

**WRITTEN QUESTION TO THE MINISTER FOR HOUSING
BY DEPUTY S.Y. MÉZEC OF ST. HELIER
ANSWER TO BE TABLED ON TUESDAY 1st DECEMBER 2015**

Question

Given the dramatic effect on levels of Relative Low Income that housing costs were shown to have had in the Income Distribution Survey 2014/15, what measures, if any, will the Minister be looking at to bring down rental costs to ensure that no more families end up living in poverty?

Is the Minister considering any changes to the current policy, and what thought, if any, will the Minister give to introducing rent control and to an empty property tax to encourage landlords not to leave properties empty in an effort to drive up rents?

Answer

The Housing Strategy that has been proposed is clear – Jersey needs better and affordable housing. This is why the Housing Strategy sets out four clear objectives – more housing supply, best use of our housing stock, better neighbourhoods, and improved standards.

The primary means of supporting affordability is to deliver an adequate supply of new, good standard housing for our population, while also getting the most out of our existing housing, including reviewing options to get empty homes back into use.

This means using the £250 million housing bond to deliver on the re-zoned sites, to get the most out of existing housing sites, and to improve standards across the board. Alongside this delivery of social housing, the Council of Ministers is focussed on supporting a strong economy to help with the delivery of new private sector housing. The Scrutiny Panel have been very clear that we need deliver more housing.

Our plans will deliver at least 1,000 affordable homes and 3,000 open market homes over the course of the Island Plan.

Evidence shows that rent controls can reduce investment in the rental sector, and thereby reduce supply and quality, and distort the market.

It is vital that we have appropriate data on recent trends. The forthcoming rental price index, which will be published by the Statistics Unit in February 2016, will further inform this debate.

The Income Distribution Survey shows that people in social housing, in particular those of working age, have found the climate difficult. This needs further analysis, and no conclusions should be drawn in advance. In doing this, however, we cannot undermine the funding models that underpin the much needed investment and additional supply of social housing, and need to focus on the objectives outlined in the Housing Strategy.