

5.7 Deputy J.A. Martin of the Minister for Housing regarding the sale of housing stock:

Have there been any discussions with local housing trusts regarding the possible introduction of a scheme to provide for sale their housing stock to existing tenants in an initiative similar to the Right-to-Buy scheme in the U.K. and if not, why not?

The Deputy of Trinity (The Minister for Housing):

I am pleased to say I have held very positive discussions with the affordable housing providers about supporting greater home ownership. However I am in favour of such trust schemes, but this policy needs to be matched with additional supply to ensure there is no reduction in the net supply of affordable rental homes.

5.7.1 Deputy J.A. Martin:

It is open to any Andium housing tenant to buy any property, even if it is not the property they are living in. Is this right transferable across the housing trusts, i.e. a 3-bedroom house comes vacant in Andium, you have a tenant in a trust who wants to buy. Are they at this present time even made that offer? Is it not total double standards? The Minister wants to sell a certain amount of homes. Surely they are all social housing stock, the majority all funded by money from the States.

The Deputy of Trinity:

The principle is right but Andium sell approximately 15 or so homes a year on a deferred payment scheme and this has been in place since 2008. The level is sustainable at this present rate, but to put it out to more social providers we need to increase the housing stock. Otherwise if that unit is sold it can be out of social rental *ad infinitum*.

5.7.2 Deputy M. Tadier:

The Minister is correct to be concerned about protecting the housing stock but does she agree that in circumstances where properties are sold-off to tenants, where appropriate it is imperative we have a proper ring-fence system so that those properties remain as affordable homes and a system, perhaps whereby first refusal is given back to Andium or the social housing Gateway is put in place before any of these properties are sold-off?

The Deputy of Trinity:

Yes, and Andium do that as I understand it. If someone has bought a house and they wish to sell it for whatever reason I think it is right they have to sell it back to Andium so they can relocate it, either selling it on or put it back into social rental.

5.7.3 Deputy M. Tadier:

Will the Minister undertake that similar provisions should be extended to other social housing providers if that is also going on?

The Deputy of Trinity:

I am standing up, Sir, with my leg up and down. I would like to think it could be extended to other social housing providers but they need to increase their stock. Some of the social housing providers are very small, cushioned together and they have very small stock. So, if you take out even 2 or 3 the stock is gone, and going back to increasing more supply, which I hope we can do with the fields that have been rezoned in the Island Plan.

5.7.4 Deputy G.P. Southern:

Referring to the sustainability of what the Minister is doing, does she accept that any sales are likely to make the system less sustainable in that we have a proven shortage of social rental homes

and can she update Members on how many people are waiting on the list in Band 1 and how many sales she has made in the last quarter?

The Deputy of Trinity:

There are quite a few parts there. It needs to be sustainable and Andium with their business plan feel that 15 or so houses are sustainable until we get new supply up and running. Regarding the Gateway numbers, I have them here and I am happy to circulate. As of May 2015 in Gateway there were 1,082 and Band 1 was 222. This shows a decrease compared to June 2014 of 1,269. I am happy to circulate those numbers.

5.7.5 Deputy A.D. Lewis:

Provided they are sold at a reasonable price, surely the funds can then be recycled back into the system enabling more homes to be built. This unfortunately did not happen during the Thatcher era in the U.K. and a huge number of homes were sold and not replaced. Can the Minister confirm that the funds are being recycled and then put back into more social housing in which case you could expedite the process and provide more funds for more homes over a shorter period?

[10:30]

The Deputy of Trinity:

It is being recycled, so to speak, back into Andium but it still comes down to physically building the stock. The Island Plan has rezoned some sites as we know and they are on an 80/20 split with Samarés and De La Mare, so there will be some more units coming on line, and those 2 sites have identified 55 new affordable units for sale. So, it is coming but it will not happen overnight, unfortunately.

5.7.6 Deputy J.A. Martin:

I was prompted to bring this question because we have the Gateway where everybody goes in. You may be allocated Andium or you may be allocated a housing trust. My concern is to do with voids in Andium. Some very desirable properties, normally 3 beds, I know are waiting 7 to 8 months, even a year because they cannot get an Andium tenant to buy them. They cannot buy them because they cannot get the mortgage. There may be a tenant who is just a few years back been put in a housing trust who has the funds. It is about equity. It is about asking those tenants who are all social housing tenants whether they would like to buy the Andium property. It is done across Andium and I would like the Minister to assure the House that this is something she will look into seriously. I am not asking for the amount tomorrow to be sold-off. I am asking for all social tenants to be treated the same.

The Deputy of Trinity:

I would like to think they are all treated the same. I would like to extend this more but at the end of the day it is lack of stock, and we know that we have not built as many houses as we need. There is a need and hopefully, with the bonds that have been secured, that building is taking place. We know that Ann Court will be for social rentals but that is going to take 2 or 3 years to come off. We need to get on and build.