

STATEMENTS ON A MATTER OF OFFICIAL RESPONSIBILITY

6. Senator T.J. Le Main (The Minister for Housing) - Statement regarding the withdrawal of the proposition regarding the establishment of a housing trading organisation

The Deputy Bailiff:

Now, there is nothing under J so, we come to K, Statements on a matter of official responsibility and the Minister for Housing will make a statement regarding the withdrawal of the proposition regarding the establishment of a housing trading organisation lodged au Greffe on the 27th September 2005. Minister.

Senator T.J. Le Main (Minister for Housing):

I wish to notify the Assembly of the reasons for my decision to withdraw the proposition on the establishment of a housing trading organisation (P.211 of 2005). The report and proposition was lodged au Greffe on the 26th September 2005 by the former Housing Committee and was due to be debated on the 28th March 2006. P.211 of 2005 dealt with 2 key issues, namely the funding of an extensive refurbishment programme for States rental accommodation and the long-term future of the Housing Department and the States housing by establishing a trading organisation. Since becoming Housing Minister I have concluded that it is not possible to deal with these issues in one proposition hence my decision to withdraw the same and approach the matters separately. It is vitally important to commence work on the much needed refurbishment programme for States rental accommodation. A simpler report and proposition will therefore be lodged as soon as possible. This will outline the need to carry out such works together with a detailed schedule and identified funding. In addition, it will specify a reduced list of property sales. These sales will help finance some of the refurbishment as well as increase the level of home ownership among States tenants. With regard to the long-term future of States housing and its management, it would be difficult for Members to consider any proposals until such time as a clear strategy is developed for the provision and management of social housing in the Island. I have therefore instructed the Housing Department to produce an in-depth and wide-ranging report on this matter. The report will form the basis of a proposition to be lodged towards the end of this year. This Assembly will then have the opportunity to debate a new strategy for social housing in the Island and, as such, the role that both States housing and housing trusts will play in this overall plan. The report will involve extensive consultation with all stakeholders and will of course be involving the Social Affairs Scrutiny Panel in this vital piece of work. Thank you.

6.1 The Deputy of St. Martin:

I draw the House's attention to the second paragraph, last sentence: "Since becoming Housing Minister I have concluded that it is not possible to deal with the issues in one proposition hence my decision to withdraw the same and approach matters separately." Could I ask why it was not possible when the Minister was the President of the Housing Committee? What changes have there been since becoming a Minister when, in fact, he was indeed the President when this particular proposition was lodged?

Deputy T.J. Le Main:

Well, the main difference is now, Sir, that we have managed to secure the support of the Council of Ministers in securing funding and that has a main implication on the whole programme. We have now got an agreed funding for a 5-year period from 2007.

6.2 Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

I wonder, Sir, if the Minister could inform us what will be the source of that funding for the refurbishment programme?

Deputy T.J. Le Main:

The Council of Ministers has agreed wholeheartedly in the Strategic Plan that funding of £7 million a year will take place for the next 5 years and quite a considerable sum of this money will come from the Housing Loans Development Fund. So, there is a huge opportunity now to move forward on the refurbishment et cetera of States housing.

6.3 Deputy G.P. Southern:

Will the Minister's wide-ranging review of policy include the foolhardy position of using Homes Trusts to fund future building?

Deputy T.J. Le Main:

I would urge that all Members write in - now that I have made this announcement and Members are aware what we are trying to achieve - to the department with any views on the subject. We would like to look at the whole issue of what role the Housing Trust plays, what role the Housing Department and the public play in the provision of home ownership of social rented homes et cetera. So, I would urge all Members to please talk to us, give us some ideas and advice and I promise to work with all the stakeholders including all the tenants and everybody who has got a stake in it.

6.4 Deputy G.P. Southern:

Again, what consideration has been given by the Housing Minister to the sale of current stock via shared equity to private banks and others?

Deputy T.J. Le Main:

Considerations will be given at the place and time.