

**WRITTEN QUESTION TO THE MINISTER FOR HOUSING
BY DEPUTY G.P. SOUTHERN OF ST. HELIER
ANSWER TO BE TABLED ON TUESDAY 17th APRIL 2012**

Question

Will the Minister explain to members why he has refused my request to release the Wilcox report which contains some of the evidence which has been used in the production of the proposals for future housing policies?

Does the Minister accept that members should have access to all relevant research on which policies are based before being called to vote on such policies?

Will the Minister state whether he (or other Ministers) have commissioned other research in developing the proposals for funding affordable housing and, if so, will he agree to release this work so that members can fully assess the proposals in the light of the relevant evidence, and if not, why not?

Answer

The draft report in question was prepared by Professor Steven Wilcox of the University of York working as an Associate to Sector Financial Services Limited as part of the Housing Transformation Programme.

The draft report reviewed the current arrangements for rent policy and the linkage with the housing component of Income Support and identified some potential drivers for change, but remained in draft form as it did not include a sufficiently comprehensive social and economic impact assessment, nor did it recommend any preferred option.

Separate work is being undertaken by the Social Security Department to complete the social and economic impact assessment with a view to recommending any changes considered necessary to the method of setting private sector housing component of Income Support as a result of proposed changes to rent policy. I confirmed in my answer to Written Question 6754 that these proposals will be put to the States in parallel with the proposals for Housing reform. There is no intent to progress Professor Wilcox's work further.

The draft Joint Review of Rent Policy and the Housing Component of Income Support report therefore falls under the definition of "policy in development" as defined within section 35 of the Freedom of Information (Jersey) Law 2011 as it is not a completed report nor would it be appropriate to publish it given that my colleague the Minister for Social Security has not set out his findings on the matter.

It is of course reasonable for States Members to request to see relevant background information and research that has formed the basis of formulated policy.

The Achieving Decent Homes White Paper published as a Report au Greffe on 12th April has been informed by considerable work carried out by my Department with support from colleagues in the Chief Ministers, Treasury and Resources and Social Security Departments and appointed advisers. Whether or not this comes under the heading of "research" I will be happy to accommodate any reasonable request for background information made by any States Member on the subject matter within the White Paper.