

Jersey Citizens Advice Bureau Limited

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**Response to the Environment, Housing and Infrastructure Scrutiny Panel
Re. the Government Plan 2020-2023.**

Foreword

I am the CEO of Citizens Advice Jersey, a position that I have held for the last 9 years.

We are pleased to respond to this scrutiny review of the proposed Government Plan. During the course of our work, we see the problems associated with Housing and the provision of affordable and accessible housing stock can be seen as pivotal to the overall strategy of allowing individuals and their families to thrive in a safe and secure environment in the context of fairness and equality, rather than economic dominance.

Housing was our biggest single advice area in 2018 with **1,867** cases being recorded. So many societal problems can be attributed to insecure family surroundings and we believe that many of these problems can equally be rectified at the 'front end'.

In relation to the specific areas highlighted by the Scrutiny Panel in their letter dated 16 September, 2019;

Long term housing policy, and, Rights for tenants

A Housing Policy Development Board has been established to develop proposals that support the delivery of the priorities identified in the Government's Statement of Common Strategic Policy 2018-2022.

The Board is undertaking a wide-ranging review of the housing market in Jersey, recognising that structural issues in Jersey's housing market cannot be addressed without a long-term strategy that delivers sustainable, holistic and coherent policy solutions. As part of its work, the Board is:

- (a) Investigating challenges in Jersey's housing market.
- (b) Examining the factors that affect the supply, affordability, access to, and the standard of housing affordability of housing in Jersey.
- (c) Identifying areas for policy development in view of the findings of (a) and (b) with particular focus on the funding arrangements required to deliver those recommendations.



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What the proposals eventually determined by the Policy Board might look like are not known yet, but the Board is likely to make recommendations in respect of ways to fund and incentivise housing provision such as measures to make available assisted home ownership schemes for households who are unable to purchase a home in the open market, for example, a deposit loan scheme; shared equity; etc. Funding has been identified in the Government Plan for this purpose.

Ministers have also made a commitment to improve legal protection for tenants.

The aim of this project is to strengthen the legal protection afforded to tenants in the private and social rented housing sector. The project is comprised of a number of separate actions, which together enhance the statutory framework for letting residential property in Jersey. Not all of the measures will require additional funding. The actions to protect and enhance tenants' rights comprise of four areas:

- (a) Legislation to cover the protect tenants with children against discrimination;
- (b) the introduction of a legal framework to control the level of letting fees that can be legally charged;
- (c) the potential introduction of measures to provide additional security of tenure for tenants via the Residential Tenancy Law.

This is also linked to the ongoing work on tackling homelessness in Jersey, and the funding for tenants' rights in the Government Plan will support the delivery of the recommendations of the homelessness review and strategy (to be completed Q1 2020) – e.g. the introduction of a housing options service.

We wholeheartedly support these initiatives and we will work with politicians from across the assembly to make sure that these measures are put in place within the timescale of the proposed plan.

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