

23.05.23

**16 Deputy M. Tadier of the Minister for Housing and Communities regarding the creation of a Digital Property Register of beneficial ownership (OQ.96/2023)**

The Chief Minister, thank you. Further to his answer to Written Question 177/2023, will the Minister confirm whether it is the Government's intention to create a digital property register of beneficial ownership for all residential properties and, if not, why not?

**Deputy K.L. Moore (The Chief Minister- rapporteur):**

Apologies from Deputy Warr that he has had to leave the Assembly, as he is giving a keynote speech at the Vacant Homes Conference in Birmingham today and he could not stay in the Assembly any longer, which is he is meeting his policy commitments, I think, and receiving great interest in other places for it. To answer this question, the Government is very interested in how we can get a better understanding of the housing market. It is vital to have high quality information so that we can make the right policy decisions. But a digital register of beneficial ownership for both residential and commercial properties is perhaps not the best way to do this. We recognise the need to improve information sharing, which is why officers are working on a housing data intelligence project, which is identifying trends, resolving housing supply data barriers and developing housing market analysis capability in partnership with Statistics Jersey and the Economics Unit. I have committed to a review of the States Assembly decisions; whether or not to create a digital register property ownership will form part of that. In the meantime, no further work will be done. The focus of the Government is clearly outlined in the 2023 Ministerial Plan and the legislative programme.

**3.16.1 Deputy M. Tadier:**

I know this Government could be criticised for inaction but certainly when it comes to making new nomenclature they are right up there with the best. The current policy position of the previous Assembly - and it has not been changed, it has not been rescinded - is that there should be a digital property register; it is what the Assembly had voted for. If this is no longer the case and Government no longer wishes to pursue a digital property register, will they be coming back with a rescindment to that proposition?

**Deputy K.L. Moore:**

As I think I outlined in the original response; that is something that is under consideration. Of course if that decision is taken then we will return to this Assembly to seek the approval of Members, as is of course the right thing to do. But what we have to consider is the information that we already have in place. There is of course a great deal of information available to the public and to the authorities with regards property ownership. In these times we are taking a great amount of time to consider how best we are spending money and how best we are employing officials as well to work on behalf of the public. We have to ensure value for money and that means ensuring that we are not duplicating work and effort simply to be able to tick a box. We are taking time to ensure and reassure ourselves of what information is available publicly and what will be the most expedient and cost-efficient way to deliver the information.

**3.16.2 Deputy R.J. Ward:**

Can I just ask the Chief Minister now what the timescale for some outcome from I think it was referred to as the Housing Intelligence Unit, sounds interesting; perhaps it is a smart home. Apologies, I could not resist. What is the timescale for an outcome from that?

**Deputy K.L. Moore:**

I am afraid I do not have that to hand. But, as I mentioned in the earlier answer, this piece of work is outlined in the Ministerial Plan of this year.

**3.16.3 Deputy R.J. Ward:**

Can I ask for an assurance as well, and it is a wider assurance which I think does fit into this question, about the use of rescindments? Because if an action agreed on by this Assembly is not going to be acted on, can I ask the Minister to assure, particularly with this one and any other, that a rescindment is brought to this Assembly so that we do not have empty propositions just being left with the disregard from the current Government?

**The Bailiff:**

I think if we limit the question to this particular area, then that is within the ...

**Deputy K.L. Moore:**

That is very helpful, Sir. Because my mind immediately went to some random pieces of legislation that I have become aware of recently, that have not been enacted. It is certainly not a novel experience for the Assembly and previous Governments to fail to progress on matters that were agreed by the previous Assembly. But what I do reassure Members is that we take value for money extremely seriously and we want to ensure that we deliver the best possible services for the best value and that is an important thing to focus on in this term of Government.

**The Bailiff:**

Final supplementary, Deputy Tadier.

**Deputy M. Tadier:**

Sir, I do not have a further question. Thank you.