

**REPLY BY THE MINISTER OF THE HOUSING DEPARTMENT  
TO A QUESTION ASKED PURSUANT TO RULE 6 OF THE RULES OF  
PROCEDURE BY DEPUTY JOHN GOLLOP**

**Question**

*In view of the sad news that the useful community resource "Maison St. Pierre" in St Peter Port is scheduled to close, would it not now be an appropriate time for the Housing Department to consider using the building as either a Sheltar (3rd sector partnership) housing for homeless people, especially single unattached persons with alcohol issues, or as an emergency hostel for people seeking social or need housing?*

**Answer**

Maison St Pierre will shortly cease operating in its present form, although it will continue to exist as a locally registered charity. I would first like to acknowledge, on behalf of the Housing Department, the fantastic work that the team at Maison St Pierre have done over the years.

I note that the reason given for the closure of Maison St Pierre in its current form is a lack of demand. This is ascribed to 'an increase in the availability of housing stock', among other things. I am pleased to note Dr Smith's comments, as it gives weight to my belief that the Housing Department – along with the Guernsey Housing Association – is able to meet urgent demand for housing, both from the mothers and children once accommodated at Maison St Pierre, and from the other groups to whom your question refers.

The Housing Department has said in the past that it is not minded to provide emergency accommodation. In our experience it either stands empty and therefore becomes a drain to the taxpayer, or it runs the risk of being used purely to circumvent the normal waiting list process – the principle being that once you're housed in emergency accommodation, you need to be moved quickly into somewhere more permanent so as to free up the emergency accommodation for the next person. The Housing Department is not convinced that turning the vacated property into a shelter for homeless or vulnerable people is a sensible way forward.

If the Housing Department were to provide a tailored service to a group of individuals with particular requirements, such as single adults with alcohol dependency issues, it would work with the Guernsey Housing Association to develop purpose-built accommodation. This would be a less costly option, and result in a more effective service, than buying or renting private property that was not created for this purpose.

**Date of Receipt of the Question:** 21<sup>st</sup> July 2015

**Date of Reply:** 29<sup>th</sup> July 2015