

2018.11.06

**1 Deputy K.F. Morel of St. Lawrence of the Minister for Children and Housing regarding measures to improve the affordability of housing in the private sector: [OQ.173/2018]**

Following the Minister's recent decision to limit rises in social housing rents, what measures, if any, is he investigating to improve the affordability of housing in the private sector?

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

I have said that I want to pursue a similar policy in relation to private sector rents. In my response to the Rent Controls e-petition I stated that one of the options we will consider is rent stabilisation measures that require landlords to provide longer leases with restricted in-tenancy rent increases. This is just one of a number of measures that I will consider in order to improve the quality and affordability of private rented accommodation in Jersey. One of my other priorities, for example, is to introduce a ban on particular letting agent fees for tenants.

**4.1.1 Deputy K.F. Morel:**

Thank you for your response. When you are assessing these different measures that you are looking at, are you modelling how they may affect the markets or are you just going to try new measures and see what happens?

**Senator S.Y. Mézec:**

That is a good question. There are some measures that I included in the Rent Controls petition's response, other than the ones I have just mentioned that the States has already made the decision to pursue, so from my position it is just a case of implementation. But later this year the Council of Ministers is going to consider a terms of reference for a Housing Policy Development Board and some of that work will be undertaken by that Policy Development Board, which will want to utilise the expertise that we can have available to us, and I am sure that modelling will be part of that process.

**4.1.2 Deputy S.M. Wickenden of St. Helier:**

I thought, after seeing this question, I would peruse the Senator's manifesto where one of the comments on it on page 24 is that if a Reform Jersey member becomes Minister for Children and Housing in the next Government they will ban letting agent fees for tenants immediately. Could he give us an update on his timescales please?

**Senator S.Y. Mézec:**

I am glad he studied the manifesto in detail; it is a fantastic read and I am very pleased that we are delivering on many of the policies we had in that manifesto, including one of our pledges, which was to investigate rents measures and we envisaged that this would take some time to do and that is of course what the Housing Policy Development Board will do. Upon becoming Minister for Children and Housing I immediately asked my officers to put together options for looking at letting agent fees because there is ongoing work in the U.K. (United Kingdom) at the moment with the Tenancy Act that they are looking to put forward there, and I have had a set of options put to me and I will be examining those and hope to report back shortly on what progress we can make with those. I do not envisage that is something that the Housing Policy Development Board will need to look at because I think it is more simple than that.

**The Bailiff:**

We come to question 2. I think question 2 falls away; the comments have been lodged?

**Deputy M. Tadier of St. Brelade:**

May I make a comment? I find it unfortunate that a Back-Bencher effectively bringing this proposition has to lodge a question asking for the comments. There were lots of emails going back and forward to the Minister for Health and Social Services and the comments were already available on Wednesday and I see no reason that they could not have been published and it effectively means that I have had to waste a question in order to get comments that should have been publicly available for this debate.

**The Bailiff:**

Minister, do you want to say anything?

**Deputy R.J. Renouf of St. Ouen:**

I would be grateful to respond. I do not really understand why the Deputy is so anxious about this. We had a useful meeting on Wednesday I think in which I shared with the Deputy what were then draft comments. The Deputy indicated that he would probably defer his proposition and Members will recall receiving an email from Deputy Tadier to that effect. I therefore decided to defer lodging the comments rather than release them at that time and cause confusion in the light of the Deputy's email that he was deferring the debate. Thereafter the Deputy changed his mind and I therefore lodged comments in the usual way within the time period.

**The Bailiff:**

We will stop there because the question has fallen away. No doubt it will be returned to during the debate later on this sitting. We come to question 3, which Deputy Southern will ask of the Minister for External Relations or the Assistant Minister.