

STATES OF JERSEY



VICTORIA AND GEORGE V COTTAGE HOMES (REPEAL OF GENERAL PRINCIPLES) (P.44/2013): AMENDMENT

Lodged au Greffe on 3rd May 2013
by Deputy G.P. Southern of St. Helier

STATES GREFFE

VICTORIA AND GEORGE V COTTAGE HOMES (REPEAL OF GENERAL PRINCIPLES) (P.44/2013): AMENDMENT

PAGE 2, PARAGRAPH 2 –

Delete the words “the general principles approved in 2002 should be repealed and that”;

For the words “over the age of 55 years, in line with the standard policies in place for managing social housing, except that” substitute the words “in receipt of an Old Age Pension and Income Support, and (a)” and after the words “their residence at the Cottage Homes” insert the words –

- “(b) new residents shall be residentially qualified;
- (c) new residents of the Cottage Homes will henceforth pay rent (to include water and electricity charges). Rental levels will be capped at 80% of market rates;
- (d) the Cottage Homes to have a resident manager able to provide appropriate light to moderate (non-medical) support to residents.”.

DEPUTY G.P. SOUTHERN OF ST. HELIER

REPORT

There is no doubt that one of the most difficult demands that will be made on our support systems in the coming years is that of catering for the needs of ever increasing numbers of pensioners. Over the past decades many individuals and families have been grateful for the accommodation and support offered by the Cottage Homes.

There has always been a need for a “halfway” facility to cater for those elderly persons who may be finding independent living difficult, but for whom moving into a residential care home is not appropriate. The demand for such facilities will only increase over the coming years as the proportion of 70, 80, and 90 year olds increases. The Cottage Homes have provided such “light touch” residential support and could continue to do so in the future.

The proposition P.44/2013, brought by the Minister, effectively removes the option for this type of supported independent living at a time when the principle of supporting people, especially the elderly, in their homes rather than in more expensive facilities has become the accepted policy for the Health and Social Services Department. The Minister’s intention to remove these 78 units of accommodation from their current use and have them simply as over-55s rental housing is surely a retrograde step.

On examination, the requirement for change made in section 3.1 of the report is revealed as somewhat weak. The fact that the principles, described as “out of date”, were developed before the widespread development of pensions is not relevant. There was still seen to be a need for the cottage homes in 2002, when anyone with a part pension would have been picked up and supported by the parish welfare system. One could argue indeed that the parish officials would have been better placed to spot those pensioners who might need the little extra support which is available from the presence of a warden in the cottage homes.

The argument that the provision of a warden is inequitable ignores the element of need for light support. The real problem appears to be the very low income and savings levels required for eligibility, to the extent that the Minister reports that finding those who fit the tight financial criteria is becoming increasingly difficult. Instead of removing the criteria altogether and opening the cottage homes to all over 55s, this amendment uses eligibility for income support as the criterion, thereby encompassing some one in 3 pensioner households.

The central argument however appears to be the financial one. At present the charges fail to cover the running costs (with or without a manager) nor the costs of refurbishment and improvements. However, an increase to 90% of market rates, takes the sums raised from tenants (and from States revenues to fund income support) way over the top. Funding at the 80% level produces around £590,000, which makes a more than adequate sum of £400,000 available annually for refurbishment and improvements and can easily cope with the cost of a manager to cover both sites.

Financial and manpower implications

The amendment will increase the income generated from the Cottage Homes over time as outlined above, which will put them on a sustainable footing. It will replace the position lost through retirement in 2012 and will therefore increase States manpower (or that of the proposed Housing Company) by one.

If approved, the revised proposition will read as follows –

“THE STATES are asked to decide whether they are of opinion –

to refer to their Act dated 11th September 2002 in which they approved revised general principles for the management of the Victoria Cottage Homes and the George V Cottage Homes following the transfer of responsibility for the Cottage Homes from the Cottage Homes Committee to the then Housing Committee; and

to agree that the Victoria Cottage Homes and the George V Cottage Homes should henceforth be administered by the Housing Department (or by the future independently regulated wholly States owned Housing Company if it is established) for the benefit of persons in receipt of an Old Age Pension and Income Support, and

- (a) the current residents of both Cottage Homes will continue with their existing terms and conditions for the duration of their residence at the Cottage Homes;*
- (b) new residents shall be residentially qualified;*
- (c) new residents of the Cottage Homes will henceforth pay rent (to include water and electricity charges). Rental levels will be capped at 80% of market rates;*
- (d) the Cottage Homes to have a resident manager able to provide appropriate light to moderate (non-medical) support to residents.”.*