

**WRITTEN QUESTION TO THE MINISTER FOR HOUSING
BY DEPUTY G.P. SOUTHERN OF ST. HELIER**

ANSWER TO BE TABLED ON TUESDAY 13th MARCH 2007

Question 1

- (a) Will the Minister release to members the content of the report on the state of concrete degradation at Convent Court and if not, will he state on what grounds he feels justified to refuse?
- (b) Following the statements made to tenants in his Department's newsletter of the 16th February 2007, stating that refurbishment of Convent Court would cost £5 million, will the Minister reveal to Members what estimates, if any, he has been given regarding the relative costs of refurbishment versus demolition and replacement of Convent Court, along with the respective costs for Caesarea Court?
- (c) Given the Minister's admissions on 27th February 2007 under questioning over plans for Convent Court that he was not in possession of all of the facts, will he undertake to come to the Assembly better prepared for notified questions in future?

Answer

- (a) I am happy to release the report on the concrete degradation affecting Convent Court.
- (b) When dealing with capital projects of this nature, the Department does not solicit 'estimates'. The Department has carried out a number of high-rise refurbishments over the years and is currently preparing tender documents in respect of The Cedars. This knowledge, together with the known requirements of a revamped Convent Court, to meet the needs of demographic change, highlight the need to spend in the region of £4.5 and £5 million on refurbishing this 'tired' building. However the Property Plan is aiming to achieve so much more with an imaginative use of the site so as to improve the lives of existing tenants and those also living in the surrounding area. The future for States Tenants is now so bright it is hard to understand why some wish to look for negativity, when none exists.
- (c) I am always well prepared when I attend the States Chamber. When the future for States Tenants is so bright, it is regrettable that I have to divert my time and attention to answering questions immersed in negativity.

Question 2

- (a) Does the Minister concur with the conclusion reached by the Public Accounts Committee (PAC) in paragraph 52 of the report PAC1/2007 on the States Property Plan that "The Committee agrees with Mr. Ogley and Mr. Le Ruez that, as a matter of principle, the proceeds of the sale of capital assets should not be used to meet revenue expenditure"?
- (b) If he does not agree, will he state his reasons and, if he does, will the Minister state why the plans outlined in P6/2007 of the Social Housing Property Plan do not follow this principle?

Answer

- (a) It may be helpful to Deputy Southern if he checked with Mr Ogley & Mr Le Ruez as to their actual comments and the important point they were making.
- (b) The Housing Department's Property Plan is not using the proceeds from the sale of capital assets to meet revenue expenditure. The Department is investing money in an extensive refurbishment programme planned maintenance and where appropriate, sheltered housing acquisitions, to protect and enhance assets

for the Public of this Island. That is an intelligent and strategic use of a property portfolio.