

2015.06.16

**5.6 Deputy G.P. Southern of the Minister for Housing regarding void times reported by Andium Homes:**

Can the Minister account for the increase in void times reported by Andium Homes, due apparently to an increase in refusals through the Affordable Housing Gateway, and advise what measures are under consideration to improve this apparent inefficiency?

**Deputy A.E. Pryke of Trinity (The Minister for Housing):**

Applicants refuse offers for a variety of reasons across all social housing providers, Andium Homes and the other housing trusts. For example, they may not like the area the property is located in or consider the property is not in a good condition or does not meet their specific requirements. Having a void property is an inefficient use of housing stock so when an offer is refused we need to understand the reasons for this and make sure that any concerns are reasonable. In these situations Andium Homes will work with the Gateway team to identify suitable applicants for the homes that become available.

**5.6.1 Deputy G.P. Southern:**

If there has been an increase in void times up to a month, I believe, which is quite significant, it must surely mean that the process through which applicants are allocated to particular housing has increased inefficiency. Certainly, whenever I have advised people applying to social housing I suggested they be very specific about what their needs are and what type of accommodation they want and where they should be going. This obviously seems to be not happening with the new team. What measures can she take to make sure the system gets more efficient in the short term?

**The Deputy of Trinity:**

We want the system as efficient as we possibly can and the Gateway team works extremely closely with the applicants as well as the social housing providers. But if there are any reasons why the information given to the Gateway team is wrong or not quite as full as possible then obviously that does take time. But people do refuse, as I said, for a variety of reasons and location or perhaps the condition of the property is not how they would expect it to be, unfortunately, and that results in the times of empty houses taking a bit longer.

**5.6.2 Deputy G.P. Southern:**

The Minister has failed to address the core of the question, which is what she can do about the fact that the system appears to have got worse. I accept that people refuse particular offers of accommodation for whatever reasons. Nonetheless the facts state the system has got worse and what steps will she take to improve this in the short term?

**The Deputy of Trinity:**

As I said, I do not think I quite agree that the system has got worse. There is one per cent, which is about 60 void properties at a time and, as I said, that is one per cent of Andium's total housing stock of over 4,500, bearing in mind that they have significant investment to make the properties up to decent home standards. That does take time until we have played catch-up. But in the short term Andium has just launched a choice-based letting scheme for those applicants in Gateway's 1 and 2 Bands and this is a pilot and it has been very successful and they hope to roll it out more in the foreseeable future.

**5.6.3 Deputy T.A. Vallois of St. John:**

Could the Minister advise whether there is an allocations policy and who it applies to, whether it is the Gateway or whether it is Andium Homes, and when it was last reviewed?

**The Deputy of Trinity:**

The allocation policy sits with the Gateway team. As they know, there are 6 bands, Band 1 and 2 being the highest priority, especially Band 1. That is under review at this present moment in time.

**5.6.4 The Deputy of St. John:**

Would the Minister be able to advise when that review will end and will the Members will be able to have a copy of that?

**The Deputy of Trinity:**

I think the review should finish by the next couple of months. As regarding Members having a copy, I will wait and see what the review says first. If it is appropriate I will release it to Members.

**5.6.5 Deputy G.P. Southern:**

The Minister has failed again to answer the questions as to what she is going to do about this clearly signalled deterioration in the service. Nonetheless could she take the opportunity to explain to Members a little more detail, clarify what the choice-based system of Band 1 and Band 2 involves?

**The Deputy of Trinity:**

I am happy to send that information around to States Members. It is when a limited number of vacant properties in the Andium stocks are advertised and they are advertised to households in Band 1 or Band 2, and then the households themselves can express an interest in which properties would suit their needs. Once the interests have been received then the manager can carry out an assessment and has allocated a property according to the highest ranking applicant. It has been very successful and I am happy to send out more information about it.