

**WRITTEN QUESTION TO THE MINISTER FOR HOUSING
BY DEPUTY G.P. SOUTHERN OF ST. HELIER
ANSWER TO BE TABLED ON TUESDAY 8th OCTOBER 2013**

Question

Will the Minister state why, in the face of the most recent numbers of applicants for 2 and 3 bed social rented homes (490 and 291 respectively) he continues to advertise social rented houses for sale at discounted prices, with the result that several of these properties remain empty despite there being many households living in overcrowded conditions?

Answer

There seems to be a notion that P.6/2007 deferred payment sales have had a negative effect on the amount of social housing available. This is not correct, in fact it is quite the opposite. All of the deferred payment sales have been to social housing tenants. Those tenants could not afford to buy in the private sector and so would have remained tenants. The sale of a home to them represents a tenure change and the impact on the social housing stock has been negligible. £31m has been generated from these sales, all of which has been reinvested in to the stock either to develop new homes or for major refurbishment projects.

Members will recall the Full Business Case (R.15) which supported P.33/2013 sets out that over 20 years some 330 homes will be sold to persons qualifying for affordable housing and specifically states that *'The sale of 330 properties includes 30 sales prior to the commencement of the new Housing Company on 1 July 2014. The proceeds from the sale of properties part fund the stock development and associated borrowing until repaid in year 16.'*

Members will also be aware that the Strategic Housing Unit has now been established to look at Island wide housing strategy. The Housing Department is not the only provider being required to meet the demand on the Gateway, the Trusts must and will also play their part. It is the lack of new social housing supply overall that has been stifling the waiting list, not the comparatively small amount of sales.

As I say there has been a lack of new housing supply during the recent economic downturn. However, new rental sites are still being developed, notably at Langtry Gardens (80 units), Le Squez 2c (24 units), Lesquende Phase 1 (35 units) and 2-4 Journeaux Street (9 units). Additional developments which will start shortly include, the Former Le Coin site (23 units), Le Squez 3 & 4 (137 units) and Lesquende Phase 2 (44 units). These developments contain the right mix of homes to meet the needs of current tenants needing to downsize and this will in turn allow existing homes to be utilised better and go a significant way to meeting the needs of those on the Gateway. There is no room for complacency, more homes are required still and I look forward to debating the proposals in the Draft Island Plan Review in due course, which are essential if we are to meet the demand for social housing that is clearly demonstrated by the Housing Gateway Waiting List and in the Statistics Unit's Jersey's Housing Assessment 2013-2015.