

STATES OF JERSEY



LES QUENNEVAIS PARK FLATS LOAN SCHEME (P.19/2021) - RESCINDMENT

Lodged au Greffe on 21st May 2021
by Deputy M. Tadier of St. Brelade
Earliest date for debate: 29th June 2021

STATES GREFFE

PROPOSITION

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

To refer to their Act of 22nd April 2021, in which they approved, in accordance with the Public Finances (Jersey) Law 2019, a variation to the purpose and terms of the 99-Year Leaseholders Fund to enable monies from the Fund to be lent to property owners in Les Quennevais Park Flats for the repair of balconies, and to rescind that Act.

DEPUTY M. TADIER OF ST. BRELADE

Note: In accordance with the requirements of Standing Order 23, the following Members are additional signatories to this proposition –

1. Senator S.Y. Mézec
2. Deputy M.R. Higgins of St. Helier
3. Deputy R.J. Ward of St. Helier

REPORT

Following the approval of P.19/2021, numerous representations were made to me and subsequently with Senator Pallett and Deputy Truscott, about issues relating to the proposed loan scheme, which they felt were not clear to the Assembly at the time of debate, when agreed on 20th April 2021.

At a meeting on 4th May, at Communicare, I met with about 17 of owners/leaseholders (There would have been more, but numbers were limited to 20 people due to ongoing guidance).

They explained what they saw as fundamental problems with the proposed loan scheme: these ranged from:

- (1) affordability;
- (2) the interest being charged on the loan;
- (3) the potential period of the loan;
- (4) the criteria for the loan;
- (5) That fault lay with the Housing Department of the day.

Some owners explained that they would struggle to afford the loan repayments; some were elderly and were worried about having debt hanging over them for potentially a further ten years; a question was asked about why interest needed to be charged at all, or at such a rate; some said that they were not eligible for the loan as their income was 'too high', but said that gross income and disposable income are not the same thing; and that it was ultimately the States fault for allowing incorrect construction methods to be used which resulted in faulty balconies to be built.

Indeed, they pointed out that the report, itself accompanying P.19/2021 did admit that the balconies were not correctly built in the first place. The report stated:

Following a recent maintenance inspection of the flats, it was found that their balconies require certain repairs arising from a problem with the original construction method.

Further investigations were undertaken, and it was found that the problems stemmed for the use of precast concrete beams for the balcony structures. These beams were not well suited for this use due to the thinness of the concrete and associated problems of fixing the balcony hand railings, and durability problems with the outer beams, which tend to be more exposed to the elements.

It is not known exactly what took place in c1964 during the build contract that led to the balconies being built with precast beams... It is considered that even in the 1960s, the expertise of the architect, engineer and contractor should have highlighted the risks and swayed the decision away from using such beams on the balconies.

I am asking for P.19/2021 to be rescinded to allow the terms of the loan itself to be amended, and indeed I will give further consideration as to whether to ask the States to agree to meet the costs of the repair work itself, by way of an ex gratia payment.

I will be providing further supporting documentation in due course, but have made the decision to lodge this proposition, as my request to Treasury and Housing, for a small delay for applications to the loan scheme, appear to have been ignored or refused.

Financial and manpower implications

There are no financial and manpower implications arising for the States from this proposition.