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5<sup>th</sup> December 2024

Dear Sir,

**Letter of Comment – Requête P.2024/63 – Establishment of the Committee for Housing**

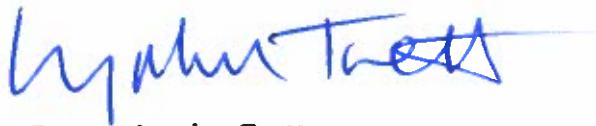
I refer to the above Requête which is scheduled for debate by the States of Deliberation at their meeting commencing 11<sup>th</sup> December 2024.

In accordance with Rule 28(2)(b) of the Rules of Procedure of the States of Deliberation and their Committees, the Policy & Resources Committee (“the Committee”) consulted with the Committee for the Environment & Infrastructure (“the CfE&I”), the Committee for Employment & Social Security (“the CfE&SS”) and the Development & Planning Authority (“the DPA”) on this matter and their replies are appended to this Letter of Comment.

In light of the outcome of the recent debate on the 2025 Budget, the Committee does not consider there is benefit in these proposals that warrants additional costs to the public purse and is unable to support the additional costs incurred in the administration and governance supporting an additional committee, as set out in Section W of the Requête.

Notwithstanding the above, the Committee acknowledges the need to continue to prioritise the development of policy proposals to address housing supply issues, and to this end had made allowance in the 2025 Budget for three additional substantive policy development officers to support the Committee for the Environment & Infrastructure. This was approved by the Assembly earlier this month and operating in an established and stable context should greatly assist in bringing forward housing and infrastructure proposals more quickly for the Assembly’s consideration. It will also remove any unintended consequences, and associated costs, that might otherwise be attracted by decoupling housing and infrastructure public service structures which currently employ the principles of matrix working i.e. working without demarcation across both housing and infrastructure.

Yours faithfully,



**Deputy Lyndon Trott**  
President

Enc.

- Rule 28 response – Development & Planning Authority
- Rule 28 response – Committee for Employment & Social Security
- Rule 28 response – Committee for the Environment & Infrastructure

The Vice-President  
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1<sup>st</sup> August 2024

Dear Deputy Soulsby,

**REQUÊTE – P.2024/63 ESTABLISHMENT OF COMMITTEE FOR HOUSING**

Thank you for your letter of 12<sup>th</sup> July 2024 requesting the D&PA's comments on the above Requête. As Requérants, Deputies Oliver and Kazantseva-Miller are recused from the Committee's discussion on this matter and have not been involved in formulating this response.

The D&PA have been proactively helping progress housing wherever possible and from its experience has some concerns that creating another Committee would add to rather than resolve coordination problems.

The Requête refers to the D&PA in paragraphs H and I, and to planning policy at point 12 of the policy, advisory and general responsibilities listed in the draft mandate at Appendix 1 of the Requête.

In paragraph H, the Requête states: *“Therefore, the Committee for Housing would take the lead on informing and driving policy direction involving any future reviews of the IDP policies with effect on homebuilding.”* Unfortunately, it is not clear what this would mean in practice. It is noted that, notwithstanding point 12 of the draft mandate, the Requête does not propose that there be any amendment to the mandate of the D&PA. Therefore, it is assumed that the D&PA's present responsibilities for planning policy development would remain unchanged, and that it would simply consult with the proposed new Committee at the appropriate stages of Plan preparation, in the same way as it does with the Committee for the Environment & Infrastructure and the Committee for Employment & Social Security currently.

However, should it be envisaged by the Requête that the proposed Committee for Housing would seek to take a more direct role in the formulation of planning policy than outlined above, then the D&PA would have concerns about the impact of this on the mandate of the D&PA and considers that potentially it would raise serious issues of conflict of interest, given the other responsibilities proposed in the mandate of the new Committee.

In paragraph I, the Requête states regarding the management of planning applications that: *"It is recommended that the new Committee for Housing develops a Service Level Agreement (SLA) with the D&PA focusing on service delivery to ensure Guernsey can meet the SSHI for housebuilding and the Committee for Housing work plan once it is developed next political term."* Whilst remembering that the approval of a planning application does not necessarily result in actual development taking place on the ground, the D&PA would have no objection to this proposal in principle, subject to the allocation of adequate resources to enable the Authority to fulfil any obligations provided for under such an SLA.

The Requérants have not outlined any benefits that may be derived from an SLA or provided any examples of historic cases where such an agreement may have assisted in the determination of applications so it is not clear what they seek to achieve. It should be noted that, in practice, where there is delay to the determination of a planning application, this is often for reasons which are beyond the control of the D&PA, for example waiting for consultation replies from other bodies or waiting for an applicant to provide amended plans or other information. In the event that the States seek to introduce an SLA, the detail would need to take account of such matters to ensure that it remained practical and meaningful.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "A Taylor".

**Deputy Andrew Taylor**  
Vice-President, Development & Planning Authority



The President  
Policy & Resources Committee  
Sir Charles Frossard Housing  
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2 August 2024

**By email**

Dear Deputy Trott

**REQUÊTE: ESTABLISHMENT OF THE COMMITTEE *FOR* HOUSING**

Thank you for the letter from the Vice-President of the Policy & Resources Committee (“P&RC”), dated 12 July 2024, consulting with the Committee for Employment & Social Security (“the Committee” or “CfESS”) on the above Requête, itself dated 1 July 2024, which has been scheduled for debate at the States Meeting due to commence on 4 September 2024.

The Committee has considered the content and Propositions of the Requête and has a number of comments that it hopes will be published by the P&RC to help inform debate on this item. The Committee shared a number of these comments with the Requérants prior to the final version of this Requête being prepared.

In summary, Members are of the view that the establishment of a dedicated Committee for Housing would not have the desired effect of accelerating delivery of the States strategic objectives on housing. Members agree that this outcome would most effectively be achieved through the provision of additional Housing Strategy staffing resource focused on the delivery of the various workstreams set out in the existing Guernsey Housing Plan (“the GHP”) which sets the strategic approach to housing for Guernsey.

The Committee understands that the Requérants believe the establishment of a dedicated Committee for Housing would lead to *“improved delivery, accountability, coordination, resourcing, communication, engagement, scrutiny, long-term planning and political ownership”*. The Committee has considered these intended outcomes in its response.

The current political structure was implemented following the last review of the machinery of government conducted by the States Review Committee (“SRC”) in 2016. The SRC identified that it would be beneficial to merge existing Committees where there were clear synergies and create a smaller number of Principal Committees with more holistic mandates. The SRC argued that “*distinctiveness and separation [were] no guarantee of prominence or success*”. The proposed establishment of a new Committee *for* Housing goes against this previously agreed sentiment. The Committee is of the view that rather than accelerating progress, it has the potential to complicate and slow down delivery of strategic housing objectives by adding to the number of Committees that will need to work together in a co-ordinated way.

The Committee believes there is considerable benefit in keeping policy and operational responsibility for States-owned social-rental housing, the Affordable Housing Development Programme, and the States’ relationship with housing associations under the same mandate as political responsibility for other forms of social assistance. This enables schemes of social assistance to be developed and delivered holistically. Should this synergy be broken then cross-committee working will need to be facilitated between the CfESS and the Committee *for* Housing to ensure that social housing policy development is aligned with social assistance policy development.

In addition to these cross-committee relationships, the Committee *for* Housing will also still need to communicate with the P&RC regarding funding for the Affordable Housing Development Programme and the regulation of the Guernsey Housing Association; with the Committee *for* Health & Social Care in respect of specialised housing policy; with the Committee *for* Home Affairs in respect of Population Management; with the Development & Planning Authority in respect of land supply and planning, and with a number of different committees in respect of demand for key-worker housing.

The Committee notes that the Requête proposes that the Committee *for* Housing should take responsibility for “*planning policy development on homebuilding for the Island Development Plan as well as operational delivery to ensure Guernsey is able to meet the SSHI for Affordable and private market homebuilding*”. Under the current political structure these responsibilities are necessarily held by different committees for the purposes of good governance. To move these under the responsibility of one committee would not be appropriate, with competing land uses potentially not being afforded political consideration with fair weight.

The Committee hopes the points above show that it is neither possible nor accordant with good governance for there to be, as the Requérants propose, “*one central voice and accountable body for all matters relating to delivery of housing*”.

The current synergy-based political structure has led to complementary changes in the way that the civil service supports government. Often policy and strategy officers are not tied to specific committees but work towards joint objectives such as those set out in the GHP. The Committee welcomes the suggestion in the Requête that two new policy officers should be employed, however, if it is possible to fund these two new roles, then the Committee feels that they could be tasked with delivering against the States' strategic priorities without needing to sit under a new Committee. The Committee understands that the CftE&I is planning to submit a budget request for additional policy and strategy resources to assist in the delivery of the cross-committee GHP. If this request were approved, then accelerated delivery of strategic housing objectives could be achieved within the current political structure.

If a separate Committee were to be established, additional resources above those directly involved in the delivery of strategic housing objectives would be needed. The Committee notes that the Requérants propose employing another Committee Secretary to assist with additional cross-committee policy coordination, but the Committee believes that dedicated administrative resource would also be needed. Separate meetings would need to be facilitated requiring agendas, papers, minutes and action lists to be prepared and maintained. Members do not believe there would be a significant reduction in administrative demand as a result of the proposed respective reductions in workload on housing matters for the CfESS and CftE&I. If additional strategy and policy delivery resource was added under the current political structure, there would be no need for additional coordination or administration resources and the funding could be better targeted at accelerating the delivery of strategic housing objectives providing a better return on investment for the States.

It should be noted that the establishment of a new Committee comes with political resourcing demands too. Responsibilities would need to be shared by the same number of politicians, with the same capacity, as at present. Arguably the creation of an additional Committee would not therefore lead to improved political focus. The proposed changes also open the door to other smaller Committees being created with the same political resource being spread even thinner, which is something the Committee cannot support.

In a similar vein, suggestions in the Requête for the Committee for Housing to “*facilitate better housing outcomes across the Bailiwick*” “*through regular engagement with the newly created Alderney Housing Working Group*” need to be considered from a financial and resourcing perspective. Housing is not a ‘transferred service’ under the Alderney (Application of Legislation) Law, 1948 so support is not currently provided in this respect. This suggested approach would spread limited resources even more thinly.

The Requête indicates that to establish the Committee for Housing an additional £155,000 of budget on top of budget transfers from the CfESS, CftE&I and P&RC would need to be

allocated in the 2025 budget for the six-month period of July to December 2025 following the General Election. It should be noted that this equates to an annual budget requirement of £310,000. The Committee feels that if the Requérants are particularly focused on delivery, this funding should be used for additional staff resource to deliver the GHP.

The Committee considers that the current political structure affords appropriate levels of political ownership, accountability and scrutiny. Housing objectives have featured heavily in recent political statements delivered by the President of the *CftE&I* and myself and in Scrutiny Hearings for both Committees, so the Committee does not feel that anything further could be achieved from the creation of a Committee *for* Housing. In fact, the opposite could be true because under the current system housing can be the focus of two Committee Presidential Updates and two Scrutiny Hearings (as well as the P&RC Scrutiny Hearing), so the questioning opportunity is at least double what it would be under a single Committee *for* Housing.

The Committee does acknowledge however that communication with the public and States Members about progress against strategic housing objects and communication about which Committee is accountable for which elements could be improved. Awareness and understanding in relation to these points is something that can be improved within the current structure, and is something that the GHP strongly promotes. An information sharing group has recently been established with membership of the President and Vice President of the P&RC, the President of the *CftE&I* and myself. Discussion is focussed on cross-committee strategic housing issues as set out in the GHP, while respecting the mandates of each Committee. This helps to accelerate resolution of cross-committee housing issues and information is shared back to the respective Committees. Consideration could be given as to how information could be shared more widely to other States Members and the public, which is something I understand the *CftE&I* is looking to promote further.

To conclude, the Committee is of the view that if additional resources can be secured these would be best directed towards strategic delivery of housing objectives, as set out in the GHP, under the current political structure, and targeted towards better communications with States Members and the community regarding progress against these objectives. The Committee believes that this would lead to greater acceleration of delivery of strategic housing objectives and a better return on investment than the establishment of a new Committee *for* Housing.

Yours sincerely



**Deputy Peter Roffey**

President



President  
Policy & Resources Committee  
Sir Charles Frossard House  
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2 August 2024

Dear Deputy Trott

### **Requête – Committee for Housing**

Thank you for consulting with the Committee on the above Requête, dated 1 July 2024, which has been scheduled for debate at the States Meeting being held on 4 September 2024.

The Committee has considered the content and Propositions of the Requête and has also met with some of the requérants to discuss the proposals and to better understand the rationale behind the Requête.

The Committee would have welcomed the opportunity to meet with the requérants before they had decided their recommendations, so as to provide them with further details on the housing challenges faced by the Island and work through potential options and optimal solutions. The Committee has a number of comments on the proposals and potential issues it wants to highlight that will help inform debate on this item. These can be summarised as:

- The Committee believes that the priority for any additional resource that the States can make available should be focused on the frontline delivery of actions that will alleviate the island's housing pressures as quickly as possible. The most material factor in the speed of that frontline delivery is the level of relevant officer resource. The Committee welcomes the requérants' suggestion of additional expenditure on policy officers, but the proposals set out in the Requête are not as cost-efficient as the officer resource that the Committee has already applied for through its budget submission.
- A new political structure in and of itself would not make a material difference to delivery of these housing actions but would be more expensive like-for-like. Acceleration of progress on the Guernsey Housing Plan in reality can only be

achieved by increased officer resource, which would be more efficiently delivered under the current political structure. The creation of a new Committee for Housing is likely to be at least £110,000 per annum more expensive than the provision of the same officer resource through the existing political structure, because of the additional costs of a Committee Secretary and the additional pay for the President and non-States members.

- The work on delivery outlined in paragraphs M, N and O of the Requête is already well underway. The speed of its delivery is determined by the level of officer resource which, as noted above, can be more efficiently delivered under the current political structure than under the proposed new structure.
- There is a significant conflict of interest in the proposed constitutional arrangements relating to land planning.
- The creation of a new standalone committee would add complexity to the cross-committee work that would still be necessary. This could potentially create duplication and delay.
- The proposed new structure would further require the creation of additional civil service roles to work on infrastructure (currently carried out by officers in the Housing & Infrastructure Team) – the resource implications of which have not been included in the Requête. The proposed move towards bigger government could have wider implications for resourcing as well.
- In summary, the Committee very much welcomes any practical measures to increase the type of resource that will accelerate the delivery of the Guernsey Housing Plan but will explain below why the current delivery plan is a more efficient way of achieving that aim than the proposals suggested in the Requête.

## **Background**

From the beginning of this political term, the mounting pressures on housing compounded by the pandemic, Brexit and subsequently the invasion of Ukraine were increasingly clear. The island's population, which had previously been shrinking, grew sharply and suddenly at a rate that far exceeded the capacity of the construction sector to meet the acute need for new homes. This was made worse by the supply chain problems and significant cost increases in materials, labour, and finance. These factors significantly affected the construction of new homes in the private and affordable housing sectors alike.

The political appetite to tackle these issues was evident from the outset, with both Presidents of the Committees for Employment & Social Security and the Environment & Infrastructure confirming housing as a priority before even being elected to those roles, and the formation of the Housing Action Group (including the President of the Policy & Resources Committee) soon afterwards.

In order to co-ordinate and prioritise resource in the most effective and efficient way possible using up-to-date evidence and relevant expertise and local knowledge, the

Committee undertook housing needs modelling and worked with stakeholders across industry and the States to develop the Guernsey Housing Plan.

The Committee actively engages with relevant industry groups, including developers, on an ongoing basis.

### **The Guernsey Housing Plan**

The Guernsey Housing Plan<sup>1</sup>, which was agreed by the three lead committees (the Committee for Environment & Infrastructure, the Committee for Employment & Social Security, and the Policy & Resources Committee) and supported by the Assembly through the Government Work Plan process, establishes six priority areas of focus:

- affordable housing delivery;
- private market supply;
- the private rental sector;
- market niches such as keyworker accommodation, first time buyers and homelessness;
- quality and energy efficiency; and
- data and evidence.

It also sets out the actions necessary to address the issues in a co-ordinated way and in the most effective order. Through its conversations with the requérants, the Committee understands that they are supportive of the Guernsey Housing Plan, indicated also by the fact that their proposed mandate for a new Committee for Housing mirrors the Guernsey Housing Plan's priority areas.

The Committee has considered this Requête in the broadest sense to understand whether the creation of a dedicated Committee for Housing would expedite or improve the current delivery process.

Providing the optimum solutions for our island must be at the forefront of all Members' minds when considering this Requête. The Committee welcomes the interest of other deputies in housing, and it is very much in favour of driving faster progress on delivering measures that can ease the housing pressures the island is experiencing as quickly as possible. The Committee very much hopes that, irrespective of any decision on this Requête, the Assembly will be supportive of the funding to expedite the delivery of the Guernsey Housing Plan at the earliest opportunity.

After full consideration, and discussion with many political colleagues, the Committee does not consider the creation of a new political body will accelerate progress and delivery of housing, nor that a Committee for Housing will achieve this in a more streamlined way than through the current political structure. An additional committee would in fact introduce further complexity by adding another committee into the mix of those whose

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<sup>1</sup> [Guernsey Housing Plan - States of Guernsey \(gov.gg\)](https://gov.gg/GuernseyHousingPlan) (<https://gov.gg/GuernseyHousingPlan>)

mandates necessarily impact housing policy and delivery, including those that manage the States' budgets, resources, property and land planning, environment, infrastructure, social welfare, population management policy, and many other policy areas.

Housing policy and delivery are at the forefront of the Committee's agenda and the direction for addressing the Island's housing pressures are set out clearly in the Guernsey Housing Plan. This plan is based on independent expert housing market analysis, housing market projections, a wide range of stakeholder feedback, best practice in other jurisdictions and a holistic look at the delivery options available which together forms a robust evidence base. The prioritised list of workstreams that the Guernsey Housing Plan sets out is the roadmap for addressing the Island's housing pressures. The evidence has been gathered, the thinking and consultation has been done, the plan is in place, and delivery has started: what is needed now is support for its accelerated delivery, assuming the Assembly shares the Committee's aspiration in this respect. To achieve that aim, an increase in resources supporting and undertaking the frontline delivery is required.

This fundamental point is the main reason why the Committee does not support the Requête, because the most effective and cost-efficient way of increasing the resource necessary to accelerate delivery is through the existing structure rather than through the creation of a new committee, which adds expense and complexity. It also risks diverting resource away from that frontline delivery over the course of the transition between now and July 2025 in particular, just when the Committee wants officers to be able to focus their efforts entirely on workstreams that will make a material difference to housing in Guernsey so they can take effect as quickly as possible.

Through conversation with the requérants, the Committee felt that the Requête had been lodged without detailed awareness of what the Guernsey Housing Plan is, the workstreams contained within it, the work currently being undertaken, and the progress on those workstreams. The Committee monitors progress of delivery against the Guernsey Housing Plan on a quarterly basis, as well as preparing monthly workstream updates for wider circulation to both the Committee *for* Employment & Social Security and the Policy & Resources Committee as key stakeholders.

To increase awareness of and evidence the work that is ongoing, attached to this letter is the Committee's [Annual Update on the Guernsey Housing Plan](#). This provides evidence of the progress made on delivering the Guernsey Housing Plan and it explains the position of the Island's housing market over the past year against key comparables, as well as reviewing the upcoming priorities. This report will show the progress the Committee has made, as well as the progress of other States committees, in seeking to deliver against the Island's housing requirements as set out in the States Strategic Housing Indicator (SSHI).

Paragraphs M, N and O of the Requête focus on operational delivery and the perceived focus and drive that a new Committee *for* Housing could provide. All the work referenced in this section (and more) is already underway, with substantial political drive and

determination. The Committee believes communication about the Guernsey Housing Plan can be improved, and so is taking steps to do so. The justifications in the Requête merely validate the work that is already being done under the current political structure and within the mandate of the Committee *for the Environment & Infrastructure* in particular.

The Guernsey Housing Plan is a ‘live’ document and sets the delivery plan for several years, well beyond the term of this government. This is the long-term nature of a housing market’s function, and it is crucial that there is a Plan in place which can ensure consistency and continuation of progress on delivery across political terms and changing committee memberships. The development of the Guernsey Housing Plan has taken on board sound advice from independent housing market experts and many local stakeholders to ensure the Plan is both targeted, appropriate, and prioritised.

By virtue of the wide-ranging interdependencies in Guernsey’s housing market, the Guernsey Housing Plan workstreams are cross-committee measures. Cross-committee working is essential to delivery and directly impacts on the mandates of the Committee *for the Environment & Infrastructure*, the Committee *for Employment & Social Security*, the Policy & Resources Committee, the Committee *for Home Affairs*, the Committee *for Health & Social Care*, and the Development & Planning Authority. A new dedicated Committee *for Housing* would not be able to deliver what is needed to address the island’s housing needs on its own and it would not stop the need for this cross-committee working. Neither would the creation of a new separate political Committee speed up this essential cross-committee working or the delivery of housing; indeed, because of the added complexity there is a risk it could be slower. For this reason, the Committee believes the current political structure is preferable to the alternative proposed to drive forward change in the Island’s housing market.

### **Current Political Structure**

The Committee *for the Environment & Infrastructure* has responsibility for infrastructure strategy and policy for Guernsey, of which housing is an important part. In setting the strategic direction for housing, the Committee can consider these pressures alongside its other areas of responsibility such as strategic land planning (through the Strategic Land Use Plan), strategic transport management and strategic planning of the natural and built environment, all of which fundamentally intersect with housing policy.

The States Review Committee (SRC), in proposing the structure of government to be implemented following the 2016 General Election, recognised that general housing policy *“is linked to policies regarding land use and infrastructure and should be under the leadership of the Committee for the Environment & Infrastructure.”*<sup>2</sup> The Requête proposes that responsibility for housing strategy be moved to a separate political committee, thereby severing this link with land use and other infrastructure policy.

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<sup>2</sup> States Review Committee: The organisation of States’ affairs – Second Policy Letter [Billet XII \(States Meeting 7th July 2015\).pdf \(gov.gg\)](https://www.gov.gg/Billet_XII_(States_Meeting_7th_July_2015).pdf)

Criticism of political structures relating to housing in other jurisdictions such as the UK often points to the disjointedness of housing policy with wider infrastructure planning. Guernsey's current political structure is a good example of joined up policy making in this important respect.

Housing is infrastructure and there is considerable benefit in maintaining the consideration of housing infrastructure alongside the provision of other forms of infrastructure as per the Committee's wider mandate. There are considerable overlaps and synergies, and the opportunity for co-ordination and a holistic approach would be disrupted if the Requête's proposals were to be adopted.

For example, there are clear synergies between housing strategy and the Committee's other policy areas listed below:

- Integrated transport policy
- Strategic land use policy
- Natural and built environment
- Energy efficiency and energy strategy
- Waste strategy
- Climate change adaptation

The same synergy is true within the Committee for Employment & Social Security's mandate who can consider the delivery of Affordable Housing (and, in particular, the delivery and management of the States-owned social rental housing) alongside its wider welfare mandate. The same is also true of the Policy & Resources Committee (through the States Property Unit) in the management of key worker accommodation alongside other private lease arrangements and stock management, and of economic levers affecting housing (through the Treasury and Revenue Services functions).

In its report, the SRC stated that "*It seems plain to the Committee that political responsibility for social housing, tenancy management and the States' relationship with housing associations should be brought together with political responsibility for other forms of social support and protection – and that is what is proposed in the new Committee for Employment, Housing & Social Security.*" The Proposition of the Requête would disrupt that clear synergy.

Further, the SRC noted that "*The Committee fully recognises the importance of providing social security and social housing [...] but, as in the case of some other areas of policy, those objectives do not depend upon maintaining separate Principal Committees with the words 'social security' or the word 'housing' and nothing else in their titles. As stated in the previous section, distinctiveness and separation are no guarantee of prominence or success.*"

As the above demonstrates, for both this Committee, the Committee for Employment & Social Security, and the Policy & Resources Committee, there are significant advantages to

decision-making on housing-related areas that are gained from their wider decision-making across the broader areas of their mandates. Removing the housing functions from these committees would isolate housing policy from the broader interdependent considerations.

The Committee agrees that the mandates of the two main committees responsible for housing (the Committee *for the Environment & Infrastructure* and the Committee *for Employment & Social Security*) run close at times, as Affordable Housing is an important part of the general housing policy landscape. However, in relation to housing, the two committees are mandated to provide distinct functions, with the Committee responsible for housing strategy and policy overall (including Affordable Housing), and the Committee *for Employment & Social Security* responsible for delivery and management of Affordable Housing.

As with all cross-committee working, this new committee would be reliant on strong working relationships with other committees and cannot force action from another committee. Like other committees, it would need to work within the framework of the Government Work Plan (or future equivalent).

Matters have been progressed efficiently between the two committees since the implementation of the current political structure in 2016. The establishment of the information-sharing Housing Priority Group in this political term has ensured even better co-ordination of cross-committee housing issues. This group, which includes the President and Vice-President of the Policy & Resources Committee and the Presidents of the Committee *for the Environment & Infrastructure* and the Committee *for Employment & Social Security*, meets fortnightly. It focuses its discussion on strategic housing issues as set out in the Guernsey Housing Plan, while respecting the mandates of each Committee and ensuring good co-ordination of the work. The Committee believes that the continuation of a body such as this would have more impact and therefore merit in the next political term than a specific Committee *for Housing*, as the mandate proposed for that committee would not enable it to deliver the work set out in (and already underway) the Guernsey Housing Plan without significant cross-committee work with those committees anyway.

### **Speed of Delivery**

The underlying assumption of the Requête appears to be that the creation of a new committee will accelerate and improve delivery of the States' strategic objectives on housing. However, neither the Committee nor officers are aware of any examples of work being slowed down by the current political arrangements. There has never been a delay arising from a constraint around a committee agenda: such bottlenecks that have arisen have been in terms of officer resource.

If the main purpose of the Requête is to speed up progress on delivering measures that will make a practical difference on the ground, the Committee feels that this can only be

achieved by increased frontline officer resource dedicated to the workstreams already prioritised for delivery in the Guernsey Housing Plan. The resourcing proposals set out in paragraphs P–W of the Requête are not reliant on a new Committee *for Housing* being established. Indeed, the Committee has already made a submission for additional resource (focused exclusively on delivery of workstreams) which, if approved by the Assembly through the Budget Report, would be in place sooner than the resource proposed in the Requête.

The Requête proposes the creation of a new Committee Secretary to support the proposed new committee. A Committee Secretary is focused not on frontline delivery of the workstreams but on political support, advice, and governance. This function is already delivered under the existing political structure and its duplication is not the best use any resource allocated for housing. The Committee's view is any available resource should be focused on delivery, for example through frontline officers such as policy and programme leads. Any progress in accelerating work to address the Island's housing pressures is reliant on the right kind of resource being in place to deliver the planned work of the Guernsey Housing Plan, not the political structure it reports to.

An increase in frontline officer resource can be achieved more efficiently and cost-effectively through the existing political structure than through the creation of a new standalone committee. This is for two main reasons. Firstly, the creation of a new committee requires resource that is additional to the resource required to accelerate frontline delivery (e.g. a Committee Secretary post, plus additional funding for the President's salary uplift and non-States members' pay). Secondly, existing officers working on housing will have to divert their attention away from frontline delivery in order to inform, support and implement the necessary operational and administrative changes inherent in the creation of a new committee. With so much work already underway, the Committee would prefer those officers to be able to focus exclusively on measures that will make a practical and positive difference to Islanders, rather than on the work required to establish and administer a new political structure.

A new Committee *for Housing* could add complexity and cost to the team structure that has been set up. Housing is infrastructure and the Housing & Infrastructure Team has been intentionally set up to deal with both housing and infrastructure matters, which not only has the benefits of flexibility in addressing priorities but also taking advantage of the synergies as set out above. Separating out a housing function from the remaining infrastructure (as proposed in the Requête<sup>3</sup>) would complicate matters. It would also see a resource shortage in relation to infrastructure work areas which would require additional civil service posts to be created. The Committee does not believe that these resource implications have been accounted for in the Requête.

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<sup>3</sup> Paragraph T

## **Accountability**

The Requête proposes that the Committee for Housing would “*provide an enhanced level of political ownership and accountability and be the central point and voice for issues on housing for industry, government and community.*” The Committee feels that, if this is perceived to be an issue, this could be enhanced through better communication to improve the wider understanding of committee mandates at play. It does not consider this to have been a material barrier to delivery under the current political structure, as industry groups and other interested parties have had good channels of communication with the Committee.

The President of the Committee in particular has attended been very involved in stakeholder engagement, in the last few months alone meeting with:

- A group of around 30 property professionals (including developers, agents, bankers, lawyers, surveyors etc) hosted by Collas Crill;
- The Guernsey Development Agency;
- The Guernsey Private Rental Landlords’ Association and their membership;
- The Open Market Forum;
- The Chartered Institute of Building (CIOB);
- The Guernsey Construction Forum;
- Masterplanning workshops for a large housing development site;
- The Institute of Directors (presenting and answering questions on Housing at a breakfast seminar);
- The Chamber of Commerce;
- The Guernsey Green Forum (a collection of large employers); plus
- Various individual developers, mortgage providers and other housing specialists.

She has also represented Guernsey at inter-island and British-Irish Council meetings to discuss the housing agenda. The fact that general housing policy and infrastructure are considered together in the one mandate has been noted as a positive by other jurisdictions.

## **Land Planning**

Although within the mandate of the Development & Planning Authority and for it to provide more detailed comment on, the Committee wishes to express significant concern about the mandate proposal of the Committee for Housing to “*take the lead on informing and driving policy direction involving any future reviews of the IDP policies with effect on homebuilding.*”

The Committee considers this to be a serious conflict of interest. The proposed committee responsible for developing Affordable Housing (and potentially general housing if this is resolved to be the direction of travel in the future) would also be responsible for setting

Island-wide policies with effect to homebuilding. This would put the Committee at high risk of challenge for bias. The separation of the land planning function and the delivery of housing is an important one and one that should be maintained regardless of which political structure results. Also, as the responsibility for the Strategic Land Use Plan (SLUP) rests with the Committee *for the Environment & Infrastructure*, and by Law the policies of the Island Development Plan (IDP) must have the agreement of this Committee that they are consistent with the SLUP, any land planning policy work carried out by a new committee would still have to be referred to the Committee for agreement.

### **Alderney**

The Requête proposes the closer working between Guernsey and Alderney, through regular engagement with the newly created Alderney Housing Working Group. While the Committee can see benefits in this, it also cautions that the housing function is not an agreed transferred service and to focus more heavily on this area would risk diverting existing resource away from the prioritised actions of the Government Work Plan, the workstreams set out in the Guernsey Housing Plan and the wider operational delivery focus in Guernsey.

### **Machinery of Government**

There is a strong chance that if the Requête is successful it is likely to see a drive for other additional committees with more focused mandates. This raises the question over whether Guernsey wants bigger government moving forward. The Committee finds it hard to see this as a preferable option for the Island, given the upcoming challenges in funding public services.

Through the work of the States Review Committee (SRC), the States agreed that there should be a smaller number of Committees with broader portfolios.

In its second report, the SRC stated that *“...as long as committees are not created which have unmanageable portfolios, common policy responsibilities which might otherwise sit in separate committees generally benefit from being amalgamated and under the leadership of slightly larger, more prominent and arguably more influential committees quite possibly with access to greater resources.”*<sup>4</sup>

A move to separate housing from the mandates of two larger Committees is contrary to this general approach agreed by the States.

There are 40 States members, the majority of whom are on at least one committee, including the two Alderney Representatives, each of whom is on a principal committee (which is fairly unusual). There are currently 57 roles on the various committees and other bodies of the States, although it is fair to say that some, like membership of the Transport

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<sup>4</sup> States Review Committee: The organisation of States' affairs – Second Policy Letter  
[Billet XII \(States Meeting 7th July 2015\).pdf \(gov.gg\)](https://www.gov.gg/Billet_XII_(States_Meeting_7th_July_2015).pdf)

Licensing Authority and President of the Overseas Aid & Development Commission, are less onerous than others. Nevertheless, the States do rely on deputies taking on more than one role in order to populate all the Committees. As you know, the five members of the Policy & Resources Committee cannot have a seat on a principal committee, and neither can the President of the Scrutiny Management Committee (SMC). Other members of the SMC may sit on no more than one principal committee.

Therefore, increasing the number of principal committees, assuming no other changes, would result in 62 committee roles to be populated by 40 States' members. Whilst some principal committee roles might be workable when combined with a role on a committee with no real policy remit, such as the States Assembly & Constitution Committee (SACC), the creation of a new principal committee would put considerable pressure on members to "double up", which is unlikely to be sustainable when many States' Members already report working long hours. This would be particularly inappropriate for a committee dealing with such an important and pressing issue for the island as housing where there needs to be focus on delivery.

This could well result in a situation where the Assembly has no "back benchers," which is arguably not a good thing in terms of informal scrutiny. It is acknowledged that there is already a limited number of these.

As the acceleration of delivery on housing priorities can be more cost-effectively and efficiently delivered under the current political structure, the Committee considers that changes such as those proposed in the *Requête* would be more appropriately and thoroughly considered through a review of the machinery of government, which can take into account such wider considerations.

### **Conclusion**

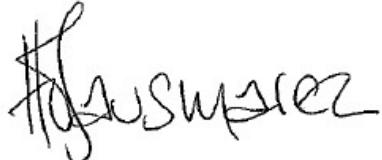
The work progressed by the Committee *for the Environment & Infrastructure* over this political term to develop a Guernsey Housing Plan means that there is now a clear strategic plan for housing delivery in Guernsey to work to. The current focus on its delivery needs to be continued and indeed accelerated without interruption or delay.

The Committee feels that any financial resource that would be required in the establishment of the Committee *for Housing*, and indeed in the administration of the additional political body, would be more effective if directed towards providing additional resources for delivery of workstreams within the Guernsey Housing Plan. This is what will accelerate progress in addressing the Island's housing pressures and make a tangible difference to Islanders' quality of life.

Because delivery of housing priorities can be more cost-effectively and efficiently delivered under the current structure, the Committee does not support the proposals in the *Requête*, although it very much welcomes the fact the requérants share the

Committee's aspirations to accelerate the delivery of work through the Guernsey Housing Plan.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Lindsay de Sausmarez".

**Deputy Lindsay de Sausmarez**  
President  
Committee *for the Environment & Infrastructure*

Enc.