

**WRITTEN QUESTION TO THE MINISTER FOR SOCIAL SECURITY
BY DEPUTY L.V. FELTHAM OF ST. HELIER CENTRAL
QUESTION SUBMITTED ON MONDAY 13th MARCH 2023
ANSWER TO BE TABLED ON MONDAY 20th MARCH 2023**

Question

Regarding the rent increases made by providers of social homes that receive tenants via the Affordable Housing Gateway, will the Minister please provide the following information –

- (a) what process of review, if any, is undertaken regarding tenants in receipt of the Income Support housing component, and does the component automatically increase to cover any rent increase;
- (b) what additional funding will be required from the Social Security fund to cover any increases;
- (c) was the Minister consulted on the matter by any provider ahead of the increases being made, if so, did she raise any concerns; and
- (d) has she attempted to contact people receiving Income Support to ensure that they know of what steps they must take, if any, following a rent increase?

Answer

The question is not specifically related to any particular provider, nor to any period in time. I am therefore assuming it refers to the increase recently announced by the Jersey Homes Trust. Like other Members, I was concerned to learn about the increase in Jersey Homes Trust rents. I am very grateful to the Minister for Housing and Communities for his prompt action in contacting the Trust and obtaining their equally prompt agreement to a one-month delay in the implementation of the new rents.

- a) For social housing tenants, the Income Support accommodation component will be increased as soon as an increase of rent is notified to Customer and Local Services. This can be by the landlord or the tenant. Any increase is implemented from the date it came into force. The component is increased individually for each income support tenant in respect of the particular property rented.
- b) Income support payments are not made from the Social Security Fund. The overall income support budget is set as part of the Government Plan process. The overall budget is set in line with economic forecasts which take account, at a high level, of forecast changes to IS claims during the year. This will include rent increases. At this stage it is not anticipated that any extra funding will be required across the year as a whole. Any requirement for extra funding will depend on a wide range of economic factors over the coming months.
- c) The Government has a rent review agreement with Andium Homes and there is a well established route for annual rent rises on Andium properties to be confirmed with the Housing Minister and to be advised in advance to the CLS department. The government does not have rent review agreements with other social housing providers. Different providers use a variety of methods to advise CLS of rent changes. The Minister for Social Security is not involved in this process, and therefore was not consulted or notified ahead of the recent JHT announcement.
- d) Every written communication to Income Support claimants includes advice to households about what they should do if their rent changes. Claimants can call, email or write to Customer and Local Services and changes can be made quickly and easily. With regard to the recently announced increases, Customer and Local Services are actively seeking to contact any customers who haven't already been in contact with the department directly.