



Environment, Housing and Infrastructure Scrutiny Panel

Records of Meetings

2024

The following records of meetings have been approved by the Panel.

The constitution of the Panel changed in early 2024. Deputy Steve Luce was appointed to a ministerial role on 30th January 2024. The Panel folded and Deputy Hilary Jeune was appointed to Chair of the Panel on 6th February 2024. Subsequently, the Panel was constituted on 27th February 2024.

Chair of the Panel to 29th January 2024

Signed

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Chair
Deputy Steve Luce

Chair of the Panel from 6th February 2024

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Chair
Deputy Hilary Jeune

Environment, Housing and Infrastructure Scrutiny Panel

Record of Meeting

Date: 10th January 2024

Present	Deputy Steve Luce, Chair Connétable Michael Jackson, Vice-Chair Connétable David Johnson Deputy Mary Le Hegarat
In attendance	Nikita Hall, Principal Committee and Panel Officer Anna Thorne, Committee and Panel Officer Kaya Camara, Research and Project Officer

Agenda matter	Action
<p>1. Records of Meetings</p> <p>The Panel noted and approved the record of the meeting held on 20th December 2024.</p>	
<p>2. Bridging Liquid Waste Strategy 2023-2026 Review – Draft Report</p> <p>The Panel considered a final draft report in relation to its review of the Bridging Liquid Waste Strategy 2023-2026 and agreed the final updates. The Panel requested the report be published no later than Monday 15th January.</p> <p>The Panel noted that long-term funding had not been identified and which could result in delays to some liquid waste projects commencing until funding from 2026 could be approved. The Panel requested the Officer check the Public Finances Law Manual regarding major infrastructure projects to understand if there was a resolution to acquiring long-term funding. In the event that there was no resolution in place, the Panel requested a private briefing with the Minister for Treasury and Resources to discuss the issue of potential forward funding mechanisms.</p>	<p>NH</p> <p>AT</p>
<p>3. Marine Spatial Plan - Planned Scrutiny Review</p> <p>The Panel noted a letter from the Minister for the Environment which agreed to the Panel's request to extend the public consultation period until 28th January 2024.</p> <p>The Panel considered and agreed an update of the initial scoping document for its review of the Marine Spatial Plan and requested work be undertaken to enable identification of consultants to take place whilst awaiting the publication of the finalised Plan. The Panel agreed to identify key consultants who could support the development of the Terms of Reference ('TOR') for the review. The Panel requested the Officer to circulate a briefing paper and a list of potential consultants to the Panel.</p> <p>The Panel discussed the potentially limited timeframe to conduct a scrutiny review, it being noted that the States' debate was estimated to be held in July 2024.</p>	<p>AT/KC</p> <p>AT/KC</p>

<p>4. Work Programme and Ministerial Delivery Plan Progress Updates</p> <p>The Panel reviewed and updated its Work Programme for January – June 2024 utilising updates provided by the Ministers for Environment, Infrastructure and Housing and Communities.</p> <p>The Panel noted that the Draft Amendments Residential Tenancy Law consultation had finalised the previous June, but no consultation outcome report had been published. The Panel requested Officers ensure questions were added into the draft question plan for the upcoming quarterly hearing on 31st January 2024.</p> <p>The Panel also requested that the Officer add a potential short review looking into the planning process and non-criminal proceedings to its work programme. The Panel also requested the Officer to carry out research and produce a briefing paper into the use of retrospective planning applications, compliance and number of infractions in recent times.</p> <p>The Panel also asked the Officer to organise a private briefing regarding glasshouses and derelict buildings.</p> <p>In addition, the Panel requested the Officer prepare a briefing paper regarding the use of oil-fired burners in the island, the cost to replace oil as a heating source to inform any future review of electrification and the capacity of Jersey’s infrastructure.</p> <p>The Panel also requested the Officer to arrange a briefing with the Jersey Electricity to discover its capacity and ability on island ahead of the ban on oil burners.</p>	<p>AT/KC</p> <p>AT/KC</p> <p>AT/KC</p> <p>AT/KC</p> <p>AT/KC</p> <p>AT/KC</p>
<p>5. Resignation of the Minister for Infrastructure</p> <p>The Panel noted the resignation of Deputy Tom Binet as Minister for Infrastructure.</p>	
<p>6. Future Meetings</p> <p>The Panel noted its next scheduled meeting was due to take place on Wednesday 31st January 2024 in the Le Capelain Room of the States Building when the Panel would also receive the Minister for Housing and Communities for a public quarterly hearing.</p>	

Environment, Housing and Infrastructure Scrutiny Panel

Record of Meeting

Date: 29th February 2024

Present	Deputy Hilary Jeune, Chair Deputy Tom Coles, Vice-Chair Deputy David Warr Deputy Alex Curtis
Apologies	Connétable David Johnson
In attendance	Anna Thorne, Committee and Panel Officer Kaya Camara, Research and Project Officer

Agenda matter	Action
<p>1. Records of Meetings</p> <p>The Panel noted the former Panel's approval of the record of the meeting held on 10th January 2024.</p>	
<p>2. Declarations and Conflicts of Interest</p> <p>The Panel noted the declaration of interests section in the Scrutiny and Public Accounts Committee Proceedings Code of Practice. The Panel agreed that this should be a standing item on the Panel's agenda going forward.</p>	KC
<p>3. Training for Panel Members</p> <p>The Panel discussed opportunities for training and expressed an interest in a number of areas including effective questioning. It was agreed that this interest be conveyed to the Scrutiny Liaison Committee. The Panel requested the Officers to enquire about an all-Scrutiny Member training day.</p> <p>The Panel noted an interest in a visit to Westminster to observe a relevant Select Committee. The Panel requested Officers to make the necessary arrangements.</p>	AT AT/KC
<p>4. Appointment of Vice Chair</p> <p>Deputy Tom Coles was appointed Vice Chair of the Panel.</p>	
<p>5. Position Paper</p> <p>The Panel noted a Position Paper provided by the Officer. The Panel noted that the Chief Minister was not intending to lodge a new Government Plan and requested the Officer to enquire about the Ministerial Responses from the Ministers for the Environment and the Minister for Infrastructure to the formal Panel's Comments on the Government Plan 2024–2027. It requested that a realistic delivery date be provided.</p> <p>The Panel noted the priorities outlined by Ministers during their nomination speeches in the States Assembly and discussed potential question areas for forthcoming briefings with the Ministers for Housing, Environment and Infrastructure. The Panel noted that its briefing with the Minister for Infrastructure was scheduled for late March and requested that a letter be drafted for the Panel's approval requesting an outline of the Minister's current priorities.</p>	AT KC

<p>The Panel requested that the officer schedule a briefing on updates and amendments to Building Bye-laws.</p>	<p>AT/KC</p>
<p>6. Work programme</p> <p>The Panel noted its work programme for the year and discussed amendments and additions. The Panel agreed that the work programme should be revisited following the forthcoming briefings with the Ministers to ensure that priority areas were covered.</p> <p>The Panel agreed that it would request an updated timeline from the Minister for the Environment on the presentation of the Marine Spatial Plan if this remained a topic that the Panel was likely to review.</p> <p>It was noted that a tracker had been generated by the States Greffe to track Ministerial work streams and requested that an updated version be shared with the Panel.</p> <p>The Panel noted the changed date for the debate of P.82/2024 Offshore Wind to 16th April 2024 and requested that officers schedule a suitable time for a briefing with Government Officers and the Minister for the Environment. The Panel agreed that the proposal would fall within the remit of a number of Panels and that a Review Panel should be established to examine any proposals. It was noted that the Chair would propose this to the Scrutiny Liaison Committee.</p>	<p>KC</p> <p>AT/KC</p> <p>HJ</p>
<p>7. Topic-led Briefings</p> <p>The Panel discussed potential areas on which it required background briefings from Officers and/or Ministers and agreed to consider this further.</p> <p>The Panel noted that long-term financing regarding infrastructure projects needed to be considered and requested the Officer to make the necessary arrangements to schedule a briefing with the Minister for Treasury to investigate the processes.</p> <p>The Panel noted a number of site visits that would be beneficial to its work programme and requested the Officers to make the necessary arrangements.</p>	<p>AT</p> <p>AT/KC</p>
<p>8. S.R.1/2024 – Bridging Liquid Waste Strategy 2023 – 2026 Review – Ministerial Response</p> <p>The Panel noted the Ministerial Response to the Bridging Liquid Waste Strategy Review carried out by the previous Panel. The Panel agreed to examine the response in more detail before its next meeting and that any questions arising would be included in correspondence and its first Quarterly Hearing with the relevant Ministers.</p>	
<p>9. Scheduled Meetings and Hearings for 2024</p> <p>The Panel reviewed and agreed the scheduled Panel meetings for 2024.</p>	
<p>10. Question Plans for Hearings</p> <p>The Panel received information from the Committee and Panel Officer on the development of question plans for Public Hearings and noted the document provided. The Panel noted that its first Quarterly Hearing would be held with the Minister for Housing on 24th April 2024.</p>	
<p>11. Ministerial Briefings</p> <p>The Panel noted the upcoming briefings with the Ministers for Housing, Environment and Infrastructure that had been scheduled to gather information about the Common Strategic Policy and Ministerial Plans. The Panel agreed that a public record of the</p>	

briefings should be taken by officers and requested that the Ministers be informed ahead of the briefings.	AT
12. Relevant Documents for the newly Constituted Panel The Panel noted a number of papers provided by the Officer regarding procedural and administrative matters, working practices and declarations and conflicts of interest.	
13. Communications The Panel agreed to add an update from its Digital and Public Engagement Officer as a standing item on the agenda for future meetings.	
14. Future Meetings The Panel noted its next scheduled meeting was due to take place on Thursday 7th March 2024 in the Le Blampied Room of the States Building and would include a briefing with the Minister for Housing.	

Environment, Housing and Infrastructure Scrutiny Panel

Record of Meeting

Date: 7th March 2024

Present	Deputy Hilary Jeune, Chair Deputy Tom Coles, Vice-Chair Deputy David Warr Deputy Alex Curtis
Apologies	Connétable David Johnson
In attendance	Item 2 only Deputy Sam Mézec, Minister for Housing Natasha Day, Head of Strategic Housing and Regeneration, Cabinet Office Lauren Ferguson, Research and Administration Officer, Ministerial Office Anna Thorne, Committee and Panel Officer Kaya Camara, Research and Project Officer

Agenda matter	Action
1. Briefing with the Minister for Housing – discussion points The Panel noted topic areas that it would discuss during its briefing with the Minister for Housing.	
2. Briefing with the Minister for Housing – ministerial priorities The Panel welcomed the Minister for Housing and government officers for a briefing on the Minister’s priorities during this term of office. The Minister began by informing the Panel that the new Government had not imposed the framework of Ministerial Plans and that each Minister had more freedom to shape their priorities in their own terms. He said he had referred to his priorities on a number of platforms and during his nomination speech and these were: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Moving more Islanders into home ownership• Improving the situation for renters• Addressing the plight of homelessness It was agreed that the Minister would outline the actions that he was taking on each of these priorities and that the Panel would then pose any questions which arose. <u>Supporting Islanders into home ownership</u> The Minister said that he was keen to build and expand on the First Step shared equity scheme which had now been launched and was accepting its first applications. It was acknowledged that any expansion and increase in funding of the scheme would depend on the support of the wider Council of Ministers. It was the Minister’s intention to open communication with developers looking at the rezoned sites in the Bridging Island Plan and to ensure that he was aware of the proportion of properties which would be first-time buyer homes.	

It was stated that both Andium Homes and the States of Jersey Development Company (SoJDC) have schemes which would be looked at to see what could be done to improve home ownership through delivery of those schemes. The Minister said that he would be seeking to maximise the development of the SoJDC sites for those who hadn't yet had opportunity to own their home.

It was stated that Andium Homes had been successful in providing 1- and 2- bedroom homes in recent years but that he was aware of the need for 3-bedroom family homes.

There was an acknowledgement that right-sizing would play a part in this and that, despite Andium's success, current rules did not always assist them in helping people move from properties they occupied into ones which were the right size for their needs. However, that under current rules they were struggling to do this effectively, to ensure people had access to the size of home that met their needs.

The Minister indicated that although there would need to be a cautious approach it may work better financially for homes owned by Andium (that would be impossible to rent) to be sold.

It was stated that lowering the age limit for access to social housing to 25 would be assist people who were perhaps at an earlier stage of their career whose wages may increase over time, as life circumstances change. Access to social housing would provide a buffer for those who needed it at that early stage.

The £10 million funding for the First Step Scheme would be released in tranches rather than in one go. It was felt that the advantage of this would be that the window for applications would be longer.

The Minister expressed the view that tranches would mean that the news would spread over time and people who did not think about applying in the first tranche may do so later.

It was stated that capping the amount that a home could cost under the scheme might also encourage sellers to slightly lower the price of their property to be accessible to the buyers eligible for the First Step Scheme.

The Panel asked about the collection of data during the first tranche of the scheme and when the Minister would feedback on whether the scheme was successful. The Minister said that the first tranches would provide a picture of who was applying and whether the criteria of the scheme and level of deposit were set at the right level. He said that Government would have the ability to check this at the end of each tranche. No substantial changes were expected to be brought through before the launch of the second tranche.

The Minister said that he had not spoken directly to mortgage lenders but would be meeting with the Minister for Financial Services and with the Consumer Council to discuss any potential for assisting more people into property ownership.

The Panel asked how relevant Ministers would work together on the provision of affordable homes and whether the Future Places Ministerial Group, established by the previous Government, would continue. The Minister said that the group would revert to its previous title of Regeneration Steering Group which was due to meet soon. He said that he was aware that the Minister for the Environment had made it one of his stated priorities to resolve the planning issues that have elongated the process.

It was stated that among the obstacles to the provision of affordable homes was the viability of building those sites already identified as a result of the lack of capacity within the sewerage network.

It was acknowledged that there would be competing priorities for funding from members of the Council of Ministers but that the Minister would push for as much as he could for the First Step Scheme and for work which would progress the development of affordable homes.

The Minister stated that he was keen to ensure that developers provide as much as they can in terms of affordable housing on new developments and that he did not want to see any reduction in the percentages they had to provide.

There was some discussion about the viability for the construction industry of providing affordable homes.

The Head of Strategic Housing and Regeneration provided information about the importance of the cost of land and the need for the supplementary planning guidance on the price of affordable homes to be factored into the land price negotiations.

The Minister acknowledged that, as a result of the fifth amendment to the Government Plan 2024 – 2027, a scheme for encouraging and incentivising right-sizing would need to be presented to the States Assembly by 31st May. It was stated that the aim was to find incentives that would help people who were not able to downsize to do so, rather than offer them to people who did not want or need them.

It was stated that there was a change of focus for the work being undertaken on vacant homes which was being tough on homes which were empty for no good reason, rather than providing incentives for people to ensure occupancy. The Minister would be meeting with the Comité des Connétables to explore what was possible under the Rates (Jersey) Law 2005 as a taxation element. The intention would be to find a way to get abandoned homes back on the market but also not to tax owners unnecessarily if there were valid reasons for vacancy.

Improving the experience for tenants

The Minister stated that he was determined to bring the amendments to the Residential Tenancy (Jersey) Law 2011 (RTL) forward. Officers had been instructed on the way in which he wanted the work to be expedited and had requested that elements be removed that he did not feel should have been there.

It was stated that a more formal declaration would be made in the coming weeks but that the Minister had requested that social housing regulation should not be in the amendments in the first instance and could perhaps be added at a later date. The Minister said that the addition of social housing regulation at this stage would delay getting other elements in place that he wanted to see, including:

- Security of tenure
- Protection from excessive rent increases
- The establishment of a rental tribunal

The Panel asked about the rationale for the removal of social housing regulation. The Minister stated that he wanted the work to be undertaken but that it would take more time. He had made a political decision to separate the regulation of social housing from the current RTL proposals.

It was stated that a final draft of the RTL amendments would be completed by September 2024. The Minister was intending to undertake some informal stakeholder engagement by the end of April and to have conversations with the Tribunal Service.

It was the intention of the Minister to make changes to the Deposit Protection Scheme to improve communication for both landlords and tenants. Whilst the scheme was praised it was stated that the administration could be improved to ensure that people did not lose money unfairly. It was felt that some of the work might require law changes.

It was also stated that a clearer process in the Residential Tenancy Law would reinforce the message that deposit money was not owned by the landlord.

There was some discussion about the forthcoming code of practice on the Public Health and Safety (Rented Dwellings) (Licensing) (Jersey) Regulations 202- which were adopted by the States Assembly in 2023. A commitment had been made with the Jersey Landlords Association (JLA) to build the guidelines with them rather than imposing a system upon them. The draft code of practice would be discussed with the JLA and with Environmental Health.

The Minister also said that he wanted to look at shaping the Social Rents Policy to help people in the most effective way possible and address inequities which meant that, in some cases, people were paying more for a smaller property.

The Minister stated that it was intended that a handbook be published that provided clarity for both parties so that people know where they can go. It was stated that this should be clear and address, for instance, safety elements. This was seen as a separate document from the law. It was hoped that the wording of the law would ensure that it could be passed but not enacted until the guidelines were published.

The Panel raised a question about data on rent levels and heard from the Minister that he was not convinced that a database of all rents was that useful but was more interested at looking at the mechanism of a rent review than a database of every rent.

The Minister spoke about the lowering the age of eligibility for social housing. It was stated that the pathway for expanding that criteria was underway but that current feedback suggested the change would not lead to overwhelming demand.

It was acknowledged that there needed to be increased promotion of the Affordable Housing Gateway and eligibility criteria. The Minister said that he had asked Andium Homes to do work on projections and the demands that they were experiencing, to see whether there was scope for widening the criteria further.

The Panel asked about the Housing Advice Service and heard that, while it was a relatively new service, it was hoped that it would be able to develop to do outreach and to gather expertise and information, but this would be a political decision based on available funding. The view was expressed that the Housing Advice Service should be the front door for all housing enquiries and that the Minister would like to increase the service capacity but did not want to find that the team were swamped as a result.

The Minister said that the supply of three-bedroom homes was not what it should be and that this was one of the reasons why the Island Plan sites were so important.

It was stated that the Andium Homes development at Cyril Le Marquand Court had been very successful and that a result of the success with down-sizing homes was that Andium was struggling to rent two-bedroom properties. He expressed the view that this could provide the opportunity to look at home-buy for those properties where there was demand and to provide rental when there was not that demand. The Minister said that there would be benefits to being flexible about how people were assisted to access housing.

The Panel asked about the priority that would be given to any changes to the Control of Housing and Work (Jersey) Law 2012 (CHWL). The Minister said that his political view was that, as currently structured, the law created a two-tier society. Any elements of the housing portfolio that related to the Control of Housing and Work Law would be led by the Assistant Minister for Housing, Deputy Carina Alves.

The Panel asked about the Minister's oversight of the categorisation/recategorisation of housing under the CHWL. It heard that the Minister did not receive many requests from people asking for homes to be recategorised. The Head of Strategic Housing and Regeneration said the power to recategorise housing was given exclusively to the Chief Minister not the Minister for Housing but that it would be useful to understand the patterns emerging from any requests to change categories.

The Minister stated that he did not like the idea of anything owned by Andium not being at social rent and was aware that decisions could be made now which would have an impact on how a home was used forever.

Addressing the plight of homelessness

It was stated that the Homelessness Strategy was good but that it was hard to implement. The reasons for being homeless were unique to every situation and primarily included health issues, the breakdown of relationships or domestic violence.

The Minister stated that he wanted to do the work to define homelessness in law and to ensure that this was connected to the obligations on public services for their action when someone found themselves in that position.

It was stated that this work had yet to be done and it would need the input of a number of bodies, including the Children's Service, Probation Service and the Housing Advice Service to ensure that there was an appropriate service and a legal obligation to help people who were homeless. Conversations on how to proceed would also need to include the Ministers for Health, Justice and Home Affairs, and Social Security.

The Panel asked why the Minister had established the Housing Crisis Emergency Taskforce. It heard that the body was the weekly focus group for the core actions in each of the pillars outlined above. It was attended by the Minister and officers for relevant areas and concentrated on what was happening in relation to each of the actions and any difficulties that the Minister needed to resolve. Future meetings would also include other Ministers, such as the Minister for the Environment to ensure that planning issues could be explored.

The Panel thanked the Minister and his officers who exited the meeting.

3. Panel matters The Panel noted the areas covered by the Minister for Housing for future questioning and agreed that a briefing should also be arranged with Andium Homes to gather information about their service and to ask for figures in relation to their home-buy scheme.	AT/KC
4. Future Meetings The Panel noted its next scheduled meeting was due to take place on Friday 8th March 2024 in the Blampied Room of the States Building and would include a briefing from the Minister for the Environment.	