

## **THE JERSEY HOMES TRUST**

Chairman's Statement to the HSSH Scrutiny Panel; April 2011

### Waiting Lists.

Waiting lists are an important tool in the management of social rented housing, in two respects:

1. They are a necessary means of listing prospective tenants as part of an allocations process aiming at fairness and consistency.
2. They can be a reliable and informative indicator of housing demand in the sector.

Waiting lists will be a valid indicator of demand only if the criteria for inclusion are not too rigid or exclusive. Excessively harsh criteria will, in fact, conceal unmet housing need.

It is understandable for a housing authority to filter applications for inclusion on waiting lists, for administrative reasons and in order not to offer unrealistic hope to applicants. There is a danger that lists may be manipulated (perfectly innocently) in order to match demand with supply and as a result the political incentive to create further need housing may be weakened.

The Jersey Homes Trust does not filter applications with the criteria utilised by the Housing Department. Many of the applicants on its waiting list would not succeed in getting on to Housing's waiting list. This gives the JHT the opportunity, occasionally, of allocating a home to persons in exceptional need who otherwise would fail to find the help they urgently require. Many applicants on JHT's list will never be helped, because they are already adequately housed or because there are so many other applicants in greater need. Although the situation is fully explained to such applicants (to avoid unrealistic hopes) they almost invariably request that their names remain on the list.

The JHT waiting list can readily be broken down into those applicants in genuine need and those not in significant need and could, therefore, be utilised as a reliable indicator of some unmet housing need. Need is measured by an assessment of adequacy of existing accommodation and/or financial circumstances of applicants.

It is important to note that despite the great variance between the waiting lists of the Housing department and JHT, actual allocations of homes by the two agencies follow close observances. The overall consideration is an assessment of the need of the individual applicants. Financial considerations and time spent on the list may influence final selection. The Housing Department nominate 80% of JHT tenants in new developments and 50% in re-lets. Many applicants' particulars are held on both waiting lists.

The JHT waiting list is administered by its appointed property manager. The JHT is the landlord of 744 homes, fully tenanted. In 2010 there were 47 re-lets, resulting in a mere 24 allocations from its own waiting list. Whilst every allocation is of great importance to the households concerned and is handled accordingly, I submit that the question of how the JHT's waiting list is administered is not of particular import in the general scheme of things.

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