

2018.10.23

**2 Senator S.C. Ferguson of the Minister for Children and Housing regarding the decanting of residents from Convent Court: [OQ.158/2018]**

Given there is a shortage of social rented housing, will the Minister explain why the residents decanted from Convent Court are not being returned to the refurbished flats?

**Senator S.Y. Mézec (The Minister for Children and Housing):**

When refurbishment work is carried out in Andium properties, Andium do send teams around to meet with the residents to understand what their needs are and see how they can be met. Of course, we recognise that sometimes this can be tricky to do. But the Senator will be aware that, just before Convent Court was refurbished, Caesarea Court, across the road, was refurbished, which meant that there was an opportunity to offer those in Convent Court the chance to live in properties just across the road, with the same neighbours and community and amenity space, but in properties that were much better quality. Not all tenants wanted to do this and for various reasons some wanted to move elsewhere, but all of these moves were successfully facilitated. It is not often the case that tenants wish to move twice, firstly out of the property when it is being refurbished to start their life somewhere else and somewhere new, only to then go back a year later when the refurbishments are complete. But if the Senator is aware of anybody, who would like to move back to Convent Court then she should get in touch and we will look at that opportunity because they may well end up freeing up a property elsewhere, which could be used for somebody who wants to move out of Hue Court and does not want to move into Convent Court. So, there are opportunities but I ask the Senator to get in touch if she is aware of residents who have that preference.

**5.2.1 Senator S.C. Ferguson:**

According to the *Jersey Evening Post*, part of Convent Court is to be used by doctors, presumably locum doctors and locum social services officers, who are being brought over. Would the Minister confirm that?

**Senator S.Y. Mézec:**

It is our policy now that where possible we should endeavour to ensure that key workers in Jersey are accommodated as well as possible. We know this is incredibly important for the Island, given what we were told in the Care Inquiry and the Care Commission reports that say that moving to the Island and setting up a life here has been difficult. I think that when we have States-owned bodies like Andium that we can use to meet our policy objectives and not rely on the private sector, which sometimes is not capable of delivering on these, then I think that is a good thing.

**5.2.2 Deputy G.P. Southern:**

The Minister has mentioned the linkage with Hue Court. Could he inform Members - and the public for that matter - of the timescale attached to this transition and decanting from Hue Court?

**Senator S.Y. Mézec:**

The Deputy has caught me off guard there in that I cannot recall that. I was not anticipating that as a supplementary question. I will get that to him within a few hours, as my officers will be listening.

**5.2.3 Deputy G.P. Southern:**

Can the Minister accept that I will talk to him at the next parliamentary party meeting?

**Senator S.Y. Mézec:**

Yes, I can accept that.

**5.2.4 Deputy M.R. Higgins:**

Will the Minister say it is not only junior doctors that we have a problem of attracting to the Island, we have teachers and we have many other sorts of professionals? Andium has responsibility for also providing social housing to residents of the Island, who are already here. How is the Minister going to balance the 2?

[10:00]

**Senator S.Y. Mézec:**

It is a good question. There is a report that is due to come out very shortly, which will outline proposals on what we can do to support key workers moving to the Island. I can understand why some might have some concern when there are residents in the Island who need decent homes to live in, and Andium is going to play an important part in delivering that. There is a balance to be struck though. In many ways this is chicken-and-egg in that if we do not have decent housing options for key workers then we will not attract key workers when we so desperately need them in areas. So, I accept that it is a difficult balance to strike.

**5.2.5 Deputy G.P. Southern:**

Once again, the Minister is a bit loose with his timescales, “shortly” expecting to see a report on the housing Gateway and housing demand. We have been waiting for this for the last 6 months; when are we going to see it?

**Senator S.Y. Mézec:**

I agree and I had hoped that this would be published before summer, but that has not been the case. This will be published absolutely by the end of the year, I give that guarantee. I had a discussion with officers yesterday about the future housing needs report and again we are hoping for that one to be published in the next few weeks. But there are various people we need to show it to before we make it public.

**5.2.6 Senator S.C. Ferguson:**

Does it not seem grossly incompetent of the Future Hospital Planning Board to end up in a position where they need to occupy much-needed social rented housing for residents? Will the Minister take this policy back to the Council of Ministers in order to find a more satisfactory solution?

**Senator S.Y. Mézec:**

If the Senator is making comments about the handling of properties that had previously been used to occupy health staff then perhaps there is a legitimate point in there, but the properties that are currently being used for some of these workers are simply not good enough anymore and something has to be done about it. We can either sit on our hands and do nothing or we can use a States-owned company to deliver on our strategic priorities.

**5.2.7 Senator S.C. Ferguson:**

Why should the residents suffer because of the incompetence of some of the civil servants?

**Senator S.Y. Mézec:**

I absolutely disagree with such an allegation and, as the Senator will know if she listened to my opening answer, that the residents from Convent Court have had solutions provided to them and

many of them are now living in properties that are substantially better quality than what they were living in before. **[Approbation]**