



HOUSE OF COMMONS

LONDON SW1A 0AA

7th February 2022

Jean Contrevent,

RE: THE VAGRANCY ACT 1824

Thank you for your recent correspondence in respect of the *Vagrancy Act 1824* and the *Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts (PCSC) Bill*; your comments upon which I have read with interest.

I recognise your concern with the *Vagrancy Act*, specifically in regard to its provisions for rough sleepers. As a piece of legislation that is almost 200 years' old, it is right that the Government is undertaking a review into the Act to ensure it is fit for purpose in the modern world.

As you might be aware, under the Cross-Government *Rough Sleeping Strategy* published in 2018, the Government committed to review the legislation around homelessness and rough sleeping, including the *Vagrancy Act*, to ensure the best measures are in place. It is my understanding that the Department for Levelling Up, Housing & Communities has noted that this is a complex issue and is looking at all the options. I am told that an update on the Government's findings will be provided in due course.

On the issue of rough sleeping, I am delighted that work continues in this area to ensure vulnerable people are helped off the streets for good. For example, the Rough Sleeping Accommodation Programme (2021/22-2023/24) is helping local authorities and registered providers to offer move-on homes and accompanying support services to people rough sleeping, or those with a history of rough sleeping.

Originally announced in May 2020, the Government committed £433 million to this programme which aims to provide 6,000 homes to achieve a sustainable reduction in rough sleeping. This represents the largest ever investment in longer-term move on accommodation for this group and will provide some of the most vulnerable in our society with a place to live and help them to rebuild their lives.

I am aware that, as part of the passage of the *Police, Crime, Sentencing & Courts Bill*, Peers voted to repeal the *Vagrancy Act 1824*. While I agree, of course, that no one should be criminalised simply for having nowhere to live, or for sleeping rough, I do not think it is appropriate or wise to make such a drastic change to the statute book without fully understanding its ramifications. The Government is fully committed to reviewing the *Vagrancy Act* and it is important that due consideration is given to how and why the Act is still used to tackle begging and what impact any changes to the Act will have. This includes consideration of any legislative gap left by repeal that may impact the police's ability to deal appropriately with begging.



Please be assured that the Government has confirmed its intention to repeal the outdated Act and replacing it with much more modern, fit-for-purpose legislation when parliamentary time allows. Until the review into the Act is complete, however, its repeal would be premature, possibly leaving concerning gaps in legislation.

Once again, thank you for having taken the time to contact me and if I can ever be of any further assistance to you, then please do not hesitate to contact me again.

With best wishes,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be 'T. Pursglove'.

**TOM PURSGLOVE MP
MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT
CORBY & EAST NORTHAMPTONSHIRE**