

2.4 Deputy P.V.F. Le Claire of St. Helier of the Assistant Minister for Treasury and Resources regarding the funding mechanisms and support from the States of Jersey provided to the Jersey Homes Trust:

What funding mechanisms and support from the States of Jersey does the Jersey Homes Trust enjoy, and in what way, if any, can the States involvement be used to ensure that ongoing concerns expressed by tenants at Berkshire Court in particular are addressed?

Deputy E.J. Noel of St. Lawrence (Assistant Minister for Treasury and Resources):

The States provide interest subsidy payments to Jersey Homes Trust as it does to other providers of social housing. The subsidy support is in a form of an interest rate cap whereby the States reimburse the trust for interest charges paid to its lender above a level determined in a letter of comfort. I have been advised that the Housing Department has a good working relationship with the Jersey Homes Trust and will be making contact with the Trust and Deputy Le Claire in an attempt to see that the concerns being raised by the tenants of Berkshire Court are given an adequate hearing.

2.4.1 Deputy P.V.F. Le Claire:

I would like to thank the Assistant Minister for his answer. It does encourage me, although I did ask questions of this nature a few months ago of the Minister for Housing and there was no mechanism that he indicated was available for the States to pressure the Jersey Homes Trust to take actions on behalf of the residents in areas of concerns that they have. It is confirmed this morning to my right by the Senator. Therefore, it does not seem - am I correct in asking - that there really is anything that States Members can do or States departments can do to get these tenants in Berkshire Court the security that they wish or the services that they desire or the answers that they and their Deputies and the Constable have been trying to get out of them, including the Minister for Treasury and Resources, for the last 3 years?

Deputy E.J. Noel:

I am sure that if the good Deputy, myself and Housing worked together we could put adequate pressure on to the Jersey Homes Trust to give the tenants an adequate hearing.

2.4.2 Deputy G.P. Southern:

Does the Assistant Minister not accept that it is a woeful state of play when social housing can be built by a third party and yet we have no control over the service level that they supply to tenants in social rented housing?

Deputy E.J. Noel:

I agree with the good Deputy Southern, I think that we do need to address this situation and I am happy to work with him to do so.

2.4.3 Deputy G.P. Southern:

Will he not condemn the Minister for Housing for his lack of action on this issue for the past 10 years?

Deputy E.J. Noel:

No, I will not.

2.4.4 Senator S.C. Ferguson:

Has the Treasurer reminded such bodies as the Jersey Homes Trust that their full accounts will be required to be published by way of a report to the States?

Deputy E.J. Noel:

I personally have no information on that but I am sure that the good Senator is correct.

2.4.5 Senator S.C. Ferguson:

Supplementary, please. Would it be possible for the Assistant Minister to find out and ensure that this has been done?

Deputy E.J. Noel:

I will indeed do so and report back.

2.4.6 Deputy T.M. Pitman:

Just to follow on from Deputy Le Claire, I have been a politician only a year and yet we have had constant problems with the residents ... well, not with the residents but on behalf of the residents of this area. Will the Assistant Minister confirm that he is willing to organise a meeting for all aggrieved parties before the end of the year to finally progress this matter?

Deputy E.J. Noel:

I would happily do so but I would like to have the opportunity, with the Housing Department and Deputy Le Claire, to meet with Jersey Homes Trust and the residents to see if that can sort it out.

Senator T.J. Le Main:

Could I just say that we will do all we can to assist and work with the Parish Deputies in trying to resolve any problems that may be occurring in that area.

2.4.7 Deputy J.A. Martin:

I would like to wish him luck because the 3 Parish Deputies have been working for 3 years and we have even worked with the Constable of St. Helier and we have had the Minister for Treasury and Resources himself down to a meeting who told us in February: "Give me 2 weeks and I will get them to the table." We are now November and the table is still waiting. What I would like to have the Assistant Minister confirm is that Senator Ferguson is wrong. I do think it should happen. The only person who has ever seen any of the Trust's accounts is the Minister for Treasury and Resources and the Minister for Housing. They have never, ever, ever been published for the States of Jersey, which I do think is a mistake and I really hope that this will start happening so they are accountable.

The Deputy Bailiff:

Is there a question?

Deputy J.A. Martin:

Will the Assistant Minister confirm this and look into having this done? There have been millions of pounds invested in these social housing providers.

Deputy E.J. Noel:

As I have already said, I am happy to looking into this and report back.

2.4.8 Deputy P.V.F. Le Claire:

I welcome the response of the Assistant Minister for Treasury and Resources who is a can-do Deputy. I would also ask him, following on from another can-do Deputy, Deputy Martin, can he please try to integrate the fiscal mechanisms that are at his disposal in ensuring that a portion of the tenants' rents are set aside for maintenance and security and are assigned appropriately, and recommend it through the Whitehead report as changes throughout this community because there is not satisfaction from these tenants in respect of security and of maintenance.

Deputy E.J. Noel:

I do not believe that is really a matter for the Treasury and Resources Department. I believe it is more of a Housing matter but I will give my personal assurances that I will work with Deputy Le Claire to hopefully bring a speedy result to this issue.