may want to contribute to. I will leave it there.

The Deputy Bailiff:

Is the proposition seconded? **[Seconded]** Does any Member wish to speak on the proposition?

3.1.1 Deputy J. Renouf of St. Brelade:

I am going to speak against this proposition on the basic principle, which is we should not accept propositions that attempt to make something happen that is already mandated in statute. The Minister for Social Security has made clear that this is something she is required to do anyway. She was not intending to break her obligations under statute and in fact is committed to doing it. I think that on principle this Assembly should not be spending its time debating propositions that are changing nothing, gains nothing, and I think that should be discouraged. We should therefore not support it. I must say I am tempted to bring a proposition requesting the Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning to review the provision of school places, Article 7 of the Education Law, or bring a

proposition requesting the Minister for Treasury and Resources to bring forward a comprehensive plan for the Government spending plans and its revenue-raising measures, and to do so by the end of the year and to call it a Budget. I think that this is a spurious proposition and that we should reject it.

3.1.2 Deputy L.V. Feltham of St. Helier Central:

It is difficult to know how to respond to this proposition. As Deputy Renouf has made clear, this is something that the future Minister for Social Security - I am minded it will be the future Assembly that this work will happen within - is legislated to do anyway, so legislation would have to change if this work was not to be done. I just wanted to give the background as to why in my comments paper I urged Members to support the proposition if it came to a vote, and that was just for me around consistency because my recollection is that I think there was an amendment brought fairly recently. I think it was by Deputy Jeune around some work that the Minister for the Environment was already doing, and we supported that amendment even though that work was already being done. I think it is important to treat all Members the same and to act with consistency in relation to those matters. I think also we need to consider what situation I or any other future Minister for Social Security would be in if the proposition was rejected.

[15:00]

Would that then mean that I would need to enact what the Assembly has rejected in rejecting the proposition, and therefore bring changes to the legislation to tell the next Minister not to do this piece of work. I do think this proposition puts us in a fairly tricky situation. I completely understand why Deputy Renouf has come to the position that he has come to, but I would urge Members to consider what position we would be in if the proposition itself would be rejected. In saying that, I also would urge Members to speak to Ministers before bringing propositions. I think it is really important that the time that we spend in this Chamber is time well spent and time making actual differences to the lives of our community. Just to answer back some of the concerns that Deputy Andrews raised in his initial speech. Yes, the minimum wage has risen further and faster than it would have done under the previous Government. I am incredibly proud of that achievement but we have also put in place the Better Business Support Package, which does include grants of £2,000 towards traineeships. So there is support there for people who are taking on trainees. I also want to give the Assembly comfort that I would not wait until the time outlined within this proposition before looking at issues related to wages and pay and traineeships and the impact. I consistently have conversations with both the Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning, the Minister for Sustainable Economic Development and also industry representatives about these very issues. I do not think we should be waiting until the specified time period to be having those conversations; it needs to be an ongoing conversation. My team also consistently work with the team at Skills Jersey, and I know that Skills Jersey are doing a lot of work in monitoring traineeships and apprenticeships, and they of course will provide advice to the Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning. This is a work in progress. All Ministers are committed to ensuring that apprenticeships and traineeships continue to be available and that our businesses are supported to deliver them. But we are also committed to working towards a living wage for all Islanders.

The Deputy Bailiff:

There was a third light on but I did not get it. Was it you, Deputy Curtis?

3.1.3 Deputy A.F. Curtis of St. Clement:

Yes, sir. Sorry to the Members for speaking so much today. Very quickly, I would like to echo and concur with Deputy Renouf on why I will not support this proposition today. I note the comments made by the Minister for Social Security about consistency, but I believe that there is a difference between all these propositions. Personally, I believe what Deputy Jeune brought was pushing

forward a piece of work that I think was at risk, from not just the narrative that the Minister had shared and his priorities, was not being done and reprioritised this. Narrowly, I supported the amended proposition just voted on prior because the Minister assured us he was not doing this work already. So much as that disappointed me, he was proposing new work that he had not been doing and so I could come to the conclusion that I would reluctantly support that. This is work that is being done. I am being consistent. In the vote on a reduction of Cabinet Office finances last year I abstained. I should have voted against on that one, was my plan, because that was work the Chief Minister had said was in train, was being done, and so, for my consistency, propositions should be for new work. They should not be reiterated work already to be undertaken, either by statute legislation or by something as foundational as a C.S.P. or a Budget. I would ask, given that we are having this debate, for the proposer in his summing up to explain what conversations he did have with the Minister for Social Security, and if he did not have them, why not?

3.1.4 Connétable M.K. Jackson of St. Brelade:

I rise really to reinforce my previous comments where I suggest that Government should not have any involvement in employee wages, and the minimum wage particularly. Not that I am against those being paid a minimum wage but I think the consequences are often overlooked, and this is where the Deputy's proposal comes in. What are the consequences of a prescribed minimum wage? They will, in fact, drive employers away from employing people. They will push more people on to zero-hours contracts, as quite frankly a lot of the smaller businesses just will not be able to afford what the Government have been proposing, nice as though it may be for the employees. I think in her deliberation, the Minister needs to consider what those consequences might be. Are they going to be creating more jobs? Are they going to be reducing jobs? That, I think, is what the Deputy is asking in his proposition at the moment. I think it is often overlooked that if a trainee or an apprentice is taken on by a business, the tradesman or trades person involved will probably be losing half their chargeable time because of it. That is often overlooked, and I can only speak with experience of running a business myself that that is certainly the case and sadly, as I alluded to earlier on, government interference will do nothing to help the employment of young people.

3.1.5 Deputy C.D. Curtis of St. Helier Central:

Just very briefly, I share the same concerns as Deputy Andrews about apprenticeship placements particularly. However, I do not want to vote for a proposition that is about something that is already happening so therefore I will abstain.

3.1.6 Deputy M. Tadier of St. Brelade:

Just following on from the Constable of St. Brelade, I was not quite clear if he was saying he does not think there should be a minimum wage at all, because if he is saying that ... and that is good, it is refreshing to hear somebody say that. I have not heard that for quite a while, but that is their point of view; just let the free market decide. But I think that that is quite far removed from the mainstream view, even looking at Deputy Gorst, who does not seem to be giving anything away in that regard. I am not clear here what the idea or the problem is that Deputy Andrews has in moving this. It seems to me that ultimately there are ... if we go behind the philosophy of apprenticeships and how trainees are paid, it seems to me that there are 2 possible ways forward. We either agree that everybody who works should be on a minimum wage and that if there are ... let us call them subsidies or packages that employees can apply for help with supporting them to. Of course, provide that training, presuming that the training is not simply beneficial for their companies and that, of course, the trainee once they have done their apprenticeship may not stay with the employer that has given them the training. Then it seems to me that there needs to be some kind of partnership with government. Then the question is, is that partnership with government done through the Economic Development Department? Is it done through the social security system? Is it done through the education system or is there perhaps a package of all 3 which somehow contributes to reimbursing the employer for

the real and perhaps notional costs that they have? I think, for me, it is that latter part which is more important. I would prefer to see a system where everybody, whether they are apprentice or not, gets paid a minimum wage. A minimum wage which will be increasingly the living wage because that person still needs to live, right? So it does not matter if you are an apprentice. You could, of course, be an apprentice, a trainee, when you are 16 or when you are 30 or when you are 45. That does not really matter because we can all retrain and learn the ropes of a new profession. You cannot simply go to your landlord or to the supermarket and say: "Look, can I get a trainee rate for my rent, please? Can I get a trainee rate for my loaf of bread and for my shopping this week?" That does not wash. I would like to hear from maybe the mover of this, whether he disagrees with the principle that trainees at the moment are being paid the same as the minimum wage. Although there is a provision in the law which would allow the Minister to vary the trainee rate so that it is decoupled from the ... so it is not the same as the minimum wage. It does not have to be, it just coincidentally is at the moment. If that is what the mover of the proposition is suggesting then I would appreciate from a political point of view if he could maybe articulate that a little bit more. I think that the Minister has been a little bit kind in the sense that her comments did not urge us to vote for this proposition. The comments I think suggested that we could vote for the proposition if we wanted to but I am also mindful of what Deputy Renouf has said about simply doing things which are already being done. I would be grateful for the mover of the proposition in his summing up to perhaps give more meat to the bones of what he thinks the problem is, what he thinks the potential solution is that the Employment Forum needs to look at in this and whether there ultimately needs to be a change of policy or not.

3.1.7 Deputy P.M. Bailhache of St. Clement:

One of the great privileges that we have in this Assembly is that any Member can bring a proposition to the States and can know that it will and must be debated. That is quite different from the position in other Parliaments. Certainly, if one looks at the House of Commons, a Back-Bencher can lodge a proposition, lodge a motion, but the chances of it being debated are pretty slim. We have this very great privilege and like all privileges it seems to me that a privilege should not be abused. I am sorry to say this to Deputy Andrews, but I think this is an abuse of the privilege. It really does not matter one way or another whether this proposition is passed. What it seeks to achieve is going to happen whatever we do and this is not a constructive or positive way for the Assembly to spend its time. I think Deputy Renouf is entirely correct and I think that the Minister is wrong. I think this proposition should be rejected in order to make it perfectly clear to any Member that a proposition should be only brought when it seeks to achieve something which is not otherwise going to be achieved.

3.1.8 Deputy L.J. Farnham of St. Mary, St. Ouen and St. Peter:

The phrase: "You just cannot win", comes to mind here. Let us just look back at the proposition of Deputy Jeune on the energy strategy. That is something we were doing. The Minister for the Environment is not there but we accepted that and the Deputy saying we were not. This is it, if we say we are doing it, Members say: "Oh, but you will not so we are going to bring a proposition." There is just no continuity here. There was a general attempt around the Council of Ministers table to say: "The Deputy has lodged a proposition, let us try and accept it." We could reject it; we do not want to be seen to be pushing back on everything with Assembly Members, and so that is what we decided to do. There is no continuity. I accept Deputy Renouf's comments as I do strongly support, as Deputy Bailhache says, the rights of Members to bring propositions, the rights of Members to speak as they see fit but I think this could end up being ... and I make no criticism of Deputy Andrews but I would urge Members thinking of bringing propositions to please speak to the relevant Ministers first to see if they can be reassured - some do, some do not - that the Government is already carrying something out. If they are reassured, there is no need for them to bring a proposition; they can work with the Minister. If they are not reassured that it is going to happen, then they can bring a proposition to get the support of the Assembly to help see it through, to help keep it on track but I think this could be quite helpful because we are getting a steer from the Assembly, and I know there is an election

coming up. I was hoping that this Assembly and Members would not already be focusing on that and stop thinking about their own chances of, perhaps, re-election and letting that guide what comes before this Assembly in terms of questions and propositions but continue to focus on what is right for this Island.

[15:15]

I fear that going to conversations like this will mean we will become distracted from what our duty is to work always in the best interests of Islanders, but I think we are going to get a steer today that if there is something we are already doing we should not support any amendments to do that. I know that is going to probably upset a number of Members but really the inconsistency in some of the comments today is quite surprising. The proposition itself, I think, is fairly straightforward. I do not disagree with Senator Bailhache. I am not sure it was necessary. While I am not going to speak out against any Member who wants to bring any proposition, it is quite clear that under Article 18 of the Employment Law, the next Minister for Social Security will be required to carry out a review and a review is important. Now there are things from the start of this Government; we have tried to limit the amount of reports and reviews because there were just too many but some need to be done. A review into costs of rent and rental affordability and rental stress in Andium Homes, I think, is an important one. I think reviewing the impact of this from the new minimum wage is very important. Lots of other reviews, I think, lots of other careful consideration of the impact of the move to the living wage including - at the risk of getting myself in trouble - the rates for younger people aged 16 to 18 and the impact that might have on holiday and seasonal work. I know that is a debate we have had at Council of Ministers, and Council of Ministers supported the current position, but it is important moving forward when we introduce new policies that do have impacts on businesses and the economy, we are prepared to look at those decisions on a regular basis to make sure they are working. I would ask Members to support the proposition of Deputy Andrews because it is a work in progress, and we are doing it. Then I would ask Members to just think a bit more carefully before bringing propositions that are already being done because I hear the mood of the Assembly and they do not want to waste time on a debate like this if we are doing the work already, although I am not holding my breath.

3.1.9 Deputy H.L. Jeune of St. John, St. Lawrence and Trinity:

I am glad to follow the Chief Minister because I was pretty disappointed in what the Chief Minister had to say. I think he is conflating several issues, and he used my proposition as one that it is in the same line as this one. I would like to remind the Chief Minister that it is the statutory responsibility of the Jersey Employment Forum, and I have it here under the Employment Law 2003 that they have to advise the Minister on the minimum wage, so they have to conduct an annual review and consultation on the minimum wage. It is a statutory responsibility already in law and this is very different from the proposition that I brought, which is a policy issue. If the Chief Minister is taking the same line, I just maybe point out that the Carbon Neutral Roadmap that had an energy strategy deadline within it was not put in the common strategic priorities of this current Council of Ministers and the Scrutiny Panel had to put in an amendment to make sure it was in there. If that had not happened, there would not be any energy strategy on the table whatsoever. But if we are taking that point, what about all the policies that are currently in the Bridging Island Plan? None of them are going to be done by the end of this year. We have had a very clear steer from the Minister that is impossible to do before the end of this year so there are clear priorities being taken and so to say that because it is written down in a policy document that therefore it all should have happened already and: "Why would any Member bring a proposition to reiterate that?" That is because we keep having priorities being pushed all the time and we have deadlines being pushed all the time. That is why we do not have a Bridging Island Plan that has all the policies in place and many other policy areas that we are not getting from this current Council of Ministers because of all the situations we have had to deal with in the last few years, and so deadlines are continuously missed. That is why it is important

for this Assembly to bring propositions to say: “No, we want to have very clear deadlines being put on the table”, and agreeing to make sure that Ministers are held to account with policies. That is very different when you are talking about a law that is already in place and the statutory responsibility already done for this body called the Jersey Employment Forum to do and advise the Minister for the minimum wage which is exactly what the proposer is saying: “To request the Minister for Social Security or refer the Jersey Employment Forum to review the impact of any increase to the minimum wage.” When I look at the law - the Employment Law of 2003 - it basically says: “The Jersey Employment Forum has to advise the Minister to conduct annual reviews and consultations on the minimum wage”, not whatever the minimum wage was in the past, annually, so whatever the minimum wage is currently which of course is changing with the Council of Ministers currently. It is changing. We are going to be calling it a living wage. It still will not mean that the Jersey Employment Forum is now not having to do this annual review. They will be having to do this annual review because it is still written in the law. Unless the proposer is advising us to change the wording in the law and doing an amendment like that, this is what the discussion we are having now and why it is different. I would like to urge Members to not heed what the Chief Minister has said and be scared off from bringing propositions that pushes this current Council of Ministers to carry on to deliver policies that we have all voted on or past Assemblies have voted on and they are still not here. They are still not here. We still do not have them on the table and apparently loads are coming before the end of the year, but this has already been agreed in 2003 by the States Assembly at that time and therefore, why would we ... this is the discussion that we are having here and so to conflate the 2 issues is quite frankly ridiculous. I really would hope that the Assembly is not scared off from bringing propositions in the future but, again, taking on what Deputy Renouf has said and Deputy Bailhache, this is wasting our time because it is already in law that this has to happen. It is not policy in development. It is not Ministers being able to push it down the line and that is why we are coming here to say it has to happen. It has to happen already and if it does not happen they are in breach of their responsibilities. This is the discussion we are having and so I am not really understanding why those who are saying: “Yes, we should bring it”, I refer them back to Deputy Renouf and saying: “The rest of this year, then we can bring propositions for all sorts of statutory things that are on the books already and we can call that work done and well done, tick, tick, tick for the elections in the future.” I also think that that is not what we are supposed to be doing. We are supposed to be moving forward and trying to use this Assembly and use our time here and debate to move issues that Islanders have currently to be able to support them. To do something that is already in law, for me, is quite frankly a waste of time.

The Deputy Bailiff:

Deputy Gardiner, do you want a point of clarification?

Deputy I. Gardiner of St. Helier North:

I would like to ask a point of clarification, maybe to ask the ... I am trying to remember and maybe the Assistant Minister can help. Has the consultation with the Jersey Employment Forum been suspended for 2 years to be able to reach the living wage before the elections? Can somebody advise if this is correct status now?

The Deputy Bailiff:

You can only ask for advice from the Attorney General. You cannot ask for a comment from another Member.

Deputy I. Gardiner:

From the Attorney General, if we suspended consultations, suspended this law until the end of this, basically, term.

Mr. M. Jowitt., H.M. Solicitor General:

That is not a legal question. It is not one I am confident to answer.

The Deputy Bailiff:

You can only ask for advice from the solicitor, or you can ask the last speaker to clarify something, but you cannot ask a general question unless you are making a speech, Deputy Gardiner, but you might want to speak in due course. Yes, you want to speak in due course, do you?

Deputy I. Gardiner:

I would like to ask the Assistant ...

The Deputy Bailiff:

You can make a speech in due course, if you wish to, in which you can ask questions to be dealt with later on. The next person to speak is Deputy Ozouf.

3.1.10 Deputy P.F.C. Ozouf of St. Saviour:

I can understand why Members are a bit concerned. I agree with Deputy Bailhache in his advancing of Members being able to bring propositions and we have got a confused answer from Ministers. I am agreeing with Deputy Jeune because I amended her Carbon Neutral Roadmap in good faith. I thought it was an improvement. I was given assurances that there was going to be something happening and it has not, and I am still asking questions. Ministers cannot have it both ways, but Deputy Bailhache is quite right, I understand that what Deputy Andrews is trying to do has got to be done anyway by the Minister. It is a statutory obligation and so I really do not know what Members can do. If Members reject this proposition, the Minister is going to do it anyway, unless I have misunderstood. It is not a point of order, but I am looking at you, Sir, because you are the presiding officer ...

The Deputy Bailiff:

That is the understanding we all have that it is automatic, and a proposition cannot change the word of a statute.

Deputy P.F.C. Ozouf:

So a Member's proposition is not going to negate ... it is not going to vote against it, and I wonder whether or not on that basis ... I am looking at Deputy Andrews. I am very sympathetic to a Back-Bencher but I do not think we should waste this Assembly's time, and I wonder whether or not it is ... if he is not going to withdraw the proposition, he has got an undertaking from the Minister to do it, if he is going to ... I can give way to him. He has got his light on.

The Deputy Bailiff:

Is it a point of clarification for Deputy Ozouf?

Deputy M.B. Andrews:

No, Sir. Am I ...

The Deputy Bailiff:

If it is a matter for response, then you will just respond when you respond at the end of the debate.

Deputy M.B. Andrews:

It is not a response.

Deputy P.F.C. Ozouf:

What I was just going to say is that in order not to waste the Assembly's time whether or not we can move a proposition without notice under ... I am just trying to find the relevant Standing [Aside] ... 85 to move on to the next item, but I will give way to Deputy Andrews if he wants to.

Deputy M.B. Andrews:

I do apologise. I was well intended, and I know that the Council of Ministers discussed the trainee minimum wage rates and they decided against reintegrating the trainee minimum wage rates, so I felt compelled to ensure that there was some level of independence, an oversight of the baseline wage increases. However, due to the confusion, I will withdraw the proposition.

The Deputy Bailiff:

You will need the leave of the Assembly to do so. Is that seconded? [Seconded] Are Members content to allow the Deputy to withdraw his proposition without a debate or does someone want to talk about it?

Deputy P.F.C. Ozouf:

I was going to conclude my speech.

The Deputy Bailiff:

Sorry?

Deputy P.F.C. Ozouf:

I was going to conclude my remarks.

The Deputy Bailiff:

No, you do not need to because the proposition has been withdrawn.

Deputy P.F.C. Ozouf:

I would just like clarification about what we do going forward with Ministers giving undertakings.

The Deputy Bailiff:

The law is as the law is. The proposition has been withdrawn.

4. Chief Minister Poll (P.33/2025)

The Deputy Bailiff:

We now move on to the next item on the agenda, which is Chief Minister Poll, lodged by Deputy Moore. The main respondent is the chair of the Privileges and Procedures Committee. Can I ask the Greffier to read the proposition.

The Greffier of the States:

The States are asked to decide whether they are of opinion – (a) to agree, in principle, that the Chief Minister should be elected through an Island-wide vote of registered voters; (b) that, prior to a general election, all prospective candidates intending to stand for the role of Chief Minister must declare their intention when they submit their nomination form as a Senatorial candidate in the general election; (c) that a poll of candidates shall be conducted in parallel with a general election to establish which the electorate prefers in the role of Chief Minister; (d) that the results of the poll of candidates for Chief Minister shall be binding, and that the successful candidate will become Chief Minister designate upon their taking the oath of office as a States Member following the general election; and (e) to request the Privileges and Procedures Committee to bring forward for approval the necessary legislative amendments to give effect to the above proposals for implementation before 28th February 2026.

4.1 Deputy K.L. Moore of St. Mary, St. Ouen and St. Peter:

If nothing less, this proposition has got people talking. Not us in here but those people outside who we represent and, of course, our friends across the water in Guernsey. I would like to thank all of those who have engaged on the topic so far, whether or not they agree or disagree. Ultimately, this is a proposal aimed at increasing our voter engagement and improving transparency in our democratic system. This proposal was one of 36 recommendations brought by the Democratic Accountability and Governance Sub-Committee of the Privileges and Procedures Committee of 2022. In her foreword, then Senator Vallois stated: “This matter will be open to a future Privileges and Procedures Committee to ignite this discussion at the beginning of a term of office. I would encourage a future committee to do so.” The D.A.G. (Democratic Accountability and Governance) Report, as it was known, is rich with insight.

[15:30]

I recommend to all Members if they have not done so to read it and remind themselves of the points that it makes or for those who are relatively new to the Assembly. There is also a useful background to the development of Ministerial Government and some of the debates that have been held since that time. While some of the recommendations, such as the improvements to the role of Deputy Chief Minister, have been achieved, the vast majority of the 36 recommendations have not. It would be helpful to hear from the P.P.C. during this debate and to understand why they have barely taken forward any of those recommendations that were brought forward by this well-considered report. Naturally, I was disappointed by the comments that were published by the P.P.C., particularly as they made no mention of their predecessor committee’s own report which had provided them with a plan for early action during this term of office. Indeed, in my former role, I was often put in an uncomfortable position of questions from the then chair of the Corporate Service Committee who took an interest in one aspect of the D.A.G. Report that he had been a member of and regularly asked about the role of a Cabinet secretary, which of course at the time when we had a permanent role holder in the job of chief executive was a rather uncomfortable place to be because I could not give, perhaps, the answer that I wanted to give to those questions, but it seemingly did not matter to them that we had a permanent role holder and that there might be some issues if the issue is addressed during their time in their role. Let us continue. As I said earlier, this proposition has probably sparked more debate in Guernsey than it has here. Of course, they are a bit closer to an election than we are, but a directly elected head of Government is not an entirely new concept. Sir Mark Boleat kindly did some research and wrote in the *J.E.P. (Jersey Evening Press)*: “It is worth noting that the position in 3 territories that are classified as unincorporated organised territories of the U.S. (United States) with local self-government similar to Jersey’s relationship with the U.K., Guam, Puerto Rico and American Samoa all have direct election of a Chief Minister who is head of the Government but not Head of State.” In the British Virgin Islands in 2022, a commission proposed a directly elected Premier as part of the improvements it set out for the democratic system there. While it could be said that running an open and direct election for a Chief Minister may be presidential in style, this proposition does not seek to change the role of Chief Minister, which would remain that of our head of Government. When electing a Chief Minister, Islanders are electing a head of Government, not a Head of State. We have a Head of State, our monarch, who is represented in the Island by the Lieutenant Governor. It also deals with our political system where most of us stand as independent candidates so the public have no idea who their candidates might vote for when it comes to the key role that will set the direction of the next Government. The vision statements of the Chief Minister candidates would be published for the election campaign, not after the election results when there is little time for them to be scrutinised, with candidates challenged on their plan for delivering on that vision. This will offer the public an opportunity to focus on policy and the direction of the next Government that it might take, not just personalities. Some will say that the public do not know us as we here do know each other, but what of the new Members who arrive in the Assembly, perhaps only knowing a handful of people and are expected to take that decision? Are they genuinely better

able to take that decision than any member of the public? It is anticipated that some will argue that people who can win the popularity contest of a Senatorial election are not necessarily the best leaders. I say to them, the public are perfectly capable of understanding a different question when the question is posed to them and I, for one, have faith that they will make the right decision. As one experienced political commentator told me recently, they do not recall the name of the person that they voted for in the U.K. general election last year. All they knew was that they were voting for the person that would mean Sir Keir Starmer would be elected Prime Minister. In the absence of a strong party system here, surely we should offer our electorate the opportunity to express a view as to who they want to lead them and to have an opportunity to choose in an open and transparent fashion. I make the proposition.

The Deputy Bailiff:

Thank you, Deputy. Is the proposition seconded? **[Seconded]** Does any Member wish to speak on the proposition?

4.1.1 Deputy P.M. Bailhache of St. Clement:

I am sorry that today I seem to be cast in the role of a grumpy Back-Bencher who is opposing everything that comes before the Assembly but while I sympathise with some of the sentiments which have been articulated by Deputy Moore, I must say that her proposition is, in my view, entirely unworkable. There is a fundamental distinction, as the Deputy knows, between a presidential system and a Ministerial system. They are quite different. France and America have presidential systems. We, like the United Kingdom, have a Ministerial system. I want to draw attention to 2 parts of the Deputy's report. The first one is on page 3 where she states: "A poll for Chief Minister will pose a specific question to the electorate. It will ask them to consider who they think has the qualities and vision that they would like to see lead the Island." It is true but only partly true that the Chief Minister is the political leader of the Island. It is true only up to a point because the Chief Minister is, in the Latin phrase *primus inter pares*, the first among equals. The Chief Minister does not have the power to dictate what happens around the table at the Council of Ministers. Each Minister has his own voice or her own voice and can veto any proposal that is put forward by the Chief Minister. The Chief Minister can, in short, be outvoted. He can offer leadership, but that leadership may not be followed. In essence, he must enjoy the confidence of his fellow Ministers and more importantly perhaps enjoy the confidence of the Assembly. That leads on to the second point, which is that what happens if the Chief Minister elected by the public does not enjoy the confidence of the Assembly? The Deputy's answer to that is that in the event that a Member brought a motion of no confidence in the Chief Minister, the Assembly would be required to ask the Greffe to run a further public poll to elect a new Chief Minister. I can think of a number of objections to that in terms of time: what happens in the interim while a Chief Minister is known not to enjoy the confidence of the Assembly but the process of re-electing or electing a successor has not yet been completed? But the important thing is that, as I said earlier, the Chief Minister must enjoy the confidence of the Assembly. What happens if there is a further poll and the public chooses to elect the same person as the Chief Minister? What happens then? There will be a stalemate, a political paralysis. The public have spoken, they have elected a Chief Minister, but the Chief Minister cannot work because the Chief Minister does not enjoy the confidence of the fellow Members of the Assembly. We cannot allow ourselves to get into that position. This hybrid idea of a cross between a presidential system and a Ministerial system might be attractive in some respects but the short answer is that I am afraid it does not work.

4.1.2 Connétable K. Shenton-Stone of St. Martin:

P.P.C. considered Deputy Moore's proposition at our last meeting. We could not do so earlier as the Deputy did not engage with the committee before lodging her proposition. As it is, P.P.C. has presented comments on the proposition, which I hope Members have been able to read. The committee concluded that the proposition should be rejected, although Deputy Doublet, as a member

of our P.P.C., has advised that she will make an independent decision on the proposition. We recognise that Deputy Moore is proposing a form of direct democracy - as has been already mentioned this afternoon - whereby Islanders would choose a Chief Minister, and that such a situation may appear desirable. However, there are 2 principle reasons why we believe the Assembly should not adopt such a proposition at this time. Firstly, there are various issues that would need to be addressed if we were to move to the system proposed by the Deputy. The Deputy has identified some of them in her accompanying report. What would happen in the event of a vote of no confidence in the Chief Minister, for example? But the details remain to be explored, confirmed and addressed. There are also issues not mentioned by the Deputy which we think would arise, and on which the Assembly would have given no direction to P.P.C. on what to do. The Deputy has acknowledged comments from a previous P.P.C. on this topic and that her proposition would change our system from a parliamentary one and move it towards a presidential system. At the moment our system is parliamentary in that it is the Assembly that chooses the Government; there is no direct choice made by Islanders. This Assembly is based on the fact that the Government, the Chief Minister, and Ministers, have to command sufficient support from the Assembly. This is akin to what happens in the U.K. even though the state of party politics is different there. A Prime Minister for the U.K. is not directly chosen by the electorate but is determined constitutionally on the basis of who can command sufficient support in Parliament. Having a directly elected Chief Minister would change that situation in Jersey. It is unclear what impact this would have on the selection of other Members of the Government, particularly Ministers. The Deputy's proposition is silent on that point, but P.P.C. anticipates it would need to be considered. Would a directly elected Chief Minister expect simply to appoint their own Ministers? How would the political culture be affected by this merging of presidential and parliamentary systems? The merging of systems that would arise from adopting the proposition is something that requires more thought. Our second reason for rejecting the proposition is the timing of it. P.P.C. has previously advised the Assembly that changes to our electoral system should not be made within one year of the elections. While the Assembly may have chosen to deviate from that advice for the reinstatement of Senators, the recommendations and international guidance on this point remain the same and remain valid. If the Deputy's proposition were adopted we would inevitably be making substantial changes to election legislation, including changes we may not yet be conscious of, less than one year before the elections on 7th June 2026. This is not best practice and not advisable. A proposal of this kind needs more time and more opportunity for consideration than adoption of this proposition would allow. Therefore, P.P.C. recommends that the Assembly should reject this proposition.

4.1.3 Deputy S.Y. Mézec of St. Helier South:

I want to commend Deputy Moore for this proposition because in it she is getting at a very basic and fundamental point which we should not shy away from making, and that is that our electoral system is completely and utterly inadequate and it does not provide for the people of the Island to use that system for determining the future of their Island. It is essentially a lottery, having a system where candidates standing have no obligation to indicate what their programme for government would be if they took part in Government, and who they would associate with to lead that Government based on their vision and expertise. That, in my view, is one of the key reasons why electoral turnout is so bad in Jersey, because people do not feel like their vote is particularly worth anything and they are more than justified in thinking so.

[15:45]

The glorified personality contests that elections often end up being do not contribute to assisting in that at all, and this Assembly in its ultimate foolishness has chosen to make that system even worse at the next election by making it more complicated and less representative. That being said, this particular proposition has more holes in it than a sieve. The Democratic Accountability and Governance Sub-Panel that I sat on with Deputy Moore in the previous term of office looked at

recommendations for how our system could be improved. There is lots of good stuff in there. I look at the wording of the specific recommendation that Deputy Moore cites as the inspiration for this proposition on Chief Minister appointment. That is recommendation 8 which says: "Voters should be provided with the opportunity to indicate their preferred candidate for Chief Minister during the voting process." I completely endorse that recommendation and I believe that the opportunity should be through party politics, like most sensible democratic jurisdictions in the world understand is the way that you are meant to govern a society. You vote in your election, you give a mandate to a programme for Government - which is the party manifesto that is put forward - and you know that when you vote for your local candidate you are also voting for the manifesto which they align with and, at that moment in time, their leader to be the candidate for Chief Minister to oversee the implementation of that manifesto. If for whatever reason the Chief Minister is unable to continue, they are incapacitated or they resign or what you have you, the role gets taken up by another person elected on the same mandate and with the same manifesto, and the programme for Government continues. That is the only sensible way of delivering on the recommendation from that sub-committee report. Who knows; one day - and I believe we will get to this position where a lot of the bureaucracy that comes after an election becomes completely unnecessary - we can do what they do in Gibraltar, which is the Chief Minister is appointed by the Governor the day after their general election because they know who commands the confidence of the Parliament, because of the result of that election. They waste no time; they just get on with the business of government immediately. Rather than what we do, which is spend 6 months coming up with a Common Strategic Policy that is a pulling together of all of the aspirations from people elected on disparate manifestos, some of which have little in common, and even less credibility among them because they have not been tested through the tough process of a political party having to put a plan together that is credible and aligned with their values. That is why this proposition ought to be rejected because, for many of the reasons that Deputy Bailhache highlighted, it would lead ultimately to chaos in trying to deliver a viable Government for Jersey because of all of the complications that would arise in how the election campaign goes, what are the spending limits associated with it, can you put your name down on that ballot having no intention to take the role up and you just want the extra publicity to help with your actual campaign for membership of the Assembly. That is something that could very easily be exploited in that. Of course if a vote of no confidence then takes place all of the difficulties that follow from that, in case another candidate comes forward that still does not command the confidence of the Assembly. The public of Jersey should directly choose what their Government is, what their mandate is, and what policies they pursue; but they ought to do that through the mechanism well recognised across the democratic world, the one that will work for Jersey and one that I believe we will have sooner or later, which is through the sensible and democratic mechanism of party politics.

4.1.4 Deputy K.F. Morel of St. John, St. Lawrence and Trinity:

I fear that there would only be one winner from this proposition, were it to be adopted by the Assembly, and that would be the media. The media already in any country tend to focus on who will be the person at the top, as they often pose it. There would, in such an election as Deputy Moore's proposal suggests, still be other candidates not running for Chief Minister, but my guess is that were this to be adopted from day one of an election, pretty much all the focus would be on those candidates running for the Chief Minister. The other 30, 40, 45 candidates running to be Deputies or running to be Senators or to be Connétables, but have no aspiration to be Chief Minister, would quickly be forgotten. So I think this does significantly risk the undermining of an election in which people do learn about candidates. A lot of what Deputy Mézec just said I agreed with, but equally I was very disappointed with other parts such as he seemed to be suggesting that the electorate do not think about the people they vote for, that it is just a popularity contest. I disagree. There is always an element of popularity in any election but the electorate do think about the people they vote for, they do read through manifestos; even in this mainly independent system we have, they do make decisions depending on what the candidates are saying rather than just whether they know the candidate or not.

It was unfortunate to hear such words talked about the electorate because I feel it is deeply unfair. But, as Deputy Bailhache has said, this would turn the elections into a presidential election and, honestly, in an Island of 100,000 people there is no place for a presidential election. It would be damaging. It would be divisive and it would ultimately turn the Island in many ways against each other, I fear. I also strongly agree with Deputy Bailhache that the mechanics of our Assembly and our Government are just wrong for this type of poll. At the end of the day, when we vote for a Chief Minister as an Assembly we are, I imagine - and I certainly am - thinking not just about the politics of the candidates up for election, but also how easy are they to work with? What kind of person are they? Can they work with other people? Are they someone who finds it very difficult to work with other people? These are things that the majority of new or recently elected States Members who have served more than one term would know. For those new States Members it is difficult, I accept that. I felt in my first term when we were doing that vote for Chief Minister I had not worked with either of the candidates, and so I did not really know which of the 2 candidates I preferred because I did not know how they interacted with people. Their policies were not so very different to make a clear policy difference. That is difficult but it is something which can be overcome. But ultimately the public do not know whether someone is easy to work with, whether someone can command the leadership of a Government or not. That is something which only comes, I believe, from here and from working here with people. It also - to Deputy Mézec's point - would come from a party perspective as well because a party elects its leader based on the fact that they know they can work with this person as their leader. If the party gets elected and the leader becomes Chief Minister then that whole system of understanding how easy it is to work with this person has been carried out internally by the party, and so enables that more direct - though still indirect - way of achieving Chief Minister. So there is no way, sadly, because I have a huge respect for Deputy Moore and I know that this has been something that she has felt strongly about for quite some time. But I have to say that I do disagree. I do not think it is workable. I think it could end up harming the Island quite significantly and harming elections because it is not really where our system of government is. So from that perspective I cannot support this proposition.

4.1.5 Deputy M.R. Scott of St. Brelade:

What is positive about this proposition is that it is trying to seek some kind of respect of democracy. Personally, direct democracy is probably the most democratic form of democracy, but it is also workable in lots of ways, or at least it requires an awful lot of admin. Recently I finished reading a book called *Politics on the Edge* by Rory Stewart, and he used a term in it that caught my eye. He described the combination of Ministerial Government and party politics as an elected dictatorship. Anybody who wants to understand a bit more about how the party political systems work in the U.K. I have to say that book is quite enlightening and quite depressing. But what we also know - and that has been raised, I believe, in certain reports, whether to the Electoral Commission or by the Electoral Commission - is that when it comes to small jurisdictions the scale of the jurisdiction often does not support a political party system. You might have people who are members of parties who get elected, but to have that 2-party system that you see in other jurisdictions just does not really work. What we seem to have in the form of this proposition is a potentially elected dictatorship without party politics. I cannot say that commends itself to me either. Coming back to some of the points that were raised by Deputy Mézec about the merits of party politics, when you have leaders it ends up as a personality contest anyway in your typical political party system. Certainly I do think that joint manifestos are useful. You do not have to be a party to produce them. I also will point out that under our current system, whoever stands as Chief Minister does have to produce a manifesto. Anybody who does stand for Chief Minister, if they were looking towards being elected and trying to unify the different States Members would be looking to produce something that aligns with the manifestos of other States Members. What we do have is a system which looks to produce a more cohesive Assembly, whether you agree that that works or not. A practical issue I see, in terms of saying: "You the candidate, you decide right now, are you going to stand for Chief Minister?" If you have somebody

who is thinking: “I quite like that person who is also standing to be Chief Minister and so I would not put myself forward, because I would like to support them.” Then what happens? That person does not get elected. Maybe the other candidate could be the best person to become Chief Minister. Do we all put that in on the basis of it might just happen? I feel that there are some practical issues there. The reality of politics is it is so unpredictable because you are looking to the electorate, so everybody would probably be hedging their bets. Lastly, we have, the States Assembly has, approved a way in which the electorate can indicate support for particular candidates, Island-wide, and that was by supporting the proposition brought by Deputy Millar recently whereby Islanders can show their support for a candidate. What we have seen so far, even after the previous system of Senators was abolished, when you looked at ... after Deputy Mézec was eliminated from the race, the candidates were left. Rather interestingly they had previously stood as Senators. That is what we still tend to look for. For those reasons, I will not be supporting the proposition, but I do appreciate where it has come from.

4.1.6 Deputy P.F.C. Ozouf of St. Saviour:

I rise with a mixture of constitutional concern and a deep sense of what is coming. I rise, I am afraid, to not agree, with the greatest of respect, to my esteemed former Chief Minister colleague, Deputy Moore. I believe that her move is well meaning, but I fear, as Deputy Bailhache, the presidential march of Jersey’s electoral system and the personalisation of it. I, like Deputy Bailhache, have been in a Senatorial election. I understand the allure of a presidential Senatorial election. Glittering Island-wide votes.

[16:00]

Leaders coming out of that election, we have seen them before, glimmering, emerging blinking into a sunlight with a democratic halo. Maybe they are going to be De Gaulle, but we do not have a second round. That is a problem. They have a few revolutions in France. Or is it going to be a Bake-Off winner? It might appear to be terribly modern, but unlike other Members I am a Jerseyman and I respect Jersey traditions. I do not mind that we are not Gibraltar or the United Kingdom or France. I do not believe that we need to invent or bring a patisserie from France or a Cornish pasty from Cornwall or something from Gibraltar. We are Jersey. Our genius lies in a subtle balance between the Parish and Constables are here to stay. They may be moving unfortunately in this system, because we might have some Senators over there. We have a Parish and an Island, a Government and Assembly, ambition and humility based upon what I understood to be a Troy Rule of a minority Government. For the reasons that Deputy Bailhache said earlier, as a Back-Bencher we can bring any proposition and we need to use that privilege humbly and properly. The Chief Minister is first among equals. They soon know that. Not a president; while they used to be presidents. It is not a personal mandate that is forged in a crucible of personality politics. Maybe it is. I know that Deputy Bailhache and I both stood in the Senatorial election. I think both of us in times past topped the poll. Senator Bailhache got more votes than I did. The ambition to serve the Island is not out of a self-interest desire. I know the former Chief Minister wants to put on that ballot whether or not you want to be Chief Minister. Really, do we want to make our system any more personal? Do we want to make it anymore presidential? I do not think so. It will unravel the very balance that this Assembly has enjoyed over so long. We celebrated our 80 years of post-liberation and how well Jersey has done. I fear about the Senatorial 9, and I fear even more if this was to be adopted. Let us be honest, Senatorial elections are somewhat of a beauty parade. They are dressed up in a political manifesto, but they are a bit like Jersey’s version of “Who’s Got Talent”. Who can speak? We had a debate yesterday about hustings. We are going to have to come back to the amendment of our P.P.C. chair to deal with hustings. I have spoken before about hustings, how they came along with the 12 Parishes. Is that really democracy in our Island? I am not sure. I doubt it. I do not think that personality presidential systems are what we want. We have 100,000 souls and 12 Parishes. We have newly crafted, properly democratic electoral districts with Deputies. I agree with Deputy Mézec about that.

I worry about our democratic legitimacy. I fear that we are going to end up, if we approve this proposition or even if we do not, with a political system about slogans, soundbites, soaring promises that you can do anything, made on platforms, 12 of them. Only then we will crash to the rocks of the legislative reality. Somebody thought you were the Chief Minister the other day, Sir, when you were elected as the Bailiff and I had to explain that, no, you are the Presiding Officer. The constitutional chaos of which you will be the guardian or the constitution which you are the guardian of, Sir, is important. To change our system to have a Chief Minister elected on this sort of Senatorial mandate is, I do not think, right. Is the runner up going to be the Deputy Chief Minister? I do not know. Second best, oh well, sworn in with a shrug and a spreadsheet maybe. The distraction, this elevation of personality over policy, do we want Jersey to become a politics of some sort of Jersey Bake-Off? I suggest that, yes, this may improve voter turnout, but not for the reasons that we are here about policy. It would be about soundbites. It would be about a popularity contest with no real search of policy. That is my fear. I do not want to turn our Assembly in any more of a theatre than it already has been in the last few days and that I fear it will be as we come to try and put legislative arrangements in place 12 months before an election and coming up to that 12 months before. Deputy Moore knows that this is not going to be possible to legislate within 12 months. As a previous election observer, I would say no to anything that is 12 months before an election and changing a system. This is a massive upturning of the system, just as Senators are. I have been a Senator, like Deputy Bailhache. I do not know how many of us there are. Deputy Farnham, Deputy Gorst, Deputy Mézec. We all know about the reality of Senatorials. It is not a personal brand. You do not have to be in a party. I stand for dignity and public service. Not for executive stardom. I am not going to stand in the Senatorial. I want to stay in St. Saviour. I am not standing for Constable. I want to be a Deputy of St. Saviour. I want to retain our proud model, our unique system of government. We have not had a system of party politics. We have not had a system of presidential personalities. We have a considered Assembly, a respectful Assembly, which is at the moment more disunified, more uncertain than I have ever seen it. We are not rooted in a presidential system. We are not rooted, or ever were really, in showmanship. I would call it collective stake craft at its best when we are good at our job. I am not a dreamer of something that is not possible. It is a well-intentioned proposition, but the mover of the proposition knows it is not going to get through. Even if it could be done, it cannot be legislated in time for the election. It is a fool's gold to have an idea of a presidential system. I urge the Deputy to consider whether or not she wants to consider going on any more. I am going to be less than 10 minutes, as I try. As a Member you can do things. I am very pleased I introduced the clock and it eventually happened. I will sit down and urge Members please let us not go here and I urge the mover of the proposition not really to waste the Assembly's time on something that is not proper for Jersey.

4.1.7 Deputy A. Howell of St. John, St. Lawrence and Trinity:

I would like to thank Deputy Moore for bringing this proposition, but I regret that I am unable to support it. I would like to point out that the majority of candidates in Jersey are independent and, as such, it is important that this Assembly chooses the person they think is the most appropriate to be Chief Minister, the person they think they can best work with. I endorse all that Deputy Bailhache said and I wish to say thank you to the P.P.C. for all the hard work they are doing and they continue to do. I ask you to vote against this proposition.

4.1.8 Deputy M. Tadier of St. Brelade:

I know we are not here to talk about Senators per se. Deputy Ozouf has spoken a little bit about Senators, but it is touched on in the proposition by Deputy Moore, because she is insisting that all Chief Ministerial candidates need to be, first of all, a Senator. We will talk about that briefly. I did wonder whether I should stand up and make the shortest speech of my history, which would have been even shorter than what I have said already, which is simply: form a political party and get behind your leader and then sit down. That is what Members need to do. That is what candidates need to

do at the election. For goodness sake, it is time that Jersey grew into the mature democracy that it should have been and that it still can be. Rather than doing that covertly, because that is what tends to happen. We know who half of the Senatorial candidates are going to be at the next election. We know which ones are likely to be successful. If I was not in a party and I did not have my particular politics, I would happily offer to run one of the campaigns for Senator Whoever to make Jersey great again. We would start our campaign down at St. Catherine's Breakwater and then have some great videos about how we would make the Island great again. However, I am not. I have chosen my party and I am happy with them and I am happy to be running with them. Seeing as we are declaring our political interests, I will follow Deputy Ozouf in saying that I am very happy to be a Deputy for St. Brelade, and I hope that if the public of St. Brelade are happy to have me again that I would be more than willing to serve another 4 years for them and for the Island. That said, the role of Senator, now that has come back on the table, is an important one. We have some excellent potential Senators in this Assembly. I look to my colleagues who are currently Deputy of St. Brelade and I think all 3 of them would make excellent Senatorial candidates. I would certainly vote for them. They would potentially make very good Chief Ministers as well, in their different ways and I would be happy to work with all of them. Let us get back to the question in hand, before I perhaps inadvertently mislead the House in case things are not taken with a pinch of salt. The basics of this proposition is that the public should choose their Chief Minister. Politics can be quite lonely. I used to talk to Alexa, but now I have started talking to ChatGPT. I asked it: "Are there any democracies in the world that elect their Prime Minister directly by a direct vote?" Chat came back to me and said: "No parliamentary democracy elects its Prime Minister by direct popular vote. In all democratic systems, with a Prime Minister ..." and I think we can say we have a Chief Minister who is the equivalent: "... the P.M. is typically the leader of the majority party or a coalition in the legislature, not chosen directly by the public." It then goes on to say: "The closest exception or unique cases are Israel, briefly from 1996 to 2001, direct election of the Prime Minister occurred separately from Parliament. This was an experiment and was abandoned due to political instability." Then it reiterates with another bullet point: "No country currently does this." Why is it that we think that we should be different or rather why is it that Deputy Moore thinks that we should be the first country, if we are a country, or state or democracy in the world that should elect our Prime Minister directly. There is, of course, an axiomatic problem there. As soon as you elect your Prime Minister directly, you no longer have a Prime Minister, you no longer have a Chief Minister, you have a President. Therefore, we might need to start to talk about Jersey as being the Republic of Jersey, perhaps it would be called a potato republic by those who are not very fond of us or we could call ourselves something else. We do not have that set up at the moment. We have very much a parliamentary democracy system, along the Commonwealth lines and Commonwealth model. Let us look at what happened in Israel, because that is the only example which ChatGPT, or the internet as we might also call it. In this case, Wikipedia I went to for more information. It says in 1996 on 29th May, not too dissimilar to our period for election, general elections were held in Israel, for the first time the Prime Minister was elected on a separate ballot from the remaining members of the Knesset. The election for Prime Minister resulted in a surprise victory for who do we think it was? It was Benjamin Netanyahu by a margin of less than 1 per cent of the total number of votes cast. Not only did they abandon it, but it resulted in somebody being elected who is a genocidal maniac and who is currently a wanted war criminal by the U.N. (United Nations) Court of Human Rights. He is somebody who still travels to the U.S. and meets with another somebody who is a President of his own country, who was a wanted criminal until he got elected. They can now have cosy tête-à-têtes. In the meantime, this individual, as we know, is responsible for an ongoing humanitarian crisis in the Middle East and we are seeing the results of starving children to add to that genocide there. It does not mean that will automatically be the outcome, but I would suggest that when it has been tried in the past, it has not had great results in other parts of the world. The question then becomes: how would the Chief Minister be elected in reality? The first question I would ask is: if we are going to let the public choose who the Chief Minister is, why does it need to be a Senatorial candidate? It may well be that the public have some

Deputy or Constable candidates who they think are an excellent Constable. I think Constable Jehan would potentially make a great Chief Minister. He should not need to go through the rigmarole of standing for Senator for that.

[16:15]

Of course if he were to run as Constable Jehan of St. John with the Reform Party, I would be quite happy to vote for him, if indeed he was our leader, which I am not sure that he would be, and I am not suggesting that we replace our leader. There are a lot of people that would be happy to see Constable Jehan leading the Island. You get the point I am making. I hope I am not going to be fired from the party, by the way; I am just giving some hypothetical examples about how other people might think. That is one point. The necessity for someone to run for Senator would be obviated, it is too restrictive. The next point I would ask is about the voting system. How would we ensure the person who is selected for Chief Minister? Will it be the one who simply gets the most votes in the poll or the first past the post? What would happen if that person does not have a clear majority? It is entirely possible. Would it be a yes and no per candidate? We also then have to consider what game theory might look like. In theory, you could have a situation where it would either be entirely inadvisable for any candidate to declare their candidacy, because you may not have decided. As Deputy Scott pointed out, until a Senator who is simply one of 9 Senators, who will be working with another 40 elected Members of the Assembly, they do not know who they are working with, so they cannot say that they are going to be able to form a majority. They will not need a majority to get elected as Chief Minister, but they will need a majority to command and to maintain that role in the Assembly. It seems to me inherently unworkable in that respect, to be able to do that. Do we need any more reasons not to vote for this? I am not sure that we do. We have identified a problem here, which is that some people think that they would like to be able to vote directly for Chief Minister. That is not the kind of political system we have had. As I have said, we have a system on offer which is vote for our party, if you think our party is able to deliver the changes to the Island and maintain the systems that you think work and make the changes that you think are necessary. We will have a manifesto to do that and we will have leaders and Ministers who are ready to go if we get a majority or if we get enough seats to work in a coalition. If we do not, we will be quite happy to work on the Back-Benches and in Scrutiny. Clearly the former would be ideal from our point of view, but that is how party politics works. As I said, going back to my first point, find people you can work with, whether they exist in the Assembly or not. If they exist outside of the Assembly, find them, reach out to them, build your parties, build your associations, whatever you want to call them, get behind your leader, get behind your candidates and support them in the 2026 election.

The Deputy Bailiff:

Thank you, Deputy. Does anyone else wish to speak on this proposition? I call upon Deputy Moore to reply.

4.1.9 Deputy K.L. Moore:

I am grateful to all those who have taken the time to share their views and considerations in this debate. I must say I do not consider Deputy Bailhache to ever be grumpy. Our system of government is where it is. The public consistently tell us that they do not trust it. They do not feel it delivers change and they feel that there is an old boys' club that does deals behind closed doors. This proposition simply tries to open some of those doors. I agree that we are a unique Island and we have strong traditions, but we also are an outward looking Island that has historically been enterprising and dynamic. Such a system, I believe, is workable and has been proven to be so in the unincorporated U.S. territories associated with the States of Guam, Puerto Rico and American Samoa. Perhaps Deputy Tadier missed my opening speech. I say to the P.P.C., why have they not spent time considering the findings of the Democratic Accountability and Governance Report, which had brought forward proposals to improve our system? There are so many excellent

recommendations in that report. It is a great shame that they have been left on the shelf. On the timing, they would have also been able and welcome to amend this proposition to 2030, but I do recall that this morning we were debating their own proposals for change at the next election. Our system, as it has been described by one political historian, is already one of extreme individualism. It has been throughout history, they tell me. Even when we had parties in the past, people got behind an individual rather than the issues of the day. That may be the current zeitgeist around the world, in a post-liberal era, but the aim of this poll is not to focus on the individuals who are considered by Islanders in a democratic election, but the issues and the direction that they propose to the people and, most importantly, how the public responds to them. Running a proper campaign based on issues would allow other independent candidates to get behind their Chief Minister candidate. If we are going to have Senators again, I do believe that the candidates in this poll should have an Island-wide mandate. Although in the context of the Democratic Accountability and Governance Report, this proposal was made at the time which was considering our current system. The Chief Minister poll would have been the only Island-wide vote that would have been available to Islanders. It would have indeed appeased some of those Islanders who, as we all recall, in 2022 mourned the loss of their Island-wide mandate. I do hear the argument of Deputy Mézec, who naturally champions a party-based system. However, our history has shown that party politics in a small Island nation can be fraught with difficulty and it is not the system that we have. As it is, I would suggest that we probably have about 5 or maybe 6 political groupings in this Assembly at the moment, so it will remain a consensus-building Chamber, whatever the outcomes of the next election. One constituent kindly also asked A.I. (artificial intelligence) to crunch through the report and the information that it could find around the world. This is the conclusion of that report, which weighed up the pros and cons of a directly elected Chief Minister system. I quote: “Adopting direct election of the Chief Minister is a bold reform aimed squarely at improving civic engagement. The proposition offers a reasonable, balanced approach. It keeps the election concurrent with the general election to maximise turnout and minimise cost and disruption. It preserves parliamentary checks. The Assembly still exists in full authority and can trigger a new election if absolutely necessary. The evidence from other democracies suggests Jersey stands to gain in terms of voter participation and political legitimacy. While caution is warranted in implementation, the potential downsides can be mitigated through clear rules and the natural adaption of Jersey’s political culture to the new system. Therefore, to invigorate Jersey’s democracy and give the public a more direct voice in its Government, voting for proposition P.33 is the recommended course of action.” That is a genuinely impartial view and I hope that the Assembly will consider it. Given the clear indications, however, that have been offered in the debate, I would be content for a standing vote.

The Deputy Bailiff:

You would be content for a standing vote. Is the appel being called for? The appel has been called for. I invite Members to return to their seats. I ask the Greffier to open the voting. If all Members have had the opportunity of casting their votes, I ask the Greffier to close the voting. I announce that the proposition has not been adopted.

Pour: 1		Contre: 43		Abstained: 0
Deputy K.L. Moore		Connétable of St. Lawrence		
		Connétable of St. Brelade		
		Connétable of Trinity		
		Connétable of St. Peter		
		Connétable of St. Martin		

		Connétable of St. John		
		Connétable of St. Clement		
		Connétable of Grouville		
		Connétable of St. Mary		
		Connétable of St. Saviour		
		Deputy G.P. Southern		
		Deputy M. Tadier		
		Deputy S.G. Luce		
		Deputy L.M.C. Doublet		
		Deputy K.F. Morel		
		Deputy M.R. Le Hegarat		
		Deputy S.M. Ahier		
		Deputy R.J. Ward		
		Deputy C.S. Alves		
		Deputy I. Gardiner		
		Deputy I.J. Gorst		
		Deputy L.J. Farnham		
		Deputy S.Y. Mézec		
		Deputy P.F.C. Ozouf		
		Deputy Sir P.M. Bailhache		
		Deputy T.A. Coles		
		Deputy B.B. de S.V.M. Porée		
		Deputy D.J. Warr		
		Deputy H.M. Miles		
		Deputy J. Renouf		
		Deputy C.D. Curtis		
		Deputy L.V. Feltham		
		Deputy R.E. Binet		
		Deputy H.L. Jeune		
		Deputy M.E. Millar		
		Deputy A. Howell		
		Deputy T.J.A. Binet		

		Deputy M.R. Ferey		
		Deputy A.F. Curtis		
		Deputy B. Ward		
		Deputy K.M. Wilson		
		Deputy L.K.F. Stephenson		
		Deputy M.B. Andrews		

Deputy K.L. Moore:

Perhaps I can thank everyone for their time.

The Deputy Bailiff:

That concludes Public Business for this meeting. I invite the chair of P.P.C. to propose the arrangements of public business for future meetings. Chair.

ARRANGEMENT OF PUBLIC BUSINESS FOR FUTURE MEETINGS

5. Connétable K. Shenton-Stone of St. Martin (Chair, Privileges and Procedures Committee):

At the moment there are 8 items listed for our next meeting on 3rd June. However, I would like to advise Members that I am going to move P.35 Amendments to Standing Orders - Revised Code of Conduct to the sitting on 8th July, to enable P.P.C. to have full consultation and workshops for Members. At the moment, the items listed for 3rd June are P.5, which is Amendments to Standing Orders; P.22, Draft Jersey Gas Company Amendment; P.30, Draft Income Support Jersey Amendment Regulations; P.31, Draft Highways Law (Jersey) Amendment Regulations; P.34, Consultation Report on Presale Agreements for Land and Property Transactions; P.36, French National Identity Cards as valid travel documentation for French Citizens; and P.38, Differential Pay for Ministers, Scrutiny Chairs and Committee Chairs. Thank you. I propose the arrangement of business.

The Deputy Bailiff:

Deputy Ozouf, you wish to speak?

5.1 Deputy P.F.C. Ozouf of St. Saviour:

I am grateful for the Chair of P.P.C., because I have just lodged amendments to one of the matters that she has brought forward and I welcome that. May I also ask, Deputy Bailhache has a proposition standing in his name on French identity cards, which is very important, and I have asked for an amendment on that. I wondered whether that was going to be in order, whether or not I can amend ... it is a supplementary one. I am going to consult with Deputy Bailhache prior to it, but it is a further amendment to his proposal and I thought it was polite to say that. I know that I am out of time for a proposition on the fuel farm, but I may have to beg Members' indulgence for a reduced lodging period if I do not get any discussions with the Chief Minister.

The Deputy Bailiff:

Thank you for letting us know.

Deputy R.J. Ward of St. Helier Central:

I want to inform Members that on Tuesday, immediately after the Assembly, it is the wonderful C.P.A. A.G.M. (Annual General Meeting). You are all Members. You are all welcome for an

evening of sparkling conversation. Refreshments will be provided. Your engagement in the C.P.A. is more than welcome and much appreciated. A lot of people have been involved this year and in the previous few years, so please come along. That is on the Tuesday of the next sitting.

The Deputy Bailiff:

Thank you, Deputy Ward. Are Members now content to adjourn? The Assembly stands adjourned until 9.30a.m. on Tuesday, 3rd June.

ADJOURNMENT

[16:28]