



Environment, Housing and Infrastructure

Government Plan Review Hearing

Witness: The Minister for Children and Housing

Tuesday, 1st October 2019

Panel:

Connétable M.K. Jackson of St. Brelade (Chair)
Connétable S.A. Le Sueur-Rennard of St. Saviour
Deputy I. Gardiner of St. Helier

Witnesses:

Senator S.Y. Mézec, The Minister for Children and Housing
Mr. A. Scate, Group Director, Regulation, Growth, Housing and Environment
Mr. T. Daniels, Interim Director, Jersey Property Holdings
Mr. R. Jouault, Assistant Director, Social Policy, Strategic Policy, Performance and Population
Mr. J. Norris, Policy Principal, Strategic Policy, Performance and Population

[14:32]

Connétable M.K. Jackson of St. Brelade (Chair):

Good afternoon, everyone, and thanks for coming along this afternoon to the Environment, Housing and Infrastructure Scrutiny Panel for a public review hearing on the Government Plan in the affairs of the Minister for Children and Housing. I would like to start off by just asking everyone to identify themselves for the record.

Deputy I. Gardiner of St. Helier:

Deputy Inna Gardiner of St. Helier, member of the panel.

The Connétable of St Brelade:

Mike Jackson, Constable of St. Brelade, Chair of the panel.

Connétable S.A. Le Sueur-Rennard of St. Saviour.

Sadie Le Sueur-Rennard, Constable of St. Saviour, member of the panel.

Interim Director, Jersey Property Holdings:

Tim Daniels, Interim Director, Jersey Property Holdings.

Group Director, Regulation, Growth, Housing and Environment:

Andy Scate, Group Director of Regulation, G.H.E. (Growth, Housing and Environment).

Policy Principal, Strategic Policy, Performance and Population:

Jack Norris, Policy Principal for Strategic Policy, Performance and Population.

The Minister for Children and Housing:

Senator Sam Mézec, the Minister for Housing.

Assistant Director, Social Policy, Strategic Policy, Performance and Population:

Richard Jouault, Assistant Director of Social Policy in Strategic Policy, Performance and Population.

The Connétable of St Brelade:

Thank you very much. The first question, Minister, really is towards the long-term housing policy. The business plan states that requested funding will fund possible schemes including any assisted home ownership schemes that receive approval. Could you provide us with any more detailed information as to what type of home ownership schemes the Housing Policy Development Board will be looking at?

The Minister for Children and Housing:

The quick answer to that is lots. We are in probably a situation that is not amazingly helpful right now in that the work of the Housing Policy Development Board is still ongoing. We have recently had meeting where we have looked a very wide variety of potential policies to look at moving forward with and have started ruling some out that we do not think are appropriate to be considering. At this point in time a variety of different of home ownership support mechanisms are still firmly on the table. Ones that you would expect us to look at are being looked at, deposits, support, shared equity, that sort of thing, but at this point we are not nailing down specifically what that will look like.

The Connétable of St Brelade:

You have estimated 10 million to be established by 2021 to support such schemes, can you split that up in any way and give us an idea of how that has been estimated?

The Minister for Children and Housing:

There have been schemes in the past that had substantially less money associated with them than this is, but as I said, as we do not have fine details on what the scheme will look like we cannot necessarily say what proportion of that 10 million will go to what. I do not know if there is anything else on that?

Deputy I. Gardiner:

Can you provide the numbers going right back just to get some comparison because the 10 million could easily 15 million or 5 million, why is it 10?

The Minister for Children and Housing:

Yes, did you ask a written question on this? I am just trying to find that in front of me. I think you may have done, where we gave an example of a previous ...

Deputy I. Gardiner:

I am trying to understand why it was decided at 10 and not 6, 5 or 15, some understanding of the number that was ...

The Minister for Children and Housing:

Yes, it is more generous than what has existed previously. I think we wanted to do that. That is a political aspiration largely from ... well, not just from me but other Ministers in their election manifestos were keen to progress something like this. The entire Government Plan is a very difficult balancing act as I am sure will have come across from your hearings with other Ministers as well, but in recognising that it is a priority to assist people in this way we want to be more generous than what has existed in the past.

The Connétable of St. Saviour:

How will people be able to access this, the chance of having the money, because people are going to want to access it and they obviously will be able to so how is it going to be administered?

The Minister for Children and Housing:

My worry is that even with it being more generous than what has existed previously it will likely be heavily subscribed, there will likely be lots of people who will want to benefit from such a scheme. As we are unable to say yet what form of support that will take we cannot answer that yet because different types of support we might offer might have a different capacity, so there may be one

option we would pursue that we know at a maximum we could reach X number of families and a different type of support might reach Y number of families. I appreciate that is not the most helpful answer but at this point we just do not know because we still putting the team together.

The Connétable of St. Saviour:

But you have 10,000 for a scheme you are not sure how it is going to operate.

Policy Principal, Strategic Policy, Performance and Population:

The Housing Gateway is the point of access for assisted home purchase schemes so it would be presumably to households who are registered on the Housing Gateway. There is only one scheme operating at the moment, which is the Andium HomeBuy, so anybody registered on the gateway is offered that scheme. We have always said in future if other schemes come forward it will be to households who are registered on the Housing Gateway to provide a variety of different schemes that meets their needs, whether that is assisted purchase of the property, whether that is a deposit loan, but that will be the pool of people to whom we are ...

The Connétable of St. Saviour:

They have to go through the gateway?

Policy Principal, Strategic Policy, Performance and Population:

They have to go through the gateway because that is the assessment process.

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

Do you envisage any form of payback? We have seen the past housing loan schemes, we have shared equity schemes, do you envisage any sort of payback coming from these proposals?

Assistant Director, Social Policy, Strategic Policy, Performance and Population:

Payback to whom?

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

The lender, to the Government.

Assistant Director, Social Policy, Strategic Policy, Performance and Population:

That level of detail is not clear yet. It will depend upon the scheme that came forward about how that would work and how the public good is maintained in perpetuity, whether that is the ...

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

That is the point I am getting at, ensuring that the benefit is in perpetuity because with past schemes it has got lost after the first purchase, which does not seem to be fair to the Government and the rest of the population.

The Minister for Children and Housing:

I am keen that whatever we proceed with is something that provides maximum benefit. As I said, this policy is not just led by me, it is from other Ministers as well that have been keen to do something like this. I want to make it so it is not a quick thing that a small number of people benefit from and then we find ourselves 5 years down the line wanting to look at doing the exact same thing over and over again, without those safeguards in place that there is a wider a benefit, because if it is a public scheme there ought to be public benefit not just a private benefit for a small number of people.

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

I think we had a submission from Andium with regard to that. They suggested that the 2013 one did not do much for affordability and they thought that any investment in housing should be directed in the supply of new homes and that 10 million would probably be insufficient. Maybe that is an issue that faces the Island that we have to consider.

The Minister for Children and Housing:

That is absolutely right and that is why the Housing Policy Development Board has on its agenda various different ways that you can make it easier for affordable purchase schemes to get access to land that they need to build those homes on, whether that is land that we already own or how you can provide a greater focus of that in private transactions. But the fact that supply is such a big driver in access and affordability, we have to bear that in mind, which is why I am personally not so keen at using tax as a mechanism for enabling people to afford to buy homes we have had discussions in the past about stamp duty. I have not been an advocate of providing extra support for first time buyers through stamp duty because what you do is you have a larger group of people squabbling over the same number of properties which does not help anyone. You may get more affordable but by make it more affordable a greater number of people are there so the benefit goes to the people who are selling the properties not the wider public who want to access them. That is part of work the Housing Policy Development Board will do.

The Connétable of St. Saviour:

When do you think this will be up and running because obviously you have 10 million, you have to go through gateway but you do not know how it is going to be paid back so ... sorry, I am a little bit lost.

The Minister for Children and Housing:

It is 2021 that we are looking to establish it so it is not imminent.

The Connétable of St. Saviour:

No, I can gather that by the answers I am getting, because it is kind of still up in the air. In 2021 we have got 10 million to help people to purchase a home and you will have all the Is dotted and the Ts crossed, yes?

The Minister for Children and Housing:

Certainly by then, yes.

The Connétable of St. Saviour:

I am asking you because it is on the paperwork today and you have do not have it. All I know this is going through gateway, which is quite the normal thing now. When I purchased I had a States loan in the 1960s and borrowed £5,000. My husband only earned £13 a week but we knew that. Now, you are saying you have 10 million but you do not seem to have any answers of how we are going to get it except going through gateway and we do not know how we are going to pay it back. I will still be here, God willing, in 2021 so I will find out.

The Minister for Children and Housing:

That is why we are saying this for 2021 rather than next year. The fact is when we are going through this process for the very first time, putting this document together, which does have finer detail for the nearer years and less detail for the later years. What we are signalling by that is that this is our intention to go ahead with it. What we do not want to do is not include something like this now on the basis we do not have the detail and then get to next year and say: "Actually we probably ought to do something like this" and find that we are having to fight a lot harder and potentially losing that fight to get money for it. By arguing for it now, that puts us in a better position to be able to deliver it when we are ready for it, rather than waiting and ending up ...

The Connétable of St. Saviour:

Hand on heart, you have the 10 million secured? They will not be able to claw it back for something else?

The Minister for Children and Housing:

That depends entirely on the Assembly voting through the Government Plan, somebody could amend it.

The Connétable of St. Saviour:

If we voted for it, then there is no way anybody can claw it back and say: “No, I am sorry you have not spent it in this year so we are going to take it back”?

The Minister for Children and Housing:

Constable, I cannot give that guarantee because we live in a parliamentary democracy where any Member of our Assembly can bring an amendment or bring a standalone proposition later down the line and the decision the Assembly makes will be standing. If we make the decision this time around in the Government Plan, I would consider it to be incredibly unlikely that somebody would choose to do that, given we would have made that intention clear at this point. I would be politically foolish, I think, but in our political system any decision can be overturned so I cannot give that guarantee.

[14:45]

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

Given that 2 years is quite tight in terms of locating land or an area, getting plans in and constructing, I do not think 2 years would see houses built. Have you had any initial consultations with the construction industry or are you planning to do so with regard to their workload, because the construction industry is fairly overheated at the moment? Would there be the capacity within that industry to satisfy the need, if you like? It is all very well putting the money forward but if we do not have the capacity to produce the results we want we maybe need to review the situation. I just wondered if you had any thoughts in that direction.

The Minister for Children and Housing:

I have not personally sat around a table to engage in that way.

Group Director, Regulation, Growth, Housing and Environment:

No, certainly with our planning hats on have had various conversations, certainly on regular basis, with Commerce and the Planning Development Committee or also the Construction Council. I think their response generally is if there is more work they will gear up accordingly. That gives a vote of confidence but I think they will only gear up if they think the pipeline of work that is going to be coming is more certain for them. A lot for me depends on what the Island Plan effectively comes up with in terms of the number and then the future annual requirements. That gives some comfort to an industry to think we need to gear up accordingly if we are going to build more homes. I think a lot of it is that immediate certainty, do we have the contracts to move forward and they will then look to take on more apprentices or more local labour.

Interim Director, Jersey Property Holdings:

I think the thing to note is the more notice they have the better chance they have of being able to gear up for it which is why a timeframe of 2 years gives us a chance to do that.

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

Yes, probably quite ambitious in reality.

The Minister for Children and Housing:

We are a government of ambition, though, to be fair.

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

Yes, I suppose what I am trying to understand is whether this 10 million will be spendable within this sphere during the life of this Government Plan. Even 2023 could be ambitious knowing how these things take time.

Interim Director, Jersey Property Holdings:

They do not need to see a finished house being delivered, it could be that you support somebody in their ability to buy off plan or to buy a plot. I think that is the point that is being made that the scheme is not yet concrete so we do not know exactly how it is going to ...

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

That has been done in the past. People have been supported in the acquisition of sites, if you like, and they deal with it very well.

Policy Principal, Strategic Policy, Performance and Population:

It is not dependent on the ... you can have schemes ... for instance, deposit for loan, as the Minister has just said, that have been supplied to back up those schemes. Deposit for loan is dependent on existing properties within the market. There are issues there to increase people's access to funding and you increase demand so that is why the Minister prefers increase in supply. Equally it is not dependent on new supply to take it forward but you can put a condition on to say that they must buy existing properties in the market. There are various ways that you can structure home ownership schemes.

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

Do you think on balance that 10 million is sufficient to support the aspirations you have at present?

The Minister for Children and Housing:

By definition, yes.

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

The other question that is arising out of the Government Plan in our sphere is we are interested in how you are taking into account the sustainable wellbeing of inhabitants of Jersey over successive generations when delivering projects such as this. The finance law suggests that the sustainability and wellbeing needs to be incorporated, that is in terms of economic, social, environmental and cultural wellbeing. What are your thoughts on that sphere?

The Minister for Children and Housing:

It is certainly a fact that one source of stress and contributing to people not enjoying life or making ends meet in the way that we would want them to in a wealthy society is for a great number of people the cost of their housing causes them great difficulty in life. The income distribution survey a couple of years ago pointed out the cost of housing was the single biggest contributing factor for relative poverty and so ... and this features in our other application, the right of tenants, which I am sure you will have more questions to ask on shortly. If you provide people with better stability in the homes that they are in, you provide help to make it more affordable for them, their lives are going to be much easier and the success that you would want to build on top of that in terms of their physical and mental health, their kids succeeding in their education, if you have a good home life that is stable and people are not so stressed out with everything, that has to be a significant contributor to people's wellbeing.

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

In trying to achieve that utopian position, what do you think ...

The Minister for Children and Housing:

That is not utopia, that is definitely achievable.

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

What can your department do to do that, to get to that stage? Given that housing is your area, obviously there are health issues, public health issues and so forth but people follow their own lifestyles and such like. In terms of housing, do you think you can achieve that?

The Minister for Children and Housing:

In terms of the things that fall exclusively in my domain I am incredibly excited about what we are going to be doing on tenants' rights because I think that there are protections that can be put into tenancies and into our residential tenancy law that will make life easier for lots of people. As Minister, I regularly get people talking to me about the nightmares they have had with ... difficulty moving out of a home in the private sector that is not appropriate for them. The charges that have been put on them that really are inappropriate, and have been banned in other jurisdictions, and

so I am very much looking forward to producing those amendments to the law or whatever power the Environmental Health Department needs to enforce some of these things so that lots of those issues which tenants are regularly facing that they should not be facing can be dealt with. There is no reason that that cannot be done. It has been done in other jurisdictions. You can provide people with greater security of tenure by extending basic tenancy lengths, by looking at rent stabilisation measures that restrict what rent increases people can be subjected to throughout their tenancies. When you provide people that certainty and stability then that is not utopian, that is just good housing regulation.

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

Obviously these various elements require funding of some sort. Can you specify any that may not require the funding streams, that can be pushed into action without money from government?

The Minister for Children and Housing:

If you are passing a law and something is in the Residential Tenancy (Jersey) Law, actions that are no longer allowed to happen, then that requires no ongoing funding beyond funding a court system for people to challenge things when they think their contracts are breached or the law is broken. I think that basic update to our Residential Tenancy (Jersey) Law, it will cost money to put it together and to dedicate time and officer resource to developing it but once it is in force it has no cost implications.

Policy Principal, Strategic Policy, Performance and Population:

The Residential Tenancy (Jersey) Law is a framework of rights and responsibilities for land and tenants, it is for that relationship. It is regulation of that relationship between those parties, the costs may come through regulation, Andy's team, through the housing regulation team of making sure that if people do have problems enforcing those rights that there is a mechanism for them to challenge.

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

Would you have to appoint or create a housing regulator or can you do it within the existing framework?

Group Director, Regulation, Growth, Housing and Environment:

Further to a previous meeting we had this morning, the team we have looking at housing standards in private sector rented effectively will become the housing regulatory team that also can use the toolkit of other bits of legislation, so whether it be tenancy legislation, minimum standards legislation, other pieces of legislation. I think we are looking at how we can get those cross-warranted, so to speak, and they connect on different bits of legislation. Effectively if we are

undertaking one visit into a property then that officer can act on a number of purposes and the revenue that that generates because of that regulatory regime can help fund the team that then regulates across a wider area. The concept of what was, I guess, an environmental health team looking at private sector rented dwelling standards invariably you cannot uncouple then tenancy rights, tenancy issues, deposit issues, other things that obviously go in and around that same subject. Effectively, all being well, we will create that team and it can have many powers of across many pieces of legislation, some of which sit with various Ministers but effectively as an officer team they can be empowered under different pieces of the law.

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

Do you think there is an additional cost to creating that post?

Group Director, Regulation, Growth, Housing and Environment:

We would say that the anticipation is that is a cost recovered service. Effectively the entirety of that service should ... the market should bear the cost of the regulations. Effectively to general taxpayers the cost should be zero and that is in line with our direction on other pieces of regulation where effectively the private interest that the regulation serves pays for the regulation, rather than it being borne by the rest of the taxpaying base. An example would be planning fees, for instance. If I rewind the clock some years planning fees used to be free but the benefit used to be in the person applying for planning permission. Now, the applicant effectively bears the cost of regulation and the taxpayer does not bear that cost. Again, I think it is similar principle that we should follow here. The housing and the property management industry in Jersey is the second biggest part of our G.V.A. (Gross Value Added) and so we would contend obviously that it is appropriate for some of that cost to be cost-recovered so general taxpayers do not pick up the bill.

Deputy I. Gardiner:

I think all of us here around the table agree that we do need to have a good standard of accommodation of the housing market. We all agree that we need to protect tenants' rights. At our previous meeting we raised concern around how many regulations and what will be the charge for the landlords for this regulation. I am looking at the submission from Andium and they are basically just supporting our concerns when they said: "Any possible fault of Andium Homes they could be refunded in one of the following ways: higher rent charges, less investment in maintenance of properties, reduction in other services." Basically Andium supported what we raised as concerns and how can we basically, Minister, find the balance between healthy, safe accommodations and rights and not overregulated because the cost of the regulations will fall on the tenants?

The Minister for Children and Housing:

It is perfectly reasonable for Andium to be apprehensive about this because they are a very good landlord. They provide excellent standard homes and they have excellent tenant support services in buildings. The difficult is, the vast majority of tenants on the Island are not living with Andium and do not have that same standard of tenancy. Certainly for people in that situation it is absolutely right that these regulations come into force. I have to say, I have listened to a lot of the arguments against them and I do not buy a single one of them. It is absolutely right that everybody that is in housing abides by these regulations and paying their fair share.

Group Director, Regulation, Growth, Housing and Environment:

The one thing I would add, I think Andium have got the wrong end of the stick slightly with the fee charging. The pilot fee structure is a zero fee for social providers. Social landlords will not be charged for licenses as long as they are in the rent safe scheme. There is a catch in the fees which mean that Andium will not be paying substantial licence fees because they are already a social housing provider. That was one of the changes we have made previously to the scheme before we finalise the regulations effectively, to make sure that that is captured. We will not be seeing a big licence fee charged to social housing providers because I think that would be counterproductive because invariably that would then come from social housing provision, which is not the aim of this.

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

Have you had much in the way of discussion with other social housing providers apart from Andium?

The Minister for Children and Housing:

About?

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

About the self-financing schemes with regard to ... well, you suggest that the project on rights of tenants will be self-funding ...

The Minister for Children and Housing:

You phrased your question in a particular way before. There are parts of rights of tenants work that will be self-funding, some of it will not be self-funding. There are bits that we will need to set up that will cost money but certain bits ... if the law is changed and behaviour changes according the only cost after that is punishing people through the courts when they break that law. There are elements of the tenants' rights project that will require ongoing funding afterwards. It is not for the whole thing.

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

Clearly you have had discussions with Andium, have you had discussions with the other housing providers?

[15:00]

The Minister for Children and Housing:

I regularly meet with different housing providers and I find I am very often of the same frame of mind as them. They want to be good social landlords and provide the best service possible to tenants. Certainly one who I speak to very regularly is very supportive of a lot of what we are doing here. Is there anything else to add to that?

Policy Principal, Strategic Policy, Performance and Population:

I would also say that, and I do not wish to steal the Minister's thunder on this, the housing lottery services is one thing the companies within the tenants' right, which will require ongoing funding. That is one of the elements which will need funding, whereas other things such as the Residential Tenancy (Jersey) Law changes do not require funding but they are part of a package of improving tenants' rights.

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

Going back to social wellbeing, in your view is that measurable in any way? Do you have any framework to measure it? No doubt as the years go on we will be asked what the results of your measurements would have been.

The Minister for Children and Housing:

The short answer to that question is no.

Group Director, Regulation, Growth, Housing and Environment:

One thing I could add, we have shared some information with the panel around the wider impact that determinant housing has on wider social impacts and economic productivity, mental health, those sort of things. So there is a lot more growing research around - whether that be from Mind or Shelter or Rowntree Foundation, there are a number of bodies which are directly linking ... and you can directly link the quality of people's housing and their access to the environment and natural environmental activity to sort of mental wellbeing, social wellbeing, economic productivity. So what the Minister said earlier in terms of the quality of housing is incredibly important because it is one of the key determinants in people's outcomes in life, including their health outcomes, both mental and physical. I think the problem with a lot of this is the research is very lengthy in time. Good housing as a child, you may not pick up the impacts of that until you are in your 30s or 40s

or beyond. So, for us in government, I think it is very important for us to have proactive spend in these areas because it will save us in the long term in terms of very big reactive cost in terms of both physical health but also mental health. Arguably, people in poorer housing are less economically productive and, therefore, it is a double whammy. We get less income tax coming in as well as more cost going out. The problem is, though, trying to research all that very quickly. It is a very long study of the population which will show that. But a number of organisations are looking at this more and more, I think, which is some of the evidence behind the housing minimum standards requirements.

The Minister for Children and Housing:

I appreciate that it is a really important question, but these action points come under the heading reducing income inequality, which when we were putting all of this together that was the angle that I was promoting the most because income inequality is an economic measure. Okay, it has a knock-on effect for wellbeing and everything else and that is also in the Government Plan, but the primary angle for me in arguing for this has been based on the economics rather than the social wellbeing, which as I said I accept is important but the economics has been the focus from my perspective on this.

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

Moving on to key worker accommodation, you have kindly listed out in the written question what we have at the moment. Have you identified any other States-owned sites which could provide use for key worker accommodation?

Interim Director, Jersey Property Holdings:

There are a large number of sites where we could look at putting key worker accommodation: St. Saviour, Overdale. I think the challenge that we face at the moment is the uncertainty around some of the other projects that the Government is looking at - the hospital, the future office - and until we get clarity or some direction on those projects it is very difficult to understand what we can use for key worker accommodation.

Deputy I. Gardiner:

I would like to go back to the answer in your written question that you are working to develop a strategy. Basically, we still do not have an understanding of what is a key worker, or we do have? Do we have the key worker or it is still developing?

The Minister for Children and Housing:

We have a guideline definition at this point. It is not a definition that is set in stone, though, because there is still more work that has to be done. Are you aware of that?

Deputy I. Gardiner:

Yes. When will we see the outcome? When will we have a definition?

The Minister for Children and Housing:

When is the next stage of this ready to be ...?

Assistant Director, Social Policy, Strategic Policy, Performance and Population:

So the next stage of the key worker strategy piece of work will conclude this year. So we will feed it into the Housing Policy Development Board for Q1 2020. It is work that is under way as we speak and there is a working definition of what key worker means in terms of support for accommodation, but that is a working definition.

Deputy I. Gardiner:

How many people, how many key workers, what are our needs?

Assistant Director, Social Policy, Strategic Policy, Performance and Population:

So perhaps if I give ...?

The Minister for Children and Housing:

Yes.

Assistant Director, Social Policy, Strategic Policy, Performance and Population:

In terms of that definition, it is really a 3-pronged definition. The first is about that a key worker provides statutory services or services that are akin to statutory services. The second point is that there is evidenced difficulty in recruitment and retention, so we can evidence that there is a problem with recruiting them. Thirdly, that the household income is below a minimum threshold. When you take those 3 elements, you can see that over time different groups may fall within that category. So we might have difficulties in the future of recruiting police officers or prison officers or whatever, and they may or may not fall into that category. At the moment the work is bringing together Jersey Property Holdings, the strategy policy team and officers from Health and Community Services and the Children, Young People, Education and Skills, C.Y.P.E.S., team. We are really focusing on nurses, junior doctors, social workers and allied health professionals, and certain teachers.

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

Is it restricted to States employees or Government employees?

Assistant Director, Social Policy, Strategic Policy, Performance and Population:

It would not have to be because if you take into account employees who carry out services which are akin to statutory services, that might be nurses operating in a nursing home from the private sector. So we recognise as part of the work of the Housing Policy Development Board that housing is an issue for everybody, affordability is an issue for everybody, but there are specific issues which are around key workers that we need to address. For the Minister for Children and Housing, it is hugely important that we have a good quality workforce, and obviously the costs of a transition through locum and agency costs is a significant waste of money. We could more effectively use that money if we provide good accommodation for key workers.

The Minister for Children and Housing:

A key part of that definition about it being statutory services or services akin to statutory, even though there are ongoing discussions about this it means this is not for, for example, hospitality. They have plenty of recruitment difficulties there. This is not something that is aimed at them. It is not something aimed at a large finance firm making millions of pounds a year that needs to get a senior specific type of compliance officer or something like that. It is exclusively for those types of services, not something that may be very important for our economy, but it is for the economy, not for public services.

Deputy I. Gardiner:

My question was around estimates. For example, we have and we will have around 180 houses, homes, over 3 sites that you mentioned. We have around 180. How much else do we need, approximate estimate, for the key workers to meet the demand or to meet the need?

Assistant Director, Social Policy, Strategic Policy, Performance and Population:

So that piece of work is currently under way. What we are looking ...

Deputy I. Gardiner:

Oh, so we do not know yet? Okay.

Assistant Director, Social Policy, Strategic Policy, Performance and Population:

Yes, we have a strategic piece of work under way and we also have an operational piece of work running at the same time. So currently we have recently delivered some accommodation at Plaisant Court and we are going to bring online some accommodation at Hue Court. Now, that is addressing 2 particular elements of key workers, which is landing accommodation - that means when people immediately arrive - and then accommodation to which they can rent more long term. What it does not address is the potential requirement - and that is what our work is looking at now, returning to the issue that the Minister mentioned earlier - about ownership and how we might enable key workers to buy, how we might support that process going forward.

The Minister for Children and Housing:

Even when these definitions are set in stone, the number will fluctuate as different areas get different amounts of investment or whatever or the number of people who happen to be qualified in a certain area changes. It will fluctuate.

The Connétable of St. Saviour:

Are any of these properties that you ousted people out of to refurbish for key workers? They are not quite ready to come online, but do they have people waiting in the wings, you have names to people who will occupy them? Because you have approximately 177 apartments for key workers and, as I say, a lot of people were removed from their homes, so do you have a waiting list so as soon as these properties are refurbished you can move these key workers in?

The Minister for Children and Housing:

Richard can answer the substantial part of that question, but I have to correct the record and say that not a single person has been ejected from a social home for the purpose of housing a key worker instead. That has simply not happened. What has happened when we have used Andium properties as key worker accommodation has been being able to take advantage of refurbishment projects that were always going to happen and were scheduled to happen. There has not been an incidence where people are being made to leave so key workers can occupy their homes instead. It has been taking advantage of refurbishment programmes that were going on anyway and so that sometimes sad and unfortunate disruption that tenants have to face as refurbishment is going on was inevitable and going to happen anyway. So I just have to correct that part of the question there.

Assistant Director, Social Policy, Strategic Policy, Performance and Population:

Just to reinforce that, it was a scheduled refurbishment so irrespective of who moves back into accommodation, those blocks were always planned for refurbishment and that is why we have a system around it. But what we are doing strategically is working with Jersey Property Holdings, Andium Homes as a provider and Health and Community Services and C.Y.P.E.S., who have property within their portfolio as well which they use as key worker accommodation. As we provide better quality key worker accommodation we can free up other sites which are currently used, which are poor quality key worker accommodation, and we can repurpose those for either affordable housing or for other purposes. But what we are trying to do is strategically align that so that it all works in concert.

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

Minister, I do not know if you can just clarify with regard to key workers. It seems to me we have qualified people in the Island, we have unqualified people, and these seem to lie in the middle. Do

you envisage the time spent in key worker accommodation will entitle a tenant towards full housing qualifications?

The Minister for Children and Housing:

That is difficult to answer given the ongoing work of the Population Migration Board, which is looking at that as an issue whether ... I am not pre-empting what they are going to propose, but they are in the process of working out what are the terms in which people come to the Island to work, not just in public services but in the private sector as well. What rights do they accrue at the time that they are living in the Island? I know in other jurisdictions like Guernsey, for example, when you come over for this sort of thing, you do not gain working rights or housing rights in the time you are there. So I cannot really answer that when the Population Migration Board is doing that work and they may well propose a solution which just does not resemble that terminology about qualifications and not qualifications. All we can say is that this project will work based on whatever the population policy is, whether housing qualifications continue to exist in the way they do in the future or what conditions will be attached to work permits. I do not know what those conditions may or may not be.

Assistant Director, Social Policy, Strategic Policy, Performance and Population:

But just to add to that, we must also remember that plenty of key workers are not incoming, they are born here, they are trained here and they still cannot afford to buy a house here. What we would like to do is if we train nurses in Jersey we provide them opportunities to buy a house in Jersey and stay in Jersey, not have to move from the Island to continue their professional career when we desperately need them to be remaining here.

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

Would you agree that while we can provide key worker accommodation we do not really want them to stay in it for too long? Would you be giving some incentives for them perhaps not to stay in it too long so that it releases it for others?

Assistant Director, Social Policy, Strategic Policy, Performance and Population:

The strategy is about developing 3 types of key worker accommodation. That is landing accommodation for short term, rental which is potentially long term, and then looking at the feasibility of providing partial ownership. So we are absolutely hoping they are remaining long term, providing an option to buy.

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

We have had arrangements with what was (j) categories in the past whereby there was a shared equity scheme, did we not? Is that the sort of aspirations we are looking at?

Assistant Director, Social Policy, Strategic Policy, Performance and Population:

Again, it comes back to our earlier conversation about how you effectively enable different groups to own property.

[15:15]

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

So it is about staff retention then, is it, I suppose?

Assistant Director, Social Policy, Strategic Policy, Performance and Population:

That is key.

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

Minister, are you satisfied with this somewhat inequitable situation we find ourselves with in terms of fairness across the board? Some would argue that ... I know you mentioned earlier on that it is not for supporting someone lacking staff in the finance industry, but generally the Jersey economy is struggling for staff in lots of areas and, as has been mentioned, this is favouring States workers and not others.

The Minister for Children and Housing:

You started by asking if I was satisfied. The simple answer to that is no, I am nowhere near satisfied and I will not be until every single person in Jersey has a decent roof above their head that they can afford and live a happy life in, irrespective of where they are from or what sector they are working in. Utopia may be the appropriate word to use for that aspiration. So no, and it will take a very long time for me to be satisfied, but what I am content with as things stand is that with what is being proposed here and the ongoing work we are doing, we are moving in the direction of making life easier for more people. The focus of that, of course, has to be people who are in Jersey already who are struggling, but when we look at everything else that is going on in our public services - we have just had the second report from the Care Inquiry - we know that these areas need special attention. There is, I think, an evidenced need that something has to be done to protect the integrity of those public services. Even though that means giving a helping hand to people who are coming from outside of the Island to work here - which I understand some people resent and I can see where they are coming from - the fact is that they are working in public services that Islanders desperately need to benefit from. So, I am confident that we are certainly making progress in that direction and what we are proposing will make the situation better.

The Connétable of St. Saviour:

Do you think there are enough key workers around? Because the U.K. (United Kingdom) seems to be very, very short of social workers. They seem to have the same sort of problems we have but manifested. We keep bringing ours to the fore a lot. But do you think there are enough social workers around? Because the U.K. seems to be crying out for them and we are crying out for them. Do you think if we have a nice property or a nice apartment we can dangle in front of them, that might make them want to come?

The Minister for Children and Housing:

I had a wander round Children's Services last week in the aftermath of the report coming out, just to see how people were doing and sit down one on one with a few of them just to talk to them. I met some of our new recruits and I met somebody who was originally from Jersey, had qualified in the U.K., heard about the recruitment campaign we were doing and thought: "Oh, great, wonderful opportunity to return home and work where I am qualified and take part." I spoke to another person who was not from Jersey but had seen the recruitment thing and had thought it looked really interesting and thought: "That is a good career option there." So, I think - and I think the Care Inquiry recognised this as well - there is some good stuff going on to get people to Jersey to work in those public services but it is always going to be a struggle. Of course there are parts of the U.K. that really struggle and they have the advantage of being able to get people from 50 miles away or get people to jump on a train, whereas we are surrounded by ocean so it becomes difficult for people to do that here. We will always probably have to try harder but we have to bear in mind that there are some real advantages to working in Jersey. Firstly, you are in Jersey; where else would you want to be in the world apart from this Island? We do on the whole have good public services and often do not suffer from the difficulties that services in the U.K. suffer from. We have a good quality of life. Are there enough social workers around? If we were not focusing on the U.K. we would have to look to other jurisdictions as well. That is not a bad thing because you get different experience and different systems and ways of thinking, but at the same time we also have our social work degree to train people on Island and those people are most likely to want to stay here if they have those opportunities because they have family ties. They are not wanting to get the first plane out on a Friday night so they can go back to their families in the U.K. or anything. It will always be a struggle but there is, I think, some recognised good work going on there.

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

Could you tell me what the situation at present with Westaway Court is? Is that key worker accommodation or is that sort of linked to the hospital?

Interim Director, Jersey Property Holdings:

It was key worker accommodation but it is currently empty, awaiting again determination for possibly hospital or possibly the office or there are other considerations being made as well. So at the moment it is empty.

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

So an early decision on the hospital would benefit lots of people?

The Minister for Children and Housing:

Quite right. That point is certainly worth highlighting and if anyone is watching this I hope they have taken note of that point, Chair. You are quite right, it would make my job much easier if some of this uncertainty was dealt with because there are lots of sites that we own around the Island that I am looking at and thinking: "Well, that is a great site for social housing, for affordable purchase, for mixed development" but we are not able to move as quickly as we would like to because of the uncertainty there is around the hospital. I will freely admit that, that that is a great frustration I am facing.

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

What are the housing consultants, Altair, bringing to the party that we do not already know, which is not already obvious? What is their contribution as consultants?

Assistant Director, Social Policy, Strategic Policy, Performance and Population:

Altair is working providing support to the Housing Policy Development Board in the general terms of supporting the board and also specifically around the key worker piece of work. That is providing expertise, looking at other jurisdictions about how they are addressing similar problems or different problems.

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

I would be interested in knowing what problems other jurisdictions have. Who are we comparing with, shall we say? Guernsey has, I know, different housing rules so it may be ... do we look at other Crown dependencies?

Assistant Director, Social Policy, Strategic Policy, Performance and Population:

That is the beauty of working with an organisation that operates globally because we can identify some of the issues that we might have as being similar to some cities. Sometimes we have issues which are similar to other islands and a global consultant like Altair provides us an opportunity to tap into expertise from all different jurisdictions, which we will be bringing to the table as part of the policy options that the Housing Policy Development Board looks at.

Policy Principal, Strategic Policy, Performance and Population:

All the Altair homes are online so you will see the examples that they bring up and the jurisdictions and examples of areas where we could potentially ... the opportunities we could look at as policy areas.

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

If I can just go on to capital projects, I know, Minister, you are suggesting you did not have much involvement in the Rouge Bouillon project. There does not seem to be at this stage any preferred option for the use of the site but funding has been proposed from 2020 onwards which sets out what is likely to be required. What is your initial view on the preferred use of the site, affordable housing, a school or fire and ambulance zone? What are your thoughts?

The Minister for Children and Housing:

It is the case that I have not been involved in this. I have been round Rouge Bouillon School and I certainly think that an opportunity to provide better facilities to the students who go to that school would be desperately needed. That school does not have any green space as part of the premises there, which I think is quite sad given it is a densely populated part of town. Lots of children go there who may not have gardens to play in at home, so that option would have my support. But I understand that everything has to be considered here and it can be difficult to go ahead with a project when there are good alternatives that many would argue robustly for. If there is an affordable housing option that meets need in that area, of course that would have my support as well.

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

What is the Property Holdings view? Is that a block or been blocked by another move somewhere?

Interim Director, Jersey Property Holdings:

It has not. Part of the reason for moving with a certain amount of alacrity was to free up the existing ambulance site to be available for housing because it is juxtaposed to an existing housing development. I think that the kneejerk reaction was to bring fire and ambulance together. However, the constraints of the Rouge Bouillon site mean that the listed building where the existing fire station is means that the fire and the ambulance station would not necessarily be co-located. So, I think that there is money in the budget next year for feasibility studies and I think that a review of exactly where a co-located fire and ambulance station might go will be looked at in some more detail to make sure that we can consider the requirements of the school and a number of other requirements as well. At the moment, it is not a foregone conclusion that the Rouge Bouillon site will see a co-located fire and ambulance station.

The Connétable of St. Saviour:

You mentioned it yourself, the Rouge Bouillon site - there is also a gasworks site - which are going to have homes and for families, but where are the children going to go to school? There has not been a mention of schools. There is a mention of housing and I hate to mention schools because I have most of them in my parish and it is a bit of a nightmare, but I am also getting worried about the *J.E.P. (Jersey Evening Post)* site and the St. Saviour's Hospital site, which will be and is earmarked for homes. Nowhere along the line have they mentioned a primary school or that facility and I am being a little concerned. It is okay to have all these homes and you want families to have everything ... and I do not mean you, I am not having a go at you personally, but could you, being the children's man, see if you can put the school somewhere? Are there facilities for young people in these new homes and things that are going to be put there?

The Minister for Children and Housing:

So, I know the question is about schools rather than youth centres but obviously that is one really important project that is part of this Government Plan.

The Connétable of St. Saviour:

The youth service?

The Minister for Children and Housing:

A youth and community centre.

The Connétable of St. Saviour:

That is fine, that is fine, but you are also going to have these little children that need to go somewhere so are we going to pack them into Rouge Bouillon or St. Saviour School or are we looking to extend them or are we looking to build a new one?

Policy Principal, Strategic Policy, Performance and Population:

I would certainly say - and this goes for all forms of infrastructure - that Andium has dialogue and discussion with the likes of C.Y.P.E.S. Department in terms of the anticipated demand that that would create for schools and how the new homes will be met within existing school provision. I cannot give you specific examples but that dialogue does exist. They are in discussion about how their developments will potentially impact schools.

The Connétable of St. Saviour:

So you are telling me dialogue exists ...

Policy Principal, Strategic Policy, Performance and Population:

Yes, there is, yes.

The Connétable of St. Saviour:

... and yet we have all these homes going on the gasworks and nothing has been mentioned about the primary school either in that area, Springfield, or Rouge Bouillon, and yet you are telling me there is dialogue going on and this poor Minister is sitting here as the Minister for Children and Housing and he is not in the loop?

Policy Principal, Strategic Policy, Performance and Population:

It is factored into the developments so ...

The Connétable of St. Saviour:

But he is not in the loop.

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

Minister, do you feel that you ought to be?

The Minister for Children and Housing:

Sorry, I am just trying to get my head around the question here.

The Connétable of St. Saviour:

The question is we are building homes, we are putting families in homes, and we are building a youth centre in one of the areas, which is fantastic, but unless you are old enough to go to that youth centre there is not going to be a place for you in a school anywhere in that area or you are going to be packed into a classroom that is going to be deep. Now, the young gentleman alongside you has said that it is Andium and it is all being talked about and is in consultation, not a problem, and yet you are the Minister and it will all fall back on your lap if nothing works out but you are not in the loop.

The Minister for Children and Housing:

Yes. I am sorry, I am still just trying to understand the question here. It is right that particularly in town where it is densely populated that there is an overall view of amenity facilities, schools, everything that goes with that. The Island Plan will be a significant part of that. As I said, I have not been involved in the discussions about Rouge Bouillon but you have heard my view so I am sure that my views are well known, that I think that that school in particular, because of capacity issues and everything that goes with that, that that has to be considered as part of it.

The Connétable of St. Saviour:

But at this moment in time, all these buildings which are going to be going on the gasworks and we are putting families there - it will not be in my lifetime but it will be in yours if you are re-elected - and we do not know where those children will be going to school. There is not a catchment area because there is not a school. The schools we have are already overcrowded for little ones.

[15:30]

The Minister for Children and Housing:

No, the Education Department has excellent projections of what need is around different catchment areas and they are engaged with ... I am not directly involved in that but honestly, if you want to speak to the Education Department and look at their projections and their needs, what they know, because they know from immigration, people coming in with young children, they know the ages, they know when there will be a year group with particular demand because the birth rate was higher in one year or whatever. There is a science behind it.

The Connétable of St. Saviour:

Is there? I cannot see it yet.

Deputy I. Gardiner:

I am following the Constable also with regard the new development in Rouge Bouillon they are just now building but it will be finished in another 6 months or so. It feels like there is something in Infrastructure, something in Education, and basically you as the Minister for Children and Housing, where is your centre? How are you involved? Where is your say? Or it is split between 3 departments and nobody really co-ordinates it? Because we do have a need and a youth centre is nice, like you say, but we need playgrounds, we need parks, we need different amenities. It is for children, for wellbeing and for housing, all together, and it feels like this is Infrastructure and this is Education, so where are you standing?

The Minister for Children and Housing:

Historically, that has absolutely been the case and it has been something that we have not been good at, getting the best joined-up thinking. The point about the reorganisation that is happening in government is that it is meant to help that. I do not know what other experiences of Ministers for Housing were because there used to be a Housing Department and now there is not. Remember that it is not a department that I am in charge of in the way that previous Ministers would have been. I am finding that I get the access that I need to other departments when I need it to focus largely on housing regulation. So it is not a day to day part of my job to say: "Housing has to go here and this has to be done with this site." I can lobby for that but it is not my decision. That comes under what

planning rules there have to be and everything that goes with that. So, I have a job which is very much misunderstood widely out there for what the limits of my responsibilities are.

Group Director, Regulation, Growth, Housing and Environment:

In terms of the school capacity issue, clearly schools future project using the demographics and the population projections. The housing that is being permitted on the ground effectively is a function of their population projections. There is an anticipated growth in housing supply, some of which we are seeing being permitted on the ground. If a school is at capacity, then what we would expect to see is a change in capital requirement, i.e. the school may get bigger, it may get an extra classroom, it may get some extra classrooms, that sort of thing. So a number of our schools are having some works done to them. We are building a new school certainly at a secondary level down at Les Quennevais, which has increased capacity. For instance, St. Mary's School is having a programme at the moment. So they are just a couple of examples but we would expect to see the school's capital programme keep up with population projections. Undoubtedly, if you are building more homes and a certain catchment is getting pressurised, then either catchment areas can be changed or managed depending on which school has capacity or not, or you can make the schools a bit bigger. So, it could be potentially a blend of both of those things.

The Connétable of St. Saviour:

That I can understand. In St. Mary, which is, god bless them, out in the sticks, they are getting something new. Rouge Bouillon, which is in St. Helier, St. Saviour's School, which is on the outskirts, and ...

Deputy I. Gardiner:

First Tower, Springfield.

The Connétable of St. Saviour:

I know that FCJ are doing an infants and reception class, but that is fee paying. I am talking about the ordinary man and lady in the street. You really have not convinced me that the schools and young people - and I mean young people - have been thought of in this housing project. I am sorry, I do not want to appear negative, but you really have not convinced me that a school is on the list as well as the homes.

Assistant Director, Social Policy, Strategic Policy, Performance and Population:

If I could just check with Andy, there was an existing planning permission for that site which had a significantly higher number of units on it?

Group Director, Regulation, Growth, Housing and Environment:

Yes, it is about half the number of units ...

Assistant Director, Social Policy, Strategic Policy, Performance and Population:

So the actual proposal that has come forward is half the number ...

The Connétable of St. Saviour:

Yes, but there was not a school on it in the first place.

Assistant Director, Social Policy, Strategic Policy, Performance and Population:

Agreed.

The Minister for Children and Housing:

It was also a States Assembly decision to do that and my longstanding position ...

The Connétable of St. Saviour:

What, to cut it down?

The Minister for Children and Housing:

Yes.

The Connétable of St. Saviour:

Oh, yes, but I just said there was not a school on it in the first place. Sorry to harp on about the schools but I know how much education is so important. I am a school governor and I know how important it is for primary schools to have good education because then when you go off to secondary schools a lot of them cannot do maths and a lot of them cannot even read. I do feel that primary schools ... if you are going to overload classes because you do not have the facilities for them, then you are not helping those children when they get to a secondary school and they are not able to cope, some of them.

Group Director, Regulation, Growth, Housing and Environment:

How school catchments are managed by Education will be dependent on the amount of physical capacity in certain catchments. Sometimes the catchment areas can be redrawn to pick up capacity in other catchment areas. There may well be a function in some places of making the schools bigger. There can be management decisions in terms of who goes to school where but also do we need to make the schools bigger, do we need to expand the number of classrooms. I also understand some schools we have are very constrained, so the ability for them to expand is very limited. One of the critical things, as population increases, is we need to understand the impacts on public infrastructure, including schools but a number of other pieces of public infrastructure as well.

The Connétable of St. Saviour:

At the gasworks they could walk.

The Connétable of St. Brelade:

I think that is a pertinent point in terms of access to any proposed additional housing is the safer routes to school, which have to come into it. I think what the Constable is saying is basically there are consequences to whatever we do, sometimes unappreciated at the time. Minister, that is all we have for you today. Thank you very much for attending with your officers. It is much appreciated and we look forward to seeing you soon.

The Minister for Children and Housing:

Okay, thank you very much.

[15:36]