

**WRITTEN QUESTION TO THE MINISTER FOR HOUSING
BY DEPUTY G.P. SOUTHERN OF ST. HELIER
ANSWER TO BE TABLED ON TUESDAY 2nd FEBRUARY 2010**

Question

Notwithstanding the ongoing consultation process in which the Housing Department is engaged, will the Minister inform members what options, if any, he has under consideration to eliminate the under-funding of £7.5 million on annual repairs and maintenance identified in the Whitehead report?

Answer

The Whitehead report identifies that spending on building maintenance is under funded in 2 areas:-

- Day to Day Repairs £2.5m per annum; and
- Major improvements and refurbishments £5m per annum

As the Deputy has pointed out in his question the Whitehead review is still in the consultation phase and no decisions have yet been reached about the future of social housing provision or the long term issues relating to funding. As we begin to consider what we will do, I believe that it is vital that we do so in the context of the wider budgetary issues facing the States as a whole.

Addressing the funding shortfall is not something which the Housing Department can do on its own. The available options, which include a reduced annual return to Treasury, rent increases, sales of properties or borrowing against future rental income, all have implications for either the Treasury or Social Security. Detailed analysis is being undertaken and both of those departments are being consulted with.

Professor Whitehead suggests, and I tend to agree with her, that greater levels of efficiency are possible by freeing the Department from the bureaucracy of the current system. Such steps are vital if the Department is to be able to react to the changing needs of our population and make best use of the existing social housing stock.

Notwithstanding the under funding, the Department is making significant inroads into the maintenance backlog. 105 sales to tenants and 24 open market sales have generated over £30m; all of that sale income has been ring-fenced and used for refurbishment or development works. 7 significant projects with a total value of £26.85m have already been completed, another £18m is due to be spent in 2010 including £5.8m on 34 new homes at Salisbury Crescent. The Department is trail blazing in respect of the construction element of the fiscal stimulus programme which has already seen 4 projects successfully tendered and a further 9 projects out to tender including Phase 2 of Le Squez.