



PROCEEDINGS OF THE GIBRALTAR PARLIAMENT

MORNING SESSION: 9.20 a.m. – 12.45 p.m.

Gibraltar, Tuesday, 25th June 2013

The Gibraltar Parliament

The Parliament met at 9.20 a.m.

[MR SPEAKER: Hon. A J Canepa GMH, OBE, *in the Chair*]

[CLERK TO THE PARLIAMENT: M L Farrell Esq RD *in attendance*]

PRAYER

Mr Speaker

Order of the Day

Appropriation Bill 2013

For Second Reading

Debate continued

Clerk: Sitting of Parliament, Tuesday, 25th June.
Second Reading of the Appropriation Bill 2013 – Budget speeches continue.

Mr Speaker: The Hon. Mr Neil Costa.

Minister for Tourism, Commercial Affairs, Public Transport and the Port (Hon. N F Costa): Mr Speaker, it is always with a great deal of anticipation that I stand to deliver my Budget Address. As this House knows, this is my sixth Budget Speech and my second as Minister for Tourism, Commercial Affairs, Public Transport and the Port.

Without an ounce of exaggeration, I can tell this House that it has been, and continues to be, an absolute privilege and honour to be able to continue to serve our community during this last financial year

in the areas of responsibility entrusted to me by the Hon. the Chief Minister. And what a productive year it has been, Mr Speaker.

15 It is in order to be able to highlight the most important aspects, as well as making the relevant announcement for this financial year, that I intend to take each of my constitutional responsibilities in turn.

20 In the first place, therefore, I address Consumer Affairs. As the public may recall, the Department of Consumer Affairs became part of the Commercial Affairs portfolio in June of last year. The allocation of this responsibility under the auspices of my Ministry, Mr Speaker, is in pursuance of a central plank of the Government's manifesto, to establish an Office of Fair Trading.

25 This House may also recall that Ken Kinrade, the retired Chief Executive Officer of Fair Trading and Trading Standards Office of the Isle of Man, was invited by my Ministry to travel to Gibraltar to assess our legislative, regulatory and infrastructural architecture to advise the Government on how best to proceed to establish an Office of Fair Trading in Gibraltar.

30 During Mr Kinrade's visit in January of this year, he, together with Mrs Maruchi Riso, the Director of Consumer Affairs, met with the Chamber of Commerce, the Gibraltar Federation of Small Businesses and other relevant persons with an interest in commercial affairs.

35 Apart from a fact-finding mission, Mr Kinrade was also provided with two briefing documents from the Trade Licensing Authority and the Consumer Affairs Department, which contained their recommendations as to the functions that should be undertaken by the Office of Fair Trading/Trading Standards Office and how it might be structured.

40 It therefore pleases me greatly, Mr Speaker, to confirm that the first draft of this critical piece of business legislation is ready and has already been forwarded to the Chamber and the GFSB for their comments and proposed revisions.

45 Whereas I will of course make a full announcement at the appropriate juncture, Mr Speaker, the legislation will not simply establish the Office of Fair Trading – it will also, just as importantly, address a perennial bugbear – and rightly so – of the business community, which is the need to form a one-stop shop to make that quantum leap that Gibraltar requires in commercial matters to make her even more attractive, not just to potential foreign investors but persons locally who wish to set up a business. A crucial step therefore in the Government's drive to foster entrepreneurship, this of course, without mentioning the raft of measures that the Hon. the Chief Minister mentioned yesterday in his Budget address.

50 Mr Speaker, the proposed Bill will not stop at the one-stop shop. The Bill will also, and once and for all, also redress another major complaint of the business community, which is to modernise and overhaul the Trade Licensing system. Once the GFSB and the Chamber revert with their comments, the draft Bill shall be presented as a Command Paper for wider public consultation, after which the Bill will be presented to Parliament.

55 Laws without enforcement can, in the main, however, Mr Speaker, prove pointless. As a result, it is the intention of Her Majesty's Government of Gibraltar to provide the Office of Fair Trading with the adequate and necessary resources so that the legislative provisions therein will have teeth.

60 And at this point, it is right that I should applaud the tireless work of the staff of the Department of Consumer Affairs. It is unquestionable that they undertake a wide range of duties, providing a high level of service under historically less than ideal circumstances and are nonetheless committed to doing their very best for consumers and in assisting the retail industry. To this end, and something that not many people know outside of this house and indeed traders, they are also responsible for calibrating all the petrol stations and supermarkets in Gibraltar, as well as dealing with between 600-800 consumer cases every year – a formidable work load indeed.

65 Mr Speaker, the House will recall that this year the Government brought in the Indication of Prices and Invoicing Rules in April 2013 and, bearing a short leeway to traders, this will make shopping a good deal easier and better in Gibraltar. We hope to have traders exhibiting prices in shop windows as well as in the shops, prominently and in line with the rules.

70 The House will also recall that the Small Business Board, which I established last year, has now met numerous times and has identified various problems facing small businesses in Gibraltar. We continue the process of discussion and seeking solutions to difficulties raised and we expect to be in a position soon to make various recommendations to the Cabinet.

It is to be pointed out, Mr Speaker, at this juncture that I must applaud the efforts of the GFSB and the Chamber who have, under the auspices of the Small Business Board, worked together to be able to put to the Small Business Board joint recommendations which we will in turn put to the Cabinet.

As the Minister for Commercial Affairs, I can say on behalf of the Government, that we are fiercely committed to increase, wherever possible, the opportunities available to entrepreneurs whilst ensuring that the ultimate consumer is properly protected. I therefore very much look forward to elaborate and progress discussions with the Small Business Board.

75 The public will also remember, Mr Speaker, that as a result of matters raised at the Small Business Board, the Business Support Unit, under the auspices of my Ministry, held two seminars. One of them, on indication of prices and will soon hold its fourth seminar; the second – on exploring solutions to the challenges posed by online sales.

80 The Trade Licensing Section, which is also part of my Ministerial remit, has had their historical computer problems resolved. As the House will recall, the GFSB is now represented on the Trade Licensing Authority in order to correct a historical issue.

85 I now turn, Mr Speaker, to my transport responsibilities, in general, and, in particular, the Gibraltar Bus Company. The House will recall that in 2012, the Government advertised the pre-qualification of the tender for the Eco Friendly Buses. Out of the companies that applied for this tender, and as part of the second stage of this process, two companies were selected as meeting the requirements of the tender. As the public will have witnessed for themselves, buses are being tested on our roads. Once this stage of the process is complete, the Tender Board will make its recommendations to the Government.

90 Mr Speaker, I eagerly await the day that we will be able to announce the successful completion of the tender process and replace the current fleet with environmentally friendly vehicles. It pleases me to note that on the recommendations from the directors of the company and the managers, the Bus Company has reduced the costs of the company, by having wages and salaries prepared, too by the Treasury. Electrical works which were conducted by a sub-contractor are also now conductor by GIB Elec.

Mr Speaker, I am sure that the House will have welcomed the introduction of the 18th July of last year of the new Route 7, to meet the demand for a service to Mount Alvernia. The route has certainly been welcomed by the visitors, the residents of course and the Mount Alvernia Trust.

95 Certainly, this route was a need that was promptly addressed by this Government on entering office which saw the need to do so on hearing the representations from the general public and the Mount Alvernia Trust. Following more feedback from the users of this route, on 31st July of last year, the Bus Company extended the route to service Linewall Road, thus making it more accessible to other bus users who visit this area.

100 Mr Speaker, on 20th March of this year, the Bus Company also introduced a brand new bus, a Ford Transit Trend Mini Bus to service the route. In August of last year, you will recall that new bus routes were introduced. The new routes have received overwhelming approval and support from the general public save for representations on two additional routes being requested, on which I will elaborate below.

105 In respect of one of the routes that have been requested, and based on the recommendations from the directors and the managers. The comments were taken on board and in September last year, routes 8 and 9 were introduced. These two new routes have proved to be very popular with users, and the record shows that, by introducing them, it has eliminated complaints received by the Bus Company over the chronic delays of the route 4 bus, which we inherited.

110 Mr Speaker, the second representation stems from residents of the South District and I can also confirm that they will very soon see a solution to the various representations received. I hope to be able to be in a position to make an announcement later on this month.

115 Further, Mr Speaker, in order to improve communication with the public, the Bus Company introduced a user-friendly website that is constantly updated. It has added a totally new concept to our users with its feedback section, and it has also seen the introduction of a Facebook page that has interactivity between the website and vice versa. Additionally, facilities for the mobile-optimised version of the Company's website can be accessed by most smart-phones.

In addition, Mr Speaker, and as pledged at my last Budget speech, a new bus shelter was installed in the Shorthorn Estate bus stop in April of this year. Further still, following representations from the Senior Citizens Association, two new bus stops, inclusive of shelters, were installed in both directions in the area of Bishop Canilla House. This has made the area more accessible for our elderly.

120 In turning to the taxis, Mr Speaker, the House will note that the Government's publicly stated commitment to work with the Gibraltar Taxi Association – the GTA – to resolve their concerns and improve the service available to the community. The work done is well underway and tests have established the effectiveness of the newly incorporated taxi meter against a modern, reliable and cost effective dispatch system. The tests will establish communications between the vehicle and a central office. The installation of these newly incorporated taxi meters will also allow all the vehicles job details to be tracked.

130 As part of Government's commitment to further improve the taxi service, a joint effort between the Ministry of Transport and the Ministry of Traffic will see the deployment of several transport inspectors. These officers will be seconded to the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Department and will be trained, not only to police and to ensure the improved taxi service, but to guarantee that other modes of transport, such as buses and heavy goods vehicles, adhere to all regulations and safety requirements.

In addition, the Government, in close consultation with the GTA, has also established a client charter. This document will be placed in every rank to ensure transparency and the right to information.

135 Mr Speaker, the Committee of the GTA and I, are quietly confident that all of the above measures, in addition to the legislative changes that I will announce shortly, will address the lack of a proper city service at certain times.

If it does not, then we will return to the table to see what changes will need to be made. It goes without saying, however, that we have met as many times as we have felt necessary to produce what we think will immediately produce a workable solution to the city service. What this Government will not do, Mr Speaker, is to do nothing to resolve the situation by trying to find solutions with the GTA and then unnecessarily threaten to issue more taxi licences on the eve of a general election and then do sweet nothing for the next four years.

140 As the Minister responsible for Transport, I wish, from this House, to acknowledge support and applaud the GTA and the other entities' efforts in working with the Government to ensure that the general public – both residents and visitors alike – benefit from an improved taxi service.

145 It is important that we do not forget that taxi drivers are important tourism ambassadors and play a key role in Gibraltar's tourism industry. In this respect, I can say that I have found in the GTA and in the individual members that I have met, willing participants in furthering the aim of the Government to provide an effective and reliable taxi city service.

150 Mr Speaker, on that note, I now refer to my responsibilities for the Gibraltar Port Authority and the Gibraltar Maritime Administration.

Turning first to the Gibraltar Maritime Administration, I can tell this House that they are indeed exciting times. I am pleased to report on the successful progress of the Gibraltar Maritime Administration, which, despite the global economic downturn, continues along a steady path of growth in terms of its overall fleet and resources.

155 Firstly, in respect of Gibraltar Ship Registry; Mr Speaker, as I have previously noted and in a clear sign that the Government's new focused marketing strategy of the Maritime Administrator and staff travelling to personally meet ship owners is certainly working, given that the number of commercial ships on the Gibraltar Ship Register has increased by 5%. In other words, meeting owners face to face has had an immediate impact in attracting new vessels to Gibraltar. 2012 was a record year for new registrations, with 58 brand new vessels. This trend appears to be holding, Mr Speaker, with 22 new ships registered as at the end of May of this year.

160 Significantly, the overall gross tonnage jumped nearly 50% in one year, from 2.1 million in December 2011 to 3.2 million in December 2012. The current overall gross tonnage now exceeds 3.5 million in April of this year. Larger, high value ships are now being registered on the Gibraltar flag, attracted by the quality services being offered, not just by the GMA, it must be said, but also by the local ship representatives and financial institutions.

165 Crucially, Mr Speaker, and this is an important point, I have to point out that, notwithstanding the increase in the number of vessels and tonnage, the quality of the fleet is being maintained, with an equivalent number of vessels turned down in pre-registration in the last year, as they did not meet the high standards of the flag. Furthermore, the mean average of the commercial fleet remains at nine years, despite the increase in numbers. This is indicative of the number of newer vessels being brought over to Gibraltar and being registered.

170 I now turn, Mr Speaker to the Gibraltar Yacht Registry. Like with the Ship Registry, the Yacht Registry continues to make its presence felt, in terms of marketing and fleet growth. My Ministry with the GMA is developing a comprehensive marketing strategy for the Yacht Registry, which includes the creation of a new website dedicated to yacht registration as well as participation in a number of international yachting events, including an exhibition at the Monaco Boat Show and technical discussions at yacht fora in Malta and the Netherlands.

175 It pleases me to note the positive feedback that has been received from potential new clients of large yachts and my Ministry working with the Yacht Registry is in the final preparations of introducing two new products. The first a new fee regime for the Registration of very large Mega Yachts and the Registration of Yachts Under Construction.

180 It is also very gratifying, Mr Speaker, to note that the number of yachts on the flag now exceeds 800, with an increase of 5.5% over the last 12 months. The Yacht Registry has tremendous potential, in terms of commercial growth, and the Government is keen on facilitating its development. Future proposed developments will include the availability of online payments for yacht registration services. This will be one of the first Departments to offer this, in line with the Government's new e-payment system.

185 Mr Speaker, the GMA has also enjoyed an increase in staff resources over the last 12 months. Three new marine surveyors have joined the fold and one additional engineering post has recently been advertised. The Department has also taken on two trainee marine surveyors, emphasising our long-term vision for the development of the maritime cluster in Gibraltar. It is with great personal pride, that I can tell this House that, in spite of the fierce competition for these vacancies, all of the new highly-qualified surveyors are Gibraltarian, as are the trainee surveyors. While more surveys were delegated to the

195 recognised classification societies, increased monitoring of these organisations has continued to ensure the overall quality of the fleet is being maintained.

Mr Speaker, it is also to be noted that the Seafarers' section issued over 2,200 endorsements to officers serving on Gibraltar-registered ships. This is an important aspect of maintaining the safety and maritime protection standards expected on board the ships of the fleet. The Provisional Endorsements, which are issued online, is completed within 24 hours. The Seafarers' certification section of the GMA is another success in terms of revenue collected and the quality of the service.

Indeed, Mr Speaker, I should note, as a course, that the GMA is not just a self-financing arm of Government but it also is able to make a profit – thus not costing the taxpayer any money at all and yet contributing positively to the economy of Gibraltar.

205 Furthermore, we have a new Maritime Administrator, and the whole House can boast that this post is, for the first time, also held by a Gibraltarian. This highly-qualified officer has over 14 years' experience in the maritime industry and has progressed through the Government system. The previous incumbent, Alan Cubbin, was, it must be said, a tremendous asset to the Department and his successor will build on these solid foundations, the main objectives of which are to ensure the highest standards of quality, safety and protection of the marine environment. I am sure, therefore, that all hon. Members will congratulate Mr Richard Montado to the post.

I now turn, Mr Speaker, to the Gibraltar Port Authority. The financial year 2012-13 has also been successful for the port when, also despite the financial pressures on shipping generally, revenue has shown a 3.7% surplus on the estimated bid; £6,801,518 against an estimate of £6,556,000.

215 Pursuant to a manifesto commitment, and/or withstanding the increase in revenue, a review of port charges was undertaken at the end of the last financial year and the decision was taken not to increase the tariffs. So, notwithstanding that the tariffs have remained the same, we still have an increase in revenue for the Gibraltar Port Authority, thus also positively contributing to the economy of Gibraltar.

220 In fulfilment of another manifesto commitment, work continues to improve port facilities and infrastructure including provision of enhanced facilities for operational personnel.

It pleases me greatly, therefore, Mr Speaker, to say that, in satisfaction of another manifesto commitment, a new messroom and facilities for launches and crews is being provided by adapting the old ferry terminal at Waterport. I am told that the works are quite close to completion. As well as welfare facilities for crew, this site will also provide berthing and workshop facilities for craft.

225 It also, Mr Speaker, pleases me to be able to announce in this House today, that a site for an entirely new port administration building, incorporating improved accommodation and a better location for VTS, to include a physical lookout, fulfilling yet another manifesto commitment, has been identified and architects drawings have been produced. This, Mr Speaker, will represent a substantial injection of capital investment in the port, in order to fulfil yet another critical manifesto commitment to stop the chronic underinvestment in the port and, instead, to substantially invest so that the port may continue to operate successfully, safely, enhance its global reputation and continue to generate revenue for the Gibraltar economy.

230 In addition, moving the port administrative and VTS centres away from the port will also free up valuable land within the port estate for operational use. Work is underway to identify a suitable site and commence the investment in human resources in order to be able to reinstitute the reporting berth.

235 Introduction of port-wide closed circuit television system is now complete and underpins enhanced safety and security through much improved surveillance of the critical areas of the port estate. Works to improve the resilience of business systems within the port is nearing a landmark stage, with the successful implementation of an upgraded and robust computer system. The introduction of an electronic Vessel Management System will further enhance capabilities and will allow ships' agents to input data remotely in order to provide the most recent information on a vessel's movements.

240 In line with the importance the Government attaches to its environmental obligations, an environmental health and safety advisor post was created and a Gibraltarian was successful, and has been appointed to provide impetus to build a robust environmental, health and safety culture within the port and provide support for compliance with marine environmental legislation.

245 As further proof that, in this Government, every Minister is a Minister for the Environment – although none of us, of course, Mr Speaker, presume to have the expertise of the Hon. Mr Cortes – this House will remember that in January of this year, I enacted regulations to ban ship to ship operations being carried outside British Gibraltar Territorial Waters in a concerted drive to enhance the supervisory control of the Port Authority over port operations.

250 The House will also recall that an Act and Rules were enacted to increase fines for pollution offences at the Magistrates' Court, with a fine up to a maximum of £250,000 and to an unlimited fine on indictment. Real deterrence, Mr Speaker, and incontrovertible proof, if any further were needed, that we, on this side of the House, take our duties to our marine environment very seriously indeed.

255 The commitment to review and upgrade the oil pollution response organisation is also truly well underway and, as a result, a new Vikoma Alligator skimmer, capable of being effective in the recovery of

a wide range of oils in the most demanding of weather conditions, has been purchased. This will augment the equipment already held. Research continues into ways in which threats of oil spills from vessels outside British Gibraltar Territorial Waters can be detected early and appropriate action taken.
 260 Relationships are being developed with the aim of producing a coherent plan for the deployment of stakeholder's assets in the event of a pollution event.

And in an embarrassment, Mr Speaker, of environmental riches, and all this, of course, to please my great friend the Hon. Mr Cortes, this year saw a landmark in the commitment of the port in supporting the Government's Green Agenda, when the Gibraltar Port Authority became an accredited member of the
 265 Green Award Scheme. The scheme, administered in the Netherlands, seeks to reward responsible ship owners who commit themselves to having their vessels audited to stringent high standards, by recruiting partners as 'Incentive Providers'. The Port Authority has elected to provide a 5% discount on port dues for ships certified under the scheme.

In his speech, Mr Fransen, the director of the scheme said as follows, and I quote him:

'The Port of Gibraltar's view fits very well with the Green Award's Philosophy. When such a major bunker port as Gibraltar practices its Corporate Social Responsibility through participating in the Green Award scheme, it does make a difference and motivates safe and environmentally conscious shipping.'

The Port of Gibraltar is the second port this year that offers new incentives to seagoing vessels holding the Green Award certificate. A total of 31 ports have now earned the Green Award. With the Port of Gibraltar being a major bunker port and the gateway to the Mediterranean, the port's decision to grant incentives to ships, the highest safety standards of which are confirmed by the Green Award certificate,
 275 motivates even more ships owners to invest in improvement on board.

And, Mr Speaker, of course I cannot leave my responsibilities to the port without mentioning to this House that a major project has, as the Minister for Justice has said as well, commenced to provide sufficient small vessel berths to accommodate 700 vessels, in accordance with yet another manifesto
 280 commitment.

The marina will be constructed in the mid-harbour area and will incorporate 400 six-metre and 300 eight-metre finger pontoon berths. The marina will have electrical and water points, secure entry to the pontoons and CCTV security cameras. The construction will be a caisson vertical wall design wharf, which will also provide around 500 metres of new outer wharf berthing for large vessels and super yachts.

This will be the first time in recent history that new commercial wharf facilities have been constructed in Gibraltar. There will be two lanes for traffic, a roundabout at the end of the wharf, a public promenade
 285 and parking for over 50 cars and for motorcycles.

Mr Speaker, at this point I pause to pick up on the point made by the Hon. the Leader of the Opposition, who mentioned that the small boats marina was not popular. I cannot for the life of me fathom why he would make such a point, except that maybe he will now use that as the excuse why they did nothing in 16 years. (*Banging on desks*) And yet, we, within 18 months in Government, and having
 290 announced it as a promise in the manifesto, are already starting work on this important, critical plank manifesto commitment and will finally be able to provide pontoons and small boats berthing to the long suffering, waiting owners of small boats.

As the first stage of an ongoing project to review and bring up to date legislation relating to the port, work is continuing in conjunction with the Pilotage Authority to review the legislation concerning marine pilotage, including the issue of Pilotage Exemption Certificates in anticipation of the new European
 300 legislation on the subject. A strategy for marketing the port and its activities is continuing to be developed with a greater emphasis on face to face meetings and the development of relationships with industry stakeholders.

Mr Speaker, I now turn to tourism, in a year that has also been satisfyingly dynamic. My efforts and those of the team at the Gibraltar Tourist Board, and their colleagues at Gibraltar House in London, have been tireless in pursuing: (1) our responsibility to deliver more visitors to the Rock; (2) market the destination effectively; and (3) make product improvements. In tandem, we have encouraged the private sector to take more initiatives and to work in closer partnership with Government. I am happy to say that
 305 the results are there for all to see.

Let me start, Mr Speaker, with air services where we have shown tremendous progress. Despite the loss of services from Liverpool and East Midlands Airport, the Government acted swiftly last year to address the situation and worked closely with Monarch Airlines to encourage service to resume from the Midlands, with the airline starting flights from Birmingham as from March of this year.

We were also able to delight in the news that, following a series of meetings that the Chief Executive of the GTB and I held with BA, BA decided to increase capacity to the Rock as from last winter, by scheduling two extra services at the weekend. These are set to continue through this summer and next winter. Indeed, Mr Speaker, we are working hard to argue the case for additional capacity from Heathrow, where we believe there is still potential for further growth.
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320 As part of the on-going support for airlines, and in association with BA, the GTB held an event at Gibraltar House in London to specifically promote this extra weekend service. The event is one of many that the GTB would like to host in this intimate setting, to target travel agents who are an important part of the booking process for the airlines.

325 Mr Speaker, it is also good news that flights from Manchester have also risen to four flights per week in the current schedule and will remain at three flights per week for next winter, offsetting the loss of capacity from Liverpool. I am also pleased to report that easyJet will continue to lay on extra capacity from London Gatwick in the peak summer months, increasing to four rotations on some weekdays.

330 It will therefore be, Mr Speaker, the busiest summer for the airport, with more than 1,800 flights and 300,444 seats available to five destinations until the end of October. For the first time on one day, namely Sundays, the airport will enjoy seven flights. This is all very encouraging news, Mr Speaker, but neither I nor my team at the GTB will be satisfied nor rest until Gibraltar enjoys, firstly, even greater connectivity with the United Kingdom and we start connections into mainland Europe – an aim I am sure that Members obviously will also encourage us to undertake.

335 To that end, we are working very hard to encourage our existing airline partners to add new routes from the UK and other countries, and are in hot pursuit of new airlines and new routes from European destinations.

I now turn, Mr Speaker, to an important aspect of the tourism sector, the cruise industry. Not least given the very recent misleading and blatantly partisan comments on social media, by at least one supporter of the GSD, I need to place the 2011-12 financial year, in terms of cruise calls, in its proper context.

340 When this Government came into office on 9th December 2011, we were faced with the, let's not say ideal, scenario where only 170 cruise calls were booked for 2012, down from 186 cruise calls in 2011. As those that are familiar with the cruise industry, certainly not the persons who made the post on Facebook, as they will categorically tell you, cruise calls are planned sometimes for more than a year, sometimes 12 months and at the very least nine months in advance of the call. As a result, Mr Speaker, the number of cruise calls for 2012 was already well and truly cast when we, on this side of the House, were elected into office by December 2012.

350 Those who support the party opposite should, therefore, try to be honest when insinuating that the drop in number of calls in 2012 was somehow the fault of this administration – it was certainly not. Then again, why allow the facts and reality to get in the way of trying to denigrate the Government, it never has to date.

355 Having pursued, Mr Speaker, a vigorous policy of one-to one meetings and building up real strong personal relationships with the industry, I am pleased to report that 2013 will see calls scheduled rise to 186, with passenger numbers also rising. We must also consider that ships do carry a large crew complement, some of which also come ashore and avail themselves of Gibraltar's facilities and services.

In 2012 the cruise ships calling carried 291,000 passengers. This year, Mr Speaker, estimated passengers are 300,000 and crew members of course will also need to be included. In an encouraging sign, furthermore, as at Friday last week, there are already for 2014, 170 calls. This evidences the undeniable fact that some cruise liners book their calls sometimes more than one year in advance.

360 Some of the great news this year was the announcement by Thomson Cruises and Island Cruises that their calls to Gibraltar for the winter 2013 and summer 2014 programme will increase by 33%. The announcement came in an interview for the press carried out by Neil Duncan, who is the General Manager of Thomson and Island Cruises, whilst in a visit to Gibraltar – in fact, during the course of our meeting.

365 Pullmantur Cruises also announced the return of their important product aimed at the French cruise market. In 2011, Pullmantur calls had fallen to two from four in 2010. A total of two calls were scheduled for 2012 but after a direct meeting with the company calls increased to five scheduled for this year and, so far, this company has 13 calls booked for 2014. Good news indeed, Mr Speaker, although undoubtedly a bucket of ice cold water to those who mischievously want to paint an inaccurate picture on social media sites.

370 This year, I have held meetings with senior cruise executives in the UK. I was able to dispatch two of my very able senior officials, with experience in the field, to Miami with the Government's strategy of marketing on a one-to-one basis. We are certain, Mr Speaker, that personal contact and an exchange of ideas with the itinerary planners and shore excursion decision makers is vital if we are to maintain the level of cruise calls we enjoy today.

375 We have also ensured that as many senior executives from the cruise companies as possible come and visit us in Gibraltar to experience our legendary business hospitality. Since early 2012, we have held meetings here at home with Pullmantur, Thomson and Island Cruises, Viking Ocean Cruises and Carnival Cruises. We are scheduled to meet with Saga Cruises later in fact this very week.

380 Another area being actively pursued by my team and I, is the provision of turnaround cruises in Gibraltar, and we have already presented a comprehensive study to this end to some of the major cruise

companies. Whilst taking note of the concerns and representations raised by the cruise operators about the feasibility of being able to have turnaround cruises in Gibraltar, we will be tireless in our pursuit of this opportunity.

385 Mr Speaker, we were able to delight in the news from the team at Azamara Club Cruises, through their agents in Gibraltar, M H Bland, that we were being given the opportunity to host an AzAmazing evening. We were then further overjoyed to hear that once was not enough for them and that a second AzAmazing event would take place in Gibraltar.

390 Azamara, having been disappointed at the arrangements being made at a Spanish cruise port, scheduled to host the event on 30th April. Azamara Cruises visited the GTB stand at the World Travel Market and right there and then asked if we could take on the other event, which of course we clasped with both hands, putting Azamara Cruises in no doubt of the Government's commitment to the tourism industry.

395 This event was co-hosted by the GTB, M H Bland and the cruise line. I can also doubly confirm, Mr Speaker, that despite some additional blatantly partisan misinformation on another social networking site, the Government did not pay for the excellent fireworks display that took place on the two occasions that the Azamara Quest was in port. This was a generous gift from Azamara Club Cruises to its passengers and indeed for all of Gibraltar to enjoy. Of course, Mr Speaker, once I made clear in a press release that the taxpayer had not funded the fireworks, they then complained of the time at which the fireworks display was held. Quite touching really, that they should feel so desperate that they should pick on anything that they feel they can.

400 In any case, Mr Speaker, these events have gone a seriously long way in cementing a relationship with a cruise line by showing a willingness to be proactive, and will no doubt result in further events like this taking place in the future. I can confirm that Azamara Club Cruises have already been in contact to plan their AzAmazing evenings for 2014.

405 The passengers on board the Azamara Quest were one of the first to enjoy improvements made at St Michael's Cave. Azamara Club Cruises called at Gibraltar three times in 2011, there were five calls in 2012 and there have been six calls in 2013.

410 Mr Speaker, if ever there was a signal that Her Majesty's Government of Gibraltar is a great supporter of the tourism industry, aside from all I have said so far, it is the unprecedented investment currently being undertaken in the visitor attractions. Works have already been completed at the Great Siege Tunnels, Moorish Castle, the 100 Ton Gun exhibition, St Michael's Cave, Jews' Gate, Apes' Den, the Gibraltar Cruise Terminal and Waterport Fountain along with other works at other locations.

415 In particular, attention has been given to providing enhanced or new accessible facilities. This has included the refurbishment and provision of toilet facilities and improved access at St Michael's Cave, including the provision of a specialised lift at the new entrance to enable guests to view the Cave from the first landing. Facilities have been installed for those with impaired hearing and the Gibraltar Tourist Board is now also looking at providing enhancements for visitors with impaired vision.

420 We are also in the process, Mr Speaker, of installing new signs on the upper town area. These are designed to provide clear directions for those walking in and from the Upper Rock in this area, and therefore assist our visitors in finding their way to the marvellous attractions within the Nature Reserve. I must point out that this particular exercise is to be carried out following a suggestion by a citizen of Gibraltar, which was sent to the GTB by email, and reflects the Government's continuing consultation with the public, and our willingness to act on excellent suggestions from the public when they are able to be actioned with ease. I must stress, Mr Speaker, that this is just one example of the consultation.

425 The Government has also given its support to the arrival and installation of HMS Pickle as a tourist attraction in Gibraltar. As you know, Pickle is famous for the role she played at the Battle of Trafalgar from where she sped home to deliver the news of Lord Nelson's death and the British victory to the King in London. The Government warmly welcomes new attractions and initiatives from the private sector.

430 At the end of March and for a few weeks subsequently, several injured soldiers visited Gibraltar, courtesy of a charity called 'Give Us Time'. This is a charity founded by former UK Defence Secretary Dr Liam Fox to provide holidays for soldiers recently returned from operational duties. These soldiers require operational quality time in order to reintegrate into family life and to recuperate after six difficult months apart. The Government was pleased to support the initiative.

435 In co-operation with M H Bland, Monarch Airlines and the GTB, a group of school children visited Gibraltar for the day on 24th April, in what proved to be a great event for those involved and an educational trip the children will no doubt remember.

440 One of the most anticipated events this year, Mr Speaker, and one very close to my heart as an A-level student of English literature, will be the first Gibraltar International Literary Festival, to be held in October. The Festival follows the Government's policy of encouraging event-led tourism in a bid to drive more visitors to the Rock, off peak season, and to firmly place us in the field of quality international events.

I am particularly pleased to see the great support we have received from private sponsorship, signifying a willingness, on behalf of these companies, to work in partnership with the Government and sharing a vision for success with these events. I have no doubt that this prestigious Festival will do much to promote Gibraltar as one of the most dynamic city states in the world.

Also bearing fruit is the continuing work done by the United Kingdom Gibraltar Tourism Association and the team at Gibraltar House in London, with UK tour operators. In February, Superbreak, one of the tour operator members of the UKGTA, announced that for the month of January they were 263% up in bookings for Gibraltar against January 2012 – with an additional 300 clients booked in the month. I am pleased to say that the feedback from most of the operators to Gibraltar from the core source market remains positive.

Yet another UK tour operator, featuring Gibraltar as a destination reported an increase in sales this month. The announcement was made by Cresta Holidays, that are part of the Thomas Cook Group and are members of the UKGTA. The news came just before the last meeting. Earlier this month, Cresta Holidays reported encouraging performance from their Gibraltar programme so far in 2013, currently trading at over 7% up from year on year. This performance improved further and the four weeks prior to the meeting of the UKGTA trading stood at over 23% versus the same period in 2012. Cresta added that Gibraltar is an area in which the company has seen significant growth and that they were sure that this would continue.

The GTB has held successful road shows in the UK aimed at the catchment areas around the airports with which Gibraltar has connections. An event was held in Birmingham earlier this year to promote the start of services from this airport to Gibraltar by Monarch Airlines. At the beginning of June a very successful road show, attended by 102 agents, was held at the Waldorf Hilton Hotel in London. The road show was aimed primarily at the London airport catchment areas, in support of British Airways, Monarch Airlines and easyJet. The road show proved so popular that a wait list was in place for agents wishing to attend the event, this being the first time that some travel agents were not able to find a place at the event.

Marketing continues apace in the UK with a campaign in the media and jointly with members of the UKGTA and local industry partners. We have actively encouraged our partners to contribute to the marketing and advertising campaigns in the UK, in particular for niche markets such as for conferences and meetings and the weddings market. In respect of the latter, the GTB has now set up a weddings committee which will meet regularly so that all those selling this product can work together to improve on the services on offer.

We have paid particular attention over the last year to the formula for attending trade fairs. In a drive to maintain costs down, or as from 2012 onwards at the same levels, an effort to curtail stand build costs have been made and stand designs have reflected the needs of the users. We have therefore managed to drive costs down substantially in some cases, such as, for example, with the World Travel Market, where in 2007 – its high peak – just over £68,000 was spent on this exhibition, compared to just over £30,000 last year.

I have personally held post mortem analysis sessions after the events with co-exhibitors to fully appreciate their feedback and incorporate this into the work of the GTB at the events going forward. The co-exhibitors are therefore doubly encouraged, firstly, that the Government takes the time to listen to their views, and then secondly, incorporate those views into the format of shows held abroad. In addition, Mr Speaker, the attendance at the fairs by Miss Kaiane Aldorino and the Gibraltar History Alive Group has added colour and dynamism to the GTB's attendance at these events. We have also ensured that the time is used to hold as many meetings as is possible with industry partners and prospective customers. We shall endeavour to bring all of the improvements to the attendance at the World Travel Market and all other trade fairs or consumer events that the industry urges us to attend.

Mr Speaker, this year the GTB exhibited for the first time at the IMEX trade fair in Frankfurt. Members of the GTB team attended on an observer basis, on two occasions in the past. This event is specifically aimed at the Meetings Incentive Conference and Events markets, commonly known as MICE. Gibraltar, as the House knows, is ideally placed to host small to medium sized events in this category and it is vital that the GTB supports local industry partners in pursuing this market. Despite only having had a small stand this year, the event was wholeheartedly supported by the industry in Gibraltar.

In April the GTB was also present at the Marrakech FIA World Touring Car Championship Event. The Chief Minister and I led a delegation to this event and hosted a stand. The event served to highlight the recent changes in Gibraltar's immigration rules, encompassing the Government's relaxation of visa requirements for Moroccan Schengen multiple entry visa holders and the Government's desire to develop modern tourism, trade and business links with the Kingdom of Morocco. As at 20th June, 1,549 Moroccan visitors have availed themselves of this scheme.

The GTB is therefore pursuing new markets. Germany, in particular, is a country holding great potential in outbound tourism for Gibraltar. Last March, I approved a visit to the ITB fair in Berlin by two members of the GTB's team, on a fact-finding mission. This visit has been instrumental in setting up contacts and in helping the GTB to gain a feel for this market. China and Russia are also two very

505 exciting areas for growth. Last year, the Government introduced a visa waiver programme for Russian nationals wishing to visit Gibraltar for the day on an organised trip. I am also pleased to note that, as at 20th June, 3,327 Russian nationals have visited Gibraltar as a result of this initiative.

As the House knows, in April the GTB participated in the World Travel Market Vision Conference in China and exhibited at the China Outbound Travel and Tourism Market. The GTB also continues to pursue niche markets. In particular, bird watching is of significance and a group of tour operators and 510 journalists specialising in the field visited Gibraltar recently, following an initiative taken by the Bland Group of companies. The expanded Tourism Advisory Council has already proved very useful in advising us of issues affecting the industry.

Mr Speaker, I turn to the beaches. As far as our beach facilities are concerned, I can safely say that the Government has so far provided for these in an unprecedented manner. Last year we initiated weekly 515 cleaning of all the beaches from 1st February, laying of all walkways from mid-May, the purchase of new lifeguard boats and the employment of senior lifeguards.

This year, initiatives include: the purchase of three extra boats with engines for the lifeguards to cover the service in all our beaches; the provision of a lifeguard weekend service as from 11th May, with a full 520 lifeguard service from 8th June; beach facilities, including showers, being made available as from 6th April; external showers being provided at all the beaches; a new beach umbrella store being provided at Camp Bay; a new toilet/changing room unit, including showers, has been provided at Western Beach; vastly improved accessible facilities provided at Camp Bay; a new walkway being provided at Catalan Bay to provide easier access from the car park to the beach and to the promenade; jellyfish booms have also been provided and there is already one on a trial basis on Western Beach; and accessible facilities 525 being improved, Mr Speaker, at all the beaches.

It will not have escaped the notice of Members of the House of the regeneration works of Sandy Bay, which is now truly and well in progress. As announced earlier this year the works involve major coastal protection, indeed one of the groynes is very much developed and work on the south groyne, I believe, 530 will be starting today. And also, of course, the replenishment of the beach with sand. This will once and for all undoubtedly bring improvements to the much neglected and popular beach.

I was very pleased, to have seen last year the launch of a new website for the GTB. The new site has brought great improvements to the online information available to visitors and the site is compatible with tablets and smart phones. However, Mr Speaker, connectivity with tourists through the internet does not 535 stop there. The Government has embarked on an initiative to have Gibraltar's main tourist and beach locations also covered by Wi-Fi. Gibtelecom has been asked to extend the reach of its existing Wi-Fi network to cover 12 separate tourist sites, as well as all six main beaches on the eastern and western sides of the Rock.

The project is being carried out in a phased approach, with the Government contracting with Gibtelecom for free access to a number of local orientated websites at each location. This would include 540 tourist information, as well as a selection of other public sector sites of interest to visitors. Access to more general websites, outside this 'walled garden' approach, would be directed to Gibtelecom's Wi-Fi payment portal.

The first phase of the project will see prime tourist sites such as St Michael's cave, Napier Magdala Battery, the Coach Park Terminal and the frontier area covered. It is expected that this stage will be 545 completed very shortly. This will be followed by Gibraltar's main beaches, including Catalan Bay, Sandy Bay, Little Bay, Camp Bay and the Eastern and Western beaches. The plan is for these to be fully up and running in August. The remaining sites, embracing other areas such as Europa Point, will be covered in September.

Mr Speaker, I now return to the revenue of the GTB. In a bid to ensure the cost effectiveness of the 550 GTB, the GTB is on a drive to improve revenue in its areas of responsibility. This will now be achieved by: the already installed ATM machines at the Gibraltar Cruise Terminal and Gibraltar Coach Terminus; the selling of advertising spaces at the Gibraltar Cruise Terminal and Gibraltar Coach Terminus; and, subject of course to the appropriate licences, the sale of new official souvenirs at the main GTB Information Office, including gift vouchers, for those wishing to purchase entry tickets in the visitor 555 attractions.

Mr Speaker, it is the aim of the Government to make the GTB self-financing so that the savings made to the taxpayer can go towards socially essential services such as Health, Education and Social Services etc. In the current climate of close co-operation, which I have engendered in the local tourism industry, 560 there is a clear view that the tourism product in Gibraltar has devalued itself over the last 20 years, driving much needed yields down to levels that are just not acceptable to anyone involved.

We all travel regularly, Mr Speaker, for business and for leisure and to say that £10 for an all inclusive ticket to see all of the wonderful attractions on the Upper Rock is expensive, is clearly a misnomer. When you consider that a ticket to see a film in central London today can cost up to £20 and that entry into a well known wildlife park on the Costa Del Sol can cost up to €25, we really are cheapening our breath- 565 taking attractions, which I hasten to add, this Government is continuing to improve and add value to.

Mr Speaker, looking at last year's statistics, I am pleased to report that, excluding non-Gibraltarian Frontier Workers, the total number of visitor arrivals increased by 0.6% over 2011. The published figure, including non-Gibraltarians, however, shows a decline, but this is due to the decline in the number of

570 cross Frontier Workers crossing into Gibraltar.
The number of visitor arrivals by land, again excluding non-Gibraltarian Frontier Workers, increased by 1%. Again the published figure including non-Gibraltarian Frontier Workers declines by 1% again because of the decrease in the number of Frontier Workers.

575 Mr Speaker, it is particularly pleasing to say that, despite the loss of two routes in 2012 – one, a commercial decision taken by easyJet and the other due to the demise of bmibaby – together with a slight reduction in capacity on some routes, the largest visitor arrival increase in 2012 was in fact by air. A 1.7% increase in arrivals was recorded over 2011.

580 It is interesting to note, and I am sure the hon. Members opposite will be interested to know, that in comparison, air arrivals in Andalucía for 2012 showed a decrease of 6%. In particular, arrivals at Malaga were down by 1.8% and at Jerez by 13%. In 2012 overall passenger load factor jumped 4.8% over 2011 to 87.2%, with June through to October recording average monthly figures over 90%. This load factor of 87.2% is way above the worldwide IATA average of 79.1%, and the European airline average of 80%, indicating a strong market on existing routes to Gibraltar.

585 Of note, Mr Speaker, is that the additional Heathrow services secured by this Government, have delivered an additional 5,202 passengers to date versus 2012. There has been, Mr Speaker, which is very welcome news, a 13.9% growth on this route so far this year versus 2012. Also good news for Gibraltar, the route from Manchester is doing exceedingly well, having recorded a 26% growth to date over 2012. For summer 2013, the airport will have an additional service overall compared to 2012, and winter 2013 will have an additional four services overall compared to 2012.

590 Mr Speaker, the number of coaches arriving in Gibraltar has fallen by 1.5% over 2011. However, statistics show that there has been a continuous steady decline of coaches arriving in Gibraltar since 1999. This, to an extent of course, is no doubt a reflection in the way that the industry has changed, with more independent travellers choosing to make their own arrangements. Having said that, Mr Speaker, I am not being satisfied that there has been such a steady decline since 1999 on the number of coaches arriving in Gibraltar. I have tasked the GTB to make a particular effort in devising protocols and plans in how we

595 can stem this tide.
Mr Speaker, in turning to the hotel occupancy report, in 2012 all arrivals at hotels decreased by 6.6%. However, room nights offered fell by 5%. Room occupancy, therefore, fell by a marginal 0.7 percentage points and stood at 59.3% as an average for the year. Mr Speaker, it must be noted that this average of 60% is an average of all of the hotels and the sleeper occupancy for all of them. But, without mentioning the details of any one particular hotel, if one were to analyse the sleeper occupancy of different hotels individually, some hotels clearly do much better than others, with one hotel in particular boasting of 76% sleeper occupancy in Gibraltar in 2012. It is also interesting to note the statistic that the number of employees in the hotel industry has actually increased by 3.2% over the year to October 2012.

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605 Mr Speaker, at the meetings of the Tourism Advisory Council and the UKGTA, I have repeatedly encouraged hotels to make far more use of the Government's increased marketing drive to convert the visitors to Gibraltar into overnight tourists. These marketing collaborations have clearly worked for UK tour operators, who have seen the numbers increase, and which announcements have been made. It is, therefore, apparent that the hotels have their work clearly cut out for them in this respect.

610 It is also interesting to note, as I did before on a comparison with the neighbouring region, that an analysis of hotel statistics in Andalucía for the period of January to March in this year, shows that occupancy at 35%, and in Gibraltar, for the same period, room occupancy stands on average at 46%.

615 Mr Speaker, in respect of hotels, a leap forward in the provision and variety of bedstock in Gibraltar is necessary. Soon, in 18 months, we will have a new 5-star hotel, in the form of the Sunborn Hotel, bringing the first product of this kind to the Rock. This allows us to promote the destination to a 5-star bracket and attract visitors who, potentially, may offer a higher yield in the leisure and business sector. Some of the new market sectors that we are pursuing, indeed the exhibitions that we have attended in respect of the MICE industry, require the provision of 5-star accommodation.

620 The Government is acutely aware, of course, to continue to support established hotels in Gibraltar and the assistance scheme that was started by the previous administration, which is tied into the prompt payment of utilities bills, continues. In addition, of course, the GTB continues to promote the hotels in Gibraltar in the marketing activities at no cost.

625 Mr Speaker, it has to be said, that the attitude of the Opposition, in respect of the Sunborn Hotel was certainly one that I found interesting, if not to call it contradictory. I recall when in Opposition, they were flaunting that they were going to bring to Gibraltar, seven – not one, not two, not three – seven new hotels and that two were committed to Gibraltar. I have to tell them that I have not found any contract that commits any hotel to Gibraltar.

630 So, on the one hand we have the Hon. Mr Bossino, who in this House tried to bring me to task over what he tried to suggest was the failure of this administration in not bringing over the Lester Hotel, which they could not bring over for four years. They now accuse us of making a done deal over the Sunborn, which is a 5-plus star hotel, which everyone in the tourism sector tells us is vastly needed for those who want a 5-star experience.

635 Mr Speaker, if they do not want to credit the Government where credit is due, and clearly that is always the case, it is considered, and I am told, that one of the benchmarks of how the tourism industry in Gibraltar is perceived to be doing is the annual report of the Chamber. Let me say how encouraged I was to read the section on tourism in this year's report. It is acknowledged that the GTB is proactive and focused and the invigorating approach is gratifying.

640 In addition, the Chamber recognises the new administration's focus on the much-needed attention to this sector and is welcomed by them. The Government also shares the Chamber's view that tourism was the lost pillar of the economy, but we will make it resilient and we will continue to work on it. So we were very pleased to read as well that the Chamber, in addition, applauds our investment in the Upper Rock and we can assure the Chamber, the House and persons listening to this debate, that the programme will continue with a further series of investments this year.

645 So, Mr Speaker, it pleases me to announce that the Government will spend yet another £1 million in this financial year on much-needed infrastructural repair and work on the physical fabric of the visitor attractions in Gibraltar. The details of the sum that has been invested and the projects to be carried out will be made public shortly.

650 We agree with the Chamber that there is a need to convert more of our visitors into tourists, and attract them to visit the sites and to stay overnight in Gibraltar. The team at the GTB has therefore worked hard with the local tour and transport operators in Gibraltar to establish new tour options. These have included the use of under-utilised iconic venues such as the City Hall and Garrison library.

Training and education, Mr Speaker, in the hospitality industry is very much at the forefront of our minds and we intend to focus this financial year on how we progress on those matters.

655 Clearly, Mr Speaker, the industry can see that the Government is committed to investment and growth in the tourism industry and that it is serious about the sector. We, therefore, look forward to establishing the partnerships that some in the industry believe should materialise, so that the Chamber of Commerce, the GFSB and other similar institutions, have a role to play in future developments.

660 We are confident, Mr Speaker, that the Government has already started to do this, and we will continue. Our long-term strategy is clear: to establish Gibraltar as the preferred short break leisure destination in this part of the world, delivering a quality product in a unique setting, at one of the most impressive geographical locations in the world.

We continue to work vigorously in all areas of the tourism industry with a very able team, Mr Speaker, and I wish to thank them now for all of their work to date.

665 Mr Speaker, before I close, I take the opportunity to thank, from this House, all of the staff at all of my responsibilities for their unwavering dedication and their commitment to duty. It is true to say that despite the ambitious programme of the Government – and our desire, for us on this side of the House, to wish to implement it – we would not be able to fulfil our pledges if it were not for the hard work of the staff that surround us.

670 So, Mr Speaker, it would be remiss of me not to also thank you, the Clerk and the staff at the Gibraltar Parliament who are unfailingly patient and always ready to assist, guide and advise, and for which, Mr Speaker, I am personally always very grateful.

All objective observers will agree that in the areas of responsibility, in which the Hon. the Chief Minister has entrusted me, there has been serious earnest work and results that have been seen throughout this last financial year. (A Member: Hear, hear.)

675 Moreover, not only have results been delivered, not only have projects come online in a timely fashion, not only has there been consultation, but it also has to be said, Mr Speaker, that this Government has prioritised infrastructural projects that also aim to assist the most vulnerable of our community – such simple things, as a lift at St Michael's Cave, so that people with disabilities can also enjoy the attraction. The accessibility projects at all of our beaches so that people with disabilities can choose which beach they wish to attend.

680 Mr Speaker, the Hon. the Chief Minister also made special mention of the increase to the disability allowance and other allowances for the most vulnerable of our society; things which we have been able to do only after 18 months in Government, and which they failed to do and missed one opportunity after another, over 15 years – in particular, the Hon. Mr Netto, who nods whilst I speak.

685 So, I conclude on a more serious note by remembering the late Charles Bruzon. Every person in this House, I am sure, will remember Mr Bruzon as a caring gentleman. I will remember him, Mr Speaker, when I first met him when I stood for Parliament the first time in October 2007, and he showed his usual special kindness by, at the time, trying to get to know the reasons why I stood for Parliament, what we expected that this Government could do whilst in office, and I will always recall his words to me, that: 'In

690 everything that we do, when in Government, we must act our exercises, our discretions with fairness and with justice'. I can think of no better way to honour the memory of the late Mr Charles Bruzon, than to, in everything that we do, reflect exactly that – fairness and justice to our people.

Thank you, Mr Speaker. (*Banging on desks*)

695 **Mr Speaker:** The Hon. Mr Selwyn Figueras.

Hon. S M Figueras: Mr Speaker, it is scarcely believable that I am already called upon to deliver my second Budget speech in this House, an honour and a privilege, which I have come to eagerly anticipate in my few short years on the political frontline of this community.

700 I am tasked by my Hon. and Learned Friend, the Leader of the Opposition, with shadow responsibility for the portfolios of Transport, Planning in the City, Justice, Home Affairs, Financial Services and Immigration.

705 Following the marathon by-election hustings in this House since the start of this session by the Hon. the Chief Minister, the Deputy Chief Minister, the Hon. Minister for Traffic, the Hon. Minister for Transport, as well as the contribution of the Hon. Minister for Health and the Environment, it falls to me, Mr Speaker, to bring the Government's election campaign momentarily back down to earth. (*Laughter*)

I turn my attention first to planning. During last year's speech I focused on the fact that the Government had failed to make Government projects subject to the approval of the Development and Planning Commission. A year on, Mr Speaker, it remains the case that Government projects continue to be passed on to the DPC for their opinion and guidance, but do not require the DPC's approval before going ahead.

710 I told this House last year, and happily say it again this year, that the Government's commitment to subject their projects to DPC approval is unrealistic. It is unrealistic for reasons which I have already rehearsed in this House and will not bore the Members with again. Suffice to say that it is clear that the Government has not yet delivered on this manifesto commitment, for the simple reason that it has too much work to do before the conclusion of its first term in office to afford such controls on its agenda.

715 I am of the view that Government, in a community like ours, needs to take responsibility for the direction in which it takes Gibraltar, making decisions and standing by them to deliver on the mandate given to it by the electorate. The difficulty for this Government is not that they do not want to take responsibility, and it is not that they do not want to take control of the agenda. The problem is that what they certainly do not want to do is to upset anyone in the process of governing. That, Mr Speaker, is impossible, and that, Mr Speaker, is where they are coming unstuck.

720 The extra floors on the Government estates, the construction of a tank farm at the North Mole and, more recently, the preparatory works for the arrival of the far from ready Sunborn Hotel; these are all examples of how this Government is struggling with being all things to all men, now that they are in Government.

In relation to the Government's estates and the Sunborn Hotel, they made public announcements of the projects they had come up with, surely in consultation with experts and civil servants, and when the public tide of objection was coming in a little too fast for their liking they backtracked and revisited the projects to try and save face and, of course, the votes.

730 In relation to the floating hotel, Mr Speaker, that change of heart came well after the Hon. Minister for Health and the Environment – who is unfortunately not in the Chamber at this moment – had been happy to literally wash aside the environmental concerns expressed during, what I am told was rather an awkward moment during the relevant meeting. (**A Member:** Shame.)

735 In relation to the new purpose-built, state-of-the-art tank farm on the North Mole, the two Ministers on the Development and Planning Commission – the only two members with political responsibility on that Commission – abstained from voting on a project which was clearly felt to be in the interest of Gibraltar by the rest of those present at the meeting.

740 The feeble excuse given by the Hon. the Deputy Chief Minister, when I asked him about this in the House, is that both he and the Hon. Dr Cortes had been disappointed that operators had not been able to come together to agree joint use of one facility, as opposed to having more than one.

745 The developers of that project, Mr Speaker, had been made to jump through every hoop in the book to obtain approval. Yet the Ministers, when the time came, chose to abstain during the very process, hoping thereby not to alienate any voters on either side of the result. This dithering, which the Government dresses up as openness and transparency and the willingness to consult, is very dangerous for our community. I have warned about the dangers of relinquishing decision making power to unelected and unaccountable institutions in the past.

Whilst it cannot be denied that the contribution made by the Development and Planning Commission is an invaluable one, it is one that cannot, and never should, replace political control of Gibraltar's development by the Government of the day. Political leaders of this community share the responsibility to

750 ensure that, amongst other things, a planning process encourages and nurtures growth in activity and helps to accommodate it. I do not believe that this is true for Gibraltar's planning process today.

As things stand, Mr Speaker, and as an illustration of what I am referring to, there has been little, if any, creation of office space in our community since 9th December 2011 – (*Laughter*) down, in no small measure, to the extensive demands placed on developers by the enlarged DPC, (*Interjection*) which
755 demands are entirely unencumbered and unfettered by the responsible imposition of reasonable political direction from the Members opposite. In this context I do note, however, the measures announced by the Hon. the Chief Minister yesterday to incentivise the building of office accommodation. Be that as it may, planning is an area of Government which causes me concern, as it does for many in the community who approach me to discuss precisely this.

760 In my view, Mr Speaker, the Members opposite should not have relinquished general control over the planning process to the Town Planner, which should not be interpreted as a reflection of my opinion of the person of the Town Planner himself. I further believe that the Government should not hand over powers of approval over Government projects either. I suspect, however, Mr Speaker, that this particular commitment box will only be ticked when the bulk of the Government's capital projects are well under way. We shall keep a keen eye on developments, if you will pardon me the pun.

765 I now turn my attention to the area of Justice and, unfortunately, the Minister for Financial Services and Justice is not in the Chamber either at this time. In relation to my shadow responsibility for Justice and Financial Services, (*Interjection*) I am pleased to be able to say that I have enjoyed a generally positive and constructive interaction with the Minister, since I was allocated this portfolio on the great occasion of the election of my Learned and Hon. Friend Daniel Feetham, as the new Leader of the
770 Opposition.

It is my view that, in the context of both these areas, being positive and collaborative is better for the community than being divisive and negative, (**A Member:** Hear, hear.) an approach which the hon. Members opposite tended to favour when they themselves were on the Opposition benches (**Several
775 Members:** Hear, hear.) (*Interjection*)

I also wish to associate myself with the Leader of the Opposition's complimentary and positive comments of the Hon. Minister for Justice and Financial Services – a view which he expressed during last year's Budget speech when he was shadowing his portfolio. I do not consider that there is a better qualified individual on the whole of the GSLP's team to deal with this area of responsibility, and I look forward to working opposite him for as long as I am tasked with it.
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I would also like to take this opportunity to add my congratulations to Liam Yeats and Damian Conroy on their recent appointments, and to extend my thanks and congratulations to the Royal Gibraltar Police and all those involved in securing the return to Gibraltar of the five-year-old child the Minister referred to yesterday.
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I also acknowledge the Minister's comments, in relation to the improved management of cases and availability of hearing dates, and take the opportunity to remind the House that none of these improvements could have been possible in the circumstances without this party's vision and investment in the Court's complex as it stands today – a source of much pride for this party.

790 Turning to deal with the issues, Mr Speaker, I turn first to the sex offenders and the work being done to deal with this scourge of society in our community. It is obviously a positive development that the Sex Offenders Register is now a reality, despite the differences expressed heatedly at times across the floor and in public by the Minister and the Leader of the Opposition, my predecessor in this role.

It was, I hasten to remind the House, a measure that we introduced through the Crimes Act 2011. (*Interjection*) We on this side of the House feel strongly that the creation of the Sex Offenders Register should be just the first step on the journey towards protecting our children and vulnerable, to the furthest extent possible.
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When Gibraltar delivers the change, in the shape of Gibraltar's first one-term Government, and returns the GSD to office in 2015, we will set about the process of establishing, in consultation with the relevant authorities, NGOs and the public at large, a child sex offenders disclosure scheme built on the model of the UK's enforcement of what is known as 'Sarah's Law'.
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With Mr Speaker's indulgence, I will read a brief description of what such a scheme entails. Any member of the public can approach participating forces to apply under a child sex offender's disclosure scheme for information regarding a specific person who has contact with a child or children. The Police will process the application, but disclosure is not guaranteed. Even if there are no firm grounds for suspicion, the applicant can trigger an investigation to find out if the subject – the person they are asking about – has a known history that means they might be of risk to children.
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Third parties with concerns, for example the grandparents or neighbours, about an individual who has contact with children are also invited to use the scheme. However, where appropriate, disclosure will only be given to parents and guardians or those best placed to protect the child. A number of agencies work together in the UK for this purpose – the police, probation and prison services – in the gathering of information and on initiatives to manage the risks posed by sex offenders and to protect the public.
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815 I recognise, Mr Speaker, that Gibraltar is a very different place to the UK and, whilst it is important to acknowledge that our security services have an advantage over other forces in the UK by virtue of its size and the strong family ties that bond this community, we can ill afford to stand still in the development of tools and strategies to manage and minimise risks to our children, and vulnerable adults, from sex offenders in the community. This is a hard line on sex offenders; one which the GSD plans to pursue, when it is returned to Government in 2015, as part of the GSD's continuing dedication to keeping Gibraltar safe in the modern age.

820 Further, in the context of the hard line on crime, the Minister and I have had an exchange in the last few months, in relation to the enactment of legislation in Gibraltar for the purpose of clamping down on living off the proceeds of criminal activity. Some in our community, Mr Speaker, enjoy the fruits of a criminal lifestyle and do so with impunity. The Proceeds of Crime Act in the UK, as an example, empowers law enforcement authorities to seek confiscation orders in relation to persons who benefit from criminal conduct and to make provision about investigations relating to benefit from it –

825 **Minister for Education, Telecommunications and Justice (Hon. G H Licudi):** Mr Speaker, will the hon. Member give way?

830 **Hon. S M Figueras:** No, I think I will carry on. (**Hon. G H Licudi:** Point of order.) By legislating along the lines of the Proceeds of Crime Act here in Gibraltar, we will begin to target those in our community who, by their lifestyle... and, Mr Speaker, we have afforded all the Members the opportunity to continue and complete their –

835 **Hon. G H Licudi:** Mr Speaker, on a Point of Order.

Mr Speaker: What normally happens during the course of a Budget debate, is that if you ask a Member to give way very early on in his speech, the Member may very well want to make more progress before he gives way. He is developing a point and he may want to make more progress and it is a right, which the hon. Member who holds the floor... It is his right to decide at which point he does or does not give way.

840 Now, does the Hon. Mr Licudi have a Point of Order?

Hon. G H Licudi: Yes, Mr Speaker, that is absolutely right, and this is the first occasion that I have asked for the hon. Member to give way.

845 I have already made my contribution so I do not have a right to reply. This is after all the... (*Interjection*) This is, after all, the debate on the Second Reading of the Bill, and it is quite normal in other Parliaments for there to be exchanges across the House whenever a point is made and it is important to clarify a particular point.

850 It is a matter of courtesy, especially with the hon. Member having said that I was not here before and not having corrected as soon as I came in – especially in that light. It is a matter of courtesy for the hon. Member and it is good for the debate, especially when the hon. Member has made a serious point of there being proceeds of... an allegation of persons out there enjoying the proceeds of crime in Gibraltar with impunity. It is important for the hon. Member to say exactly what he means; who is out there, who is enjoying the proceeds of crime in Gibraltar with impunity? Certainly, we do not know of anybody.

855 **Mr Speaker:** I am not sure that that is a Point of Order. What I would suggest is that the Hon. Mr Licudi may wish, before the Hon. Mr Figueras terminates... before he finishes his contribution... ask him to give way as he nears the end. I think that that would be better procedure.

860 **Hon. S M Figueras:** Mr Speaker, I am grateful for your intervention. I have to say that unfortunately the Hon. Minister was not in the Chamber when I was being tremendously complimentary of him.

865 **Mr Speaker:** The hon. Member will give way. The fact that an hon. Member is, or is not, in the Chamber does not mean that they are absent, because all Members have to sometimes transact business, attend to telephone calls, or what have you, and they are in the Antechamber. So, that should not be a reflection of the fact... that should not be an indication that they are not necessarily following the proceeding in the House.

870 **Hon. S M Figueras:** Mr Speaker, with respect, and for the avoidance of doubt, it was not a suggestion at all, when I was making reference to that. I was simply saying that it was unfortunate that he was not in the Chamber when I was about to be complimentary and to congratulate him on matters of his responsibility, and the fact that we have enjoyed a hitherto very positive exchange across the floor in respect of matters arising in this portfolio.

875 As far as his quasi Point of Order is concerned, it is a matter of general observation made in respect of some – and again the word used was ‘some’ and I will not labour the point too much further – of some in the community known to be living on a criminal lifestyle.

But, Mr Speaker –

880 **Hon. G H Licudi:** Mr Speaker, it is a Point of Order, because when Members make observations in this House they are responsible for the accuracy. They are responsible. Members of Parliament are responsible for the accuracy of every statement they make in the House and what the hon. Member is saying is that there are members known out there to be living off the proceeds of crime with impunity, as if the forces of law in Gibraltar know about that and are doing nothing about it.

885 That is absolutely incorrect and the hon. Member should correct it.

Hon. D A Feetham: Mr Speaker, may I... ? Mr Speaker, may I... ?

890 Mr Speaker, I rise because, having also been Minister for Justice for four years, I know something about this. Look, Mr Figueras has not made a statement criticising law enforcement officers at... *(Interjection)* No, he has not. *(Interjection)* No, he has not. No, he has not.

Indeed, in the United Kingdom, they have introduced this particular type of legislation, which you and me have had exchanges across the floor of this House, and, indeed, you yourself said that it is something the Government was considering.

895 Of course, this particular type of legislation is introduced precisely because it is very difficult for law enforcement officers to actually pin a crime on an individual, but then, of course, it is obvious from the lifestyle that that individual is leading... that that individual’s lifestyle is not commensurate with their job or with his employment status. That is a very sensible... *(Interjection)* It is a...

You cannot expect, Mr Speaker, for the Hon. Selwyn Figueras to name individuals.

900 **Mr Speaker:** Could we have some order and pay attention to each other. It is a matter of common courtesy, and that is how it has been all day yesterday and earlier this morning. *(Interjection)*.

Hon. D A Feetham: Mr Speaker, I am very grateful.

905 It is not a question of identifying – and if the Hon. the Minister for Justice has misinterpreted the point, I think that nobody on this side misinterpreted it – it is not a question of identifying individuals and saying: ‘well, if there is an obligation, Mr Figueras, to identify individuals’. The reality is that, not only in Gibraltar but in all parts of the world, this happens.

The way that one deals with it, and the way that Mr Figueras is inviting the hon. Gentleman to deal with this, is to introduce legislation dealing with... effectively, being able to explore somebody’s lifestyle with the job and income that that person receives.

910 I do not think this is a Point of Order, I think this is a point for the Hon. the Chief Minister, who has a right to reply and, traditionally, has always responded to every single speech on this side of the House, to do so and it is not something that the hon. Gentleman ought to be offended by.

915 **Hon G H Licudi:** Will the hon. Member give way before he sits down? Just for one point –

Hon. D A Feetham: Mr Speaker, I think that the problem that we have here is *(Interjection)* that it really is destroying the contribution of my Hon. and Learned Friend Mr Figueras’s speech. It is the second speech that he gives in this house. The hon. Gentleman is far, far more experienced and really he should not be making the fuss that he is making. Allow him to continue. You can make whatever points you want to the Chief Minister and he can then respond. I think that is common courtesy.

920 **Hon G H Licudi:** ...*[Inaudible]*so is it the case that the hon. Member is giving way just to clarify one particular point? So the hon. Member does not want to hear our response to that particular point when –

925 **Mr Speaker:** I am afraid that the Hon. Mr Licudi, much as he is trying, does not have the floor, because hon. Members of the Opposition have the floor at the moment.

930 **Hon. S M Figueras:** And I am grateful, Mr Speaker. *(Interjection)* I return to, and I expect the hon. Members opposite will afford me the opportunity to complete my contribution to this debate in much the same manner as we have allowed the lion’s share of the Ministers... of the Members opposite to do so in the last few hours in this House. *(Interjection)*

So some in our community enjoy the fruits of this criminal lifestyle and do so with impunity. The Proceeds of Crime Act in the UK empowers law enforcement authorities to seek confiscation orders, in relation to persons who benefit from criminal conduct – and, Mr Speaker, I am conscious that I may have

935 dealt with this already, but I simply want to set the tone once more briefly – and to make provision about investigations relating to the benefit from criminal conduct.

By legislating along the lines of the Proceeds of Crime Act here in Gibraltar – and this is the point I was getting to, that perhaps the Minister would do well to listen to – we would begin, or could begin, to target those in our community who, by their lifestyle, remain a dangerous and enticing example for otherwise law abiding citizens yearning for a fast buck or indeed that easy life. (A Member: Hear, hear.) (Banging on desks)

940 We must ensure that the maxim that crime does not pay, holds true in our community. Seizing upon an initiative of this kind, Mr Speaker – and this is not a criticism of the Government, which seems to be how it is being taken – would help to allay fears in the community that Gibraltar is falling off the wagon, or veering from the course set by the GSD Government back in 1996. A course away from criminality and a course away from the easy come easy go criminal lifestyle.

945 The GSD steered that course through stormy seas for 16 years, and now this Government has the opportunity to hold her steady and eradicate all that was bad about that episode in Gibraltar’s history, and ensure it never returns. On that note, I would like to make one further observation in relation to Justice and Home Affairs, before I turn to Financial Services.

During the last few months, the Opposition has openly been supportive of the Government in the work it has done to try and deal with the consequences of the busy tobacco trade. The Opposition has congratulated the Government on its initiatives in this regard, going further to ask when the Government will be delivering the East Side berth for law enforcement agencies to use in their daily struggle. This is a matter that the Hon. the Leader of the Opposition also referred to in his address in this debate. I also note yesterday’s announcement, by the Hon. the Chief Minister, of an increase in 10p per packet on the price of a packet of cigarettes, bringing the total increase in price to 25p over the one year.

950 However, despite all these measures, the figure for import duty has suffered a steep increase year on year, and that certainly is worrying. There can be no denying that Gibraltar has over the years benefited from the significant sums of revenue from import duty, but as the former Leader of the Opposition, the Hon. Sir Peter Caruana referred to yesterday, that source of revenue remains susceptible to factors outside our control. It is with this in mind, that we will continue to observe the Government’s management of this particular issue, to ensure that our community’s longer term interests are served as well as possible, and remain at their disposal and willing to assist in the handling of what is, and we acknowledge, a very delicate matter.

965 Turning now to, I trust, the slightly less controversial subject of Financial Services. (Laughter)

Hon. G H Licudi: Mr Speaker, he has finished his contribution on Justice –

970 **Hon. S M Figueras:** No, no, I think I am going to progress, Mr Speaker. (Interjection) No, I think I am going to take the opportunity to complete my address to this House. (Interjection) Mr Speaker, I am genuinely surprised by the nervousness of the Members opposite [Inaudible] in respect of this matter. (Interjection) Mr Speaker, perhaps I could have the floor?

975 **Mr Speaker:** Order please. Will hon. Members please give an opportunity to the Member who holds the floor to conclude... to carry on with his contribution. (Interjection)

Hon. S M Figueras: I am grateful, Mr Speaker.

980 On the subject of financial services, I wish to thank the Hon. the Chief Minister for bringing the news of ECOFIN’s approval to this House yesterday morning. I further proudly associate myself with the remarks made in that context by the Hon. my Learned Friend, Sir Peter Caruana, as it is a source of much pride to form part of the political family that presided over this community’s transformation during my hon. and learned friend’s stewardship at its head. (Several Members: Hear, hear.)

985 I note the Minister’s comments about the new areas being explored – new avenues for business, and the use of new and fresher strategies in the marketing of Gibraltar plc – once again being complimentary, Mr Speaker.

The Minister can count on this party’s support in respect of all sensible measures being pursued by the Government to further develop the financial services products, and to spread the message of Gibraltar’s value in international financial services far and wide.

990 Conveniently, given the interplay between both fields, I would like to take this moment to deal, momentarily, with my responsibility as Shadow Minister for Immigration and remind this House that Members on this side of the House were happy to support the introduction of the visa waiver system earlier this year.

995 It was a personal pleasure to collaborate with the Hon. Chief Minister in this House on that measure. (Interjection) The Hon. the Chief Minister knows that I share his view that it can only be good for

Gibraltar to explore and develop relations with our neighbours to the south, as an entirely natural extension of our very strong links to Morocco, through our local Moroccan community.

1000 In fact, it is with much satisfaction that I watched Miss Maroua Kharbouch take the crown of Miss Gibraltar in this year's pageant – becoming our representative for the upcoming Miss World contest. I think that all hon. Members will agree that Miss Kharbouch will be able to capture everything that is good about the Gibraltarian spirit of community and the wonder of our peaceful multicultural existence. Miss Kharbouch's representation of Gibraltar is, in my view, a brilliantly positive story, which will only help to bolster the work of our own Miss World, and all our Miss Gibraltar's before or since.

1005 I also note the Chief Minister's comments yesterday, in relation to the directions due to be issued in respect of the territories of Brazil, Russia, India and Japan, and the installation of biometric scanners at all entry points to Gibraltar. Whilst this is certainly capable of bringing further investment and activity to Gibraltar, I have just a few cautious words to say about this particular bit of news.

1010 Gibraltar's success is built on three things: reputation; reputation; and reputation. In fact, the Hon. Sir Peter Caruana often referred to reputation as being Gibraltar's only commodity. Expansion into, and the pursuit of opportunities in territories hitherto undiscovered, such as the [*inaudible*], must in my view be accompanied by a resolute adherence to the highest levels of care and compliance, almost to the point of paranoia, if necessary, to ensure that the romance of the new opportunity does not inadvertently lead us into harm's way. I know the Chief Minister understands these concerns, and for that reason, I am happy that he and the Minister for Finance are both alive to these matters and will proceed with due caution in this regard.

1015 Mr Speaker, Gibraltar's transformation from old school offshore centre to onshore specialist finance centre, complying with all EU and international obligations, has been down to the hard work of the industry, and the sensible, mature and competent management of all the challenges Gibraltar has faced over the last 16 to 20 years.

1020 Our success – Gibraltar's success – is down, in no small measure, to our ability to adapt and thrive in the face of an evolving European and global regulatory landscape. Re-inventing ourselves as we go along, complying when required to with wave after wave of EU legislation.

1025 Much as I am a proponent of this approach and an evangelist of the Gibraltar story – hence my highlighting of Gibraltar's presence on the IOSCO list on non-compliant jurisdictions some months ago – the direction in which financial services regulation is going is a source of some concern; namely the move towards automatic exchange of information and the creation of registers for use, in the first instance, by law enforcement authorities and then by extension tax authorities around the world.

1030 Gibraltar cannot – and I cannot stress this enough – and should not, seek to stem the tide of regulation. As it must remain committed, as it is, to continuing the work it has already done for many years in combatting money laundering, the financing of terrorism, and more recently tax evasion or rather, what is more recent, Mr Speaker, for the avoidance of doubt, is the trend to deal with tax evasion, as evidenced by the exchanges between the Ministers opposite, the Members opposite and the UK Government in recent times. (**Hon. G H Licudi:** We already do.)

1035 I feel compelled... Indeed, indeed, indeed and I acknowledge that. I feel compelled, however, to quickly raise the point that may be worth bearing in mind moving forward. There is a palpable concern, which I and others... and I really do not understand this nervousness emanating from the other side of the House. (*Interjection*) No, no, no, yes.

Mr Speaker, perhaps I can have the floor?

1040 **Mr Speaker:** Will the hon. Member sit down.

A Member: Yes, by all means.

1045 **Mr Speaker:** I think hon. Gentlemen, particularly in the Government side, have to bear in mind that a number of them have made speeches, yesterday and today, and some of those speeches have contained barbed comments about Members of the Opposition when they were in Government. They may not have liked what was being said but they took it on the chin and there were hardly, if any... I do not think there were any interruptions yesterday or this morning, and that is how I think we ought to proceed. Common courtesy demands that that is the way to proceed.

1050 On the Government's side you have nine speakers, so it is not beyond the ability of any of them to respond, later on, to other Ministers, who respond to points that are being made by the Members of the Opposition.

1055 What is more, the Chief Minister has a right to reply, and in that right to reply is usually a winding-up speech, in which he will have an opportunity to address all these matters. So I would ask hon. Members to maintain the decorum, the good behaviour that we have had throughout yesterday and today.

Now, I will give the Chief Minister an opportunity to rise and then I will ask the Hon. Mr Figueras... and call again upon hon. Members to allow him to carry on with his speech without unnecessary interruption.

1060 **Chief Minister (Hon. F R Picardo):** Mr Speaker, I am grateful for the way that you have called the House to order. It is important that in this very detailed and important debate, there should be order in the House.

1065 I acknowledge what you say, but if I may, Mr Speaker, I think that the issue that has arisen is not one of barbed comments. There will be barbed comments of course, during this debate and this is a parliament, and a parliament without barbed comments is an encyclopaedia of facts, and not a parliament. But there is one issue that the hon. Gentleman has said, which I will take up now as a point of information, for him and for the House, and it is important that we do it.

1070 This is not nervousness on the side of the Opposition; this is the reputation of Gibraltar, internationally. (*Interjection*) Since 199... and he will want to hear me, Mr Speaker, because he is an operator in the financial services field, and he needs the information if he is going to go around marketing Gibraltar. Since 1994, Gibraltar has had tax evasion as a crime, (**A Member:** Absolutely.) laundering the proceeds of which would be a crime. I think what has happened, Mr Speaker, is that, on this side of the House, we have interpreted his last comment as meaning that we have only recently done that. If he accepts that, then there is no issue in respect of his last comment.

1075 **Mr Speaker:** I will not allow any more interruptions to the contribution of the Hon. Mr Selwyn Figueras.

1080 **Hon. S M Figueras:** Mr Speaker, I am grateful for your intervention once more, and for establishing what us, on this side of the House, know to be the correct way to manage this debate, and that is to not interrupt and allow contributions to be completed.

1085 On the point that the Hon. Chief Minister has just made, I have not suggested for a moment that we have not been dealing with tax evasion for as long as we can recall in the financial services industry. If he has interpreted it in that manner then he has, unfortunately, misinterpreted it.

1090 There is one point, if I can find my place in my address following the various incidents; (*Interjection*) Gibraltar cannot and should not seek to stem the tide of regulation – certainly not. But there is a palpable concern which I, and others in the profession here and elsewhere, have expressed about the distinction between the taxation implication for an individual seeking to avail him or herself of the services a jurisdiction like Gibraltar, or others might be able to offer, and the importance of the confidentiality and/or security of the information itself.

1095 Concern is growing for the security and confidentiality of information shared on registers, or between tax authorities around the world, for very good reason. In times of austerity – where communities around the world are facing more cut backs, more cuts in salaries, and cuts in services – wealthy families are increasingly becoming exposed to risks of being targeted by those less fortunate and those of less noble intent.

In certain countries around the world, Mr Speaker, gangs are resorting to stealing tax return documentation to help them identify wealthy families, and then proceeding to kidnap a family member for ransom. They are then showing the hostages copies of this documentation as a means of telling them: ‘we know what you are worth’.

1100 This is a concern that has been raised – not just in Gibraltar but certainly as part of my professional endeavours in a recent visit to Switzerland. And, in a world where the likes of Google, Amazon and Starbucks, and generally the well-to-do, have become easy and populist targets for politicians around the world – who decry the use of tax mechanisms to limit or reduce taxes payable by such giants of business, despite the wealth such companies generate for the communities in other ways – is it preposterous to suggest that the sharing of sensitive information between tax authorities and other agencies could be a matter of concern for finance centres like ours? I certainly do not think it is.

1110 I am keen to stress that my concern is not one of the potential limitation that this move towards automatic exchange may represent for Gibraltar’s product, but simply that the more places information is stored and shared, the more likely it is to be found and put to the wrong use. In that context, I trust that the Minister will just take this on board and bear it in mind as we move together along this international political agenda in Gibraltar’s future.

1115 Finally, Mr Speaker, and commenting generally on the impact of his Government’s labour policies on this area of business – and here come the barbed comments – it has to be said that if there is a home grown threat to the continued well-being of our financial services and other service industries, such as gaming, it is his hon. colleague the Minister for Employment’s worrying and over-protectionist labour policies, which threaten the viability and commerciality of local business.

I need to make clear that this party on this side of the House is all for creation of jobs for locals as a priority. We are committed to taking care of our own. However, whilst bearing that in mind, we would be fools, Mr Speaker, to allow the party political pursuit of unchecked nationalist and protectionist policies, which impose barriers to business in an already difficult context, to shape the administration of labour in Gibraltar.

In that context, I would now urge the Government to tighten policy controls to ensure that none of these anachronistic and unnecessary polished shenanigans see the light of day, as the last thing the lawyers in this House, of which there are a few, and the rest of the professional community at large, wants to see is the effective souring of the milk for businesses operating here. **(Several Members: Hear, hear.)**

On that note, I move on to Traffic and Transport, Mr Speaker, and these are both areas for which I have significant interest – both as matters which affect the community as a whole, and as matters for which, as a petrol head with a keen interest on two-wheeled pedal-powered transport, I have a special affinity for.

I will say, Mr Speaker, that, much as the Chief Minister thought he was making, of labelling me a petrol head in his reply to this debate last year, it is accepted wisdom that you are not a real petrol head unless you have owned an Alpha Romeo. I have not had the pleasure of owning one, but perhaps the Hon. Chief Minister himself knows others in the Chamber who have indeed had one, or maybe even two.

A Member: I have had two.

Hon. S M Figueras: Thank you.

On transport, I have had the pleasure of dealing with my good friend, and I recall one time colleague, the Hon. Minister for Transport, on these matters and, in particular, in relation to the GibiBikes urban bike rental scheme and its development. I will admit, Mr Speaker, that I was not encouraged to hear, very shortly after the General Election of 2011, as the Hon. Minister for Transport declared cycling dangerous in this House at the drop of a hat. On that basis, I feared for the survival of the urban bike rental scheme and the outlook for cycling generally in Gibraltar.

I can reveal, however, that I have been working very closely with him on this particular subject, and I am hopeful that we may be able to collaborate across the floor of this House, to bring about a solution for a much loved and needed service in Gibraltar.

In relation to the buses, Mr Speaker, I was also aware from the Hon. Minister, that work was afoot in respect of the replacement of the bus fleet for Gibraltar. Equally, given my Hon. and Learned Friend Mr Damon Bossino's intervention on the subject of the deterioration of the bus fleet during last year's Budget speech, I understand, and have experienced for myself, that the standard of repair of our bus fleet, one of the standard bearers for Gibraltar and all it represents in the 21st century, is much improved. I eagerly anticipate further news on the fleet's replacement, as I am keen to understand which solutions are being proposed for our community in this respect.

As far as the taxis are concerned, Mr Speaker, also this is a work in progress, which we will give the Government the benefit of the doubt, in respect of, for some time, in order to allow for the new GPS enabled meter system to have an opportunity of having an impact on the service. I am hopeful that this service will improve, particularly at the border and airport at peak times, given that I continue to receive some reports of delays and difficulties in that regard.

I am, Mr Speaker, as hon. Members on both sides of the House I thought now appreciated, but I am not sure of any more *(Laughter)* able to recognise the good and the bad in local politics. The Sardeña affair has to be a rather unsavoury and inevitable black mark on this Government's record so far. The manner in which the whole thing has been handled has, frankly, fooled no-one. The fact that we are still pending resolution, in respect of what should be a relatively straight forward matter, just does not inspire confidence. I am not going to rehearse the facts or chronology of this case again, Mr Speaker, as it is entirely unnecessary and I am not in the business of wasting this House's time.

The simple reality is that in this day and age, when information is so easy to come by, the spectre of cronyism, favouritism and contracts for the boys looms large over this Government's term in office so far. **(Several Members: Hear, hear.)** It is important also to note, Mr Speaker, that it is down, in no small measure, to the dedication of concerned individuals, who bring matters of this ilk to our attention that we continue to do such sterling work in Opposition. *(Interjection)*

By way of a side note, before returning to the substance of traffic, it is perhaps one of the more notable down sides of living in a community as small as ours that, during the GSLP's second reign of... second reign, *(Laughter)* few of those with the ability or fora to publicly air these matters in a non-partisan, independent and objective manner are put off their noble pursuit for fear of consequences on their personal lives. *(Interjection)* And in that context, I must admit, Mr Speaker – *(Interjection)*

Hon. Chief Minister: A hugely important Point of Order.

1180 The hon. Gentleman has got up in the Parliament of Gibraltar and said that there is fear for people's lives? Has he said that, Mr Speaker? That people fear for their lives? Because, if he has said that, I am going to ask that you ask him to withdraw. (*Interjection*)

Hon. S M Figueras: Mr Speaker, no I have not said that.

1185 I have said that... and I will read it – thankfully it is written so I can say it again – that few of those, with the ability or fora to publicly air these matters in a non-partisan, independent and objective manner, are put off their noble pursuit for fear of consequences on their personal lives. There is no matter – (*Interjection*) On their *personal lives*, yes, (*Interjection*) yes. Mr Speaker, the Hon. Chief Minister's nervousness gets the better of him once more. (*Laughter*)

1190 However, in that specific context... (*Interjection*) Specifically in that context, Mr Speaker, I must admit that the Government has indeed been very innovative in respect of one Gibraltar's hitherto most vociferous writers. If you cannot beat them, employ them.

Turning now to deal with traffic, I found it very interesting yesterday that the Minister should tell us about 100 additional parkings in Catalan Bay when, just last month, I had asked him whether there were going to be any additional parkings and he flatly said 'no'.

1195 I also note from the Hon. Minister for Traffic's comments during last year's intervention – something, which I consider is very telling about the Minister's approach to this area of responsibility – the Minister said 'that the Trafalgar Interchange', Mr Speaker, 'was an example of a project where the previous administration did not research the project enough before going ahead', hence the supposed nightmare arrangements for pedestrians negotiating it. Surely, the Minister understands, or at least we hope he does, Mr Speaker, that the design of something like the interchange simply cannot take the interests of all stakeholders and give them all equal weight.

1200 Highways Engineers – the Ministers now own civil servants – will have surely participated in the process to build an interchange – to design and build an interchange – to favour the largest group of users, whilst trying to limit the inconvenience for smaller groups. That is what is has to be about, doesn't it, Mr Speaker?

1205 But be that as it may, I can go no further in this speech without mentioning the all-consuming ever present Sustainable Traffic and Transport Plan. The GSD Opposition has long since accepted, a long time ago, that the Government was always going to take the GSD's integrated traffic management plan and rubbish it, with a view to establishing a more realistic starting point for achievement in this field.

1210 The survey is, apparently, now complete and we wait, with bated breath, until the data is collated, a report produced, and recommendations made. We wait with bated breath because there are not many questions that my predecessor or I have asked of the Hon. Minister for Traffic that have not been met with the standard form of reply: 'let's wait and see what the survey says'.

1215 I will admit, Mr Speaker, that I was, for some time, unsure as to my hon. and learned friend Mr Damon Bossino's impatience with this portfolio, until I inherited it. It is a frustrating exercise too, as question after question invokes the same answer.

I understand that there is a plan being drawn up and that, since we are paying for the thing, we might as well wait and see what it says.

1220 **A Member:** A lot of money.

Hon. S M Figueras: But surely we cannot be shackled by the terms of reference to do nothing. I have commended the Hon. Minister on the installation of the intelligent traffic lights at the junction of Queensway and Europort Avenue, as well as the installation of pedestrian crossings on Bishop Caruana Road. Can we do no more than that while we wait for the plan to be complete?

1225 What is certainly a contradiction in terms, in my view, Mr Speaker, is the Government's stated intention of waiting for a plan to be devised for sustainable traffic and transport for Gibraltar, and their determination to tick every box in their manifesto, which includes the commitment to deliver double the number of car parking spaces in the area of Commonwealth Parade.

1230 Isn't it correct to say, Mr Speaker, that if the plan – the Sustainable Traffic and Transport Plan – is the centre point of everything they do to fix Gibraltar's perennial traffic problems, much improved by the GSD Administration during their 16 years in Government (**Several Members:** Hear, hear.) (*Banging on desks*) that they should be putting some time of caveat on that particular commitment? Something along the lines of: 'we will deliver twice the number of parking spaces, subject to approval and advice received from Messrs Mott MacDonald'.

1235 The Sustainable Traffic and Transport Plan may well prove insightful. It may even prove to be helpful. The problem is that, like me, there are many in the community that cannot shake the idea that the plan is just a cynical ploy to either avoid investing in any major programme of infrastructure works on our roads during this term, or perhaps a way to disguise the fact that this Government simply does not have any ideas of its own in the traffic context.

1240 One thing is clear; the massive strides this community took, in the context of traffic management in Gibraltar during the last 16 years of the GSD administration, is a matter of record and attributable to this party, the party that I proudly form part of today. The GSLP Government, Mr Speaker, will struggle to deliver progress on such a scale and will in future, I am sure, happily point the finger at the Sustainable Traffic and Transport Plan as the root of all it does or all it does not do.

1245 And so, Mr Speaker, I would like to say a few final words to conclude my contribution to the debate this morning. What this Government has done since it took office, is to take a ship that was sailing well in stormy seas, kept her on an even keel and proceeded to polish the bells and whistles... (*Interjection*) (**Some Members:** Hear, hear.) (*Banging on desks*) whilst drawing as much attention as possible to the buff and the blush as they can muster.

1250 They have been conscientious, Mr Speaker, indeed they have; conscientious to ensure that they have not missed a single opportunity to blame the GSD and rubbish its legacy; blaming us still – 18 months after they took office – for all the problems and crises of their own making.

1255 The Hon. the Deputy Chief Minister said to us yesterday in this House that everything they do, they do because they just want to make Gibraltar a better place. I wonder, Mr Speaker, whether in order to make this a better place they are satisfied that misleading the electorate at by-election time is the way to go. They say that the only vote that counts is a vote for their candidate, that any other vote is a wasted vote. This, Mr Speaker, betrays the reality of the value that they place on democracy. They tell the electorate that this is an election for a Government seat and that, as their candidate is the only one that could fill it, a vote for any other candidate is a wasted vote. They choose, Mr Speaker, to shamelessly mislead the electorate about the by-election, desperate to secure a victory, whether they have to put their principles on the line or not. Something that they have shown time and again that they are happy to do.

1260 But it is particularly peculiar today, Mr Speaker, because the Hon. the Chief Minister has, himself, said that he could easily run Government with nine Members. With their keen eye on expenses, and their ability to run Government in its current streamlined form, why is the Government so keen on an electoral victory, Mr Speaker? The Government is, once more, deceiving the electorate in the fashion of their handling of the referendum on our constitution, by saying that to vote for anything other than the GSLP is to waste a vote, because it is nervous about its popularity, its very *raison d'être*.

1270 We on this side of the House are excited about the election, contrary to the negative campaign of the Government. We are out in the community going door to door, telling constituents how important it is to go and vote, whoever they decide to vote for. Clearly, Mr Speaker, we believe the GSD is the absolute best option for this community (**Some Members:** Hear, hear.) (*Banging on desks*) but we are not willing, despite our confidence in that, to deceive or dupe the electorate into giving us their vote. The Government, on the other hand, will.

1275 Let them be reminded that it was they who were told, on three separate occasions, by this electorate, that they were not wanted – by an electorate consumed by frustration and the divisive negative and irretrievably partisan politics of the GSLP. Let them be reminded, Mr Speaker, further, that it took almost 16 years of political attrition for the GSD and an election bonanza, offered by the party now in Government, to shoehorn themselves into Convent Place without a majority of the electorates vote on their side. (**Several Members:** Hear, hear.) (*Banging on desks*)

1280 They have done some good work, Mr Speaker, they have, (*Interjection*) and I will happily acknowledge that. But, as a good friend, who knows a thing or two about politics, recently told me, (*Interjection*) the biggest danger with the Members opposite is their narrow mindedness – the fact that all they are thinking about is their own party political agenda and nothing else. He went on to say that so long as they are ticking boxes in their manifesto, that is all they care about. I do not enjoy agreeing with my friend any more these days, but he was certainly right about that.

1285 Thank you, Mr Speaker. (**Several Members:** Hear, hear.) (*Banging on desks*)

Mr Speaker: The Hon. Miss Samantha Sacramento.

1290 **Hon. Miss S J Sacramento:** Mr Speaker, it is a pleasure to address you and set out my Budget for the year ahead, which follows an extremely busy and productive year.

1295 Having had the benefit of being in office 18 months, I can proudly say that there has been a marked difference in the work that has been undertaken by my Ministry and my Departments. This year, I have an additional portfolio that I have taken over since the sad passing of my colleague and very good friend Charles Bruzon. While I do not have the years of wisdom that Charles had, I hope to continue what he started and do him proud in dealing with the Ministry for the Elderly, with the same dedication and hard work that I apply when dealing to the rest of my portfolio.

1300 This past year has mainly been spent addressing pressing social matters, which were neglected or forgotten by the previous Administration; forsaken by misspending on luxurious projects. The most visual of these are probably the intervention at the RNH Estate, and the changes at the old St Bernard's Hospital that I will refer to in greater detail further on.

1305 Mr Speaker, last year I described the Care Agency as a monster, an uncontrollable beast, because this is the way that both its management and staff felt. Through constant reviews of the service and working very closely with the Chief Executive and management, while, of course, not yet perfect, I am happy the general feeling that the Care Agency report is that it is greatly improved and is, nowadays, much less of a beast. It is felt, throughout the Care Agency that it now has direction and everybody is focused on the path they need to take.

1310 Importantly, I am told that there has been a significant improvement in staff morale. This was incredibly low when we took office, not least due to the disjointed management of the place. People tell me that they are now proud to say that they work for the Care Agency because they have the tools and are in a position to deliver.

1315 The focus of the Care Agency now is to make it a great place to work, to deliver effective and professional services and optimise the outcomes for its service users. The central administration of the Care Agency is now better consolidated and more cohesive. We have had a new Chief Executive since October 2012, in an acting capacity. I have been working very closely with the CEO to improve and develop the Agency. This has also meant that the previous acting Chief Executive has reverted to her substantive role as Clinical Standards Compliance Director and has been able to lead on the training needs which have, this year, been delivered in an unprecedented manner, and will continue to do so in the year ahead.

1320 As stated in my Budget speech last year, training for staff is an essential component in social care. Last year, we increased the complement to introduce a new training co-ordinator post, a training assistant, together with administrative support. This enhanced team has allowed the delivery of training and development of new and existing staff, in addition to collaboration on multi-agency training. The Care Agency is continuing to strive towards ensuring that its workforce has appropriately skilled people in the right places, working to deliver high quality care.

1325 For the first time, the training team is working closely with the managers from each of the services, ensuring identified training needs, which include specific subjects identified by them.

1330 The generic core training programme continues to be held regularly in response to service demand, ensuring trainees receive the necessary underpinning knowledge to allow them to work within the Care Agency, while they gain further practical and theoretical experience prior to taking up employment in the Agency.

1335 The generic core training programme is continually evaluated, improved and developed, based on feedback and current research. Last year a total of 65 training sessions were delivered, as compared to 59 in the previous year. Furthermore, a lot of this training is now being undertaken by the Care Agency's own specialised and experienced staff; thus reducing the cost of having to commission external training. The number of in-house key trainers for the past year, trained to deliver training, has increased to 46. The year before, the figure was 24.

1340 I am particularly proud, Mr Speaker, that we are now delivering our DCRT training in-house. Whereas before, this was commissioned externally, we have now trained four Care Agency employees up to Level 3 in DCRT. They have also undergone the trainer course and they are the ones who are now delivering DCRT training Level 1 and Level 2 to all the staff in the Care Agency. In addition, this year the Care Agency has seen 14 employees achieve Level 2 NVQ qualifications in health and social care, and five employees achieve A1 NVQ Assessor qualifications.

1345 The Care Agency will continue to invest in its staff to undergo NVQ training, as well as support care staff who may wish to apply for enrolled nurse training provided by the GHA. The Care Agency is now working closely with the GHA and is sharing learning opportunities. Staff from the Care Agency have attended courses provided by Kingston University at the GHA.

1350 We have also been working with the Tourist Board in order to provide training for their staff, particularly life-guards, to allow the continued running of the extended accessibility facilities at the beaches.

1355 Turning to administration, Mr Speaker; in my speech last year, I expressed shock when I discovered that the salaries paid at the Care Agency were calculated by hand, using the old Kalamazoo system. I can confirm that the salaries, which were historically done manually, are now processed electronically. This has finally become a reality for all those concerned who never thought this would materialise.

The element of error has now been reduced drastically as all calculations are undertaken by the programme, and staff have been released of the stress they previously endured. All necessary reports are produced by the programme and payslip advice is now in line with all other Government Departments and Authorities.

1360 Another small investment this Government has made in the administration of the Care Agency, is in commissioning a database for Human Resources. This will entail the inputting of all employment and qualification details of personnel, allowing information of every single one of the almost 600 employees of the Care Agency. This will allow a full amalgamation of Human Resources, which had not yet materialised, even after four years since the inception of the Care Agency. So, although this is a small

1365 financial investment, it is a huge one for the service, as working without this database has been a nightmare for the staff at Human Resources.

The structure of Human Resources has slowly been regularised and is now working in better conditions than when I inherited it from the previous Administration. A new staff handbook has been commissioned. Essentially, the two handbooks of the previous Elderly Care Agency and Social Services Agency were never consolidated, and the Human Resources Department continued to operate as two separate departments, until last year.

1370 Turning to Social Services, Mr Speaker, a review of which is continuous; this is comprised of four teams: Children and Family; Adults; Drug Rehabilitation; and Probation and Disabilities.

1375 Last year saw an expansion of staff by two social workers. This year there will be an increase of a trainee social worker post, and there has also been an innovation this year in the creation of two posts of assistants to social workers. These are administrative posts which provide dedicated support to social workers, to enable the latter to better dedicate their time to social work. Insofar as the Children and Families team, Mr Speaker, the ongoing review of the Care Agency is markedly apparent in this team. This is a service that is not without its problems, given the complex and reactive nature of the work undertaken.

1380 We have looked seriously at service delivery and service improvement, to improve outcomes for children and young people who require this service. This team has, in the past year, progressed from child protection to a broader safeguarding agenda. The aim is to progress this service from being a reactive one to a preventative one, but this is not an outcome that can be achieved overnight. There has been management restructure within the team, and staff are more autonomous in their decision-making and better supported in terms of supervision.

1385 As a result of yet last year's growth posts the service has developed tremendously this past year, not least, it has assisted in reducing the case load of the other social workers. One of the new social workers appointed last year has a background in working with children with disabilities, and a lot of work is being undertaken developing policies, such as the provision of respite for children with disabilities.

1390 The Children's Residential Team has also been reviewed. In this context, we are also looking at providing for children with challenging behaviour, as well as for secure accommodation. This is not a simple thing to do, but we are looking at it carefully so as to get it right, given the importance of this facility.

1395 Furthermore, the Family Team have the additional responsibility of managing Court Welfare, which was transferred to this team at the end of last year. Management and staff have dealt with the transition and absorption of this service admirably. This team is also looking at developing an adoption and fostering policy, and we are, at present, undertaking a review of the Adoption Act. There has been great emphasis on training for professional staff, and social workers have started attending professional training courses in the UK. Furthermore, last year the Care Agency subscribed to an online professional research tool. This enables social workers to access the latest research and practice developments, and provides them with invaluable current information.

1400 Safeguarding children is the top of this Government's agenda; it is an absolutely fundamental principle when it comes to child protection and safeguarding. The multi-agency child protection forum is proving very effective. This forum, of various Government agencies led by Social Services, includes representation by the Department of Education, the RGP and Health Services. Under this forum, the Care Agency provides Tier 1 and Tier 2 child protection training to Government Departments and the voluntary sector on a monthly basis. This past year, they have delivered a record number of training and now over 650 multi-agency professionals and volunteers have been trained. This has had a tremendous effect on raising awareness on child protection issues and is also a recognition that the responsibility for child protection does not only fall squarely on Social Services.

1405 By way of service development, we are in the process of commissioning the production of formal child protection procedures. This would provide a critical leap forward in the child protection agenda and will be instrumental.

1415 On the subject of child protection, Mr Speaker, a glaring hole that we discovered, is the lack of regulation of vetting of people who work with children. We have acted on this in very little time and have already drafted regulations on the vetting of people who work or volunteer with children and vulnerable adults. We hope to introduce this legislation as soon as possible.

1420 Turning to the Disabilities Team, Mr Speaker; the development of adult disability services this past year has been remarkable. This has been attributable in great measure by two factors. The motivational leadership of the acting team leader and the intense training provided to members of staff. The focus of the services provided by Dr Giraldo Homes and St Bernadette's Resource Centre has changed to provide structure and enrichment to services provided to service users. There have been a wide range of new activities introduced and greater participation in community events promoting integration. For example, this year saw the first ever sports day at St Bernadette's Resource Centre; an event that was held in conjunction with the GSLA, and a programme for employment of some service users has commenced.

1425

Mr Speaker, we have set up an enquiry into the allegations of abuse and misconduct in the Dr Giraldi Home, so that a line can be drawn under the allegations which have been hanging around and concern the community for far too long.

1430 Turning to probation, Mr Speaker; this service has continued to operate from within the Care Agency, although it works very closely with the Ministry for Justice. Over the past year the management of this service has been changed as part of the Care Agency review. Whereas previously this formed part of the adult team, it is now headed by a team leader who is himself a probation officer. Essentially the team has been augmented, with the appointment of a further probation officer and a part-time probation officer. As
1435 such, the team now consists of three probation officers – doubling the previous complement of 1.5 – and also a community service officer.

This team provides a vital service to the criminal justice system, in providing risk assessments to assist the courts in the sentencing process. In 2012, the Probation Services provided 160 pre-sentence reports to the courts, in criminal cases. Except for a small number of isolated cases, all these reports were delivered to the courts within the agreed timescale of three weeks. This is a significant improvement from
1440 the past and we have also implemented a system of quality control to ensure that all reports meet the exacting standards of the judicial process.

The enactment of the Criminal Procedure and Evidence Act 2011 has had a significant impact on how the Probation Service now operates. There is a new range of community disposals that the Probation Service is expected to manage; notably drug treatment and alcohol treatment orders. These present a real
1445 opportunity for offenders to break the cycle of substance abuse and offending that are so closely interlinked.

Another area that has seen much improvement is the unpaid work requirements, formally known as community service orders. Many local organisations, public services and charities have benefited from the scheme. For example, much of the refurbishment of the John Mackintosh Hall and at the Garrison Library is down to offenders completing these community sentences at these sites. I have to publicly
1450 thank the various placement providers for supporting the scheme. Community service now enjoys a degree of credibility and confidence that it lacked in the past. A special mention must go to our Community Service Officer who has worked indefatigably to achieve this.

A further important innovation for the Probation Service will be the use of a room within the new court building, which will be used as a base for probation officers during court working hours. This will result in the Probation Service being able to implement a duty system, to enhance the service it provides to the court, with a view to expediting pending court matters.

One significant development the Probation Service will focus on this year is the service it provides to the prison. Steps have already been taken to commence addressing this. The service has made contact with an organisation in the UK and will be undertaking a training schedule over the coming year, in order to better equip officers to carry out specific work with offenders in custody.

And now on the subject of drug rehabilitation, Mr Speaker; in last year's Budget Speech, I highlighted the state of the Drug Rehabilitation Services, as set up by the previous Administration, and how these were clearly failing to reach those individuals and families they were supposed to be helping. Statistics show how low the number of admissions to Bruce's Farm has been over the years. It is quite concerning,
1465 given that there is a substance abuse problem in Gibraltar.

I also addressed the lack of any focused or strategic thinking on this front. Over the past year, a clearer picture has emerged of the services and initiatives that need to be developed. I have spent a great deal of time listening to staff and all the stakeholders, particularly voluntary groups, who can attest to the open door policy that I have adopted with them. This has been instrumental in shaping the thinking on what needs to be done on this front. I am pleased to say, that as a result of assessing the situation this past year, this coming year will see a range of initiatives at all levels, that I am confident will impact on the issue that, as I said last year, we need to get right.

During my last Budget intervention, I pointed out that we need a complete rethink on how our drug and alcohol rehabilitation services operate. Over the last year, we have extended some of these services from a purely residential model to a more community based model, with promising results. At most times, more people have been seen within the community service than at Bruce's Farm Drug Rehabilitation Centre. Many of these would have had no recourse to any help in the past. We have also made the admissions process more accessible and flexible for those wishing to access Bruce's Farm with the input of the GHA.

As I speak, I am reliably informed that this week will see the highest occupancy of this service in over five years. We have also facilitated the process to assist inmates at Her Majesty's Prison, who genuinely wish to address their drug use and, so far this year, several inmates have been released on parole, subject to the condition that they complete a programme of rehabilitation at Bruce's Farm. Since 1999, only three
1485 inmates have been able to access Bruce's Farm via this route. However, I recognise that a lot more still needs to be done. The Drug Rehabilitation Service that this Administration inherited was a stale and

stagnant one, which was clearly limited, and not reaching out and helping those in the community in the way that it ought to.

1490 This last year has been one of taking stock; listening to the right people and identifying where the gaps in the service provision lie. I recently had the benefit of visiting the UK, with two senior officials from the Care Agency, in order to familiarise ourselves with the established and respected provider of community drug rehabilitation services. This is helping us to develop a clearer picture on how this model can be adapted and implemented locally. We also need to improve the current residential rehabilitation model and to this end, a visit has been planned to a centre in the UK with a view to enhancing our practice, training, as well as developing other joint initiatives.

1495 In addition to the provision of facilities available, Mr Speaker, I have been working on the establishment of a working group that will be tasked with producing a strategy on how to deal with the drugs problem in Gibraltar. This group will not be a stagnant paper exercise, as was the case with the Drugs Strategy that was developed by the previous Administration in 2003. It will be a dynamic project that will produce real outcomes. The committee will consist of individuals with a wealth of experience spanning a range of disciplines, including the public and voluntary sector. Crucially, it will also include past service users of the rehabilitation service.

1500 It is not to say that because new committees are being set up, that no strategy or policy developments have taken place this past year. In my speech last year, I undertook to ensure that there was a more robust approach to public awareness campaigns of drug and alcohol use, particularly among the youth.

1505 We have undertaken two very successful campaigns last year, during National Week and over the Christmas season, alerting to the dangers of binge drinking. This involved a coordinated approach across various traditional and social media, television adverts and posters on buses. This was complemented by a programme of talks at comprehensive schools by the Care Agency Drugs Team Leader, the Police and former addicts.

1510 The multi-agency collaboration has produced fantastic results and this will set the benchmark for how we will conduct similar initiatives in the future. I am particularly grateful to the members of the voluntary groups who have given up their time to deliver such talks to children. I have attended some of these sessions and have personally witnessed how effective their presentations can be.

1515 Turning now, Mr Speaker, to the Adult Team at Social Services. The workings of the Adult Team has been completely overhauled. By removing management's responsibility for court welfare and probation, this team are able to concentrate exclusively on the care of vulnerable adults. In addition to the day to day referrals of vulnerable adults, the team now manages the one point entry system into elderly care. This includes domiciliary care, day centres and residential care. This means that there is a consolidated and more professional approach to elderly care.

1520 The one point entry system for referrals, assessment and access to a range of services has proved to be very effective. Since 1st April this year alone, the adult team have received a total of 421 referrals from people, ranging from professionals working in different agencies to relatives and neighbours concerned about people living in the community. This number is increasing on a monthly basis as our community realise services are no longer stagnant but available to those who really need them. I am pleased that the new systems implemented ensure that all services are allocated in a fair and equitable way, based on each person's individual health and social care support needs.

1525 The services being provided for elderly people in our community continue to be developed and increase at a significant and dramatic rate, and this is to the credit of the Adult Team who have worked so admirably hard over the past year, to completely turn this service around. The old waiting list system of people applying for residential care at the age of 60 years – when admission was based on the basis of time of application and determined solely on this, regardless of any other factors, such as risk of the vulnerable elderly person in the community – was considered unfair and tantamount to abuse of the vulnerable elderly in the community, in urgent need of admission. Some of them, Mr Speaker, unfortunately, would die while they waited to get to the top of the list because the previous Administration did not change its policy.

1530 Entry into Elderly Care Services is now needs based and ensures that the most vulnerable people in our community are given priority. All people on the previous waiting list have been contacted and those requiring the services at this point have been identified and assessed. Since April 2012, a total number of 48 people have been admitted to Mount Alvernia, Calpe Ward or Cochrane Ward and because of the review of the system, Mr Speaker, every single one of these individuals are the ones who were in most need of admission.

1535 Domiciliary Care Services... (*Interjection*) Of course, he knows I am right.

1540 Domiciliary Care Services are now being provided by two providers and an additional 68 people have been granted various hours of domiciliary care. This means that we are now providing domiciliary care to 168 people. In 2011, before this Administration took office, a total of 43,056 hours of domiciliary care were provided. During the past financial year, this has been increased to 97,702 hours – quite an achievement within such a short space of time, I am sure you would all agree. (**A Member:** Hear, hear.)

1550 There is now, Mr Speaker, an electronic database to record domiciliary care and applicants. The staff spend weeks and months trawling through boxes of paper in order to implement this, because under the previous administration, records were simply not organised. Now, all the domiciliary care systems have been updated, and it is possible to easily monitor who has received hours and ensure that the funds granted are being effectively and efficiently administered, and that we are getting best value for money services.

1555 Historically, Mr Speaker, a common complaint was that the Care Agency worked in isolation with very little communication from other Government Departments, but this has been changed in the last year and a half, with a holistic approach being set down. This has been further developed, with a number of new initiatives being instigated and existing systems have been updated and improved. This has ensured improved communication between different agencies and resulted in an integrated approach to people's care and support.

1560 As far as we are concerned, Mr Speaker, this is one Government and not various individual Government agencies. (A Member: Hear, hear.)

1565 The quick response initiatives between the Police and Adult Services are going from strength to strength, with 105 people now receiving this valued service. People on this list also receive regular monthly phone calls from Adult Services, in order to identify any changes to the person's social care needs or circumstances. This pro-active work by my team identifies difficulties at an early stage and often prevents unnecessary admissions to hospital.

1570 Regular multi-disciplinary discharge meetings within the hospital are now attended by social workers, Mr Speaker; that is an innovation that we have introduced. There is also a new funding system in place, which makes the whole process seamless. This improved multi-agency working practice minimises any potential delays in the person leaving the hospital. It is not only more cost effective and time effective, but it also improves the quality of life of the person as most people want to return home as soon as possible.

1575 It is in our interest, Mr Speaker, to ensure that these elderly people return home to a safe environment. Twenty-five new packages of domiciliary care have been approved since January 2013 alone under this system, to support patients being discharged from the hospital and enabling them to return quickly and safely to their homes.

1580 People wish to remain independent in their homes, with residential care being seen as a last resort. So the significant increase in funding for domiciliary care in the last financial year, has provided an incredible support to people in the community, and is greatly appreciated by those in receipt of this service. Again, this year, we have renegotiated a lower rate for the provision of this service, in order to be able to supply even more packages of care from our budget.

1585 A working party under the direction of the Safeguarding Adults Multi-agency Committee has developed a basic awareness training course for vulnerable adults, and this training has been provided by my Department and has been cascaded down through different agencies. This will ensure that everyone understands their individual responsibility to raise alert if they are concerned a vulnerable adult is at risk at home.

1590 The importance of establishing even more robust working partnerships with key agencies is acknowledged. And it is proposed that the training of new police recruits, for example, in these safeguarding procedures take place in their basic training, in order for them all to be fully aware of this important work, and the procedures in place to protect vulnerable people at the commencement of their careers.

1595 We will continue to develop clear policies and procedures that are concise and transparent to ensure that fair and equitable access to services, to include a three-tier system of day care, will meet the support of different needs of people in our community. The effective and efficient use of day care services, combined with Domiciliary Care Services, will reduce unnecessary admissions to hospital; with residential services being seen as the last resort, as opposed to the only resort. Mr Speaker, as I mentioned in this House last week, our new elderly care day centre will be opening very shortly. This will clearly enhance the services that we can provide.

1600 Turning now to Elderly Residential Services, Mr Speaker; since the one-stop point system was introduced and managed by Social Services, there is a fantastic working relationship between Elderly Care Services and the Social Services Adults Team, and this results in the provision of an individualised service. Regrettably in the past, the staff at Mount Alvernia would never even share the list with the social workers – that, thankfully, is a thing of the past.

1605 Since the commencement of a new nursing co-ordinator, there have been some positive changes to the management of Elderly Care Services; most significantly is the introduction of night duty rounds. This has proved extremely positive with the staff. Last year saw the increment of one part-time physiotherapist and one full-time physiotherapist assistant. The quality and quantity of physio input has increased and is having a positive impact on the health and welfare of residents.

1610 In the next six to nine months, we will see the opening of the new Alzheimer's Residential Unit at the RNH Estate. This is, what can only be described as, a tragic inheritance from the former Administration. It was obvious to me, when I first visited this place, that it was not fit for purpose, and it was confirmed to me by the expert engineer in dementia design, that I commissioned to prepare a design brief.

1615 Previously there had been no design brief and this resulted in the construction of a place where not even a *single room* was suitable for an elderly person with dementia to spend the rest of their days. We have completely re-designed the internal layout, in order that the residents – let us not forget that they are dementia sufferers – can live in dignity.

1620 For this Government, the priority is the people. (**A Member:** Hear, hear.) In addition, we shall shortly, in approximately the next four months, be making available some 36 beds for people with Alzheimer's at the Mackintosh Wing of the Old St Bernard's Hospital. Again, this building is another fiasco and waste of taxpayers' money incurred by the previous Administration.

Mr Speaker, they purported that this building was going to be flats for independent living for elderly people. We showcased these flats to 150 pensioners, but nobody wanted them. Out of all the people who saw them, only about four or five people were interested in them, and even then, subject to conditions.

1625 To make things worse, the previous Administration did not bother to consult with the occupational therapist or elderly care professionals, and as such the flats' layouts were simply not appropriate. Doors are smaller than standard and not appropriate for wheelchairs or Zimmer frames. Therefore, Mr Speaker, this has resulted in a complete waste of money, in the initial design, and has caused us to have to redesign it. This building, in addition to providing beds for elderly care, will also provide five or six flats for semi-independent living on the ground floor.

1630 Having dealt with the Care Agency, I will now turn to my responsibilities as Minister for Equality. The landscape in relation to equality is changing. It is changing physically, in relation to the changes being made to various locations by making them more accessible, and it is changing as things move and policies are developed. Legislation will be amended and, in some cases, new laws will be introduced. I have said it before and I will say it again, equality is at the heart of this Government's agenda.

1635 Mr Speaker, starting with the issue of disability, a lot has been achieved in the last year and a half – much of it very visible. Significantly, works will be done to this Parliament to make it fully accessible, as part of its refurbishment. There have also been assessments of other public buildings with a view to making them accessible. Works have already been taken at the GSLA shallow pool, St Michael's Cave and, most recently, most of Gibraltar's beaches. Provision is made for public events, such as concerts, National Day and the Three Kings Cavalcade. This Government strongly believes in a policy of inclusion.

1640 A register of people with disabilities is being compiled and is almost complete. Significantly, work has been done in relation to a review of the current legislation and in relation to extending the UN Convention on the Rights of the Disabled. A person who will be tasked with developing policy and Government strategy in relation to disability will commence working in my Ministry shortly. This will enable me to further progress this agenda. During this past year, I have engaged with many groups with an interest in disability and we are working together very fruitfully. You will have heard from the Chief Minister's address yesterday, the difference that this year's Budget will make to people with disabilities.

1650 Turning now to gender equality, Mr Speaker; this is a subject that is becoming very popular lately. Perhaps this is due to its profile being raised by having a Minister for Equality for the first time. (**A Member:** Hear, hear.) (*Banging on desks*)

1655 We must, however, ensure that we deal with this responsibly. It is not about rhetoric or quotas. Gender equality is not about having more women for the sake of it, as this completely undermines the work done by women. People should be appointed on merit. What we need to ensure is that people of a particular gender, whether they are men or women, are not placed at a disadvantage. To this end, my Department is looking into issues so that we can develop policies.

1660 In the past year, I have raised awareness of this issue, met with various women's groups and the unions. In March of this year, I attended the UN Commission on the Status of Women, 57th Session at the United Nations Headquarters in New York. This was the first time that a Minister from Gibraltar attended this forum. The CSW is a functional Commission of the United Nations Economic and Social Council, and is dedicated exclusively to gender equality and the advancement of women. I attended many meetings and side events where representatives openly exchanged their experiences, objectives and achievements.

1665 I also recently met with the Minister for Equality in the United Kingdom and I had the opportunity of discussing with her various issues. I also sit on a women's steering group of Commonwealth parliamentarians, and shall shortly be attending a meeting in the UK to discuss women's issues with my fellow colleague parliamentarians.

An issue which is prevalent to women is that of domestic violence, and I am in the process of setting up a forum to deal with this issue and have already commenced speaking to interested groups.

1670 Turning now to the issue of gay rights, Mr Speaker; great strides have been made in the field of gay rights this past year – not least the recognition of gay people. I, as well as many of my fellow Ministers, have had regular meetings with equality rights group, GGR. Most significantly, a draft Civil Partnership

Bill is at an advanced stage, and a draft of this has already been provided to GGR, by way of consultation. We have also met to discuss the issue of hate crimes and hate speech in the Crimes Act 2011. We will continue to work together with interested parties and make progress on this front.

1675 Mr Speaker, the Citizen's Advice Bureau is the body currently tasked with promoting equality under the Equal Opportunities Act 2006. I have been working very closely with CAB's manager and the Discrimination Officer over the past year, in order to support them in achieving their objectives. A very successful training conference was organised earlier this year. I recently met with CAB to discuss equality awareness events in the coming year, and they know that they can count on my full support in this.

1680 Mr Speaker, I am an advocate of working in partnership with groups and associations, and I meet with many of them on a regular basis. A perfect example of this is the tremendous work which my Ministry and I have undertaken with representatives of the Gibraltar Clubhouse Project. This project, which complements the mental health services offered by the GHA, had been operating from the old Toc H building. Which I noticed on my first visit was in a terrible state of repair; mainly due to excessive dampness problems and very hot conditions in the summer.

1685 As part of our working partnership, arrangements for alternative premises at Wellington Front have been made and this will give Club House members a better opportunity to benefit from what is offered by the valued team, while permanent premises for the project are being considered.

1690 Finally, Mr Speaker, in the same way that I did last year, I would like to acknowledge the hard work of my staff and the teams around me and their sheer determination to make a difference. Because they know all too well that we serve the most vulnerable in our community.

1695 I would also like to acknowledge the valuable work undertaken by the different groups and associations who work with me; thanks to their enthusiasm and they strive to work together toward common objectives. This is achieved due to my open door policy and the establishment of solid working relationships with the representatives of these various groups and associations. It has been a pleasure working with everyone at the Care Agency, who are so willing to make the difference and I will now give them the tools and the support to do so.

1700 Insofar as my Ministerial team, I would like to welcome my two new members of staff, who joined me in this past year and have already proved to be very committed individuals, and above all to my Senior Personal Assistant, whose dedicated assistance, in the complex matters we have dealt with this year, has been exceptional. They have all helped me in achieving what I truly believe is now a better service.

1705 To conclude, Mr Speaker, ours is a Government that works for its people and will help those who need it the most. It is my pleasure to work as hard as I can to achieve this. (*Banging on desks*)

Mr Speaker: The Hon. Mrs Isobel Ellul-Hammond.

1710 **Hon. Mrs I M Ellul-Hammond:** Mr Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to address Parliament as Opposition spokesman for Health, Social Services and Civil Contingencies. It is both a duty and an honour for us on the Opposition benches to contribute to, and vote on, this vital discharge of the responsibility of Parliament.

1715 What a year this has been, Mr Speaker; a year in which the GSD Opposition has held the Government to account on behalf of the people of Gibraltar; a year where the GSD Opposition has questioned Government policy, where appropriate; occasionally even getting an answer to those questions; a year of positive and effective opposition.

Mr Speaker, I begin my address with Civil Contingencies and the Fire Service. I start by referring to the Hon. Minister's Budget speech of last year, where he said that and I quote:

1720 'Professional development in the form of training was unfunded and it was only until last year that some extra funding was provided for this.'

1725 Unfunded, Mr Speaker. I would impress on the Hon. Minister to check the present and past Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure books to see that, under the Head of Operational expenses for the City Fire Brigade and training courses, he will note that this has been funded to the tune of £90,000 for the last three years. He further stated that, and I quote:

1730 'We have increased it even further only months after coming into office.'

As if only his Government could possibly understand the value of training and continuous professional development. But wait for it, the increase was of £10,000, Mr Speaker, for the 2012-13 financial year. And not so important it seems this financial year, as the figure remains exactly the same at £100,000 for training, not even an increase to account for inflation.

1735 With much fanfare, and many photo opportunities, the Minister said how he visited each watch of the City Fire Brigade to observe them performing different exercises, in order to address the so-called demotivation that the Fire Service had endured for many years. How many more motivational visits has the Minister made to the three watches of the City Fire Brigade, Mr Speaker? Perhaps he could have been a bit more honest by stating it was a familiarisation visit, as would be the norm, and not spin it to sound as though, if he had not visited them, the Fire Service would have collapsed in a morass of demoralisation.

1740 The Government commissioned Sir Kenneth Knight, the UK Government's Chief Fire and Rescue Adviser, to conduct a scope study of our local Fire and Rescue Service, which was completed last November. Seven months later, we are still waiting for the contents of the report, in full, to be made public. Not, of course, the first Government report that has been delayed; perhaps it has not yet been formatted. But we look forward to hearing of the findings of the report regarding the re-organisation and transformation of the Gibraltar Fire Service and Defence Fire Service; what the recommended modern working and shift patterns are; what the terms and conditions of service for the fire-fighters are.

1745 There is also still no word on the re-location of the Fire Station, on which Sir Ken Knight would have had a view, and no commitment for it again in this year's Budget. Such a delay in informing the public makes one thing that Sir Ken Knight's recommendations may not be what the Government was expecting. Will the Minister now be cherry picking recommendations from the report, so as not to upset the apple-cart, (*Interjection*) or are issues being moved in private by activists, as has become the practiced norm of the GSLP?

1750 The Hon. Minister was also critical in his last Budget that C3, and I quote:

1755 'Table top exercises had not been carried out, as should have been the norm,'

and that, I quote:

1760 'C3 Meetings would be convened regularly in order to evaluate current procedures.'

1765 Well, Mr Speaker, that is another budget commitment that has not yet been fulfilled. The full C3 has met three times in the last year and a half; hardly regular or evaluative. I wonder whether, in one of those three meetings, the Civil Contingency was discussed for when Gibraltar's only two brand new emergency ambulances broke down, in the same area of flooding along Queensway? Both of Gibraltar's emergency ambulances using the same route, and out for the count at a time when they were potentially most needed. And the City Fire Brigade tied up rescuing them, when they too were on alert and most needed during a power cut on a day of pouring rain and floods. That procedure needs evaluating by C3.

1770 We also hope, Mr Speaker, that the new Medical Priority Despatch System goes live very soon. We have had several concerns raised, where members of the public have called the ambulance in an emergency, only to be told that they are both busy and they either have to wait or get a taxi. The City Fire Brigade operates a third ambulance which is also deployed in these circumstances. However, they are neither paramedics nor trained health professionals. A pre-scoop of the patient triage system is absolutely essential to ensure that emergency ambulances are not called to incidents that are not emergencies, thus depriving those who really need them.

1775 Mr Speaker, still on the topic of ambulances, the new ambulances and patient transfer vehicles are very welcome. £1 million well spent, or is it? The Hon. Minister Costa, who was shadowing Health in Opposition, went to great lengths to highlight the inadequacy of the then fleet of ambulances and how they kept breaking down. Some did not even start, and that they were not fit for purpose.

1780 But let me put things into perspective, Mr Speaker, of how the situation is today. In answer to a written question by me in February to the Minister for Health, I learned that in just 14 months the new ambulances and patient transfer vehicles had broken down no less than 52 times, and been off the road for a total of 565 days for repairs, which cost the tax-payer £59,000. Also the cover for these broken down vehicles cost around £73,000. That is a total of £132,000 in 14 months, for ambulances and vehicles that had broken down.

1785 I assume that when Minister Costa stated, in one of his seven ambulance-related press releases in just two months as Opposition Spokesman for Health, that, and I quote:

'The voters can at least dispense with Mrs Del Agua's services as an ineffectual Minister at the next election.'

1790 He did not intend this to apply to his now Minister for Health, Dr Cortes.

A Member: [*Inaudible*].

1795 **Hon. Mrs I M Ellul-Hammond:** Yes.

With regard to Health Services in Gibraltar, Mr Speaker; the Hon. Minister opposite presides over the largest community budget, which reflects the importance we give to the free provision of health care. The

1800 estimated budget for this financial year of 2013-14 now stands at £94,506,000, including a contribution for capital expenditure. The GSD Government estimated a health budget of £78,880,000 for the financial year 2011-12, which it saw half way through until the GSLP/Liberals took office after the general elections. In just two years the health budget has gone up by £15,626,000; an increase of around 20%.

While I welcome increases in the health budget, Mr Speaker, it is imperative that those with the political responsibility ensure we receive a value for money health service that adequately foresees and pre-empts the problems ahead, through careful planning, rather than throwing money at it.

1805 Our Health Service, therefore, really needs to show some results and improvements, in order to justify this increase. Given this huge increase and the millions we spend on healthcare every year, it is my duty to raise the question as to why some serious issues had not been tackled, such as: acute bed shortages; cancelled operations; long operations waiting lists; months to get an appointment with a consultant; a CT scan that keeps on breaking down; locum cover that is still at a high of £2 million estimated for this financial year; and a GHA board which remains ineffective with no accountability for how the GHA organisation works and to ensure that it offers value for money.

1810 These fundamental necessities and issues are not achieved simply because the GHA board is meeting in public under a veneer of openness, as the GHA process remains exactly the same as it has been for the last 20 years with little empowerment of its members. Perhaps, Mr Speaker, we can put all of this down to rookie error. *(Interjection)* Mr Speaker, my Budget address has to respond to that of the Hon. Minister of last year; to assess whether his pledges have been fulfilled or whether his allegations made of the previous Administration had any foundation.

1815 Dr Cortes stated last year that the executive structure of the GHA – of which he and his party have been so critical – was created by the old regime in No. 6 Convent Place, that doctors were banished from the management board, and directors were personally appointed. Well, Mr Speaker, this is the very same executive management structure that was advised and created in 2004 by the then temporary Joint Chief Executive Mr John Langan. The very same Mr John Langan, commissioned by Dr Cortes, who has been paid exactly the same as the former Chief Executive Officer Dr David McCutcheon, to review his own GHA executive management structure, with little changes so far yet and still no medical advisory council. The same Mr Langan who withdrew the so-called flawed consultant contract in December 2004, and was, until recently, paid to find a solution to the ongoing consultant contract problem; which has still not been resolved as per his brief, despite last year’s Budget commitment to, and I quote:

‘negotiate a fair reasonable agreement that places reasonable expectations on the consultants.’

1830 And about which Dr Cortes stated, and again I quote:

‘I expect agreement this year.’

1835 Dr Cortes criticised a GHA that he inherited, and then employed the same man, crucial to the 2004 implementation of the new GHA, in order to re-fix it.

1840 The GHA now has a new Chief Executive Officer, or rather should we refer to him as the Head of the Health Department, with his permanent and pensionable terms and conditions? This diminishes the accountability of a Chief Executive of an Authority who should be on contract, with specific targets answerable to the GHA Board, and therefore subject to removal from the position, if not met. As per the constant concerns, raised by the then GSLP Opposition, that the then Chief Executive of the GHA should not have his contract renewed. I am hopeful that this Chief Executive Head of Department will succeed; however, I will be very interested to see what will happen should the Chief Executive not achieve the targets he has been set.

1845 Dr Cortes mentioned at last year’s Budget how he, and I quote:

‘was briefed on the severe waiting list of over 200 patients in general surgery, and the increasing waiting lists in the other services.’

1850 Well, Mr Speaker, the last time I looked there were 309 patients waiting for general surgery and the waiting lists for all surgeries now stand at 1,081 from an all-time high of 1,118 in April; an increase of around 17% these last 18 months.

1855 Dr Cortes was also concerned then, at last year’s Budget, that the bed access problem was limited due to the total of 65 acute beds taken up by patients waiting for a Care Agency bed. Well again, in answer to a written question from me last month, there are now 80 acute beds taken up by long stay elderly patients awaiting a place at the Elderly Care Agency; 15 more than last year; an increase of 23%.

1860 And despite my questionable use of statistics, and my not understanding how waiting lists work, the fact remains that 65 operations were cancelled due to lack of acute beds in the first five months of 2013, compared to only 48 for the whole of 2012. It is obvious that the measures taken in 2012 had only proven to be a temporary patch to the problem. However, we do welcome the positive initiatives announced by the Hon. Minister yesterday regarding the operating theatres, together with an increase in Care Agency

and mental health beds to be rolled out by the end of the year, and look forward to seeing if the results they yield are lasting.

1865 The issue of cancelled surgeries and bed availability, which I have highlighted these last few months, demonstrates how effective Opposition questions can be at galvanising the Government into action; into finding solutions which benefit the people of our community. That is the role of the Opposition, and we will continue to monitor their delivery, praise positive results, but will continue to subject the Government to the checks and balances in order to ensure further positive action.

1870 And, yes, there are some further positive stories coming out of the GHA, Minister Cortes will be happy to hear that no concerns have been raised with us about the control of the norovirus at St Bernard's Hospital this year. The employment of more nurses has been extremely welcome. The plans for solar-heating, LED lighting and environmental measures, generally, are commendable. So far, apart from a few hiccups reported to us, the new Primary Care Centre appointments system seems to be running smoothly, although some improvements could still be made to ensure consistency in the process. Patients now look forward to a new system for repeat prescriptions, without the need to see their GP. Credit must also be given to the health team and their quick response to the cases of TB and their measures to mitigate any spread of the infection.

1875 Certain commitments for this year were made at last year's Budget, but not all have been implemented, Mr Speaker, such as the tabling of changes to the mental health legislation, which was due this year, and as I stated previously, an agreement over the consultant's contract, also expected this year. I understand that both of these are still ongoing and will be tackled later on in the year, as per the Minister's announcement yesterday. However, I hope not to be raising this issue again at next year's Budget as they will both be resolved.

1880 Despite the repeated answers in Parliament of 'it is being reviewed' or 'it will be ready within a few weeks', the public is still waiting for the publication of the £130,000 GHA Review Report, which was completed in August of last year, but perhaps it too is being formatted.

1885 As also stated yesterday, somewhere in the pipeline, we still await the implementation of the new kitchen and food system; we wait for the new permanent facility for ambulance staff; wait for the colon cancer screening programme to actually start; for the new GHA website; the new Ombudsman GHA complaints process; the completion of the Diabetes Strategy; the review of the sponsored patients programme; the health promotion initiative to develop a co-ordinated programme in lifestyle change, where only the smoke-free legislation and related awareness has been launched to this end, over and above the continued previous practice; and changes to the Children's Health Services, which members of the public have always been happy with, actually.

1890 With regard to health promotion, much stock yesterday was made of the lifestyle survey, conducted by the GHA in 2008, where the results will be used to raise awareness on changing lifestyles in order to improve health. A note of caution, Mr Speaker; these results are now five to six years old. That makes the data unreliable and less relevant to the Gibraltar population of today, especially post smoke-free legislation. This needs to be highlighted by the Public Health Team when promoting the booklet among the general public, and should not solely form the basis of advice to the public on preventative lifestyle changes.

1895 One area of policy making which has been lacking in Gibraltar is that of sexual health advice and support. The Government's manifesto commitment to offer IVF treatment through the GHA is welcome, and the happy news is that now contraception is available under the GPMS. But we believe that jumping from no official GHA sexual health service, apart from an ad-hoc one offered by some GPs, straight to fertility treatment without the proper sexual health advice services in place, is premature.

1900 The GSD's policy to set up a sexual health advisory clinic, to offer free confidential advice and information on sexual health, sexually transmitted diseases and contraception, addresses this. Its objective is to enable people to make informed choices about sex and to enjoy sexual health safely, have the knock-on positive consequences of reducing the number of unwanted teenage births. Awareness and screening for certain sexually transmitted diseases will mitigate the end result of infertility, with couples having to resort less to IVF treatment at a later stage in their life. I urge the Hon. Minister to look at this policy area seriously for consideration.

1905 As I commented in last year's Budget, no address on health by me would be complete without saying something on breast cancer care services in Gibraltar. (*Interjection*) Although an honourable but empty gesture for the GHA to raise awareness with Breast Cancer Support Gibraltar about lymphoedema to the upper body of breast cancer sufferers and survivors, and to state in Press Release No.154/2013 that, and I quote:

1920 'it is important to highlight the vital need for lymphoedema to be detected and treated as early as possible, thus ensuring quality of life to those affected.'

with which I concur, Mr Speaker, there are still too many women being failed in this regard.

1925 Many women are struggling to receive the appropriate therapy. Treatments are not regularly given, which need to be administered for the rest of their life, and many women are waiting far too long to be re-assessed, measured and checked; feeling there is no individual care pathway for them in place.

1930 This potentially affects every breast cancer survivor who has had their lymph node sampled or removed; affecting a majority of one in eight of us women. A walk-in lymphedema clinic is urgently needed, Mr Speaker, and I urge the Hon. Minister to listen to the concerns of Breast Cancer Support Gibraltar on this matter, and to take heed, and not to take it as another photo opportunity. (**Several Members:** Hear, hear.) (*Banging on desks*)

1935 The breast screening programme which has now been in place for two and a half years – a period during which all women eligible in Gibraltar have been invited for a mammogram for their first time. In 2012 only 58.2% of the women invited took up the offer of a mammogram. This is a figure that falls well below the UK’s ideal uptake figure of 70% and below the lowest uptake figure of 59%, seen in some areas of the UK and which has received concern from UK health professionals. This is a service that should be taken up by almost 100% of our women eligible, Mr Speaker, due to the easy access to healthcare in our small community.

1940 However, I am heartened to see that, for the first five months of 2013, we see an uptake of 74.4% of women, which is much more acceptable, and I only hope this will continue to move in the same direction. But yet again I repeat my pledge to the Hon. Minister and urge him, as part of the GHA’s public health policy, to conduct an awareness campaign on the benefits of the breast screening programme and to encourage women to take up the offer of a mammogram; it may mean life or death for some.

1945 On a point of principle, Mr Speaker, since this Government has taken office, it has become common for the GHA to be used for issuing press releases, rather than the Government’s Press Office via the Ministry for Health and the Environment; the latest being Press Release No. 370/2013 of 30th May. It is entirely inappropriate for the Health Authority to question and challenge the Opposition’s Spokesman for Health on matters of party political policy or respond with vitriol and spin. (**Several Members:** Shame, shame.)

1950 The GHA can, by all means, issue press releases on data information, GHA initiatives, charity donations and so forth, which it does, (*Interjection*) but should remain removed from the political interchange. It is completely inappropriate that press releases should be issued in the name of the GHA which are pointedly political and designed to attempt to damage the reputation of those serving on the Opposition benches. (**A Member:** Shame.) (*Interjection*) Has the GHA now become a political organ of the Government or does it remain part of the public services of the people of Gibraltar, which should remain apolitical? (**A Member:** Hear, hear.) (*Banging on desk*) (*Interjection*)

1960 In February this year, after Daniel Feetham became the Leader of the GSD, (*Interjection*) we saw a reshuffle of portfolios among the GSD MPs. After moving my Education portfolio to Edwin Reyes, I was then charged with shadowing Social Services. In order to get to grips with this new responsibility, I obviously reviewed all the press releases and announced policies by the Government to check what had been achieved so far in this Ministry.

1965 Well, not much of substance yet, Mr Speaker. A lot of photographs in the media for turning out to events and a few policies but then just the continued GSD practice in areas of training and domiciliary care. In 18 months, the Calpe Ward has opened with 18 beds, which is welcome but has had little impact on cancelled surgeries. More social workers have been employed which is very welcome. The Club House Project has been given temporary premises; we now look forward to hearing of news for a permanent facility. Care Agency nurses have parity again with those of the GHA, which is welcome, plus the new payment of salaries done electronically. Disability access to various sites around Gibraltar has increased, which is right and proper and to be applauded. However, the new access to Catalan Bay seems not to have been planned in consultation with the disabled users of (*Interjection*) the beach, nor sought guidance from the DPC. (*Laughter*) It has failed to provide proper access to the shore line, unlike the facilities and services enjoyed by those at Eastern Beach; yet another ill-conceived and poorly executed project announced with great fanfare, but failing to deliver.

1975 The announcement by Minister Balban, to review the eligibility criteria and rules for use of Blue Badges spaces and the increase in Disability Allowance, are both very welcome. However, we are still waiting on the results of the disability services review, life planning for the disabled and the new legislation on disability.

1980 Also on hold, and part of some ongoing process of the amalgamation of Social Services and Elderly Care, which the Minister claimed at her 2012 Budget had not yet occurred, is the filling of Mount Alvernia’s nursing co-ordinator post and that of Tangier View’s residential home manager. Considering the enormous overall increase in the number of Civil Service posts that has occurred since this Government came to Office, I would have thought that these two key roles would have been quickly filled.

The secure unit for children with severe challenging behaviour, plus the full review of the Children Act, as pledged at the last Budget, still remain elusive. Other issues, which appear to have failed to gain

1985 any traction, are: the Dementia Strategy; the refurbishment of the Jewish Home, promised at the last Budget; and the long delay in the opening of the Waterport Terraces day centre.

1990 Mr Speaker, if every change of Government resulted in them behaving in the manner of the present one, social progress would grind to a halt. The Minister for Social Services, in pursuing the GSLP policy of rubbishing everything the GSD ever did, has set the cause of the elderly and the vulnerable back by at least two years, and this in order to try and convince us that she is saving the day from disaster.

1995 To say that work finally started in April 2013, after 16 months of inaction, Minister Sacramento needs to explain why there have been no works at the former Royal Naval Hospital site previously and for so long. What have the construction workers been doing for 16 months and how much has it cost the taxpayer to keep them waiting to start work again on the project until April 2013... having to re-mobilise them?

2000 The reality is that the GSD's plans for the Alzheimer and Dementia Facility were perfectly acceptable and well within the guidelines and recommendations for NHS registered elderly homes. The specifications were provided by the Care Agency and GHA Deputy Chief Executive Officer, Mr Joe Catania – who were part of the design team all along – where their brief recommended room sized within the NHS minimum standards required. *(Interjection)* The downstairs single rooms, which were the only ones highlighted, were the smaller ones at 9.6 metres squared. This is an accepted size for the restoration of an existing historical **(Several Members: Hear, hear.)** building, with the option to remove the dividing wall to convert it into a twin room at 19 metres squared; larger than the NHS minimum for a twin, set at 16 metres squared.

2005 Additionally, the ceilings in these smaller rooms were reinforced to take overhead hoists, so there was no need to bring a mobile hoist in, as demonstrated by the grimacing Minister for Social Services, to show how cramped they could make the room look for the media. *(Interjections)* It is greatly disappointing that, almost from the first day of entering office, the GSLP Government chose elderly care as a battleground for scoring political points against the former GSD Government, **(A Member: Shame.)** rather than embracing and building upon the ongoing projects in a timely manner.

2010 However, if this is the style of the Minister, the very least she should have done is look at the previous GSLP Government's policies, where funding barely existed for Social Services and the Elderly; *(Interjection)* and judging from the interruptions of my Hon. Friend Mr Selwyn Figueras, if we had said, as the Hon. Minister has just said to us, that they had put vulnerable adults at risk, there would have been an explosion on the benches opposite. *(Interjection) (Banging on desks)*

2015 As far as the independent living complex – planned by the GSD for the more mobile and independent elderly persons, out of the old John Mackintosh wing of the former St Bernard's Hospital, which had been completed and ready for people to move in – it has now been gutted with brand new kitchens and bathrooms torn out, some recycled, but most thrown away, at a cost of £1.43 million to the taxpayer, according to the Estimates Book subsequent statement of reallocations.

2020 More money thrown away to convert the facility into an Alzheimer Dementia Facility, as this was not the original intention of the refurbishment. Had the Government opened the new facility on 1st April 2012, as planned, a considerable number of elderly people would now have been enjoying the new facilities, thus alleviating pressure on the housing waiting list. *(Interjection)* Mr Speaker, there is a case that would have had Minister Costa, who shadowed Social Services last term, still jumping up and down in his chair and stamping his feet, had it happened under the GSD's watch.

2025 A looked-after child was lost for 48 hours in Spain while in care *(Interjections)* –

2030 **Mr Speaker:** Yes. The Hon. Mr Costa.

Minister for Tourism, Commercial Affairs, Public Transport and the Port (Hon. N F Costa): Mr Speaker, I appreciate that Budget addresses are heard in silence, but I have never stamped my feet nor jumped up and down. She should correct that statement.

2035 **Minister for Equality, Social Services and the Elderly (Hon Miss S J Sacramento):** Mr Speaker, I have a further Point of Order.

2040 **Hon. N F Costa:** It is not true. I have never jumped up and down nor stamped my feet to make a true accurate statement, which is different –

2045 **Hon. Miss S J Sacramento:** Mr Speaker, but I am concerned about what is coming, given the nature of the questions that we had before this Parliament last month, and what the hon. Lady is about to say. She has already said **(A Member: Shame.)** things that ought not to have been said in this Parliament. Mr Speaker, I am very concerned.

Hon D A Feetham: Mr Speaker, I rise as Leader of the Opposition. That is simply not true. You have not even read the rest of the speech. No, you have not listened to the rest of the speech. (*Interjection*) You do not know what she is going to say.

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And as for the Point of Order –

Mr Speaker: Perhaps if I am given an opportunity to hear the hon. Lady.

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Hon. Mrs I M Ellul-Hammond: Mr Speaker, I can assure you that I will not be disclosing any information or detail at all. If the hon. Members opposite would just allow me to continue.

A case that made headlines in the Gibraltar and Spanish media, that had the Gibraltar and Spanish Police involved, that had members of the public from both sides of the border searching; so what happened? How did this child escape? Was he a flight risk? Were contingency measures in place? Where was she found? Unlike the parties opposite we are not concerned to make capital on an individual case; we are concerned that the right systems are in place to protect vulnerable children.

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At least, Mr Speaker, I was able to get these answers and reassurance through direct communication with the Minister for Social Services, who I thank – something the party opposite was not willing to do when in Opposition. I also complied with all concerns raised by the Ministry and Parliament over this case, but the *modus operandi* of the party opposite while in Opposition, was always to issue a press release first, ask the sensitive questions in Parliament to (*Interjection*) try and score cheap points –

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Hon. N F Costa: No, I am sorry, on a Point of Order –

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Mr Speaker: Will hon. Members make sure that, when they rise on a Point of Order, that they are familiar with the Standing Rules and Orders and are able to direct me to the Rule that they are referring to.

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Hon. N F Costa: Mr Speaker what the hon. Lady has said is not true. That is the Point of Order. I have always sought, and the record will reflect by way of emails and telephone calls, that I always tried to contact my former... the Minister that I used to shadow, Mrs Yvette Del Agua and I used to call her first always to try to establish the facts. I then used to send e-mails – never, never did she ever return my call, nor reply to an e-mail, for me to be able to ask the comment. As a result, it is not true to say that I issued a statement first, and asked questions later. It is *untrue*.

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Hon. D A Feetham: Mr Speaker, may I, on a Point of Order?

Mr Speaker: Yes. The Hon. the Leader of the Opposition.

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Hon. D A Feetham: Mr Speaker, I am very grateful to you for allowing me to speak on this Point of Order.

Mr Speaker, it clearly and patently is not a Point of Order. The hon. Lady has not... (*Interjection*) I am talking on the Point of Order. You have raised the Point of Order. It clearly is not a Point of Order. It is not referable to any Standing Orders of this House. She clearly has not infringed any of them. The hon. Gentleman has, either through some of his colleagues or alternatively the Chief Minister, a right of reply.

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All the points that you are making now, the Chief Minister can make them at the appropriate juncture, but there has been a lot of interruptions of Opposition speeches and I would just ask the hon. Gentlemen opposite, for the sake of common courtesy, to please keep the interruptions to a minimum so that our Members can continue – (*Interjection*) Well, if I wanted to raise a Point of Order, I could because you said [*inaudible*] (*Interjection*)

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Mr Speaker: Order, order, order, (*Interjection*) order!

Will hon. Members please behave in accordance with the Standing Rules, or I will have to suspend this session? And I am prepared to do so. So I hope that they will keep the temperature much lower.

Now, the Hon. Mrs Ellul-Hammond.

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Hon. Mrs I M Ellul-Hammond: Thank you, Mr Speaker.

I was making this statement, in fact, with reference to the shadowing of my Hon. Friend Mr Netto, when he was Minister for Social Services and the 10 press releases that the hon. Member opposite issued in the last term, with reference to various individuals in care who were vulnerable.

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And if I may continue, he was very quick to point the finger of blame and never tried to understand the realities and difficult decisions that Government Ministers face on a day-to-day basis, which I do acknowledge today. But that is the difference between the party opposite and us, Mr Speaker, and that is what got us re-elected four times. (**Several Members:** Hear, hear.)

2110 Mr Speaker, in relation to equality for women, the same issues I raised at last year's Budget still exist; nothing has changed. Women still find themselves struggling as single parents with erring ex-spouses defaulting on maintenance payments, trying to make ends meet or surviving on benefits, which I am glad to say have risen this year.

2115 Many single mothers are at the mercy of grey areas in law, such as access to Legal Aid and the recognition of common law relationships. It is shocking that the Government has still only published new rules to expand Legal Aid that enable defendants, accused of complex fraud cases, to hire expensive specialist lawyers at public expense. No thought has gone into or takes into account the plight of single parents, who are not entitled to Legal Aid if they earn above the qualifying threshold of £5,000 income per annum, (*Interjection and laughter*) which we would have increased to £12,000 (*Interjections*)

2120 **Minister for Education, Telecommunications and Justice (Hon. G H Licudi):** Mr Speaker, the hon. Lady seems to be confusing Legal Aid with Legal Assistance.

Mr Speaker: She has... The Hon. Mr Licudi, will you please sit down because the hon. Lady has not given way. (*Interjections*)

2125 **Hon. Mrs I M Ellul-Hammond:** Well then perhaps the Hon. Chief Minister can clarify that in his response. Additionally, if these women own a family home or a car, they are still not entitled to Legal Aid – a blanket rule which penalises lone parents, struggling with mortgage payments and paying legal fees, in order to pursue erring partners in their duty of care as a parent.

2130 The measure announced yesterday, however, to eliminate stamp duty on the transfer of deeds after a marital breakdown is welcome news. Equally the introduction of parental leave, whereby either parent is able to take entitled leave after the birth of a child, is a policy that would be welcomed by many working parents across Gibraltar.

Working parents also look forward to changes in working hours that are more family-friendly.

2135 As was discussed in Parliament in relation to parliamentary reform, with regard to statutory bodies, it is imperative that, where necessary, their composition should be changed to improve the constitutional checks and balances on Governmental power, as recommended by the Commission on Electoral and Parliamentary Reform.

2140 I believe that this cannot happen without proper representation from members of our diverse community. This means reflecting the composition of Gibraltar's society in these statutory bodies. Which, at present, are comprised mostly of, and reflect the view of, white middle class males. The provision of meaningful checks and balances to Government, a role which these bodies should be providing, is hindered by this narrow view, and this is one of the many reasons why I recommend Marlene Nahon as our candidate (**A Member:** Hear, hear.) (*Banging on desks*) for the upcoming by-election. (**A Member:** Hear, hear.)

2145 In order to address this balance, as I have stated publicly before, it means actively inviting more women and minority representatives to sit on these bodies. Out of the statutory bodies gazetted so far, only 10% of their composition is women, some of whom are the secretaries of the boards, and even fewer are from different ethnic backgrounds. This improvement to composition can be done quite simply, with a little more consideration and active, positive discrimination when inviting individuals to sit on these statutory bodies.

2150 Membership of a statutory body is not through a process of applying for the role, the assessment of applicants, and the recruitment of the best person for the job. It is simply through the invitation, by a letter, from the Minister responsible, to join and form part of that statutory body.

2155 As a former Trustee of the Heritage Trust and former non-executive member of the GHA Board, I am acutely aware of the continued practice of giving little thought to actively selecting individuals who represent all sectors of Gibraltar society, when considering the composition of statutory bodies. I therefore ask for the serious consideration of the fulfilment of some kind of a prescribed quota when selecting people and inviting them to sit on a statutory body; that is positive equality in action.

2160 Mr Speaker, we are yet to see some equality policies regarding the Moroccan residents of Gibraltar.

2165 Finally, Mr Speaker, I have to end with an example of playground politics which reflects everything that this Government's parties are about, and what they stand for. It was very unfortunate that the Hon. the Chief Minister of Gibraltar, the highest officeholder in our land, should have reduced himself to insult me personally by mocking my surname at the GSLP's AGM this year. Such childish tactics, playing to the gallery of his most hysterical supporters, says so much more about him than about me. (**A Member:** Shame.) (**Members:** Hear, hear.) Thankfully, Mr Picardo's speech is broadcast to all via the internet. Let people hear for themselves how petty this Chief Minister can be. (**A Member:** Shame.) (*Banging on desks*)

2170 **Hon. Chief Minister:** Mr Speaker, at the end of Mrs Isobel Ellul 'hyphen' Hammond's speech, I now move that the House recess, in the context of the debate this morning, to ponder why it is now so clear that we should all vote for Albert Isola in the By-election, until three o'clock this afternoon.

2175 **Mr Speaker:** The House will now recess until three this afternoon, when I understand that the Hon. Mr Bossano will be addressing the House.

The House recessed at 12.45 p.m. and resumed its sitting at 3.05 p.m.