

2017.01.30

13 Deputy M. Tadier of the Minister for Housing regarding the Minister's work in reducing the number of lower-income households in 'rental stress': [1(89)]

Given the 2015 report on Housing Affordability in Jersey, published in December 2016, stated that "almost three-quarters (73 per cent) of lower-income households living in qualified private rental accommodation could be considered to be in 'rental stress'", what measurable steps, if any, will the Minister take to ensure that this figure is significantly reduced?

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

I recognise the challenge facing low-income households in the private rental sector. This is why we are building more than 1,000 affordable homes by 2020. More supply will help to reduce the upward pressure on housing costs and ensure that low-income households have access to good standard homes with long-term security and certainty over rents.

4.13.1 Deputy M. Tadier:

Would the Minister state whether she knows who own the homes, the private rental homes, that these 73 per cent of low-income households currently live in?

The Deputy of Trinity:

No, that is something that the Housing Strategic Unit would not have.

4.13.2 Deputy G.P. Southern:

The Minister keeps on coming up with this statement that she is going to build 1,000 homes by 2020. How many homes did she build in 2015 and 2016?

The Deputy of Trinity:

I can give the Deputy a list. That is no problem but as he knows building does not happen overnight. It takes time to prepare the site and go through Planning and, if necessary, planning appeals. But, as he knows, the Jersey College for Girls site, College Gardens, is in the process of being built and Jersey Homes Trust are building 26 houses, if I remember rightly, down at Grouville. Summerland will hopefully go through Planning later on this year, as will Ann Court. Unfortunately it does take a lot of preparation to get anywhere.

4.13.3 Deputy G.P. Southern:

Supplementary, if I may. I am aware that it takes time to build houses. I think everybody can do that. Nonetheless we have had a Minister for Housing for the past 5 years and to be looking at relatively small numbers of housing in 2015/2016 says that we are not building enough. What faith can the public out there put in this current Minister that these 1,000 houses are going to be delivered in any sort of timescale whatsoever?

The Deputy of Trinity:

I have great confidence. He is quite right that we still need to build more and we will continue to build more. The homes are being built. He knows that in Planning, as I have just said, we have regular meetings with the officer from the Environment Department who keeps a check that houses are being built and we are according to plan. Most of the houses will come on line 2018 to 2019 and beyond.

4.13.4 Deputy J.A. Martin of St. Helier:

To follow on because Deputy Southern stole my thunder, it is basically the question that this 1,000 figure in 2020 and we are already in 2017, is a bit ... when you hear 26 here and a possible 50 there. Could the Minister then undertake to write down exactly where these 1,000 houses are coming from, when they will be completed even if at 2019, so we know we have something to hold her or the next Minister for Housing to account? Where are they, when will they be delivered and will it be 1,000 by 2020 because I think that is a real push?

The Deputy of Trinity:

Yes, I am very happy to do that. I can give that phase 4 of Le Squez will be 151 houses, the low rise of La Collette will be 147. We know that has had significant delay and Summerland 87, 152 from Ann Court and 24 from Convent Court and 400 from 50 other sites. I am quite happy to give the Deputy that list.

Deputy J.A. Martin:

I would like a full list going up to 2020 and the deliverable dates and the exact amount, please. That is what I did ask for in the original question.

The Deputy of Trinity:

Of course I am very happy to do that.

4.13.5 Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

Could the Minister, if she can, attempt to remind Members what the net inward migration figures over the past few years have been and correspond to that with how many new houses have been built in the Island and then attempt to justify how any of us can have any faith whatsoever that this Government has its housing policy right when its population policy is all over the place?

The Deputy of Trinity:

Just because you cannot see houses there, there is a lot of preparation that goes behind all this work. It just does not happen overnight. I wish it did but I have said many times there is a significant need for housing. We know that with housing on the Gateway but rest assured to Members there is a great deal of work done behind it to check the figures we need in the Housing Needs Survey. The Housing Needs Survey that came out in the middle of last year showed that we are more or less on line by 2020. But quite right; we need to keep an eye on those figures and keep the pressure on.

4.13.6 Deputy M. Tadier:

I have heard of the emperor's new clothes but it seems that we are talking about invisible homes now. Just because we cannot see them does not mean they are not there. I am sure I am misquoting the Minister. Does the Minister accept that even if she is successful in building 1,000 new homes or Jersey builds 1,000 new homes in the next 5 years, we have already had a net population increase last year of 1,700 people and in the last 5 years we have had a population increase of 5,290 according to the Government's own statistics and that even if there was no population increase at all we still could not be building the homes quick enough? Does the Minister accept that we need to look beyond the tired old excuse of homebuilding and we need to look at new and perhaps radical ways to make sure that quality and affordability of homes, both in the private rental sector, social and for ownership, becomes just that; affordable and with minimum standards imposed? Will she take the opportunity to bring forward a meaningful policy and encourage her Council of Ministers to bring forward a meaningful population policy, because the 2 are very much interlinked?

The Deputy of Trinity:

There are a lot of different questions in there. As you know, there is a population policy in place. The Assistant Chief Minister has said in this Assembly, it will come back to the States to have various workshops later on this year and also we are sitting with H.A.W.A.G. (Housing and Work Advisory Group) we are much tighter on the number of permissions that we give. It is not just one arm. It is various arms. But bearing in mind that people who come in cannot access social housing until they have been here for 5 years or later. But the work still needs to be done and we have the finger on the pulse, as I said, with the housing strategy that I launched last year.