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States of Jersey
States Assembly



États de Jersey
Assemblée des États

Environment, Housing and Infrastructure

Scrutiny Panel

Quarterly Hearing

Witness: The Minister for Housing

Thursday, 18th December 2025

Panel:

Deputy H.L. Jeune of St. John, St. Lawrence and Trinity (Chair)

Deputy T.A. Coles of St. Helier South (Vice-Chair)

Connétable D. Johnson of St. Mary

Witnesses:

Deputy S.Y. Mézec of St. Helier South, The Minister for Housing

Ms. N. Day, Head of Strategic Housing and Regeneration

Mr. J. Norris, Policy Principal, Strategic Housing and Regeneration

Mr. T. Millar, Senior Housing Policy Officer, Strategic Housing and Regeneration

[13:31]

Deputy H.L. Jeune of St. John, St. Lawrence and Trinity (Chair):

Welcome to this public hearing of the Environment, Housing and Infrastructure Panel. Today is 18th December 2025 and this is our quarterly hearing with the Minister for Housing. I would like to draw everyone's attention to the following; this hearing will be filmed and streamed live. The recording and transcript will be published afterwards on the States Assembly website. Please ensure that all electronic devices, including mobile phones, can be switched to silent. We will do introductions. My

name is Deputy Hilary Jeune and I am the Chair of the Environment, Housing and Infrastructure Scrutiny Panel.

Deputy T.A. Coles of St. Helier South:

Deputy Tom Coles, Vice-Chair.

Connétable D. Johnson of St. Mary:

Constable David Johnson, panel member.

The Minister for Housing:

Deputy Sam Mézec, Minister for Housing.

Head of Strategic Housing and Regeneration:

Natasha Day, Head of Strategic Housing and Regeneration.

Policy Principal, Strategic Housing and Regeneration:

Jack Norris, Policy Principal, Strategic Housing and Regeneration.

Deputy H.L. Jeune:

We have Tim online.

Senior Housing Policy Officer, Strategic Housing and Regeneration:

Yes, Tim Millar, Senior Housing Policy Officer in the Strategic Housing team.

Deputy H.L. Jeune:

Fantastic, thank you. We will kick off, Minister, in response to an oral question on 25th November, oral question 263, you told the Assembly that you will shortly announce a pathway towards widening eligibility for under 25 year-olds. When will you be announcing this?

The Minister for Housing:

Tomorrow.

Deputy H.L. Jeune:

That is great news. Just asking, who has had sight of that and the details?

The Minister for Housing:

I think we have spoken to social housing providers. All being well once the Ts are crossed and Is dotted I will get a copy to you by close of play today as well and we will go public tomorrow.

Deputy H.L. Jeune:

Yes, has it been released to anybody else?

The Minister for Housing:

Not that I am aware of. The document itself is still having a few lines just checked and all the rest, yes.

Deputy H.L. Jeune:

Okay. It is strictly embargoed and it has not been seen by anybody else.

The Minister for Housing:

I have given a couple of people a heads-up but the full document itself, no, no.

Deputy H.L. Jeune:

We were under the impression that there are some people who have received this document.

The Minister for Housing:

A section of it I have shared with a journalist in conversation but it has gone no further than that but not the whole document, no.

Deputy H.L. Jeune:

No further, okay. Why did you decide to release it the day after the Scrutiny hearing?

The Minister for Housing:

Tomorrow is simultaneously the earliest and latest that we can do it without delaying until a period into January, which would be a shame. Because once it is finalised and we can do it tomorrow, we can then communicate that out and let people know what is coming so they can begin preparing applications and that kind of thing, if that is what they want to do.

Deputy H.L. Jeune:

It could not have been done this morning, for example, so we could have seen a copy and we could have talked about it now?

The Minister for Housing:

Yes, indeed, that is awkward but tomorrow the document itself ... we are getting a final version sorted and I will give you a copy of that by the close of play and then release tomorrow but tomorrow is the earliest and latest we can do it without delaying until halfway through January.

Deputy H.L. Jeune:

No, because it is a shame.

The Minister for Housing:

Yes, I accept that.

Deputy H.L. Jeune:

Because for us obviously we cannot scrutinise you until the next quarterly hearing. Of course individually we can in a States sitting but, as a collective, we cannot scrutinise you until the next hearing, which will be our last hearing I believe, which is a shame. But is there something that you can tell us about what will be in this?

The Minister for Housing:

Yes. I have made no secret of the fact that I have wanted to lower the age criterion for social housing and get that towards 18. This will include how we are going to do that.

Deputy H.L. Jeune:

Could you tell us anything about those steps to get to 18?

The Minister for Housing:

It will be one step and it will be very soon.

Deputy H.L. Jeune:

Okay. You said before and during those discussions that you require consultation with housing providers, with what you have just answered, have you already done that consultation and so, therefore, there does not need to be any consultation; it will just happen?

The Minister for Housing:

Yes, it will just happen. To be frank, the social housing providers are often pushing me to go further and faster on this. They are very keen to see eligibility widen.

Deputy H.L. Jeune:

Okay. I think we have talked about it before but it would be useful to understand the workings that you have ... obviously there is the aspiration to make it lower but maybe there needs to be some evidence to ensure that it is done in the right way and that it will not affect things in certain ways. I have asked you this before in the States Chamber but would there be housing available when you

are lowering the eligibility, the type of units available for young people to be able to use straightaway?

The Minister for Housing:

Not straightaway because they will go on the list alongside everybody else. That list will no longer exclude people on the basis of age once they reach adulthood. They will be in the same boat as other applicants at that point. But it is because of Andium's success in delivering new homes that we feel we can do this without overwhelming the waiting list and by opening eligibility making everybody's time on the list longer. We did experience when lowering it down to 25, as it is now, that there have been some applications but it has not been a mass uncontrollable queue of people for that service. We think because of the extra supply from Andium and our experience so far, it will not be massive numbers of people wanting that. But now for those who may have been, whether that ends up being a handful or what have you, will now have that option.

Deputy T.A. Coles:

Do you hold data on the current availability within the social housing providers?

The Minister for Housing:

It is constantly a moving target. Homes become available at any moment, so there is ...

Deputy T.A. Coles:

But do you get any reporting back from them in any way, shape or form to say Jersey Homes Trust currently has X number of one-beds, X number of 2-beds, Andium has X number of one-beds, X number of 2-beds?

The Minister for Housing:

In their stock entirely or free?

Deputy T.A. Coles:

I know you say it is a moving target but obviously there might be a reporting deadline that says you do it once a quarter; by date on quarter X it is this.

The Minister for Housing:

Yes, they are constantly trying to get people filled into their properties. They do not like them being empty for particularly long. That kind of quarterly thing would not be very useful.

Deputy T.A. Coles:

But it is to have that understanding whether or not you are going to exacerbate a problem by lowering the age down to 18. Because one would assume that 18 to 25 is going to be predominantly one-bedroom or one-person occupancy accommodation. To understand that you are not going to overwhelm or you are going to have this other knock-on effect elsewhere is understanding that level of availability.

The Minister for Housing:

We will track on our side in Gateway the flow of people so we can get a feel for over a given length of time how many moves were there and a move happens because a home is made available. But asking providers to give quarterly updates of this is what is currently available just would not be useful to us. But we can track trends from our data for how many people are moving and where they are going from and to.

Deputy H.L. Jeune:

Maybe for the public who are listening as well and for those 18 to 25 year-olds, of course this is a new experience to be able to go to Andium to be able to sign up on the Gateway. What is their average waiting time and how soon would they feel that they think I will be able to get into accommodation?

The Minister for Housing:

Yes, it is all dependent on lots of circumstances, including what band they go into. If somebody presents themselves and they meet the basic criteria but there are not particular extra needs, then they could end up waiting a while because they would be allocated on to band 3, whereas a more urgent case would be quicker. But then that might also depend on whether they have any other additional needs beyond just a home, you know, a home of a particular type or a home with particular elements to it that are necessary for them to live in. Yes, it depends on a lot.

Deputy H.L. Jeune:

Of course we have talked a lot to the Chief Minister also, and yourself, about the fact that the greatest challenge facing Jersey is young people being able to afford to live here and to stay here and to build a future here. What kind of extent are the risks for young people leaving the Island informing these policy decision priorities?

The Minister for Housing:

It keeps me up at night. That it is something I am constantly told by young people, whether that is teenagers who have not finished their studies yet when I speak to them in school or people who stop me in the pub want to talk about it. It is a huge consideration.

Deputy H.L. Jeune:

I suppose it sits within a wider policy package, different packages of trying to help support youngsters staying in Jersey. But has there been any modelling done to see how much of an impact this would be?

The Minister for Housing:

I am not sure of that.

Head of Strategic Housing and Regeneration:

It is impossible to model because of individual circumstances and drivers. I think in the broader sense we are very carefully widening access and that is for everybody. Because whether you are under the age of 25 or over the age of 25, what really matters is your living situation and how exposed you might be to the risk of homelessness. That is always going to be, I think, the principal driver for how we allocate social housing units. I think part of the reason why we take a stepwise approach to managing access to social housing because it is really difficult to predict the level of demand that it might generate. We know that from the changes the stepwise approach from taking it down from the older ages down to 25, we had no idea how much additional demand that would generate. What we learnt was it did not generate a huge amount of additional demand, which has allowed us to take this. But incremental change is the only way we can really mitigate the risk of there being a surge in demand. We will be actively monitoring the number of new applications, as we have done every single step of the way. New applications by the age-band difference so that we can track if it is an unmanageable or unexpected level of demand that it ...

Deputy H.L. Jeune:

I suppose the crunch is if there is not a demand, then this is not the solution. There has got to be something else that needs to ... when we are talking about trying to ensure that young people want to stay in Jersey and feel there is a future here, if it is not this and the demand is not high, what else are you looking at? Is it something else that will keep them here?

The Minister for Housing:

Jobs and fun would probably help. But, unfortunately, I am not the Minister for Fun yet. It is the whole package of living in Jersey but anecdotally it is the number one thing that people do raise with me, that they compare cost of housing themselves in Jersey to cost of housing themselves even in the U.K. (United Kingdom) and the price differential is so great that in lots of people's minds that differential makes it worth it to go and live somewhere which, in many other respects, is not as attractive as Jersey. All we can do is try to reduce that differential and hope that it inspires people to think, yes, Jersey is our best chance.

Deputy H.L. Jeune:

Although we do not have very much details about what you are going to announce tomorrow but you have basically said there is one step which we assume will be reducing it to 18.

The Minister for Housing:

Yes.

Deputy H.L. Jeune:

What kind of communication and roll out will happen to help ensure to ... I know it is the managing the demand but even to starting encouraging those that could, potentially, be on the Gateway to come forward.

The Minister for Housing:

Yes. We had a campaign this year advertising social housing. We have posters up around town. Was there one on a bus I think as well or something like that as well? We are going to have a look at what we might do next year around that as well. But we did that campaign last year and we will have a think about how we might follow that up.

Deputy H.L. Jeune:

Yes, thank you. We look forward to reading the documents tomorrow, Minister, and then we may follow up with things before our next quarterly hearing. We are now moving on to the First Step. At the last quarterly hearing you said that the pause in the First Step would give you a breathing space to evaluate whether the scheme had the impact you expected or hoped for and to consider what changes might be needed for any future iteration.

[13:45]

Can you set out what evaluation work has been taken since and what data has been analysed, what questions that you are seeking to answer so that we can see some progress?

The Minister for Housing:

There is not a huge amount on that because it is not urgent and even if we did fast track and do that quickly we would not be in a position to then go ahead and launch another round of First Step, because that is probably going to have to wait for the budget next year to get funding to enable that. But Jack can refer to some of the looking that he has done; he has been on top of the stats on that.

Policy Principal, Strategic Housing and Regeneration:

At a very basic level we keep monitoring of what is coming through, so that being through the tranches 1 to 3. At the moment we are seeing the tranche 4 coming through and that should be completed by the end of January, looking at the numbers of applicants, the average loans that they are receiving. Basic data from the scheme; types of properties, household composition, so that gives us an idea of who the scheme is helping. It is another piece to do to look at the policy objectives around the scheme that we set at the beginning, so that is getting people into homeownership. That was at the time getting chains moving because we were at a time when the property market was relatively slow so getting people to sell, so looking at that type of data. That is one piece that we have been looking at with colleagues in economics so you would get a better understanding of that. That is a piece that is being carried out at the moment and obviously we will put a timetable for that in due course once we are clear with the outcomes of tranche 4.

Deputy H.L. Jeune:

Okay. Just to remind me, this is putting a proposal for the next Minister to put a proposal for the budget for 2027.

Policy Principal, Strategic Housing and Regeneration:

That is where they would go. It is to show the policy impact and to inform the future policy requirements if that was to go in the next budget. Then whichever funding source was to be found for that, then that would have helped to inform the consideration of whether it has had the policy impact that it intended and what sort of tweaks could be made to the scheme to ensure that it is effective, it is targeted correctly towards the right households.

Deputy H.L. Jeune:

Yes, thank you. Minister, we talked in the last hearing as well about the second step and that there were a lot of families, young families, who are having difficulty in that, not just the first step but that second step. You talked about exploring more information about that and what could be developed in that area. Could you provide some details about how you have looked into that and what mechanism there could be for that?

The Minister for Housing:

We have already done some things specifically designed for people to make that second step in regard to maintaining their access to first-time buyer products and systems. Homebuy you can access if you are a second-time buyer, as long as you have reapplied for first-time buyer status and that does come with conditions. The main one being that they should sell their old home to a first-time buyers, so we are not losing out on stock that we want to keep for that benefit, for more people than just one family as they go up. We have made that easier for people. I think it is probably not as well-known as it ought to be. I am frequently getting people get in contact because they only

vaguely heard about it or had had no awareness until someone suggested they ask or people even write to me presuming that they cannot do it and I have to correct them and say: “No, you can and here is the process for that.” There is probably some communication work to be done on what we have already done to enable those pathways to open. Homebuy is a good example of that when we in the next few years will have more family-sized homes becoming available. Not everyone is in a position to go straight into homeownership to a 3-bed family-sized home. Some people will start off in a small flat and it is important that those people realise that they are not discounted from those bigger homes that we will be building over the next couple years because they started off buying a smaller flat.

Deputy H.L. Jeune:

In that sense I am just getting to understand ... yes, somebody who has bought, a first-time buyer, maybe a flat and is now in a family and wants to move to a home and so is able to then utilise that. It is that home within the first-time buyer sphere, so still within the Andium setting, rather than, potentially, like First Step, which is in the private market as well.

The Minister for Housing:

There are open-market homes with first-time buyer restrictions on and this counts for that as well, and obviously they tend to be a bit cheaper than ones that do not have those restrictions on. They would not have to go through a scheme like Andium. I frequently get this, people come to me and say: “We are looking to upsize. We have found a home being advertised. We love it, that would be perfect for us but it is first-time buyer restricted, what can we do?” I get to say: “You can fill in this form and you can get that back.” There are homes out there that have those restrictions and this counts for that as well.

Deputy H.L. Jeune:

Okay. The support that is for them in this, it is funding as well I suppose. Where does that budget sit in ...

The Minister for Housing:

For the open-market homes that is not a funded thing. It is just they get the benefit of accessing homes that because of their restrictions are probably a bit cheaper than they otherwise would be. But they would still have to get the mortgage and use their capital from the sale of the first home but that is an option that they have. Andium Homebuy, obviously they have a reduced price through their shared equity scheme and that counts whoever is buying that home.

Deputy H.L. Jeune:

Thank you. Thank you, Minister. Connétable.

The Connétable of St. Mary:

Okay, yes. Following on from the questions raised, my general theme is housing strategy. Despite numerous Government housing strategies over the years, Jersey now faces, as we have just said, one of its most acute housing crisis with rise of living costs, worsening affordability and young people reporting that they no longer see a future here and, again, we have touched on this. In this context, what do you see as the essential strategic direction Jersey now needs for housing and how should the next Minister build or depart from the work of this term? Yes, a general question I know but ...

The Minister for Housing:

Yes. It is hard to pin down on what is the strategy, where it sits and what it means, and also whether it is any use? Because we see time and time again strategies are released to a great fanfare, put on a shelf and then we never hear about them again. I can remember at the time, not the last Island Plan but the one before, that a big part of the housing strategy was about getting private developments to contribute for affordable housing through a percentage scheme and that never happened in that phase of the Island Plan. That part of the strategy was absolutely no good to anyone at all. From my part as Minister, it has not been about redoing those exercises that we frequently see Governments do and putting loads of effort and time into producing a glossy document. But instead focusing on the tangibles, the stuff that we do not need to spend years and pay consultants a fortune to tell us it is the right thing to do. We know that providing more family-sized homes through Andium schemes is going to have a positive effect. There is lots of work that goes on in the background and I am planning stuff to forecast the numbers that might be needed in all of that. But we do that irrespective of the rest of the strategy. A new Residential Tenancy Law is obviously going to improve conditions for renters. I do not need to do a big exercise and come up with a document on that.

The Connétable of St. Mary:

I think we will have questions on that later.

The Minister for Housing:

Yes. It is not how I have operated as a Minister to expend lots of energy on documents that may well end up playing no role in future in determining what policies we pursue. I have instead chosen to focus on the key things that were in my manifesto that I committed to because I believed that they would have a tangible impact and I still believe that, and think for the time I have had as Minister for Housing was the most productive thing I could have done.

Deputy H.L. Jeune:

Do you think for a Minister for Housing to do their job with all the things that you were talking about, that there needs to be a more solid population policy and strategy so that the Minister for Housing would know ... you are saying build houses, family homes but how many, where, for how long? These are all these questions that still need to be answered and not just for a political term of 4 years but it needs to be longer.

The Minister for Housing:

That would always be a business-as-usual thing and I think as a piece of work is not dependent on what other political priorities of a particular Minister are. That Minister should expect that that is already happening and already part of the process, which, because of Island Plan stuff, has been the case for me.

The Connétable of St. Mary:

Yes, partly feeding off the Chair's question, what I was trying to get at is the setting in a foundation for a long-term policy. You have said that certain policies are going nowhere. Are you saying that within your role that is difficult to provide or determine of a Minister for Housing generally?

The Minister for Housing:

My manifesto has provided my agenda for my term of office and I think that is why we have been as effective as we have in getting stuff done. Honestly, I think if we went out and did the kind of work that you see occasionally come up from time to time in Jersey politics, I think the effort expended on it for the results it would garner would not be worth it.

The Connétable of St. Mary:

All right. You are setting a scene for a longer-term policy. You do not really think it is - and that is not a personal comment - beyond your role in a way.

The Minister for Housing:

Being blunt that would be manifesto territory for me, not expending lots of Ministerial effort. I think that is the kind of thing that politicians ought to be doing as part of their electoral engagement with the public and what they are proposing to be their work programme when they are elected. I think that is the most effective way of getting things moving in the right direction.

Deputy H.L. Jeune:

You think housing is a political issue, rather than, say, like the capital projects which would sit in Investing in Jersey, which is trying to shed itself of that political sheen and so have a bit more of that long term? Are you saying, Minister, that housing is a political issue rather than a ...

The Minister for Housing:

To be fair and when I have heard the Chief Minister speaking about this, I think that he, with the Investing in Jersey programme and the whole Capital Investment Fund, is not saying that that process is about making everything for ever more non-political. He does still say that there will be political priorities within that. It is just that format of delivering on key capital projects, having it in its own fund and not tied into the budget process, like we have just had last year, that has a lot of capital stuff in it, that we see from year to year turns out to be a work of fiction because stuff changes. I think it is more about aligning that in a different practical way for delivery, rather than the one that we currently have that has issues with it. But it is not about making that non-political because any Government does have the right to propose drastically changing what capital projects they want to see coming up.

Deputy H.L. Jeune:

I agree, that is what I have been asking questions on for a while now and that is a particular one.

The Connétable of St. Mary:

Yes, and a particular aspect of this policy relates to empty residential properties, which has been going around for some time. The result of your amendment to our amendment ended up: "By ensuring that resources are made available to progress the work stream regarding empty residential orders should it be required." You then say to join the debate that: "It is our judgment that in this moment in time that we will be able to begin some form of that work next year without leading to disrupt much else." Could you expand on that, please?

The Minister for Housing:

Things are going pretty well at the moment in terms of the big things that I have been trying to achieve for my term of office. The Residential Tenancy Law is going on track and I am really pleased with the progress on that. There is the review of the social housing rent system; I had a briefing on it earlier today. I am really, really pleased with how all of that is going. Because of that I think next year being a weird year because there is going to be a proportion of the year where there is not active political Government because the election will be taking place and then the formation of a new Government and that new Government being able, if it wants to, to completely reset everything, then it is possible to do at least the early stages of work on developing mechanisms for getting empty homes back into use.

[14:00]

That may well lead to saying we need some more resourcing and more whatever to make that a reality. But the early stage of it, which my successor may choose to cancel and not go ahead with

or may choose to ignore any recommendations or advice that come from that, we can go ahead with that part of it and manage that accordingly. But I do not rule out needing to come back for more, depending on where all of that lands.

The Connétable of St. Mary:

We are not quite sure what that part means. The idea is to make available resources should they be required. Are you saying they are required and what steps could be taken?

The Minister for Housing:

It depends entirely on what we decide we want to do, because there are lots of different mechanisms you can choose to try to bring empty homes back into use. They are not all the same and they are not all targeting the same homes that may be empty for very different reasons.

The Connétable of St. Mary:

In your 6 months I am thinking about here, what would you do before the next Government takes over?

The Minister for Housing:

I think it would be helpful to have a better understanding of what empty dwelling management orders might look like in Jersey; that is something that exists in other places. To my awareness anyway it is not something we have had a massive look at in Jersey because a lot of our dialogue has been focused on empty property tax instead. Those are 2 completely different mechanisms that would probably target completely different types of homes there. But I am interested as to what that could look like. But that thinking is absolutely at a very early stage. But if it came back and said, here is how it could work in Jersey, how does that sound? I thought it sounded good or my successor thought it sounded good, at that point depending on how big a piece of work to enact it would be, then we might have to think about, right, do we need to bring in some help on this because it is not something Jersey has had in that way before?

The Connétable of St. Mary:

All right, thank you. You did earlier this year state that: "The tax on empty properties could not be progressed due to budgetary constraints", which is what we are referring to. Do you believe that not progressing or perhaps prioritising policy on empty homes demonstrates too much focus on other short-term solutions?

The Minister for Housing:

No, because the solutions I have spent my time on have been productive and have been right and have, and are, and will be making a difference to people, so that has been a good use of my time.

But, again, empty property tax, that can manifest itself in all sorts of different ways as well. At this moment in time it is not obvious what could be the most effective mechanism for Jersey, bearing in mind our tax system is unique, compared to other places with a similar problem.

The Connétable of St. Mary:

In more general terms, are we wasting our time pursuing this idea of taxing empty homes? I know the starting point was a census of some years ago which perhaps overinflated the number of homes and they can be empty for various reasons. Do you think there is a major problem regarding empty properties?

The Minister for Housing:

It is a weird one because if you introduced an empty property tax you would want to get no money from it. But you cannot introduce a tax without the idea that it would bring money in. It would be a weird one. I think as time has gone on ... in the early days I thought that a tax would be a really good solution. Because of everything you have just said, as I have contemplated it more, I have come to the view that while it might be a useful tool to have and should not rule it out ...

The Connétable of St. Mary:

Leverage.

The Minister for Housing:

... are there ones that in a shorter period of time would bring more homes back into use? I think empty dwelling management orders might be a better one to bet on in that situation but I do not know for definite. That is why we would have to have at least a bit of time of thinking on that before deciding or committing if there was a particular route we were going to go down.

Deputy H.L. Jeune:

Yes, the last time we spoke was obviously the budget hearing and we talked about your work plan for 2026 and work on empty homes because we obviously had heard from the Youth Assembly that this was something that they wanted to do or they thought that was very important for Government to do. But you pushed back and said you did not have the time. What I am hearing now, Minister, is you are saying since then you have assessed or what was it that made you change your mind?

The Minister for Housing:

Things are going really well, I would say that, would I not? But I do feel like the progress that we have made on the things that have been my top priorities have been going well and I am feeling a degree of confidence in some of that that I was not necessarily feeling at various points of last year, so that helps. My officers gave me very good advice on that as well and they are, ultimately, the

ones who have to put in the really hard work on a lot of that thinking and they helped give me confidence in that regard as well.

The Connétable of St. Mary:

Yes, moving on to a different area, which is right-sizing and I have got a few detailed questions here but I am sure you can help me. Can you please describe how you are feeding into decisions taken about property right-sizing in Jersey, to the extent you are doing it yourself, including any decisions taken by property developers about the nature and extent of right-sizing for new developments?

The Minister for Housing:

Developers in particular when they are looking at rezoned sites, there is quite a bit of that going on at the moment and sometimes they want to include a handful of homes within that for the purpose of right-sizing. As Minister, I would submit comments for that planning application and frequently they will proactively come and approach us anyway for words of advice on that and to get an understanding from us about what the expectations are and how that works. Natasha would be a part of that, if there is anything ...

Head of Strategic Housing and Regeneration:

Guided really by the policies of the Island Plan, which are reflected in the Minister's right-sizing policy, there is different reasons why we would influence decisions on right-sizing homes. Part of that is just making sure it has a good mix of homes that builds a sustainable community that allows people to right-size. It could also be driven more actively about a conscious effort to move people into smaller homes within a community by providing these options. Because there are some parishes that are particularly focused on giving their older parishioners more choices within the parish, which will then bring some younger families in to the large properties. Sometimes we are engaging because there is an active desire to provide that type. Other times we are providing advice to make sure that there is a good sustainable mix of homes that enable the right-sizing to happen.

The Connétable of St. Mary:

Can I ask about the impact to the right-sizing policy across the 3 areas, which you have touched on already? Right-sizing and rezoned housing sites, right-sizing in social housing and right-sizing in the open market, has there been much impact in what you have done so far?

The Minister for Housing:

Good question, I will have to think about that.

The Connétable of St. Mary:

Right-sizing is a difficult thing to encourage.

The Minister for Housing:

Yes, but also the things that I think we have just been talking about. You mentioned the right-sizing in social housing, for example, we have worked with social housing providers to find their own right-sizing policies. I have not yet asked them for an update as to whether they regard in their portfolios that has led to any substantial movement. I should probably ask them that to find out. The rezoned sites, we do have developers approaching us wanting to talk about that. That may well be as a result of the lights being shone on it because of it being raised as a political issue and then the policy being developed. Yes, but that is still relatively early days; it takes a while to build a home ...

The Connétable of St. Mary:

Given the impact, or perhaps not such an impact so far, do you see an area for incentives having to be introduced to make sure people do right-size or encourage them to right-size?

The Minister for Housing:

Indeed, which is why I found it extremely helpful when a certain Deputy in the budget brought an amendment on that and that helps with our conversation on that at Council of Ministers, because there were other Ministers who do not have direct responsibility for this area but understood that it was an important issue and that amendment has helped us on our way with that. The Government next year will have to look at, within the stamp duty system at least, what that incentive might look like. Does it come with strings attached and that kind of thing? All of that we will need to do because of that.

Deputy H.L. Jeune:

Moving on to some of the Residential Tenancy Law and some of the positive movement that you were just talking about, Minister, how do you expect the implementation of the R.T.L. (Residential Tenancy Law) as amended to affect rental market, particularly supply, standards and affordability? Are you seeing any changes now? Are you seeing some things, even though it has not been implemented yet?

The Minister for Housing:

No. I see a bit of hot air every now and then. But in terms of seeing things happen, no. I am not sure how we would identify that anyway.

Deputy H.L. Jeune:

In your discussions maybe with landlords and do you see that landlords are starting to maybe do some behaviour-changing that will lead to being easier to implement once the R.T.L. has come into force, some of the things that has been set for them to do?

The Minister for Housing:

I have seen a little bit of questioning from landlords - and this is purely anecdotally - who had an awareness that changes were going through but not necessarily an awareness of the commencement of all of that, who have asked questions because they are trying to be careful. That is a good thing for them to do that and we can give advice accordingly on that. That is a positive sign that people are trying to be careful with that. My team have engaged with the Landlords' Association because they are doing their own guidance for their members on this and my team have worked with them on that. Again, that is a sign of wanting to get things right and be careful with it.

Deputy H.L. Jeune:

In your recent response to the panel's letter regarding the implementation of the R.T.L., you state that: "The removal of the officer attendance requirement for serious or repeated nuisance does not leave us in a bad place" and that you will monitor its use. What kind of monitoring system are you envisaging that will be set up and how to identify if it is being misused or the kind of data? Has that been thought through?

The Minister for Housing:

That is one for Tim or Natasha.

Senior Housing Policy Officer, Strategic Housing and Regeneration:

I do not think we have got a systemised idea in place; that is not what we have been focusing on. But we would be able to hear things and certainly the Minister could hear things anecdotally. We could also work closely with colleagues and regulation standards. We would be getting much more potential tenants' complaints if they felt that this was not working for them. We would expect to hear that. But in terms of having a monitoring or early warning system, not as yet.

Deputy H.L. Jeune:

Okay. No, thank you. In your response to our report you indicated that quite a lot of actions on our recommendations should be done by quarter 2 of 2026. I was just wondering if there was any updates on any of those or we have to leave them until our last quarterly hearing.

Head of Strategic Housing and Regeneration:

You might be unsurprised to note that quarter 2 represents the beginning of the pre-election period. This whole time I think the Minister has been quite open that we are working very hard within a constrained timescale to get the law activated and switched on. We are still working to these timescales but that is why many of your recommendations will become addressed when we enact the legislation. The guidance being available, the communication, standard tenancy agreements,

all these sorts of things are actively being worked on and will be, yes, completed upon the switch on of the legislation.

Deputy H.L. Jeune:

You indicated in your letter recently to us about the target remains to try to get there before the pre-election period. I am hearing that that is really the aim but it also is dependent on the Judicial Greffier and the Tribunal Service. Do you have any contingency planning if this cannot be met, if this timetable cannot be met from other stakeholders?

The Minister for Housing:

The contingency will be a note on the desk to my successor saying: "Here is where we left you, please try and do it as quickly as possible." It can only be that, I suppose. But our conversations with the Judicial Greffier are going well. I met her on Tuesday I think and I am meeting someone from the Appointments Commission later today to talk about the recruitment for Tribunal members. But that is the key part, if we cannot get that in time for purdah, then that would probably end that prospect of having it commence before the election. But with a good wind behind us we should be okay.

Deputy H.L. Jeune:

You talked, Minister, about the guidance that we suggested in our recommendations but also that the Landlords' Association is developing guidance with the support of your officers. How soon will that guidance be in place in the sense of is there a good lead up towards the enactment of the law? Because of course, again, it is making sure that everyone is prepared ahead of anything that happens.

Head of Strategic Housing and Regeneration:

The challenging part is getting the synchronisation of all of the things that need to happen at the same time.

[14:15]

While we are working really hard, as the Minister highlighted, the main aim at the moment is progressing the appointment of Tribunal members because we do not want to be enacting the law until the Tribunal is ready to be in place. But the sequence of events is that Tribunal members have to be appointed by the Assembly; that gives us a minimum lodging date. We do not want to start making communications too far in advance of that lodging date or too late. We are currently discussing with the Greffier almost like a roadmap plan of how we can make that sequence of events as effective as possible. But the key conversation that we had with the team this week is, when do

we start communicating with Islanders to make sure that they have adequate notice to prepare themselves for a transition to the law? Because we have to begin these communications before the transition begins because some people will be immediately impacted by the change in legislation. It is very, very challenging when you are not able to pin that date down, when you are working quite close to the deadline of the last lodging date. But as soon as we have settled on when that date may be, I think we would be very happy to let you know and share the information that we would be expecting. But we are looking at all the items that you said identified in your recommendations, like the transition guidance, standard model tenancy agreement, all of these things are actively being worked on; progress simultaneously so we have a pack ready to go as soon as we are confident on a go-live date. We do not want to pre-empt that and then Islanders become confused because suddenly we are not switching the law on that date. It is really important we do not confuse Islanders by being a bit too eager.

Deputy H.L. Jeune:

With all that that you are juggling at the moment is the data collection mechanism under development as well? Or can that be a bit later or does that have to be pretty much at the same time because it is ...

Head of Strategic Housing and Regeneration:

I think we have mentioned previously, we do not see it as a structural component of the legislation. The Tribunal will be able to function without that mechanism being in place and indeed, it will take a long time ... a reasonable time for the data to start filtering through anyway. So we are developing it simultaneously so we are, I would like to say, highly efficient in the team that when we progress a piece of work on the rent tribunal element, that goes to the Judicial Greffe, we then have a moment of "what next?" so we pick up the thing that is able to be progressed by us while we are waiting for something else to come in. So we are constantly moving forward and picking up the rents data part as we go. So that is absolutely making progress but our focus really does have to be on the essential components for the law to be switched on.

Deputy H.L. Jeune:

Thank you. Deputy Coles.

Deputy T.A. Coles:

Thank you. This area we are going to concentrate on the homelessness strategy and to begin with, Minister, I am going to ask you to cast your mind back to August last year. You set out a number of actions to be completed by yourself in the homelessness cluster in delivering the homelessness strategy. These included: discuss priority routes for women and families experiencing domestic violence, create a complex needs panel, review homelessness data collection across Government

and partner organisations, raise awareness of homelessness in Jersey on world homelessness day in schools, focus on support for care leavers and those with care experience, raise awareness of the Housing Advice Service and ensure that they have appropriate level of support, and provide individuals with a holistic pathway and mental health support. Can you provide an update on the status of these work streams?

The Minister for Housing:

So we will be providing a comprehensive update on that probably in the New Year. Jack has helpfully drafted something on that that I am in the process of reviewing. I am just trying to remember every one you have just listed. There are a few in there that I can recall us having done things along the way. You mentioned supporting those who have faced violence against women and girls. I think we have developed a really good relationship with Freeda, for example, and there has been a couple of things that we have done behind the scenes that have been helpful. There is one that is coming tomorrow. That will be helpful for them as well. What were the others? Marking World Homelessness Day, something did happen on that.

Deputy H.L. Jeune:

In schools.

The Minister for Housing:

In schools. I cannot remember about schools. It was a while ago now but there was something and I think we launched the data as well on that and the data was part of what you have mentioned as well. We have done a few sets of those reports, 3 or 4 now, is it?

Policy Principal, Strategic Housing and Regeneration:

Yes, so, at quarter 2. Quarter 3 will be coming out in the New Year.

Deputy T.A. Coles:

You also I think said in one of our previous panels about changing your data collection methods.

The Minister for Housing:

Yes.

Deputy T.A. Coles:

Has that been completed now and are you finding it more useful data rather than where you were having multiple sources but not necessarily being able to identify the individuals they are referring to each time?

The Minister for Housing:

Yes, that has been getting better as we have been going along.

Policy Principal, Strategic Housing and Regeneration:

Data, I think we are up into over a year now and there is still a piece to refine the data to make sure that we are collecting the right information, of getting used to that process with providers, with the Housing Advice Service so I think that that is starting to ... the reports are getting better, easier to compile each quarter. Providers are more aware and better positioned to complete those reports. There is learning we can do. We probably need to understand, are we collecting the right data? What is it that is missing? That is something I certainly think that once we have got the last quarter 2025 out there that will be something we need to do, looking at the frequency of reporting. Obviously it is an administrative process for providers ensuring that it is not taking too much of their time and so on. So there are things we can be looking at in terms of that data but I think given it has not been in place for a long, long time yet but it has proven very helpful for policy developments and it is drawing a lot of awareness. It does get picked up by the news outlets when it is published so it is raising awareness in itself. I think it is a good thing. But there is more we can be doing to look at what that data is telling us and whether it is the right format and so on.

Deputy T.A. Coles:

Okay. In response to the panel's letter dated 20th February 2025 you stated that there has been no uptakes among Jersey Landlord Association members of the supporting sustainable tenancy schemes due in part to the availability of suitable properties. Could you confirm whether any uptake has occurred and, if not, what steps have been taken to encourage participation or address identified barriers?

The Minister for Housing:

I do not know if any one of us would know that. Heather would normally lead on that.

Policy Principal, Strategic Housing and Regeneration:

So, the Housing Advice Service I think the supporting successful tenancies is an ambition that we have had discussions with the Jersey Landlord Association with and also with the Jersey Estate Agents' Association as well about making sure that the private sector is able to support households who are homeless or at risk of homelessness and we have had very good discussions. There is support for that and I think rather than there being ... because the Housing Advice Service has a lot of priorities to do, and you listed some of those in terms of providing holistic support, the private sector support has perhaps not been rolled out on the scale that we might have envisaged at the beginning, but certainly there are relationships there where the Housing Advice Service will draw on the Landlord Association or the estate agents or individual agents to secure accommodation and

ensure that support is in place for individuals who are at risk of homelessness. So I would say that that is more on a case by case bespoke arrangement. But looking at that I think that that is still an ambition to have a private sector offer which the housing can draw on, because any accommodation we can source, bespoke accommodations which may not be readily available in social housing or might be available in private sector, it is always good to have on hand and provide solutions for individuals like that.

Deputy T.A. Coles:

So you have mentioned the Housing Advice Service on a number of occasions within the last couple of answers. Are you able to provide an update on the resource project to enhance the Housing Advice Service? Particularly the development of structured referral procedures, personalised housing plans and the training engagement programme. Obviously this also encompasses some of the work that they will also be required to do within the Residential Tenancy Law.

Policy Principal, Strategic Housing and Regeneration:

In terms of the referral process, at the Housing Advice Service the focus at the moment is on their internal processes, so standard operating procedures which does include referral pathways, how they engage when an individual comes through the door and requires support, ensuring that they have a pathway through to identify their housing needs and then to wive them through to those options that might be available. So that is all a part of that project to enhance the services provided by the Housing Advice Service. Also, around communication, ensuring that they have proper outreach with agencies and providers. That is again a piece which has been a focus of this year. Making sure they just have the correct resources and making sure they are fully staffed, that there are case officers who are responsible for taking on some of these more complex cases. I think that the Minister spoke about setting out what has been achieved, but also the next steps. Strengthening the Housing Advice Service, making sure those referral pathways are clear is a key element of that for potentially the next Minister or the ongoing delivery of the homelessness strategy.

Deputy T.A. Coles:

Minister, are you confident that the Housing Advice Service is adequately resourced and budgeted to ensure that it can keep delivering?

The Minister for Housing:

Yes, definitely for the moment. If we widen our ambitions though then it may well need more. I know they have got a new staff member starting either in January or February so that is going to help as well but they have come on leaps and bounds in the last few years, which is great.

Head of Strategic Housing and Regeneration:

It might be worth just clarifying because I heard the mention of Residential Tenancy Law. With regard to your recommendations, that was one that we only partially accepted. I think that you had recommended that they be the point of contact for all tenancy matters. At the moment it is the Housing and Nuisance team that provides that direct support. I think the Minister was clear about, yes, it is great to have that ambition to think about the growth and role of the Housing Advice Service but at the moment, on specialist areas, it provides a front door to Government but it does not necessarily provide the service directly itself. So it is really important just to manage expectations. They are very focused on their existing commitments, managing the gateway, supporting through acute homeless cases and specialist requirements to that end, but not to the extent that it embraces all housing activity within Government. Although that is very much a conversation that I am sure the Minister would be keen to explore further.

Deputy T.A. Coles:

Okay. Following the most recent publication of the quarter 2 2025 Homelessness in Jersey report it appears that homelessness service usage in Jersey has risen quarter on quarter from 265 visits in Q3 2024 to 299 in Q4, then 321 in Q1 2025 and now 348 in Q2. What do you believe is driving this sustained upward trend?

The Minister for Housing:

It is hard to tell. Bearing in mind we did change some of how we collect statistics while that was going on and that would have contributed to the increasing numbers at the early on point in that. I do not know but the visibility of what we are doing might be part of that because whenever we have published one of these and we have reiterated to people, "Please come to us", we are in the best contact that we have probably ever been in with homelessness charities themselves so they ... I do not want to speak on their behalf but I hope that they feel that they have better confidence and comfort in working with Government than before. I hope anyway, and that means that we will get more things coming to us because of that. But if it is a sustained upward trend - which at this point we do not know if that is, it is only a short period of time we have been collecting the statistics - then I do not know what to attribute that to right now but I think we do need to probably wait a bit longer before working that out because there is obviously seasonal affects is going to be within some of that as well. So it would probably take us a bit longer to work that out.

Deputy T.A. Coles:

Obviously because homelessness is quite an important part and a risk to some individuals - and as you are saying you need to collect more data to make sure that you could translate that into concrete actions - how long data do you reckon you would need to get to that point where you could start making better informed decisions on policy objectives as well as how that will then translate into concrete actions which can see people getting out of homelessness?

The Minister for Housing:

Yes, again, I do not know but let us not waste time in the meantime. If there are things that emerge even from one report then it is worth pursuing and there have been very good conversations with homelessness providers that have led to action during the time that we have been doing this. We worked with Andium to help them acquire a small number of properties for cases where the rest of their stock would not have been appropriate. There has been a couple of tweaks to rules that have come about as a result of our engagement with Freeda, for example. So there is no point in sitting around waiting if stuff becomes apparent as we go along then it is senseless to not act on it when you hear it.

Deputy T.A. Coles:

Picking up on the point of Andium having not properties suitable within their stock for certain housing - obviously this could be a very specific case for very specific individual - how is that addressing then how you interact with people like Andium in their future development of their housing stock to make sure that maybe some of these are more available?

The Minister for Housing:

Personally I am a fan of whenever Andium decides to go into the private market and acquire homes.

[14:30]

There has been a few instances where they have taken action that has helped people who were facing homelessness. The purchase of Spencer Close, for example, was a good example of a community that were facing homelessness who had all been served notice and Andium swept in and just bought the whole lot and honoured all the tenancies for the people there. That is one thing they can do. If we had situations like that arise in future I would want Andium to be part of the conversation to see if that kind of thing was suitable again. But from their engagement with our team and others in Government about the odd case that comes up because somebody's life circumstances are just so unique that just offering them the keys to a standard one bedroom flat in a block of flats might not be the answer for them, they have been open minded and kept an eye out for if ... there are not many small one bedroom cottages around, for example, but every now and then that might be a lot more appropriate than a one bedroom flat in a block of flats, for example. So they have dipped their toe in the water on that and acquired a few in the private market with the agreement of myself and the Minister for Social Security to make sure that was sustainable for them. It seems like it has been successful so far. But if there are other opportunities to do that kind of thing and they identify that then I would want to be supportive of that.

Deputy T.A. Coles:

Another group who have challenges are obviously people who are leaving prison from H.M. (His Majesty's) Prison La Moye. In our last quarterly hearing you informed the panel that the Housing Advice Service is providing a weekly outreach. Can you provide an update on the nature, scale and outcomes of this work?

The Minister for Housing:

That would probably have been best placed to Heather McManus if she was here, unless anyone here feels they are able to ...

Policy Principal, Strategic Housing and Regeneration:

I am aware that that work is still going on but Heather would be in a better position to give you how that is practically working with the prison service.

The Minister for Housing:

So we can follow up on that if you would like us to.

Deputy T.A. Coles:

Yes, that would be good.

Deputy H.L. Jeune:

Yes, please.

Deputy T.A. Coles:

So, given that homelessness often involves overlapping issues such as health, safety, income and housing standards, can you provide an update on how the Housing Advice Service is co-ordinating with other departments to respond to these cases effectively? Do you consider the current level of cross-departmental working to be sufficient?

The Minister for Housing:

They are doing an extremely good job of that. I know I keep mentioning it but the team did not exist a few years ago so a lot of those relationships they have built up and they are probably still on that journey in order to do that. So I am satisfied with that work and the pace that it has gone on. There are other agencies that will obviously play a really important role that a Housing Advice Service itself would not be able to provide the answer to because for many homelessness cases it is not just the physical home that is the issue. There are other things going on as well and health can obviously be a big part of that, so the Housing Advice Service may be able to advocate for someone but they are not the one with direct line of responsibility for getting health treatment or that kind of thing. So

how they work with those departments, improve their awareness and help them develop their own duties and responsibilities is going to be an ongoing journey but that resource of those in the Housing Advice Service helps us to do that because they are so focused on that.

Deputy T.A. Coles:

Do you consider there has been sufficient public communication about the Government's work to address homelessness?

The Minister for Housing:

It is a difficult question and my answer would always be, we can always do more, so I do not know. A lot of what we are going to do is inevitably going to be behind the scenes though and a lot of it is the kind of thing that you are not necessarily going to shout about because it is about improving those relationships, getting better communication and bringing people around to find solutions. That is great when that happens but it is not necessarily the kind of thing that you would be shouting about every time.

Deputy T.A. Coles:

Can you provide an update on any recent actions and decisions arising from the meetings of the Housing Crisis Emergency Task Force?

The Minister for Housing:

More or less, everything. That meeting will always cover pretty much everything that is on my agenda at any given point, from how we tackle what is coming up in the States to policy stuff. So that forum can be used for various things that I will be doing as part of my agenda.

Deputy H.L. Jeune:

Minister, so it came up in the States Assembly recently and I believe we have also talked about it in the quarterly hearing about how many ... we have talked about homeless providers to help bridge and support people, but there are obviously a number of ... potentially of families and people who are being housed in hotels. Within this strategy, do you have an aim of trying to reduce the amount of time people are having to stay in hotels? Have you seen a reduction in the amount of time? Of course, I understand there may be a moment where there has to be utilisation of hotels for that step in between, but do you monitor the amount of time that people stay in hotels and is that reducing under this homeless strategy?

The Minister for Housing:

So the team will be able to cover that and if there is particular statistics you want I am sure we can find those but it is a slightly weird one because more time in hotels is not necessarily a sign of failure.

If somebody is in a really difficult and dire situation and a hotel is better for them than whatever situation they are in, the fact that we found them and enabled them to go into a hotel might be a sign of success, depending on that situation. Obviously the ultimate sign is then to get them into a permanent home afterwards.

Deputy H.L. Jeune:

That is what I meant.

The Minister for Housing:

But if we were somebody who we were not aware of and therefore were not in a hotel and that is not part of our statistic, the fact we found them and perhaps helped them get out of an unsafe situation and into a hotel might be a sign of success. That means the stats going up.

Deputy H.L. Jeune:

Absolutely. I meant more the next step in making them not be in a hotel but finding them that permanent location.

Head of Strategic Housing and Regeneration:

So around about this time last year there was what you could have seen as a bit of a peak in the number of Islanders residing in hotels and the Minister was in communication with the Minister for Social Security. He asked to make certain exceptions to provide the cover and payment to support those people. At an officer level we had almost like a sub-task force that we came together with Andium, providers and the Housing Advice Service policy officers and we went through the individual cases to say, okay, what is driving this person's current stay in the hotel and what can we do to move them on? From that we learnt that about half a dozen were particularly challenging to house and there were not active solutions. That then led to this acute housing need so it was from that work that we did that we identified we need a really bespoke solution for these individuals and we got on with that and we delivered that in partnership with Andium. There was about half a dozen people that we realised they really do not need to be in a hotel, we just need to work more closely with Andium to get the right support around that person and then off they went into a tenancy. Then there were some people in between that were more transitional in nature that we did realise this is just a temporary solution that is right for them right now and they will be moving into suitable accommodation soon. So I think you will naturally have the opportunity to clear those numbers down. With time they might build back up again and then we will clear them back down. But we are in regular communication with the Housing Advice Service, the Minister, with his Ministerial colleagues to monitor this so it is not something that we just let grow into a problem and, yes, sometimes we do take a task force approach to say, okay, what can we do to break this back down,

bring this back down to a level that is more comfortable and we can be assured there is not anybody in there that should not be in there at any given time.

Deputy H.L. Jeune:

At the moment are you seeing the figures not the same as last year? Is it more of a ...

Head of Strategic Housing and Regeneration:

So I do not have the most up to date figure so I would be very reluctant to give it to you but I think that we can give you the most up to date number.

Policy Principal, Strategic Housing and Regeneration:

My understanding is that those in hotels, the vast majority have a plan to transition out of those arrangements.

Head of Strategic Housing and Regeneration:

Yes.

Policy Principal, Strategic Housing and Regeneration:

So it is not as if they are being left in a hotel.

Deputy H.L. Jeune:

Yes.

Policy Principal, Strategic Housing and Regeneration:

It is purely transitional either to social housing or all different pathways, to give you that reassurance, and that the Housing Advice Service is actively working with them.

Deputy H.L. Jeune:

Great, thank you.

Deputy T.A. Coles:

I suppose this links in as this is considered more of emergency accommodation than regular accommodation but Sanctuary Trust has reported that it is operating at full capacity and regularly being unable to take new residents. Is there anything you think you would be able to do before the election in 2026 that would create new policies that would prioritise to prevent the homelessness in these scenarios and ensure that sufficient emergency accommodation is available quickly for those that are at risk?

The Minister for Housing:

What do you mean by emergency accommodation?

Deputy T.A. Coles:

It could be anything I would say from the hotel ... you spoke about having to liaise with the Minister for Social Security to be able to secure the payments for hotels. Is there any more internal policies that could make this more expedient that could be done?

The Minister for Housing:

I am not sure. The delivery of new social housing does help within that so that is a constant thing that we seek to do and to get people into permanent homes there and that would also help people transition out of emergency accommodation. I am struggling to pinpoint something beyond the stuff that we have already touched on in this part of the ...

Deputy T.A. Coles:

I mean is there anything that you ... these special payments for hotels, is there any sort of policy that would be able to regularise this so it does not require Ministerial sign off on one side or another as a special payment? That if somebody meets a criteria, like you say, that they were particularly vulnerable they cannot go directly into a one bedroom home of their own, that that emergency accommodation in a hotel, like you said, before is just what they need at that moment for that transitional arrangement but you have to get a sign off from the Minister for Social Security. Is there any way that that issue could be regularised so you would not need that special ... or does the process as it stands work quickly and effectively enough?

The Minister for Housing:

I am not aware of it not working. I think, and I occasionally raise this with homelessness providers when I speak to them and I spoke to one yesterday and highlighted this point to them is to be aware that that can happen and that system does exist. I cannot see an issue with the way that it is conducted at the moment. Could there be more awareness that it is an option? Yes, probably but that is something that I have raised with providers to remind them that that can happen but I am not sure that the way that those decisions are made is particularly problematic at this point.

Deputy T.A. Coles:

Okay. A final question for me then at this point would be at our last quarterly hearing you stated that you would like us to get to the point where the Minister for Housing has an obligation to provide accommodation to people who are at risk of homelessness. Do you see any work progressing in that line?

The Minister for Housing:

So, when we produced the homelessness strategy update, that I mentioned that Jack had worked on, there is some commentary towards the end of that about how we progress towards legislation on homelessness. It is not something that I am in a position to begin the legislative work on in this time of office. That will be for the future and it is the kind of thing that will not be a quick job. That is something that will take serious time and consideration to do. But that is the direction of travel that we would like to go in and there will be a bit of commentary on that in the update that we will be producing.

The Connétable of St. Mary:

Could I just follow up on that? Forgive my ignorance on this one, is there such a statutory responsibility on local authorities in the U.K. for instance in that area?

The Minister for Housing:

Yes, and in many instances they may as well not have it because they are not abiding by that statutory duty.

The Connétable of St. Mary:

So they may not have what? That authority or the ...

The Minister for Housing:

They may as well not have it. It may as well be a work of fiction because they are simply not doing it. Even though the law says they should be, in many instances they are not and that is why I have said that we cannot do this in a way that puts the cart before the horse. If we do not get our structures in place properly and have confidence that we can have our Government departments operating properly to abide by that duty when we create it, if we do not do that we end up making false promises or embedding bad practice. So it is important to get it the right way around so that is why I have said let us do this work and then we get to the point of legislation because the U.K. proves that having legislation is absolutely no solution if you are not in a position to obey it.

The Connétable of St. Mary:

Yes, okay. Yes, a couple of follow up areas from the last quarter if I may? First one is to social housing rents. In relation to the adoption of P.29/2025 in May you committed to undertaking a review of social housing rents policy. In the last quarterly hearing you stated that we remain on course to meet the January 2026 timeline consideration. Is this still the case, Minister?

The Minister for Housing:

Yes, very much so. I had a briefing on that today. I have got a substantial amount of reading to do over Christmas which I am very much looking forward to but, yes, from everything we discussed today at our briefing, yes, it looks like we are on track for that.

The Connétable of St. Mary:

In connection with the review generally, what work is undertaken in respect of this and in relation to any analysis or modelling completed? Key findings, et cetera?

[14:45]

The Minister for Housing:

Yes, so there has been a huge amount of work and research that has gone into this looking at how Jersey got to where it did, why and what happened along the way, looking at other countries to see how their systems work, what unique Jersey intricacies that there are given that our housing laws and our benefit system are unique to us and within the framework we have got, what some tweaks might look like and what they might do. Or what the opportunities or challenges there are of different frameworks as well. There will be a lot to be published on all of that when it comes to it.

The Connétable of St. Mary:

From what you said, you have taken advice yourself from local organisations as well, have you?

The Minister for Housing:

We have spoken a lot to the social housing providers. If there is anyone else Jack will know but the providers themselves, yes.

The Connétable of St. Mary:

Yes, okay.

Head of Strategic Housing and Regeneration:

We had some recent ongoing engagement with the banks because we have looked quite closely at the concept of affordability and it is a question that is often asked is, what is housing affordability? So as we seek to understand and define what that means for social housing and its relationship with income support it made sense to understand what that also means in the context of a bank's willingness to lend on a mortgage because ultimately it is still about somebody's capacity to pay for their housing relative to their other living costs. So we are taking the time also to cross-check that thinking against how banks assess housing affordability for purchase because they are ultimately one and the same thing. We just have slight differences there in affordability as you would expect.

The Connétable of St. Mary:

Changing to a different subject, pets in rentals, and I remember the debate on this. Since the Pets in Rental Properties Guide was published in March, to what extent do you believe it has achieved its aim in persuading landlords to allow pets or not operating a full-time ban or blanket ban?

The Minister for Housing:

With all due respect that was not the aim. The aim was to stop me bringing in legislation and in that regard it has been 100 per cent successful. The amendment was a wrecking amendment. We are now in a position where we have nothing positive to show from that exercise whatsoever but I did warn the Assembly at the time.

The Connétable of St. Mary:

Okay, developing that then, you are content with the status quo? I have to say this but I mean I was on the same side as yourself. I do not believe a guidance is any good unless you have got legislation which explains why the guidance is there to enforce it. So that was your view then. So you are content with this present situation that landlords effectively have complete discretion as to whether they can accept pets or not? Or would you like some form of encouraging guidance to enable them to accept pets?

The Minister for Housing:

So I am not content. My preference would have been to have done what the U.K. Renters Rights Act has in it, which is that it has provisions on this. That would have been the position I would have preferred to have been in. But that ship has sailed because of the timing of where we are, the decision of the Assembly and that I could not exactly wait around to shoe horn it into a Residential Tenancy Law. I just had to get on with the job at task. So I am not content, I would have preferred it to have gone another way. We did produce the guidance though and it got good feedback from stakeholders who looked at it and they were pleased with its contents and said that it was good. Whether it is being used or not or more likely ignored, I regret that I do not think it was a great use of anyone's time.

The Connétable of St. Mary:

Okay, and going back to the guidance or the feedback, is there any form of monitoring in process to see ...

The Minister for Housing:

None whatsoever.

The Connétable of St. Mary:

Okay.

The Minister for Housing:

I think it will sit on a shelf gathering dust and no one will ever refer to it again in future.

The Connétable of St. Mary:

Okay. If I am allowed to, Chair, just going back to debate, you compared to the U.K. situation. I remember reading that it was a very cumbersome process in the sense that I think a landlord had 6 or 7 weeks to reply and in practical terms if someone wants to take a cat in it is tomorrow. They cannot wait that long and similarly, if someone has already got an animal it is ... I just wondered about its practicality.

The Minister for Housing:

Yes, I am not saying we should have copied the exact terms that the U.K. adopted for their law but we were working on our Residential Tenancy (Amendment) Law while they were working on their Renters Rights Bill. There was some learning, we met one of the members of the House of Lords who was leading on that Bill. So there was learning we could have done through what they did and the principle of including it in the law I think they got right and we got wrong. But I am not suggesting that we would have copied every term that they prescribed in their law. We may have ... hopefully would have done a better job but the rug was pulled from our feet on that.

The Connétable of St. Mary:

My final comment if I may is that I have only this last week agreed with my tenant, she is very welcome to bring a new puppy on to the premises on the basis that she is there all the time to look after it. So I am pro animals.

The Minister for Housing:

Indeed, and in the absence of legislation we rely on good people like yourself, so thank you.

The Connétable of St. Mary:

Thank you. I am sure there is a lot of us, thank you.

The Minister for Housing:

Yes.

Deputy H.L. Jeune:

Well, on that note, Minister, we have come to the end of our questions. We can gift you a Christmas gift of 40 minutes extra of your time.

The Minister for Housing:

I was nervous for a split second there.

Deputy H.L. Jeune:

Of 40 minutes extra time to be able to go and prepare for tomorrow. Of course we hear from yourself that tomorrow there will be a big announcement and also there will be a homeless report in January so there will definitely be some follow on questions ...

The Minister for Housing:

Absolutely.

Deputy H.L. Jeune:

... that we will be able to do in our last quarterly hearing that we will have before the end of the term but thank you very much to yourself and to officers for this year as well, for coming to our hearings.

The Minister for Housing:

Thank you, and thank you for all your work as well because a lot of what you did in your Residential Tenancy Law review was extremely helpful and was a key part of that joint effort to get it over the line. It is going to make a difference for people, so thank you for all your work on that as well.

Deputy H.L. Jeune:

Thank you.

The Connétable of St. Mary:

Thank you.

Deputy H.L. Jeune:

Thank you, Minister.

[14:51]