

## Jersey Landlords Association - Press Release – Landlord Licensing

Following the rejection in September 2020 by the States Assembly of a landlord licensing scheme brought by the Environment Minister, Deputy John Young, Deputy Rob Ward has now filed a new proposition requesting the Environment Minister to lodge new regulations requiring landlords to be licensed.

This proposition should be of concern to anyone involved in property rental in Jersey, whether as a tenant, agent or landlord.

This licensing scheme is due to be debated on 20 April 2021 and is much the same as last time, with the following differences and important points of note:

- Existing landlords would not pay for their initial licence or future licences (although the proposition is somewhat vague on this later point). Therefore, only properties new to the rental market would pay for their licence. This means the taxpayer (rather than landlords and tenants) will be footing the bill for establishing /running the licensing scheme and issuing potentially up to 20,000 licences.
- It seems that inspections could also be outsourced rather than undertaken by Environmental Health officers and presumably Environmental Health will rely on reports to issue licences. If this is the case, there will be a cost to such inspections/reports, which landlords (and ultimately tenants) would have to pay, and which would cause higher rents and general inflation.
- The proposition says that when a new licence is issued, it will have various conditions attached to it. Many of these conditions are already covered by existing laws. The fact that they will become conditions on a licence means that if breached (even accidentally, in a minor way or through the fault of a tenant), the licence can be withdrawn, rather than a tenant or Environmental Health using existing laws to prosecute a landlord via the court system.
- Of particular concern to the JLA is the fact that the current (and future) Environment Minister can specify any conditions they wish, without any States oversight or need to be reasonable.
- Licences would be for 5 years (instead of yearly)
- Children's rights to adequate housing have been cited as a reason for bringing forward the licensing scheme. However, this surely would apply to children in owner-occupied housing as well as rental properties. Should owner-occupied properties housing children also be inspected?

The Jersey Landlord Association supports the improvement of housing standards for tenants in Jersey but wishes to do so in a cost-effective way without unnecessary bureaucracy. The licensing scheme will be bureaucratic and costly, which will impact on tenants through increased rents and intrusive inspections.

The JLA has proposed a better way forward, being a registration scheme whereby all landlords register themselves and their rental properties (with a requirement that the information is kept up to date), together with a fit-for-purpose complaints scheme, under which tenants are empowered to complain, through education and appropriate guidelines issued to landlords and tenants and appropriate protections for tenants, if their property does not reach minimum standards.

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