

**WRITTEN QUESTION TO THE MINISTER FOR HOUSING
BY DEPUTY G.P. SOUTHERN OF ST. HELIER
ANSWER TO BE TABLED ON TUESDAY 16th APRIL 2013**

Question

What consideration has the Minister given to the findings of the 2012 Housing Affordability Survey and the high housing cost overburden revealed in the Better Life Index 2013?

Answer

I do not believe that the findings of the 2012 Housing Affordability Survey have yet been published by the Statistics Unit; therefore, I am unable to comment until I have seen the final report.

The Better Life Index 2013 highlights a number of issues; however it is my opinion that on the whole the report shows Jersey as a desirable place to live, with people:-

- in employment - *“(78%) of the working age population in Jersey are employed”*
- earning above average salary – *“in Jersey, annual gross earnings were higher than in Great Britain (\$44,600) and substantially higher than the average for the OECD (\$35,900)”*
- enjoying a good work life balance - *“a small percentage of employees in Jersey work long hours”*
- in better general health than a lot of their European counterparts - *“People in Jersey also rate their general health highly, with 85% of adults reporting that they are in either good to excellent health”*
- are happy with their current housing - *“In 2012, 93% of adults in Jersey reported being either ‘very’ or ‘fairly’ satisfied overall with their current housing”*
- have more space in their homes than people in the UK *each Jersey resident occupied 2.0 rooms on average marginally more living space, on average, than those living in the U.K, where the average number of rooms per person was 1.8”*
- think Jersey is a good place to live - *“On a scale of 0 to 10 Jersey residents rated their overall life satisfaction as 7.5 on average. Life satisfaction in Jersey is higher than in all OECD countries except Norway and Denmark”*

Overburdening is clearly an issue in the Island as it is in the UK, it considers all elements of housing related costs, such as actual rents paid, the costs of utilities (water, gas, electricity and heating) and other services, regular maintenance and repairs by home owners. The cost of running a home can be very expensive for some Islanders.

It is for that reason that my proposals for reform are so vital, I want to see Regulation brought in for the social rented sector so we are providing well maintained and appropriate accommodation, at the right rent levels.

My proposals, if approved, will also see the establishment of a Strategic Housing Unit, which will, amongst other things, undertake the following responsibilities;

- developing a robust cross-tenure Island Housing Strategy
- championing the Supply of Homes
- proposing new affordable housing products to meet the needs identified through the new Affordable Housing Gateway
- proposing and updating a Jersey Social Housing Standard
- the development of housing policy within a States-wide strategic policy framework
- proposing and delivering the social housing rent policy
- proposing the criteria for eligibility for social housing on the Island through the Affordable Housing Gateway

The Strategic Housing Unit will focus on these matters and be able to develop housing policy in line with other social policy, taking full account of the valuable information being generated from such surveys as the Better Life Index and Housing Affordability Survey.