

Jersey Landlords Association – Press Release

The Jersey Landlords Association (JLA) is aware of the tenants who were given notices on Christmas Eve to vacate their homes. At a time when most people were looking forward to relaxing and enjoying the festive period, this must have caused upset and stress and our thoughts have been and still are with the tenants affected.

The JLA has a website (www.jla.je), where any tenants can enter their details and which our landlord members can view if they have a vacant property. We are happy for any tenant to use this, should they so wish. Equally we are happy to help in any other way we can.

Sadly being given notice to leave a property is a problem that Jersey tenants are facing more and more and this has been caused by the real fears that landlords have about rising red tape and the increasing costs of renting property.

The introduction of the Health & Safety (Rented Dwellings) (Jersey) Law 2018 and its poor implementation over the last 3 years together with the threat of much more regulation in future, has caused landlords to sell their rental properties and leave the rental market. Some of these landlords were new to the rental market and held one or two properties for a couple of years, others held more properties and/or had been landlords for a long time, in some cases, decades. They have sold and gone. That has left tenants with notices to vacate, less choice and higher rents.

The JLA has always advocated that rented properties be of good standard. However, the introduction and implementation of the Health & Safety law has been poor. This has been compounded with the threat of licensing all rental properties which would entail, amongst other things, inspections, fees and unspecified licence conditions.

Despite licensing of rented properties being voted against twice, by the States, Senator Moore, is trying to again bring in licensing by making the currently voluntary Rent Safe scheme, compulsory. This is simply licensing by the back door. It will involve inspections, is silent as to how the scheme will be funded, but will certainly entail increased bureaucracy, a much expanded Environmental Health department and cost for landlords, tenants and the Government of Jersey alike. Once again, a sledgehammer to crack a nut.

Jersey's Public Health & Safety legislation already provides mechanisms for rented properties which are in poor condition and present a health and safety issue to be served with improvement notices (requiring landlords to improve a property) or prohibition notices (banning occupation of the property) coupled with the ability to fine landlords. This legislation should be used to bring to book

landlords whose properties present a health & safety issue to occupiers. Targeted, less costly, effective.

The argument that the Environmental Health department does not know where these properties are should be being addressed in that the States have passed a proposal for all property to be registered - so they will know which properties are rented. Coupling this with the JLA's empowering tenants to complain, will be the most cost effective and least intrusive way forward. We have no doubt that the Jersey courts will (and should) offer protection against any revenge eviction.

The Reform Party want to go further - open ended tenancies and rent control. Their aim to increase regulation even more will only increase and accelerate the problem of tenants getting notice to vacate and is hugely worrying for landlords and tenants alike.