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Deputy Steve Luce
Chair, Environment, Housing and Infrastructure Scrutiny Panel
BY EMAIL

26 August 2022

Dear Chair,

Housing – workstream updates and Ministerial priorities

Thank you for your letter last month, and for agreeing to an extension to my response. I would like to offer you my congratulations on your election to Scrutiny chair, and I echo the sentiments in your letter: I am very much looking forward to working productively with you and your Panel.

Your letter asked for information on various workstreams and updates:

i. Workstream updates including, but not limited to, updates on the implementation of the ‘Creating Better Homes’ action plan and, in particular, the current status of the drafting of proposed amendments to the Residential Tenancy Law.

With regards to the Creating Better Homes action plan, continuing work includes the following areas:

- Bring forward a government-backed affordable home purchase product
- Reinstate the Rent Control Tribunal
- Develop policy to support right sizing
- Expand statutory tenant protection through the Residential Tenancy Law
- Complete the review of the Affordable Housing Gateway and implement the agreed actions
- Continue work to review the use of share transfer contracts
- Supporting the implementation of customer-facing aspects of the CBH action plan as required
- Manage the associated grant payment to the Shelter Trust

Law drafting instructions for a new Residential Tenancy Law have been created. The new law will seek to (not limited to):

- Extend the scope of the law to create protections for a greater number of residents
- Balance measures for tenants and landlords
- Provide clarification on a number of areas such as evictions, peaceful enjoyment and uninhabitable premises
- Provide greater security of tenure through the creation of different tenancy types
- Provide for regulation and order-making powers, future proofing this area

Advice has been received from the Law Officers Department and slight amendments are currently being made to the instructions.

Once all amendments have been made the instructions will be sent to the Law Draftsmen. They have estimated that they will have resource to start this work in January.

ii. Ministerial priorities for the next 12 months.

As I hope you can appreciate, I have spent my first full month in office taking time to understand the complex challenges in Jersey's housing market. Therefore, my ministerial priorities are currently under development and cannot be shared at this time. I will, however, aim to deliver on the priorities set for me by the Chief Minister and, in particular, will be aiming to:

- Improve the supply and delivery of new homes
- Take actions to improve housing affordability
- Place a focus on ensuring that the quality of homes and security of tenure is improved

iii. An anticipated timetable of propositions under your ministerial remit which are likely to be lodged in the States for the remainder of 2022 and Q1 of 2023, as a starting point.

Unfortunately, it will not be possible to commit to a timetable of propositions at this time. I note that we are due to meet on 21 September, by which time I would hope to be in a position to share the progress made about anticipated propositions.

Please be assured that I recognise the importance of scrutiny engagement on such a critical issue for our Island and, whilst I have been unable to share my work in detail with you at this early stage, I look forward to building a positive working relationship with the Scrutiny Panel to work through policies that will provide a better outcome for Islanders.

I look forward to meeting the Panel next month.

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'David Warr', with a horizontal line underneath it.

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