

Isle of Man
Government

Reiltys Ellan Vannin

Minister for Housing and Communities

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The Council of Ministers Act 1990 specifies the mechanism for appointment of Ministers. No more than nine Ministers are appointed from among Tynwald Members by the Governor, acting on the advice and with the concurrence of the Chief Minister.

An appointed Minister can be given the title of Minister for Housing and Communities by the Chief Minister and not be legally assigned as a Minister of a Department. Should the Council of Ministers agree, this Minister can be a Member of any Department except Treasury.

Given the importance and cross-cutting nature of housing policy, it is therefore proposed that a **Minister for Housing and Communities is appointed, in the Council of Ministers**. The post replaces the Housing and Communities Board, which was a Chief Minister's Committee under the previous administration.

Portfolio for the Minister of Housing and Communities

The new post of Minister for Housing and Communities is being created in order to make progress on a critical issue for the Isle of Man.

The Island's housing system is influenced by policy and action across all eight Government Departments, as well as outside factors. The first phase of work for the new Minister is therefore aimed at addressing this fragmentation. The Minister will be supported initially by a small policy team with cross-government expert input.

1.A National Housing Plan

Lead development of a prioritised action plan for meeting housing need, including the existing approved Tynwald commitment to build, provide or facilitate up to 1,000 affordable homes over ten years from April 2025. Evidence of housing need should inform funding, site availability and construction capacity. In driving action on housing, the Plan must also ensure that housing developments actively contribute to, or create, thriving communities across our Island.

1.B Governance and Organisation Proposal

In parallel, the Minister should develop a proposal for any reorganisation of Isle of Man Government resources to drive delivery of the National Housing Plan. It is not assumed at this stage that a new independent Department, with associated costs, is required; however, at a minimum, consolidation of key legal, financial and staffing resources to drive the Plan

as a central corporate initiative, and deliver policy change (e.g., a dedicated Unit) is anticipated.

The proposal should recognise the important role of local authorities, and the private sector, in the Island's housing system and ensure the Isle of Man is open to innovation to meet our residents' needs.

1.C Parallel Action

The above key responsibilities do not preclude early action in parallel. Where the Minister in partnership with Council determines, immediate changes can be brought in, if there is full scope to do so.

Phase 2: Delivering the National Housing Plan

As above, the Minister has full scope to examine and propose the scope of the National Housing Plan. The following dimensions are anticipated:

Home ownership and affordability

Lead policy consideration of measures to support affordable home ownership, including: deposits and downsizing; relevant use of mortgage interest relief, section 13 agreements and land-registration fees; measures addressing investment pressures on housing affordability; and policy on affordable homes schemes for local buyers, including rent-to-buy and shared equity schemes in coordination with relevant Ministers.

Private rental market and related housing law

Oversee policy and operational delivery for the consolidation and modernisation of housing, letting, property and tenancy law, including proportionate regulation and rental deposit protection and arbitration.

This should include reviewing the role of 'home of multiple occupation' (HMOs) and, in partnership with the Department for Environment, Food and Agriculture (DEFA) and Local Authorities, considering the role well-managed HMOs and other forms of shared housing could play in providing safe and affordable accommodation for key groups.

Housing supply

In coordination with the Minister for the Cabinet Office, ensure that the Strategic Plan and future Area Plans unlock land for development and support the housing, community and infrastructure requirements of the National Housing Plan. This should address the volume and the mix of homes needed to meet the needs of Island residents today and into the future.

The Minister should also work with Treasury to review and propose action as appropriate on:

- Incentives for brownfield development
- Bringing derelict or empty homes back into use, increasing effective housing supply and supporting regeneration where homes are vacant or underused.

Public sector housing

In coordination with the Minister for Infrastructure, and through the Department for Infrastructure (DoI) with Local Authorities,

- Identify and deliver changes to meet local demand while balancing affordability, existing stock, future supply and long-term financial sustainability;
- Expedite the development of public land to meet assessed housing needs; and
- Inform updates to public housing rent policy, including the proposal that increases be limited to inflation until means-tested rent rebates are in place (accepting that the final position with regards to rent-setting lies with the Minister for Infrastructure who holds financial accountability).

For the avoidance of doubt, until such a time that any re-organisation of resources is agreed, all management of tenants and stock remain as business as usual under the DOI.

Homelessness and supported housing

In partnership with all relevant Departments, including Health and Social Care, Home Affairs and Infrastructure, reduce pressure across homelessness, care, health and justice pathways, including reliance on emergency accommodation in line with the Tynwald approved Homelessness Strategy. This should include settling permanent delivery responsibility for the current homelessness pathway through the Tynwald-supported Homelessness Bill, and the housing needs of other vulnerable adults such as young adults leaving care and prison leavers.

Housing delivery

Monitor, and where appropriate work in collaboration, to unblock housing delivery across the private housing sector, identifying where policy needs to change in the process too. This will include coordination across Government and with private sector partners as required, and with the Minister for Environment, Food and Agriculture, should the planning process be a factor.

Phase 3: Communities

As above, the Minister should consider how the National Housing Plan actively contributes to, or creates, thriving communities across our Island.

The door is open to consider consolidation of wider community policy matters into the portfolio at a later date. The decision not to do so at this point reflects the shared commitment to focus on a smaller number of areas of action, and to deliver.