



PROCEEDINGS OF THE GIBRALTAR PARLIAMENT

AFTERNOON SESSION: 2.45 p.m. – 6.29 p.m.

Gibraltar, Tuesday, 27th June 2017

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The Gibraltar Parliament

The Parliament met at 2.45 p.m.

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

[CLERK TO THE PARLIAMENT: P E Martinez Esq *in attendance*]

Appropriation Bill 2017 – For Second Reading – Debate continued

Mr Speaker: The Hon. Trevor Hammond.

Hon. T N Hammond: Mr Speaker, I am delighted to have the opportunity to present this, my
5 second Budget speech, to the House. It is my intention to begin with traffic and transport, an
area which regularly attracts great public interest for all sorts of reasons, whether it be our
ability to use our vehicles, our inability to park our vehicles, vehicle ownership, public transport,
cycling, walking – and the list goes on.

Of course this year, in fact only last month, we finally saw the publication of the
10 Government's Sustainable Traffic, Transport and Parking Plan – the STTPP. This epic document
has been almost six years in the making and the story behind it has become a veritable saga. Its
publication was to put into reality the Minister's utopian dream for transport in Gibraltar, the
panacea to all of our woes. Well, what an anti-climax that turned out to be. *(Interjection)*

Yes, the document is voluminous, with appendices running to several volumes, but it is long
15 for the sake of being long because it repeats itself frequently and with each repetition little, if
anything, of value is added. **(A Member:** Hear, hear.) It is as if someone has said, 'Look guys, it's
taken a long time to put this together, make sure it's really long; hopefully that way it'll look
great but no one will actually read it.'

But not only is the document excessively long, when you begin to look at it you realise that it
20 is mostly not even a plan. It lacks conviction, it tentatively proposes reviews and considerations
without placing any pressures of when these proposals might be delivered or even *if* they will be
delivered. There is no indication of how much these proposals might cost or how we might
measure a successful outcome, as the performance indicators are virtually unintelligible. I have
already described this document as more of a manifesto than a plan – it is not even that, it
25 amounts to little more than a survey. It does contain some useful facts and figures, that I cannot
deny, but as a structured plan of how Government's transport policy for the next 10 years or
more will be shaped and delivered it falls woefully short.

Let's look at some of the reasons for saying this, Mr Speaker. The survey suggests we must
encourage cycling and walking. *(Interjections)* Part of that should be the introduction of a local
30 bike-hire scheme. This thankfully has now been introduced after much delay. Let's not forget we
were told this scheme was imminent at the last election. I think this Government has a very
different interpretation of the definition of words like 'imminent' and 'shortly' than does the rest
of the English-speaking world. Nevertheless, we now have a scheme. *(Interjection)* The trouble is
we had a scheme six years ago and all this Government has achieved now is to bring us back to
35 square one, only six years later. It did not take £½ million survey to tell us that this is a good
idea, what it needed was common sense and enough environmental awareness to recognise

that the existing bike scheme should have been allowed to continue and then be replaced in due course. (*Interjections*)

40 Cycling should be encouraged of course for both personal health and environmental reasons and I am at one with Government in supporting such an objective. The STTPP, however, again falls short in this respect. To get people to switch their mindset you do need to make cycling, above all other considerations, safe; then you have to allow access to where people wish to go. The plan does suggest some cycle lanes in the obvious and easy-to-access areas, such as Rosia Road, but it does not set out how we can achieve a comprehensive network of cycle lanes,
45 (*Interjection*) and therein lies the real challenge in getting the public on their bikes – a challenge which the document falls far short of addressing.

Then of course there is the condition of our roads, which go far in discouraging anyone from adopting any form of two-wheeled transport. The only noticeable improvements in the past 12 months have been a new surface to part of Cumberland Road – not the entirety of it, part of
50 it – and the resurfacing of the Sundial roundabout; and this at the Minister’s own admission. The major thoroughfares have been otherwise untouched leaving Winston Churchill Avenue, from the Frontier to the Sundial, in deplorable condition, Glacis Road barely passable to those on bikes, pedalled or motorised, and the condition of most of Queensway and all of Linewall Road very poor indeed. All of this, combined with poor drainage on most of these roads, leads to a
55 scenario thoroughly discouraging for anyone who may wish to take to cycling; even walking becomes almost impossible in wet conditions, where one must hop between the various ponds that form on the roads or risk a soaking from a passing motorist.

Government really must look at this aspect of our road network and do much better in maintaining it, if it really is trying to encourage more people to cycle and walk. Currently there
60 are so many disincentives – be they safety, air quality or the dreadful condition of our roads – that we have very far to go in this direction. I applaud those who have, despite all adversity, taken to cycling and I hope to see the conditions on our roads improving for them.

The STTPP talks about the introduction of residential parking zones. Of course, like the bike-hire scheme, we were seeing these introduced six years ago. This was put on hold, according to
65 the STTPP, in order to study the inherited scheme in detail and carry out a substantive and authoritative plan. Well, it has taken the best part of six years to do that and what do we get? I quote: (*Interjection*)

As part of a new parking strategy it is recommended to consult more widely with local communities and estate representatives to determine the level of desirability for introducing new parking zones elsewhere in Gibraltar as there was much concern regarding the lack of consideration to visitors, carers and commercial entities for deliveries of goods.

Government puts on hold a scheme only then to come back after *six years* with a
70 recommendation for more consultation! And therein lies the rub. The document, this survey, is simply full of recommendations to consult, consider, review, study and investigate, and this is precisely why the document is a disappointing anti-climax. I would have expected all of this work to have been done, to be part of the document, completed with the help of those expensive consultants, and for the document to set out a very clear roadmap on the way forward. It does
75 not do this. It is a starting point, but the trouble is the starting gun was fired six years ago and the Minister is now hopelessly behind.

Mr Speaker, straying briefly from the STTPP, I must address the confusion – not to say utter
80 chaos – that is Government’s policy on parking. Firstly, we seem to have witnessed the total eradication of the concept of a park-and-ride scheme for tourists coming in through the Frontier, a concept introduced by the previous GSD administration and apparently supported by this administration in their 2011 manifesto. Of course, such a system would lead to fewer tourist vehicles competing for the scant parking available in town and would, in turn, not only assist residents in parking but would have improved air quality in our urban areas by getting cars off the streets. Other benefits of fewer vehicles coming into town would have been better safety for

85 cyclists and more pleasant conditions for people to walk in, both stated objectives of this Government, and yet a scheme which could have had so many positives seems no longer to be on the table. I would encourage Government to rethink this.

90 However, Mr Speaker, not only is the park-and-ride scheme concept not to be pursued, but Government introduce another policy to make matters in our urban areas even worse. They ban tourist vehicles from the Upper Rock! They say it is to benefit the environment there, but it is to the detriment of the environment and air quality within the urban areas in which the vast majority of us live and breathe. So the trees of the Upper Rock and the monkeys get cleaner air, while most of the people of Gibraltar get poorer air as yet more tourist vehicles drive round town looking for, and competing for, those same scant parking opportunities that the rest of us who live here need to go about our daily business or even just access our homes.

95 So, Mr Speaker, having pursued policy which effectively ... I will not say deliberately, because I hope such a mess has not been created with malice aforethought, but which nevertheless results in more parking pressure in our urban areas, the Government then adopts a zero-tolerance policy on incorrectly parked vehicles. In the space of a month, and with no warning, we see a huge leap in the number of parking tickets to residents and clamps to tourist vehicles. 100 From December 2015 through to August 2016 not a single vehicle was clamped – not one. Come September 2016 and suddenly in that month alone 341 vehicles were clamped. For fixed penalty notices we see a rise from 1,018 in September 2015, a very reasonable number already, to 2,652 in September 2016; October 2015, 1,087 and October 2016, 2,817. These are huge increases.

105 The policy does not target nuisance parking, as would be right – vehicles stopping in red zones, vehicles causing an obstruction. No, soft targets are chosen and whole streets given tickets for no real purpose other than to perhaps boost Government revenues – a taxation of motorists through the back door and a charge on tourists which must leave them with a very poor impression of Gibraltar. Look at it from their perspective: there is no park-and-ride, so they came to visit the Upper Rock but cannot drive up there; they struggle to find parking anywhere 110 else and when they finally do, and they can go off to spend their money in support of our economy, they come back to find their vehicle clamped because they missed the poorly indicated sign that street cleaning was going to take place in the car park on that day. I do wonder what they tell their friends and relatives when they return home. (*Interjections*)

115 The upshot of Government's policy on parking has been to simply make everyone's life a misery while making cycling and walking on our streets more challenging and the air we breathe more polluted. Well done. (*Interjections*)

120 Mr Speaker, returning to the STTPP, I will say that it does contain some attractive concepts, and encouraging electric and microcars caught my eye. I have returned recently from a trip to Rome, where microcars were exceedingly popular and there were virtually no big 4x4s on the roads. I am not sure what incentives are offered in Rome, but perhaps Government ought to look at these as the current incentive packages Government offers have had virtually no impact on the habits of vehicle owners, and the STTPP offers little further guidance apart from setting aside more parking spaces for microcars. So, again, a suggestion with no clear strategy for implementation.

125 Likewise, one of the grander schemes is the pedestrianisation of Market Place: it looks very good and is certainly not to be dismissed out of hand, and pedestrianisation of other areas such as Main Street has been very successful. But the STTPP makes the suggestion without any firm data on how this will impact traffic flows on Queensway and in particular on the Waterport roundabout, an area that already becomes very congested with lorries and buses competing 130 with the many pedestrians coming down from the cruise terminal. (*Interjections*) Air quality in this area is already poor and a comprehensive study is required to determine the impact of the closure of Market Place. This area is pedestrianised of course for Calentita and it works then, but will it work on weekday rush hours? This is the kind of informative detail which I would have hoped to find and which is sadly lacking in the STTPP.

135 Mr Speaker, I was not going to raise the issue of speed cameras, until the Minister himself
raised it in his intervention, and what caught my ear during his intervention was the remarkable
admission that only one aspect of vehicles, and not the rear aspect of vehicles, is currently being
140 photographed by the speed cameras. This was something I asked him in Parliament a while ago
and which he was very secretive about. Mr Speaker, it is a staggering omission that this should
be so when the whole and primary reason for introducing speed cameras in the first place was in
order to moderate the speed of moped riders, particularly young men on mopeds, who were the
most vulnerable in terms of safety on our roads. And yet, other than face recognition, we have
no means of identifying people speeding on motorbikes and mopeds, particularly if they are
wearing a full-face helmet.

145 Something else the Minister mentioned in his speech – which I find scandalous, to be honest,
not to mention discriminatory – was his attack on pensioners, that they should not enjoy the
right to own cars like anyone else. It was a bizarre statement for him to make, to single out
pensioners in this way as if they should not have the right to own what he quotes as a ‘rock
runner’. Even there, his arguments were flawed. He described the rock runner and in the same
150 breath almost he said ‘that vehicle which is permanently parked, occupying a parking space’.
Well, that is not the case; the whole purpose of the rock runner is for people’s day-to-day
getting around Gibraltar.

The vehicles that need to be tackled are the abandoned vehicles on our streets but certainly
not those vehicles used by pensioners to get around Gibraltar because they wish to protect the
155 large investment they have made in the vehicle they use at weekends to go into Spain or
wherever they choose to go with them. Ridiculous, Mr Speaker; ridiculous that the Minister
should target old-age pensioners in this way. (*Interjections*)

It is important that we act responsibly, particularly in areas where strategies designed to
improve the quality of life of the community are concerned, for that is the intention and the
160 motivation of all of us in this House, unlike this administration – which I have demonstrated was
ready, not to say eager, to wipe out any legacy of the previous administration regardless of cost
or impact to the community. Thus Gibi Bikes were abolished, thus HEOs were removed, thus
resident parking schemes were halted, thus buses were replaced for less user-friendly versions –
and all to bring us back to square one later. (*Interjections*)

165 We on this side are more interested in the long-term interests of our community and would
be happy to work with Government and to participate in the many consultations,
considerations, reviews, studies and investigations suggested in the STTPP in order to give our
community a consistent transport strategy for years to come.

Mr Speaker, I move now to matters affecting the environment, and another issue that has
170 become a saga of mythological proportions is that of the sewage and waste treatment plants.
Let me remind Government that this is a project they presented in their 2011 manifesto. Not
their 2015 manifesto, their 2011 manifesto, that false dawn manifesto which the Chief Minister
would have us believe was delivered 100%. Except it wasn’t – far from it, actually: there is no
underground parking at Commonwealth Parade; there is no Naval Ground Park; there is no
175 South Barracks Park or relocation of GBC; the Eastside reclamation remains unbeautified as was
promised; the problems with the taxi city service have not been addressed; the problem of
sewage at Western Beach was not immediately tackled and remains a problem; there has been
no regeneration of Rosia Bay; there is no park-and-ride scheme from the Frontier to reduce the
number of tourist vehicles on our street – it no longer even seems to be a consideration; there is
180 no new road to the south district; and the paving in Main Street has not been made safe for
women wearing heels. And all this just within the portfolios I have as *my* responsibilities. I know
this is history, but the record must show that that particular manifesto was never delivered in
full despite claims otherwise.

Returning to the sewage treatment plant, I accused the Minister of abject failure on this
185 project a year ago in my Budget speech and I can only accuse him of precisely the same failure
today without providing a single good reason or explanation. A year on and still not even a

contract award for construction, let alone an operating plant. We have a promise that it will be done in 30 months' time. Well, we shall watch and see. The Minister recently reiterated his commitment to the Paris Agreement on climate change as if our global contribution was significant. I think the Minister has his priorities very wrong. 'Mr Environment', as the Chief Minister likes to call the Minister, has been in his Ministry for nearly six years and still we pump raw sewage into the sea, knowing full well the environmental damage that this causes. There is no excuse. It is shameful. He used to criticise the former GSD administration for planting the wrong plants at the children's park at Europa – and now, year after year goes by and nothing is done about the travesty that is a sewage outflow just a few metres from that park.

I know that this is not a sexy project; I know elections are not going to be won and lost on this issue. I also know that we will never be able to make true the claims of this Government that Gibraltar is at the forefront of the environmental agenda while this base practice is permitted to continue. It is my duty to ensure that Government and the Minister are held to account until they deliver on this promise, and it is the Minister's duty to deliver on that promise.

Mr Speaker, an issue which in the last year has drawn much public discussion is that of the maintenance and poor condition of the North Front Cemetery. In the last year we have seen a public petition raised, asking that action be taken by Government to improve the condition of the cemetery. We have seen regular, almost continuous, criticism of the state of the cemetery on social media. We have had discussion in this House, and indeed last November we unanimously passed an amended motion which I brought to this House. Please allow me to refresh your memories on that motion, it read that:

This House recalls that North Front Cemetery is the place where our loved ones are laid to rest, considers that there has always been room for improvement to the condition of North Front cemetery and that this has been the case under successive governments.

Notes the importance of continuing maintenance to the state of the cemetery, recognising the efforts presently being made in that direction and supports the Government's plans to review relevant legislation and to provide a management programme for the maintenance of the cemetery.

This was last November and we as an Opposition were sufficiently gracious to allow Government to make its claim in that motion that it was making efforts to improve the maintenance of the cemetery, (*Interjection*) but we did so in the hope that Government would be spurred on by this to press ahead with developing and delivering a maintenance programme. Sadly, and to the great frustration of many, we have seen nothing of the sort in the ensuing *seven months*. If a management programme for the maintenance of the cemetery has been developed it is certainly not one that has yet to be given effect, judging both from the continued poor condition of the cemetery and the constant concerns raised by the public of its condition. These concerns just fall on deaf ears, it seems.

The motion notes the importance of continuing maintenance of the cemetery. We spend around £½ million a year paying people to maintain the cemetery, and a huge proportion of that is on overtime. Our community has a right to expect better value from that. Our community has a right to expect that the place in which our loved ones are laid to rest is looked after in a manner respectful to those loved ones. (**Hon. D A Feetham:** Hear, hear.) Our community has a right to be heard on this issue and Government has a responsibility to act promptly and appropriately to deal with this issue once and for all. What we have seen from Government is simply not good enough and I implore the Minister to give the cemetery the priority it deserves and that the people wish it to have.

Air quality in Gibraltar has also been cause for much debate this year and it is an issue that affects every one of us. The fact is that standards are simply not good enough. The air that we breathe is some of the worst in Europe. While monitoring of air quality has been an important and welcome step, the fact that such monitoring simply reveals, quite literally, how eye-wateringly poor that air is across a range of pollutants is deeply concerning. Anecdotal information indicating people suffer from respiratory ailments while in Gibraltar, symptoms they

often find relieved during periods of absence, supports the data and I would ask Government to consider conducting a full survey of this to properly ascertain the impact of poor air on people's quality of life.

235 I have already touched on this subject while discussing Government's parking policy. As vehicles are one of the three major contributors to pollution in our air it is inevitable that poor management of transport policy will result in worse air quality. (*Interjections*)

240 Large vehicles, or large diesel-engined vehicles, are particularly damaging in terms of pollutants. I did notice the reference in the STTPP to the new bus fleet with the latest approved Euro-type engines – the implication being that these represented an environmental enhancement over the previous fleet. It is somewhat ironic therefore that Government should have sold this fleet not overseas, thus removing it as a contributory factor to poor air quality, but to a local private bus company so that these older vehicles are still on our streets, entirely negating the positive impact claimed in the STTPP of the new bus fleet with their latest Euro-compliant engines. Not only was this done with no consideration for the environmental impact, it was done for the paltry figure of just £15,000 – just over £1,000 per bus sold. I suppose someone must have done very well from this deal but it certainly was not in the interests of the people of Gibraltar.

250 One of the other significant contributors to our poor air quality is power generation. The advent of the new power station is of course expected to improve matters, but the location remains one that I simply cannot agree with. (*Interjection*) Setting that aside, however, it was disappointing to note that Government has ruled out the use of electrostatic precipitators to remove harmful particulates should the generators be required at any point to run on diesel. While I understand that that is not Government's intention, the contingency must be there for a reason and Government had previously committed, largely due to the close proximity of their station to urban areas, to use the best available technology to remove pollutants from the power station's emissions. Government has reneged on that commitment by not including electrostatic precipitators and this will be to the detriment of air quality in general and in particular to those – and there are many – who reside upwind of the power station.

260 Bunkering is the other major contributor to poor air quality and it is also a major contributor to our economy, but that is not to say that we must not endeavour to minimise its impact on the community and find ways of doing this business in the most environmentally friendly way. We need to be honest with ourselves about our environmental record. (*Interjection*) We cannot keep saying what an excellent record we have and how well we are doing, when we are not. Not really. The first step in actually making real progress is to recognise our frailties.

270 While projects such as placing bird-nesting boxes on buildings, managing the tuna catch, underwater cameras, the reintroduction of the Barbary partridge and other species are all important – and indeed I congratulate the Minister on the detailed work in these areas and other areas – these are small things in comparison to the real challenges we face. Sewage treatment, air quality, and yes, issues like the cemetery which affect many people. We need to see ourselves through a lens of objectivity and recognise that we are far from world leaders in environmental matters, that while recycling our waste is rising, it is far from comprehensive and there is a long way to go. We have far to go in the use of renewable energies to generate power, rather than fossil fuel. We have a few solar panels dotted about the place heating water or powering street lights; we have a trial wave generator occasionally boiling the odd kettle because much of the time it does not work at all. We need to step away from making such things sound as if they are hugely progressive projects in order to look good in the local media, because they are not. It is quite simple: they are not hugely progressive, they represent the smallest of baby steps and we need to be honest with ourselves and recognise this in order to begin to make real progress.

280 The Minister issues press releases stating our continued commitment to the measures stated in the Paris Agreement on climate change as if we are a global contributor, but we are not even listed in that agreement as a contributor. We need to get our priorities right and focus on the

285 local and the regional. Our global impact, negligible though it is, will improve through these means.

I know that this cannot be done quickly and that plans for environmental improvement in a community our size must be long term – probably longer than the term of any individual Government or Minister. It is therefore with some disappointment that I say Her Majesty's Opposition remains excluded from all committees which may have a bearing or influence on future policy. Of course Government makes policy, that is accepted, (*Interjections*) but a particular Government may not be there to see policy come to fruition or indeed continue to deliver a policy with consistency. Environment is one area where cross-party agreement, at least in those areas requiring long-term consistency, may be desirable. I invite the Minister to consider this if he is genuinely interested in establishing Gibraltar as a global leader in environmental policy.

295 Finally, in terms of environment, I join with the Minister in congratulating Mr Bart van Thienen for his tremendous voluntary contribution at the foreshore and hope that the Government will support his application for citizenship.

300 **A Member:** What has one thing got to do with the other?

Hon. T N Hammond: Because it's the right thing to do, that's all. (*Interjection*)

Mr Speaker, moving on to Brexit, where I shall not dwell overly long, it has of course been over a year now since that referendum – (*Interjection*)

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Chief Minister (Hon. F R Picardo): Point of order, Mr Speaker.

Mr Speaker: What is the –?

310 **Hon. Chief Minister:** The point of order is that the hon. Gentleman has raised a point specific to an individual across the floor of the House, not in congratulatory terms but in respect of an application –

Minister for Economic Development, Telecommunications and the GSB (Hon. J J Bossano):
315 For nationality.

Hon. Chief Minister: – for nationality; and that is out of order, Mr Speaker. If it is an attempt to curry favour – (*Interjection by Mr Speaker*) Well, indeed, but it is an attempt to curry favour with an individual in the Chamber, Mr Speaker. (*Interjections*)

320

Hon. T N Hammond: Mr Speaker, moving on to Brexit, where I shall not dwell overly long, it has of course been over a year now since that referendum, a year in which the British Prime Minister triggered Article 50 but sadly left direct reference to Gibraltar out of her letter to the European Union; a year in which the European Union responded to that letter from Theresa May triggering Article 50 and pointedly did not exclude Gibraltar from their response; a year in which we, representing Her Majesty's Opposition, have set out what we believe should be Gibraltar's objectives from the upcoming negotiations – free flow at the Frontier, be a part of any deal the United Kingdom makes with the EU, continue to have access to United Kingdom markets and be part of any agreements made by the United Kingdom with other nations beyond the EU – and it is heartening to say that both sides of the House are entirely aligned on these objectives. These points have been set out and maintained by the GSD since the result of the Brexit referendum was known.

335 It has been a year in which we have not always agreed with Government on the manner in which they have conducted themselves on Brexit. Above all, however, it has been a year in which all in this House have been broadly aligned in the interests of Gibraltar, where there has

been healthy debate and ultimately the establishment of a Select Committee to try and provide support to Government, listen to the community and assess the direction being steered by Government. *(Interjections)* We agree entirely with the Chief Minister that our sovereignty forms no part of the Brexit negotiations, that the Kingdom of Spain should not raise its hopes in this regard or see Brexit as an opportunity to forward its misplaced claims. It was a GSD administration under Sir Peter Caruana who negotiated the double lock on sovereignty, a mechanism which assures our sovereignty and an achievement which we on this side of the House are proud to defend.

Mr Speaker, finally, health and safety, and of course the recent tragic events that we have witnessed at Grenfell Tower in West London. First of all, I must pass on my deepest condolences to all those families affected by this tragedy. The horrors there have highlighted the potential risks of high-rise living and the extreme importance of managing fire risks. Pressures in Gibraltar will always be to build upwards, it is inevitable, but we must always do so safely. I have welcomed the recent statements by Government reassuring the public that the refurbishments of Government-owned estates and particularly the cladding used is of an entirely different nature to that used at Grenfell Tower, and that additional fire prevention measures were put in place to ensure proper fire protection.

Prevention is of course the key. Our community has limited resources for dealing with major incidents and this is clear when you see the kind of response to serious incidents that we have witnessed in London or Manchester. This is not to say that the men and women of our emergency services are in any way less capable than their counterparts in the United Kingdom because that is of course not so; it is simply that we cannot draw on the same resources as would be available there. We need to be all the more cautious in minimising our risks accordingly. I trust that the Government will still be conducting a full fire safety review of Government high-rise housing stock, and I repeat my call to consider extending that review further to include those estates which are partly Government owned, to provide further assurance to our community that our homes are safe from fire. I further ask that the Government makes public, or at least shares with residents, the results and recommendations of such surveys when they are complete and acts as swiftly as possible to address any issues that are raised. I also ask that the Government undertakes to conduct similar tests on the cladding of buildings as those which have been conducted in the United Kingdom, and not just rely on manufacturers' reports for assurances.

Finally Mr Speaker, I would like to thank you, the Clerk of the House and all the staff of Parliament, for the help and support that they have offered and that I have received in this last year. Thank you. *(Banging on desks)*

Mr Speaker: The Hon. Gilbert Licudi.

Minister for Tourism, Employment, Commercial Aviation and the Port (Hon. G H Licudi): Mr Speaker, I start my address with Tourism.

Mr Speaker, this important sector will continue to play a crucial role in the next stage of our challenging future.

Last October, the responsibilities for running visitor attractions, mainly within our Nature Reserve, and the provision of beach facilities were transferred to the Department of the Environment. This element of the tourism industry is now overseen by my colleague the Hon. Minister John Cortes. This change has allowed the Gibraltar Tourist Board to concentrate more effectively on promoting Gibraltar abroad as a tourist destination as well as developing new and diverse opportunities for the industry. Consequently, the increased budget figure for marketing this year will allow us to strengthen the job of selling the destination and attracting more visitors to our shores.

Our partners in the industry tell us that the growth of the weddings and MICE markets is consistent, and we will pursue the MICE element in particular this year. MICE, or 'Meetings,

Incentives, Conferences and Exhibitions', is a form of tourism which attracts large groups of people. MICE tourism is usually planned well in advance of the event so it is absolutely crucial to stay ahead of the game and get in early. Only recently, the GTB exhibited at the Meetings Show in London. This is one of the most prestigious events of its kind. It benefits from a hosted buyers programme that delivers tangible, potential business directly to those promoting their products and services at the event.

Our participation at the World Travel Market, the industry's leading exhibition will continue in partnership with the local tourism industry. So too the road shows, such as those held in the UK earlier this year and in Morocco last year.

Mr Speaker, in this electronic age the GTB is shortly to enhance the effectiveness of its website and will have a new brochure, available electronically to download. This will also help to make tourism information available more accessible. Our efforts in making social media work harder for Gibraltar are evident, as an increasing number of both public and private sector entities embrace the Gibraltar branding and use it to jointly promote the Rock. The GTB's activities on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram are always well received and we ensure that we support other events through this medium.

Event-led tourism continues to be an important element of our tourism strategy and the results are there for all to see. From chess, backgammon to darts, music, food and literature, to name but a few, Gibraltar is fast developing a reputation as *the* place to travel to, to experience this all. We continue to work closely with our colleagues in the Ministry for Sports and Culture.

The Gibunco Gibraltar International Literary Festival has certainly become one of the most prestigious events we host in Gibraltar and one which the GTB works tirelessly to deliver. We were delighted to announce that Her Royal Highness the Princess Royal has agreed to continue her patronage of the Festival for a further three years. This year will see the fifth edition of the Festival and it is indeed a testament to all those involved for such a young Festival to have reached the dizzy heights already.

Mr Speaker, I was delighted and honoured to present the Gibraltar Lecture at the FT Weekend Oxford Literary Festival once again this year. Laurence Rees delivered a deeply moving and captivating lecture about the Holocaust. We are honoured that he has accepted our invitation to repeat the lecture at the Gibraltar Festival in November this year.

We have recently announced the participation of some prestigious authors and celebrities and I am thrilled to see the Festival once again become a benchmark for others of its kind around the world.

Mr Speaker, I would like to thank the main sponsor of the Festival, the Gibunco Group and all the sponsors and partners who make it possible for the Festival to take place. I am delighted to say that the financial burden on the Taxpayer continues to lessen, as the Festival grows in popularity and reputation year on year.

Mr Speaker, all these efforts and more are showing positive results in our visitor numbers. We have more visitors by air, by sea and the number of coaches bringing day visitors to the Rock is also on the increase.

It is certainly gratifying to see in the Hotel Occupancy Survey that the total number of arrivals at hotels in 2016 reached a record high, showing an increase of 18.9% over 2015, and to see that the largest gains came from tourist arrivals that grew by 25.6% over 2015.

Mr Speaker, commercial aviation in Gibraltar saw record passenger numbers in 2016. We welcomed a record 50 flights per week in the peak summer months, with August being a record month for passengers, with 60,360 passengers handled. Looking at 2017, record passenger numbers have already been broken in the first few months of the year.

We continue our one-to-one contacts on a regular basis with the airline industry. This is wholeheartedly welcomed by the airlines that frequently comment on our proactive approach to ensure that they are always in possession of the most up-to-date information on Gibraltar.

We also continue to participate in the ROUTES Europe development forum, where airlines and airports come together to do business.

440 In 2017, we will see existing routes consolidating even further, with load factors expected to be up and flights operating even fuller than they were last year, increasing passenger numbers and throughput at the airport.

Mr Speaker, the cruise industry continues to show consistent signs of growth. In 2017, 252 calls are already expected. This is an increase of 12.5 % on last year. Seven cruise ships will make their inaugural calls at Gibraltar, with one in particular, *Panorama II*, making a total of 21
445 scheduled calls in the year.

This year the wharf at the Mid-Harbour Marina was also used to berth one of the smaller cruise ships, as the North Mole was fully booked with other cruise ships in port on that day.

Our regular contact with the industry either face to face, at the Seatrade Global events and through the membership of MedCruise, allows us to be prominent in the eyes of the cruise
450 industry. Our partners in the local shipping industry play an important role in all the aspects of the points I have covered, and we are grateful for their support in the day-to-day task of promoting Gibraltar and making sure that our clients and visitors get the highest levels of service and the best experiences.

Only last week, we hosted the 50th General Assembly of MedCruise, the Association of
455 Mediterranean Cruise Ports. This Association also includes ports in the Black Sea and the Atlantic Islands. Over 100 delegates attended the three day event and carried out important business discussing the state of the industry. This was the second time in recent years that Gibraltar has hosted the event.

Mr Speaker, as a Government we have embraced tourism and seen significant growth. Our
460 commitment to the task of selling our unique destination will continue with fervour and pride as we showcase to the world what it is that we have to offer.

Mr Speaker, I now turn to Employment matters.

As at October 2016, the total number of employee jobs in Gibraltar increased by 929, from
465 26,144 to a record high of 27,073. This is the highest number ever recorded. In October 2015, the highest number of Gibraltarians in employment stood at 11,010. I am pleased to announce that in October 2016, this number rose to 11,065. This is also the highest number ever recorded.

Private sector growth has risen by 907 – that is 4.5% – from 20,070 to 20,977 in October
470 2016. The public sector saw an increase of 23 – that is 0.4%. Average gross earnings is now £28,751.62.

Mr Speaker, we have the lowest number of Gibraltarians unemployed ever recorded. Despite
the challenges Gibraltar has faced and is facing, our unemployment has this year once again reached record low levels. 2017 has seen the lowest ever level of recorded unemployment in
475 history. The number of unemployed persons in Gibraltar stood at 111 as at 31st May 2017. This is the lowest level ever since records began. The published first quarter average of unemployment is 216, also a record low – the lowest first quarter average on record!

Mr Speaker, the Department of Employment has undergone a number of operational
480 changes. In the past six months, the Department has been working tirelessly to improve the quality of the services it provides to all its customers, by reviewing all of its processes and systems. It is finalising the digitising of all forms and continues to work to offer online facilities to ease the administrative burden on businesses and strengthen the service provided to the public.

In the last few months, one of the key initiatives undertaken by the Department involves
meetings with a cross-section of employers to assess and assist them with any historic issues they may have had when dealing with the Employment Service. One of the main issues that
485 needed to be addressed is the registration of detached workers and short-term business visitors. I am pleased to announce that we will shortly be in a position to offer businesses a new faster and streamlined process of effecting such a registration.

Mr Speaker, the Labour Inspectorate is tasked with the regulation and enforcement of our
employment laws. This Government is committed to eradicating illegal labour in order to ensure
490 that all businesses are compliant with the Employment Regulations. This is in fact one of the main issues the business community has requested that we investigate and deal with. A new

programme of inspections will be rolled out within the coming months, which will ensure a level playing field is maintained within the job market.

495 The Department has recently produced an information leaflet, which provides essential information to anyone considering setting up a business, trade or profession in Gibraltar. This has been a first for the Department of Employment providing this essential information on-line, in an easy and accessible manner and has proved to be a valuable resource and point of reference to both employers and employees.

500 Mr Speaker, the local branch of the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD) held two events this year in connection with the recent changes to the Employment Tribunal legislation. The first was held in July 2016 in conjunction with various law firms. The event provided an opportunity for HR professionals in both public and private sectors to gain an understanding of the legislative changes and how they apply to them in practice.

505 This was followed up in April 2017 with a simulated Employment Tribunal hearing, giving attendees a flavour of what it is actually like to go through the process. In the role-play scenario, a team of expert employment lawyers recreated the workings of a tribunal in a safe and non-critical environment, with a question-and-answer session afterwards. Attendees were able to understand the procedure of giving evidence, cross-examination and re-examination and discuss their perceptions of the evidence given and what the case outcome might be.

510 Mr Speaker, the Department of Employment, as part of its Careers Development Service, is proud to offer the enhanced services of a dedicated specialist team of Employment Co-ordinators. The purpose of the Co-ordinators is to match the skills, qualifications and experience of those seeking employment with the current employment requirements of local employers.

515 Employment Co-ordinators work closely with employers across industries to help facilitate efficient identification of the available workforce and in turn facilitate the effective matching of those seeking work with relevant available vacancies.

520 These officers are available to all members of the public who are registered with the Department of Employment. Registered persons unemployed or looking for alternative work are given guidance and the opportunity to review all the vacancies that are open publicly and apply to those to which they find of interest.

525 In addition, the Employment Service provides one-to-one clinics whereby each person's employment needs or concerns are assessed, followed by the development of an action plan, which may further include referral to the Employment Counsellor. Where necessary, for enhanced CV production, interviewing skills and referral for onward training opportunities can be provided.

530 The Department is also in regular contact with our secondary schools and the Gibraltar College so that any other service which they feel would benefit their students will be discussed with a view to implementation. With that in mind, the Department of Employment has made available Employment Counsellor to attend the Department of Education with a view to addressing any employment or personal issue that a prospective school leaver may have and to prepare that person to start employment on a positive note.

535 The Careers Section delivers orientation workshops for students at the Gibraltar College, Westside and Bayside Secondary Schools. The workshops allow students who are thinking about leaving the education system to have the opportunity to explore the options available to them in the job market. These workshops are proving to be a success. On the one hand, the students are in an environment where they can talk openly about their expectations, fears, doubts, etc. before they finally decide whether to leave the education system altogether.

540 The transition from education to employment is always a challenging one. The timing of when to do this or even start thinking about the prospect is perhaps one of the most important decisions a young person has to take. The Department can be very useful in bridging this gap by supporting them in the decision-making process.

For those students that have decided to leave the education system, the Careers Service provides dedicated support. Interview techniques are practiced and assistance is provided in

545 formulating a CV and cover letters for job applications. The purpose of these sessions is to ensure that first time job seekers can rely on a Work Ready Toolbox to assist them in the process of getting a job.

Mr Speaker, the Government has responsibility for the Gibraltar and the Airport Fire and Rescue Services. 2016 was a year of steady progress for the Gibraltar Fire and Rescue Service (GFRS) maintaining the three-year targets set in the 2016 Integrated Risk Management Plan.

550 The senior management team is also driving a modernisation programme for the Service involving the Fire Control Room, Operations Room, M/T Workshop and the recently established Health and Safety/Welfare Office.

555 The development of the Control Room has seen the implementation and upgrade of standard operating procedures, an improved training programme that will enhance emergency call management, restructure of supervising and reporting lines and enhancing command and control competence.

560 In addition, Training Management System software – known as the Red Kite – is being implemented at the GFRS. The software will capture and record Personal Development and Maintenance of Skills processes, monitor minimum levels of competencies within the various training programmes and keep a track of assets and equipment. The same software is being used by the Airport Fire and Rescue Service for a similar purpose.

565 The Operations Room at the GFRS has been redeveloped into a multi-function facility that has the capability to perform as a Station Command and Control HQ during a fire related incident or as an alternative multi-agency Silver Command post. In addition, it is also being used as a secondary lecture room for operational training events and as a study room for those members of the Service looking to develop their careers further.

570 Mr Speaker, the Government continues to invest in essential plant and equipment. As part of the GFRS fleet replacement programme, we have acquired two fire appliances, an auxiliary vehicle and a potable pump with a combined value of £287,000. The two new appliances should be built by September of this year. The ultimate beneficiary of this replacement programme is our community.

575 The GFRS forms a vital part of Gibraltar's future development. It is involved in major projects such as the pre-construction phase of the LNG power station and the Airport tunnel. The main objective of this early involvement by our fire personnel in both these projects is to familiarise themselves with potential risks in order to assist in the implementation or creation of emergency response plans. The primary aim of these plans is to mitigate the effects that an incident could have on first responders, our community and the environment. In addition, a contingent composed of GFRS Senior Management, Operations personnel, and members of the Environment Department, have travelled to the UK and Norway to obtain first-hand knowledge on LNG plant operations, safety and security, and emergency response capabilities.

580 Mr Speaker, last October, a team of four firefighters from the GFRS travelled to Montgomery, Alabama in the US, to represent Gibraltar in the 25th Anniversary of the World Fire Fighter Combat Challenge. The aim was to gain and share experiences and importantly to try and make it past the qualifiers. What followed exceeded all expectations: not only did the team achieve their goal of making it past the preliminaries, they battled their way to the world finals, finishing in a fantastic second place and bringing home the silver medal. My heartfelt congratulations to the team for their fantastic achievement. **(A Member: Hear, hear.)**

590 Mr Speaker, the Airport Fire and Rescue Service (AFRS) has had a busy period of activity during the last 12 months. During the financial year, AFRS has teamed up with various UK-based fire training institutions, the GHA Ambulance Service and other professional bodies and undertaken training and Continual Professional Development.

Two new recruits have been taken on to supplement the AFRS complement and these are now back from the United Kingdom, where they undertook their Initial Firefighter's Course at the International Fire Training Centre in Teesside.

595 Recently, HMGoG awarded a tender for the replacement of the fire vehicle fleet, which will
entail an investment of just over £3 million. This project will be co-funded with the Ministry of
Defence (MOD). The new airfield rescue and firefighting vehicles should be delivered in the next
12 months and replace the existing MOD vehicles, which are between 17 and 18 years old. This
investment will bring up-to-date technology and considerably enhanced fire-fighting resources
600 and capabilities to the airfield for the benefit and safety of the flying public. Two new
Operational Support utility vehicles will also be procured.

The AFRS also unveiled new kit that affords firefighters the essential protection to deal with
the full range of fire and rescue incidents.

605 The AFRS continues to work closely with the GFRS to promote synergies, having recently
signed Interoperability Memoranda of Understanding in respect of both aviation-related
incidents and to support the GFRS at any other incident throughout Gibraltar.

Mr Speaker, aviation fire-fighting is heavily scrutinised and subject to a rigorous compliance
regime. The AFRS recently underwent a UK Civil Aviation Authority audit, with only relatively
minor issues to report. The senior management team are rightly proud of this result, if you
610 consider the significant administrative challenges in the transition from the MOD to HMGoG that
this has represented to the team in such a short period of time.

Mr Speaker, with regard to the Gibraltar Air Terminal itself, and as I have already mentioned,
2016 saw Gibraltar International Airport breaking all historical records of both passengers and
flights handled. The new services from Monarch operating four times a week from Gatwick and
easyJet operating twice a week from Manchester contributed to what was an already busy
615 schedule: 548,230 departing and arriving passengers were handled in that year, which was an
additional 103,894 or 23.4% more than in 2015. Similarly, 4,968 commercial aircraft were
recorded, which reflects an increase of 868 or 21.2% growth from 2015.

The passenger figures for the fourth Quarter 2016-17 already shows an increase of 13.6% in
620 January, 20.2% in February and 17% in March in comparison to 2016. This would indicate that
the trend is continuing and the capacity available is being taken up, which will assist in
consolidating the routes.

Mr Speaker, the Gibraltar International Airport was recently shortlisted by PrivateFly, a
leading online booking platform for private aviation charter, in its Most Scenic Airport Landing
625 Poll for 2017. Thousands of global travel fans voted in the poll, with over 122 different airports
around the world receiving a mention, including those chosen and shortlisted by PrivateFly's
expert judging panel. I am happy to report that Gibraltar came out in fourth place, behind Nice
in the Cote d'Azur in France, Donegal in Ireland and Saba in the Caribbean.

The Air Terminal has also been very active in staff training with all the different organisations
630 continuing to improve on their interoperability and ensuring that they achieve compliance with
the high standards that are set by the aviation industry.

Mr Speaker, the Port of Gibraltar continues to see growth in activity across nearly all sectors
of the industry. This is despite the continuing slowdown in global economic activity, overcapacity
in shipping across the world and stiff regional competition.

635 Specifically, 2016 saw an increase in both the number of vessels calling at Gibraltar for
bunkers – up 2.6 7% on 2015 – and in the quantity of fuel delivered. The GPA also recorded a
rise in ship-to-ship transfers in the Bay of nearly 15%. Off port limit transfers were also up by just
under 6% and increases were also seen in occupancy rates at the Eastern Anchorage.

This positive trend is reflected more widely in the total number of vessels calling at Gibraltar,
640 including cruise ships and superyachts, which saw increases of just under 10% and 24%
respectively. An increasing number of superyachts have also taken advantage of the new berths
at the recently commissioned Mid-Harbour Marina. Of note, we have seen a threefold increase
in superyacht nights since the berths became available, with almost 40% of superyachts calling
at Gibraltar now staying for at least one night.

645 Working closely with the recently formed Gibraltar Yachting Business Development Association (GYBDA), efforts continue to market Gibraltar as a key hub in this sector, highlighting the wider range of services available and the easy access to so many attractions.

Initiatives which were introduced some 18 months ago to promote the Port of Gibraltar continue to have a positive impact, with Gibraltar hosting the extremely successful International Bunker Industry Association annual convention in Gibraltar last November, for the first time ever, with over 150 delegates from around the world visiting Gibraltar.

655 With the support of the Government, the GPA has continued with its targeted marketing campaign, directly engaging with ship owners and operators as well as attending key industry events around the world, including Singapore, Athens, Rotterdam, Amsterdam and Dubai, thereby providing an opportunity to reinforce the Port's reputation in the regional and global stage. Attendance at these events has also resulted in the Port being invited to give presentations or sit on panel discussions at high profile bunkering or shipping conferences and this has provided an opportunity to update the audience on recent developments and initiatives aimed at further improving the Port of Gibraltar's efficiency and standing.

660 The Gibraltar Port was also invited last year to join the Society for Gas as a Marine Fuel, a non-governmental organisation established to promote safety and industry best practice in the use of gas as a marine fuel. With over 100 members, the Society includes key ports such as Singapore, Rotterdam, and some of the most well-known suppliers and operators in this field. This represents a key step for the GPA, allowing it to draw on the technical experience and expertise present in the Society.

665 Mr Speaker, as previously announced by the Government, a new Vessel Traffic Services system has been purchased by the GPA. This new system will be housed in the nearly completed Port building at Lathbury Barracks and should be ready for testing in late autumn with the goal of going live shortly after. This is a significant investment. However, it serves to demonstrate this Government's clear commitment to ensuring that safety, particularly in our busy waters, always comes first.

670 Mr Speaker, an important aspect of the development of the Port is the continuing excellent relationship between the GPA and the private sector port operators and service providers who work very closely to support the shipping community in our efforts to maintain Gibraltar's reputation as a centre of maritime excellence.

675 Mr Speaker, I turn to Gibraltar Maritime Administration (GMA).

Once again, the Gibraltar Ship Registry has retained its 'White List' status worldwide and remains one of the top 20 in the world. This is reflected in the annual International Chamber of Shipping's 'Flag State Performance Table' for 2016-17.

680 In addition to the improvement in quality, the overall Gibraltar fleet – both yachts and ships – has increased 6% between 2015-16. We now have more than 1,200 vessels registered in Gibraltar, despite challenges such as, as I have mentioned, the global depression in the international maritime market. This is a testament to the excellent products on offer at the Registries, as well as the supporting services within Gibraltar.

685 The Gibraltar Yacht Registry introduced the 'Small Ships' Registry' in July 2016 and the take-up has been very healthy, with 47 new registrations up to the end of 2016 and a further 27 this year.

690 The GMA has once again been providing training for a number of independent authorities throughout the past 12 months, including the Royal Gibraltar Police, the Gibraltar Port Authority, the Danish Maritime Administration and the Isle of Man Registry. The latter two have used the GMA as a base for Port State Control inspections and surveys, which is the internationally agreed regime for the inspection of foreign ships in other national ports.

695 The GMA's Seafarers' Section continues to issue a significant number of provisional and full-term certificates, with more than 4,700 completed during 2016. I am pleased to announce that the GMA will shortly be introducing a new web portal for seafarers' certification and online

payment platforms this year. International and local clients will soon be able to apply, manage and receive seafarer documentation on a 24/7 basis.

700 In December last year, Captain Rob Cumbes retired as the GMA's Chief Surveyor. Captain Cumbes has provided many years of Service to the Government and I would like to thank him for this and wish him a long and happy retirement. I also take this opportunity of congratulating Mr Dylan Cocklan on being successfully appointed as his successor in June 2017.

705 From the outset, the Government has sought to attract and train Gibraltarians to pursue a career in the Maritime Sector. I am happy to inform this House that Mr Ashley Perez and Mr Martin Caruana have now completed their Port State Control Officer training in January 2017 and are fully qualified to serve as Marine Surveyors.

710 HM Government's strategy for the GMA over the next two years is to continue maintaining its high level of quality service, increase the fleet size by bringing in business from new geographic areas and further develop its position as a training hub. The GMA is the international maritime gateway for businesses into the Gibraltar market and Gibraltar offers the full spectrum of maritime services, from finance to insurance, crew certification to ship suppliers. The fact that the fleet continues to grow and yet still maintain its international accreditation as a high-quality registry is a testament to the Government's investment in the Department and the hard work the staff at the GMA have proactively put in.

715 Mr Speaker, I turn to Civil Contingencies. A number of exercises to test threat assessments have taken place during the last 12 months. I briefly summarise them as follows: two counter terrorism table top exercises of one day duration; one dry run nuclear exercise; a full scale nuclear exercise; a full scale counter terrorism operational exercise; a full day table top workshop for HMGOG support services aimed at the aftermath of a major event; two plane crash exercises aimed at the management of specific areas, friends and relatives centres and the airfield apron. A further exercise to test the management of an incident at senior level is now
720 been planned.

725 The Civil Contingency Department is working on contingency plans to cover any major incident concerning the provision or use of LNG and also the Airport tunnel project. Once these plans are completed, they will form part of the Major Incident Response Plan and will be exercised in order to ensure that known threats can be adequately managed in a co-ordinated, efficient and safe manner.

Mr Speaker, the challenges we all face in an uncertain world are many and it is right for the Government to continue to invest time, resources and money to prepare against a major incident that we all hope will never occur.

730 Mr Speaker, turning to the International Exchange of Information: in addition to handling day-to-day Exchange of Information on Request in tax matters with TIEA-partner countries and negotiating further international agreements, Gibraltar Finance has continued to lead on the implementation of the various international tax compliance-related initiatives. Gibraltar Finance co-ordinated the automatic exchange of financial account information with the USA under FATCA for the second consecutive year in 2016 and the automatic exchange of financial account
735 information with the UK under the bilateral Intergovernmental Agreement for the first time, also in 2016.

740 Preparations are underway to automatically exchange financial account information with the first wave of countries by the end of September 2017. Gibraltar Financial Institutions are required to upload their submissions to the Government's automatic exchange of information portal www.aeoi.gov.gi by the deadline of 31st July 2017.

745 Work is now underway on implementing the OECD's Common Reporting Standard on the automatic exchange of financial account information in terms of 'activating' the exchange of information relationships with partner countries.

Following a positive OECD Phase 2 Review in 2014, where Gibraltar was rated 'Largely Compliant' and a satisfactory OECD assessment of Gibraltar's Confidentiality and Data Safeguards in 2015, the OECD has announced that a Phase 3 Review of Gibraltar's 'Legal and

Regulatory Framework and Implementation of the Standard in Practice' by the Global Forum on Transparency and Exchange of Information has been scheduled for the first half of 2019.

750 Mr Speaker, the relevant amending legislation implemented by the Government to comply with the OECD Global Forum's Phase 2 recommendations was the Partnership, Trustees and Tax Information (Miscellaneous Amendments) Act 2016. This Act, which amended three separate pieces of primary legislation – namely the Partnership Act, the Trustees Act and the International Co-operation (Tax Information) Act – came into effect upon publication in the
755 Gibraltar Gazette on 1st December 2016.

Mr Speaker, on Social Security, I take this opportunity to welcome Mr John Reyes as the new Director of Social Security. Mr Reyes took up his new position in March this year and I wish him all the best in the new role.

760 The Department of Social Security is already offering their customers the facility of having their housing rent deducted from benefit payments thus relieving them of the burden of either going personally to the Housing Department to pay in person or having to set up a direct debit or standing order arrangement to settle their monthly rental bill. This simple step has also had a positive impact on rent arrears. The process makes things easier for the tenant and the Government and reduces the risk of defaulting on a payment.

765 Mr Speaker, the Department of Social Security will shortly be benefiting from a new software application system. One of the main benefits of the system is that it will eliminate the duplication of data, therefore delivering a more efficient and effective service to the public. By way of example, a birth certificate submitted when claiming a particular benefit will be stored in the database and the information can be used again at a later date for processing future claims.
770 Simple steps like this make a big difference to the Department and its beneficiaries.

The software will also streamline the information currently held in manual records, therefore highlighting and eventually reducing any inconsistencies in the system. It will also serve as a sophisticated analytical tool with the ability to produce statistical data that can analyse the impact of projected expenditure in relation to any given benefit.

775 Finally, Mr Speaker, I wish to thank my staff and all those who work in the various departments and organisations which form part of my ministerial responsibilities. I am grateful to all of them for their support and dedication.

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

780 **Mr Speaker:** The Hon. Neil Costa.

Minister for Health, Care and Justice (Hon. N F Costa): Mr Speaker, little did I suspect, when I first stood for election in September of 2007, that I would be serving my community and the good people of Gibraltar for at least three terms. As I reflect on my concept of time – which is
785 solely that it flies, Mr Speaker – I stand proud to deliver my 10th Budget address as a Member of Parliament, and sixth as a Government Minister. Today, Mr Speaker, I deliver my first Budget as Minister with responsibility for Health, Care and Justice.

In line with many other western nations, it makes sense for Gibraltar to integrate Health and Social Care, and during the course of my Budget address I will provide details as to the synergies
790 between both and the steps that we have already taken to align care in the health and care settings. Similarly, as Minister for Justice I have been in a position to move quickly in the drawing up of legislation that relates to the care and the protection of our community – for instance, the Government's legislative reforms in respect of the safeguarding and protection of children, more of which I will say later.

795 Mr Speaker, before I continue I will literally beg for your indulgence, as I had prepared a speech in the tradition in which I had heard all previous speeches in my nine years in the House, which is from a prepared script. Notwithstanding, in the limited time available, I have sought to shorten my contribution in line with your direction before lunch. I will therefore ask my teams

not to think for a moment that I consider any of their work any less important by not mentioning
800 any aspect during the course of my contribution.

Mr Speaker, I turn firstly to my responsibilities as Minister for Health. Political observers, and, I think, the wider community, will have noted the ongoing reforms and the substantive changes at the GHA.

Our model of healthcare puts primary care at the forefront of health services and is well
805 understood to be the gatekeeper to secondary care services. A strong Primary Care Centre will take excellent care of our community and keep many medical services within the primary care setting and away from the hospital.

In this last financial year there has been an overall comprehensive review of all primary care
810 services by the clinical and management teams. The findings of the review have resulted in the introduction of some highly effective reforms and creating better access to our GPs, better patient choice, enhancements to the existing services and a more streamlined service overall. The GP complement currently stands at 23 general practitioners divided into three area groups of between six and eight practitioners. In order for the House to fully understand the work of our GPs, it is important to set out the daily context. The Primary Care Centre offers between
815 nine and ten thousand appointments monthly, it receives approximately 55,000 calls monthly and, regrettably, on average, 450 patients do not attend their appointments each month. As a result, this last financial year has seen important changes to the distribution of appointments and, in particular, the availability of appointments to patients.

The introduction of the on-day clinics has proved a successful initiative, in particular
820 benefiting patients who need to be seen promptly by a GP and who cannot wait or plan ahead. The new service consists of a full clinic per clinic area on a daily basis, which is automised and releases appointments daily at 8.15. Patients who have been unable to make an appointment with their GP of choice can attend the on-day clinic with no pre-booked appointments. This represents a significant change in how appointments are offered and how much more
825 responsive we can be to patients' needs. In total, over 200 appointments are released on a daily basis for the same day, taking into account emergency clinics, emergency overflow appointments, critical ill appointments for urgent patients and the on-day system.

The repeat prescription system has been hugely successful, Mr Speaker, launched on
830 6th February. The service has a dedicated counter at the PCC main reception desk and allows patients to request a repeat of their regular medications without necessarily having to see a GP. The patient's medical record is checked by their GP before the prescription is issued to ensure safety and the involvement of a clinician at all times. The number of prescriptions from the start of the service to the end of May is 1,659, which equates to freeing up an average of almost 400 appointments every month. This is a clear illustration of how we have listened to the comments
835 of patients and have responded promptly, providing better patient choice.

The sick certificate telephone service is a modern and creative solution to the problem of
840 appointments being used for patients who are not in fact seeking medical care, but simply a certificate to allow them to stay at home and recover from a minor illness. On 6th March of this year, a dedicated telephone service was introduced where a phone call can now be made to request a sick certificate for up to two days at a time, no more than once every three months. The service is operated by qualified nurses who are formally trained in telephone triage and any certificate issued is recorded in the patient's clinical record. The initiative is designed for patients who have minor self-limiting illnesses who do not wish to be seen by a doctor but who need rest and self-care at home. The innovation supports the Government's public health message for
845 keeping minor and infectious illnesses away from public places, such as the PCC and the A&E department. To date, this service has become increasingly useful with each month that passes. For example, in May, 298 sick certificates were issued, representing a saving of 298 GP appointments in one month alone.

Both of these new initiatives combined are now releasing more than 700 appointments each
850 month. Based on the increase in use of these services since launch, we are fully expecting the

number of patients using the services to rise. To put it in context, Mr Speaker, this has completely mitigated for any loss of appointments due to non-attendance and more besides. Further, and crucially, these two reforms alone have released pressure on A&E and emergency services and have allowed GPs to spend more time with their patients, improving the quality of the care provided.

Improvements to care services also occur behind the scenes with a project to scan and digitise all patient paper notes and upload the information to individual electronic records. This huge undertaking of 60,000 sets of notes will eventually release up to six PCC clerks to attend to patients face to face and on the telephone. This will result in improved customer service, making things easier for patients to navigate through a very busy department. From a clinical governance and safety perspective, it also raises standards of care by ensuring that a patient's full medical record is always available to their GP and any important past medical events can be easily viewed and accounted for.

Mr Speaker, the aim of the Government is to repatriate services, also extending to bringing back primary services from secondary care so that services can be developed that integrate closely with overall community care, so that whole teams of professionals can be involved from allied health professionals to pharmacists to nursing staff and to GPs.

In line with the Government's Strategic Plan for the PCC, GPs are now being encouraged to develop special interest roles. Palliative care, dermatology, cardiac rehabilitation, clinical supervision, women's health and child health are among the special interests being developed. One of the most successful of these GPs with special interest initiatives is the very popular Dr Ferrera of the dermatology clinic. In February of this year the demand for dermatology appointments was such that my Medical Director approved a significant increase in the time devoted by Dr Ferrera to dermatology from two clinics a week to five. Dr Ferrera will therefore see between 15 and 18 patients per clinic, equating to a total of over 80 dermatology clinic appointments a week for him alone. Dr Ferrera also works with a highly trained and professional nursing team who have specialist training in their own right. These skilled nurses undertake an enormous variety of skin treatments, including dermoscopy to check moles, minor operations, patient reviews after treatment and chronic skin disease management. Perhaps the jewel in the crown of the service is that the team also work with a visiting consultant dermatologist who comes every two months from the UK for two to three days at a time and who provides specialist advice for patients, support and training for our team.

I am sure Mr Speaker, that we can all appreciate that living in a high sun exposure area means that dermatology is a vital service for the health of our community. It is my belief that such a service portrays the best of primary care – medical treatment, health promotion and health surveillance in a familiar but professional setting.

Capitalising on the enormous success of the dermatology GP specialist interest initiative, on 16th March 2017 we introduced a GP with special interest in musculoskeletal medicine to speed up the management of medical problems that can often lead to patients missing work and losing mobility and independence. Dr Elaine Flores is currently working at St Bernard's Hospital to help us reduce waiting times for patients waiting to be seen in an orthopaedic clinic. Mr Speaker, it is fair to say that the success of this reform has taken, pleasantly, all of us by surprise. In less than two months Dr Flores has been able to reduce orthopaedic waiting times by a staggering five months. By mid-May she had seen 179 patients in total – new and review patients – and between 15 and 20 new patients every week with a clinic commitment of five clinics a week.

It is envisioned that the service will eventually be transferred to the Primary Care Centre and all patients referred to orthopaedics by a GP will be seen and examined by the specialist GP first. Minor practical procedures can be carried out in a short timespan and patients needing consultant opinion and surgery can be streamlined into the hospital in a way that really does demonstrate how fortunate we are to have integrated medical services working closely for the best outcome for our patients.

Mr Speaker, it is my firm conviction that a strong primary care service guides and elevates all aspects of healthcare to our community. I have a team of primary care clinicians, managers and admin staff of whom I am immensely proud. Day to day and without fail they deliver high-quality professional care to every member of our community from the youngest to the oldest, and while doing so they still manage to suggest and implement improvements in care to better serve all of the community. I am humbled by their dedication and honoured to lead them. Whereas it is impossible to name all of our dedicated staff, I wish to thank the leadership of our Deputy Medical Director and lead GP Dr Krish Rawal, and our PCC Manager, Rose Suissa. They truly represent the best in all of us, are patient and compassionate and are forever considering ways to improve the service.

In respect of secondary care, I cannot overstate the impact of placing clinicians at the forefront of managing services. The strong leadership by practising clinicians and a key focus on repatriating services back to Gibraltar is already paying enormous dividends in terms of patient care and the streamlining of resources.

Mr Speaker, the steadfast commitment of the Government to improve the quality and the delivery of healthcare continues with a firm focus on supporting and strengthening the emergency services. I was proud to announce the first in a series of steps in the A&E department which saw the deployment of two additional A&E charge nurses. The deployments have ensured that a highly skilled senior member of the nursing staff leads and manages the A&E team in every shift. The charge nurse role is crucial, as they are the frontline management on the shop floor. They are responsible for organising and supporting the whole clinical team on each shift and ensure that all A&E patients receive high-quality, safe, compassionate and timely clinical care.

Further still, Mr Speaker, the GHA will employ a consultant in A&E to provide clinical leadership and a senior presence in the Department and lead in the development of services. The advert for this post was published in May 2017 and applicants' interviews will take place on 10th July. For such an important element in the medical care of our community, this senior role will further reinforce my drive to have the subject matter experts, namely clinicians, delivering, guiding and progressing care.

The Day Surgical Unit represents one of the biggest and most gratifying successes of the past financial year, for which fulsome credit must be given to my illustrious and hon. predecessor Dr John Cortes, who, if I may add, also brought back the heart and compassion to the GHA. I must place on the record my gratitude to Sandie Gracia, our Nursing Director, who was also a driving force in this very successful project.

The Unit continues to expand its services by undertaking further procedures, including cardiac procedures, urology surgical lists, dermatology sessions, as well as general surgery and anaesthetic lists within its own theatre suite.

The House may recall that the Day Surgery Unit continues to undertake over 90% of all elective surgery, with even more surgical procedures now being performed using keyhole techniques that allow for patients to heal sooner and return to the comfort of their homes on the same day with the assurance of a quality aftercare service provided by the Day Surgery Team. From January to the end of May, a total of 1,126 day surgical procedures have been carried out, compared to 1,095 procedures for the same period last year.

Mr Speaker, I am equally delighted to reiterate that there have been no cancellations of surgical operations due to lack of beds since January of this year. In the same period there has been a notable improvement in performance figures for surgery at St Bernard's. In the first four months of this year the GHA carried out 161 major surgical procedures requiring in-patient stay –nearly double the number performed in the same period last year. If the current trend continues, the GHA will conduct almost double the number of major surgeries this year compared to last year. As a result, waiting lists across all surgical procedures have been significantly reduced. For example, a patient requiring planned surgery under the care of the general surgeon will now be offered a surgery date approximately four to six weeks later as a

955 matter of routine. This very welcome increase in the number of major operations carried out is thanks to the increased availability of beds at the Dudley Toomey Ward, enabling it to cater for an increased number of surgical patients.

Mr Speaker, it also gives me great pleasure to announce that GHA has recruited a full-time renal specialist consultant. Dr Simon Lines starts work on 10th July 2017. While he will need time to settle in to his new role, he has already actively engaged with the invaluable and very active 960 Gibraltar Dialysis Association to help him develop a service of the highest standards. This represents a quantum leap in the treatment of 26 of our most unwell patients who have the security of a professional service provided by dedicated and experienced practitioners.

The House will recall that in September of last year the Hon. the Chief Minister and my hon. predecessor opened the new Ayling-Buttigieg Chemotherapy Day Unit, which focuses on the 965 treatment of solid tumours. This includes five chemotherapy stations and is open three days a week.

The management and administration of chemotherapy to cancer patients who are often very unwell and possibly not fit to travel must surely represent one of the fundamental reasons why we would wish to repatriate services and treat patients ourselves with our own teams and with 970 the support and backup of all the clinical services our Health Authority can offer. The Unit is already making a massive positive difference to the lives of many patients, and, just as importantly, to their families. This Unit is a perfect illustration of how a local multidisciplinary service can provide platinum-standard care.

Mr Speaker, the Critical Care Unit is also going from strength to strength, with the number of 975 fully trained staff having risen under this administration. In May 2011 there were 28 registered nurses, comprising two charge nurses and 24 staff nurses, plus two enrolled nurses. Today, there are 30 registered nurses, comprising: three charge nurses – in other words, one more charge nurse than under the previous administration; 27 staff nurses – in other words, three more staff nurses; and one nursing assistant. Every member of the Unit's nursing staff is fully trained, 980 qualified and experienced to work in the high-pressured environment of intensive care, taking care of our most unwell patients.

Not only are the nursing staff fully trained, but many are volunteering for more specialist training to enhance patient care in house. In this respect, four nurses are due to attend UK-based training in haemofiltration, which is a highly specialised and crucial service.

985 Moreover, Mr Speaker, it also gives me great pleasure to say that to strengthen and work with our excellent critical care nurses, on 6th May the GHA advertised for five new anaesthetists and interviews took place on 14th June. This recruitment will establish an additional tier of anaesthetic doctors. Overall, a team of senior consultants, junior intensivists and an impressive nursing team will further improve the quality of care in the CCU. The new tier of anaesthetists 990 will increase resilience, as two anaesthetists will now always be available out of hours to attend to simultaneous emergencies and emergency surgery.

The elevation in the critical care teams has been enhanced by the raising of clinical care standards. The implementation of the National Early Warning System – NEWS, for short – programme has replaced the Modified Early Warning System. The NEWS is a platinum-standard, 995 evidence-based, clinical assessment tool to monitor patients using observations such as pulse rate, blood pressure and respiratory rate. As these measures change, clinical staff are able to monitor improvement and deterioration in a patient's condition, leading to safer and more timely and effective medical and nursing interventions of acutely ill patients. The NEWS system is now in effect across the whole of the GHA, including the nursing clinics in the Primary Care 1000 Centre, and demonstrates how we are embracing the highest standards of evidence-based clinical care.

As the House may recall, the GHA has advertised and is in the process of recruiting two matrons at St Bernard's. Following advice from our clinicians, the position of matron is being brought back to Gibraltar to further improve the patient experience and co-ordinate the changes 1005 in systems for enhanced and safe high-quality health care, in conjunction with the Nurse

Management Team. Our health professionals will also benefit, as matrons will provide encouragement and motivation to members of the nursing team and support staff. Further, not only will the matron be an asset across a whole range of multidisciplinary clinical areas, but will also provide a source of information and choice for patients, together with a reassuring physical presence that can make a positive difference when a person is recovering from illness. Matrons will also contribute to patient management, ensuring measures to reduce length of stay and facilitate early discharge.

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Mr Speaker, may I, with your leave, take a moment to pause and to reflect on the fact that we are blessed in Gibraltar to enjoy the benefit of the Clinical Nurse Managers, so very ably led by the Director of Nursing Services, Sandie Gracia, and who truly are of the most passionate, committed, dedicated, professional and compassionate individuals I have ever had the pleasure to work with and are an asset to the GHA. I meet with them often, Mr Speaker, and it is always a pleasure to learn from them and to work with them in improving the delivery of healthcare to our community.

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Mr Speaker, the House would expect from a Government a medical team dedicated to bringing services back to Gibraltar that we improve on the Sponsored Patients department. I am very pleased to note that our highly competent Medical Director, Dr Danny Cassaglia, whom I cannot praise enough, has introduced a new software system that ensures that all sponsored patients' care is overseen by a GHA Consultant, thereby certifying that patients are being seen regularly and also co-ordinating care with the external hospital, ensuring that patients do not have to travel unnecessarily to Spain or to the UK. I am sure that we all agree, Mr Speaker, that patients who can be medically attended to at home should be seen at home to avoid the unnecessary and additional stresses of travel. It is possible for a medical service outside Gibraltar to wish to continue to see a patient simply because that is the system they run locally, without taking in to account the very tiring experience of travelling for a medical appointment or review, and the stressful experience of being away from home and family while undergoing treatment. To that end, my Medical Director and his team have set up a Tertiary Services Review Board to review the details of every patient who travels out of Gibraltar for medical care. The newly constituted Board, that met for the very first time on 4th May, is comprised of highly specialised and experienced clinical staff who are able to make decisions on where best to provide the optimal care for a patient. Cases are reviewed on an individual basis to guarantee a personal and compassionate review on best care.

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As the House may recall, the GHA has introduced a new medical app for its clinicians that enables them to access pathology test results much more easily from wherever they are, on their smart phones and other mobile devices, 24 hours a day. The recently introduced Modulab app is safe, easy to use, password protected, encrypted and follows best practice as applied in other locations. The app provides additional and enhanced means of retrieving information to those methods already in existence and allows the clinicians to directly contact the patient simply by pressing an icon on the app. Additionally, the app will avoid the need for follow-up appointments to review blood results, therefore releasing much needed slots for the general public at the PCC. I wish to thank the GHA's Pathology Services and the GHA IT Management and Technology department, and to congratulate both departments for the great teamwork and successful collaboration that brought the project to fruition.

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Mr Speaker, on 18th May the Government published a Bill to amend the Medical (Gibraltar Health Authority) Act to provide for changes in the management structure of the Health Authority. The main change, announced by the Chief Minister during last December's Parliament, is that the current statutory post of CEO will be abolished. The majority of the current functions and duties of the chief executive will be performed by the GHA's Medical Director. The change, we believe, is hugely important for two reasons. First and foremost, it strengthens and cements the policy of the Government that the GHA should be clinically led, whereby the most important decisions and roles, including the chairmanship of the management board, are made by experienced consultant-level senior medical professionals. It

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places the post of Medical Director, for the first time, on a statutory basis, which the Government believes reflects the importance of the role. The move reflects changes that have been ongoing within the GHA since the retirement of the previous chief executive, where there has been a gradual transfer of non-statutory functions and duties to the Medical Director and a greater involvement of the Medical Director in other decision making. The Bill also includes changes to the structure and nomenclature of management posts within the GHA. In our view, the Bill establishes clear distinctions between clinical and non-clinical functions and management lines at the GHA. The role of Deputy Medical Director will also become a statutory post to allow for continuity on occasions when the Medical Director is unavailable. The Deputy Medical Director will also be a member of the management board in his own right.

Mr Speaker, in the same way as I said earlier that I cannot praise Dr Danny Cassaglia enough, let me also place on the record that Dr Krish Rawal is similarly a consummate professional and caring GP. We are indeed blessed to have this dynamic duo at the forefront and at the heart of Gibraltar's healthcare.

Mr Speaker, the GHA is in the process of repatriating, as I have said, as many services as possible to Gibraltar so that patients can be treated at home. We are looking to repatriate further services, including more complex urology surgery, vascular surgery, cardiology, paediatric surgery and MRI services. This is likely to occur by expansion of our already successful visiting consultant service and the employment of more specialist work to the GHA.

Mr Speaker, in recent months the headlines in the UK have been about an NHS in crisis. One report refers to NHS surgeons kicking their heels as bed shortages delay operations, with another report referring to babies waiting on the floor at A&E and pensioners on trolleys for over 14 hours. Twenty NHS hospitals in the UK had declared black alerts because patient safety could no longer be assured. As hon. Members know, this, thankfully, is not the case in Gibraltar's GHA. The excellent professionals of the GHA are doing, if I may say, a sterling job for the community and it would be churlish, in my view, for us not to recognise the excellent work and the important investment we have made in the health services of our nation.

Mr Speaker, it was the increasing pressure on beds towards the end of 2016 which resulted in plans to further enhance the bed management system. This was achieved using a three-pronged approach: an active bed management strategy was implemented in January this year and weekly meetings are held with a multidisciplinary team, including a dedicated social worker and provision of packages of care to support vulnerable patients in the community; immediate temporary expansion of long-term elderly care beds by converting the cardiac rehabilitation gym into a temporary ward – the temporary ward has already been decommissioned, due to the successful transfer of our long-stay elderly to Hillside's Dementia Residential Home; the expansion of elderly care provision in the community, including the opening of the excellent Bella Vista Dementia Day Centre in January of this year and the full opening of Hillside's Dementia Residential Home. Further, the Government is presently working to increase bed capacity to John Mackintosh Home at the old St Bernard's Hospital by converting the ground floor into a ward with an additional 16 beds. All of these improvements have resulted in greatly increased average daily bed availability, resulting in an average of 31 daily available beds.

Mr Speaker, the House will also be happy to know that the number of dementia long-stay patients has decreased from 29 patients – 22% – last year, to a remarkable six patients – only 5% – in June of this year.

It is also important to note that since January of this year, even before the transfer of long-term-stay elderly to Hillside's, daily bed availability was around 20 as a result of the bed management structures that have been recently introduced.

As part of the Government's commitment to enhance and improve the services provided by the GHA's Ambulance Service, five new ambulance care assistants have been recruited and will commence employment with the service as soon as their induction training is completed next month. A further three ambulance care assistant vacancies have already been advertised locally and interviews are taking place shortly. The recruitment, Mr Speaker, will enable the GHA to

1110 absorb the responsibilities of the third frontline emergency ambulance service, currently
operated by the Gibraltar Fire and Rescue Service and which also includes the provision of a new
1115 emergency ambulance expected to be delivered by July this year. A second emergency
ambulance unit has also been placed on order and is expected to be delivered by December also
of this year. The arrival of these two new emergency ambulances will allow the Ambulance
Service to a phased replacement programme over the next seven years as advised by our
ambulance team. In this respect, all fleet vehicles will undergo major renovations as required
1120 after five years. After this period, all vehicles will be replaced from frontline duties after seven
years' service, or as required following technical advice. The process will significantly increase
the service's fleet resilience – in other words, high dependency units will be replaced with
emergency ambulances that may be used locally and in Spain and patient transport services will
be replaced with a conventional patient transport service. The existing vehicle maintenance and
renewal programme ensures all GHA's frontline vehicles are apt to safely respond to local pre-
hospital emergencies and also conduct emergency and routine transfers of patients into Spain.
1125 Having all of Gibraltar's pre-hospital emergency response assets under the same umbrella will
automatically standardise training, development and protocols, allowing better co-ordination in
responding and dealing with emergency callouts.

Mr Speaker, the Information Management and Technology team continue to manage the
GHA's extensive computer and network infrastructure, which, due to the opening of the
1130 excellent new facilities at Bella Vista and Hillside, continues to expand and increase in
complexity. Additionally, the team are involved in planning various development programmes in
order to enhance the robustness and security of our IT systems and ensuring that all systems
remain current and fit for purpose.

Over the past year, the department has engaged in the following projects – although believe
me, Mr Speaker, when I say that the list is by no means exhaustive: the chemotherapy suite
1135 installation of telephony and IT equipment; the complete redesign and relaunch of the GHA
website; the excellent in-house developments and improvements of the bespoke sponsored
patients system, the human resources system, the hospital stores inventory and stock control
system, and an estimates submission and management system.

There is a growing need, in my opinion, Mr Speaker, to implement videoconferencing
1140 technologies across the GHA, which is planned for the coming year. This will help to reduce the
number of times patients need to travel to care providers outside of the GHA, as well as
reducing the number of visits from visiting clinicians who will be able to interact via
videoconference rather than having to travel to Gibraltar.

Mr Speaker, let me now move towards an integral part of Government plans towards
1145 maintaining the highest standards of patient care. In my opinion, nursing comprises the engine
of any care and medical service provider. Such is the importance of nursing that without it
service delivery would totally collapse. It is because of this that I am determined to focus on the
provision of quality training and development of our nursing personnel. In order to accomplish
this aim, I will ensure that the School of Health Studies is both physically and financially properly
1150 resourced. The School of Health Studies oversees and approves all education and training for all
GHA staff and works collaboratively with other agencies such as the Care Agency and Education.

Mr Speaker, it was this Government and my hon. predecessor that reintroduced enrolled
nurse training to ensure that nurses who are not on the professional register achieve a high
standard of patient care through continuous education and development. Development of the
1155 Qualifications and Credit Framework are nationally and internationally recognised with the
assistance and support from professionally registered nurses, allowing a non-academic route
into the nursing profession for those with no formal academic qualifications. This ensures fitness
for purpose and fitness for practice. From a career perspective, there are enrolled nurses who
have chosen to become registered nurses through the student nurse programmes where
1160 appropriate: an example of encouraging staff to step on to the career ladder. Numbers recruited
to this programme have increased year on year since the relaunch of the programme from

across the GHA and Social Services. The programme is now 18 months long, with further plans to develop and extend the programme.

1165 Traditionally, Mr Speaker, ongoing training needs of nursing assistants have been limited to induction training and attendance to mandatory training updates. The introduction of the NVQ/QCF Level 2 qualification by this Government has instrumentally transformed opportunities. This approach has allowed those with Level 2 qualifications to apply for Level 3 – enrolled nurse – pathways and subsequently on towards the Bachelor of Science, should they wish to progress even further.

1170 My Ministry and the School of Health Studies believe that we now have a substantive pathway of entry into the nursing profession both for the academically inclined student and the not so academically inclined. The increase in continuing professional development for registered staff is also helping to encourage lifelong learning and there are opportunities to actively encourage staff to consider master's degree level modules.

1175 Mr Speaker, I now turn my attention to a crucial and important subject matter – finance and procurement. The GHA has ended the financial year with, in my view, an unacceptable deficit. My commitment to our taxpayers is that in my first year as Minister for Health the GHA will come within budget whilst improving patient care. My mantra, Mr Speaker, has become to increase patient care at better value for money. To this end I have set up a series of financial control measures in conjunction with the new Head of Finance, Mrs Jessica Montado, who I have to say has thrown herself in the deep end with an enviable degree of commitment and attention to detail. The most salient part of our reforms consist of a monthly meeting held on the first Friday a week after the close of the month, with all Heads of Departments, where we review every single head of expenditure line by line. If any subhead is in deficit I require a full explanation for the reasons and the steps being taken to ensure that the next month will reflect expenditure within budget. In this crucial mission I am ably led by the Hon. Minister Bossano, from whom I am yet to leave a meeting without having learnt at least two things new, and the guidance and direction of the Financial Secretary, both of whom attend these meetings.

1180 Further, Mr Speaker, the House will be happy to know that the Finance department is improving processes, which will deliver better budgetary control and financial balance.

1185 Further still, Finance has introduced automated financial analysis reports, which generate automatically every morning and are currently being sent to all budget holders on a daily basis. The initiative has already had tremendously positive feedback, with budget holders querying items and allocations as well as questioning their budget before the purchase.

1195 In addition, the Finance team are also heavily involved with the Government's current e-Government initiatives, ably led by my hon. Friend the Hon. Minister for Commerce, which aim to deliver an electronic procurement system in a centralised way for the whole of the public service, together with a purchase to pay system and an enterprise resource planning system.

1200 Mr Speaker, a major role of Procurement is ensuring value for money from suppliers in line with procurement regulations. I am pleased to note that there has been a lot of work behind the scenes on the procurement front, where the team have been dedicating the majority of resources into setting up revised and updated measures.

1205 A new stores computerised system is also currently being progressed in house and we are now at the populating data stage of the implementation. The new inventory/stock control system will provide us with a number of various reports on all stock items, such as usage and costs by wards and departments, as well as alerting the section on when to reorder goods.

1210 Mr Speaker, I will now turn to mental health, which during the financial year has seen the mental health in-patient services adapt, develop and progress further as they settle into their new surroundings one year on. The magnificent Ocean Views opened its doors to the public in February of 2015 and the continued development and commitment to service users is clearly evident by the progress and positive changes witnessed. This is only the beginning and a number of positive changes and improvements have been identified – working closer with local health

care and social services in order to develop the forward-thinking service that the community in Gibraltar expects and deserves.

1215 Mr Speaker, in respect of Mental Health Services, which continue to provide consistent and supportive community care for service users with complex and enduring mental health problems, a great deal of work has gone into raising awareness and, in turn, helping the general public develop a better understanding of mental health issues.

1220 Work has also been undertaken in reconfiguring some services in order to improve access to the teams. This has been achieved through increased consultant psychiatrist clinics and face-to-face community mental health staff contacts. This change, in easier access to community services, has seen a 14% increase in this last year in engagement of service users and their families.

1225 Mr Speaker, I am very pleased indeed to be able to reiterate that my Ministry and the Mental Health team are excited with the most recent enhancement to the service, which as from Monday of last week saw the phased introduction of an outreach support component for community patients. The addition to the community services is composed of three experienced qualified nurses and the development of the current service will see the addition of a nursing afterhours on-call service, including a mental health support line which will be available to our
1230 known patients/carers, incorporating a combination of phone and physical presence where necessary; support structures for people moving into sheltered/supported flats in the community from Ocean Views; managing patient case load that require more input or monitoring, increase in frequency of home visits, checking compliance with medication afterhours, on weekends and on bank holidays. The new component will be an addition to the
1235 existing on-call team.

Mr Speaker, the Bella Vista Dementia Day Centre officially opened its doors in January this year. The exciting new development has seen GHA professionals and the private sector working in tandem to bring the project to fruition. The new and magnificent facility, the first of its kind on the Rock, will offer 90 places at any one time. As the House knows, the Dementia Centre is managed by MedDoc on behalf of the Gibraltar Health Authority.
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Mr Speaker, I take the opportunity to thank the project team tasked with the planning and commissioning of this innovative facility. Great attention to detail was taken in all aspects of planning, and special consideration was taken throughout to ensure that not only the facility but also all furniture and equipment, from design to colour schemes, was dementia friendly.
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Mr Speaker, it would also be remiss of me not to place on the record my deepest gratitude to the Gibraltar Alzheimer's and Dementia Society for the work that they have done in helping us to furnish the facility, working closely with the project team, and the work that they continue to discharge with so much passion and commitment and the comfort that they give to the families of those that live with Alzheimer's and dementia. Thanks are also due, of course, to all the charities that have assisted us.
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For the purposes of further elucidating the House, Mr Speaker, I add that the first floor opened for full days in February of this year, the second floor in March, and the third floor in April. The service has very quickly been able to assess and integrate those patients who have needed and wanted to, into its programme. There is no waiting list at present for the Day Centre – referrals are assessed within the week of being made and subsequently these individuals are offered places. At the present rate, the trend is that approximately half of the individuals who are being offered places are accepting. Significantly, referrals are being received from those persons with mild/moderate dementia, which is the target population for a centre such as this.
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Further, Mr Speaker, a general practitioner is providing clinics within the centre. Day Centre patients therefore do not need to attend the PCC for their routine appointments. Huge thanks are therefore also owing to MedDoc and their very able team of caring professionals.
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Mr Speaker, I now turn to Elderly Residential Services. As the House knows, an entirely new residential facility for persons with Alzheimer's and dementia was opened on 24th April of this year. Hillside is located at the site of the old Royal Naval Hospital and close to the Bella Vista

1265 Dementia Day Centre. The new residential facility provides care and accommodation for 52
 patients diagnosed with dementia and in need of full-time, high-dependency, specialist care. The
 Hillside design focused on maximising the comfort and well-being of patients. Features such as
 1270 en-suite bathrooms and increased floor area in bedrooms and communal areas were
 incorporated into the designs, together with all necessary equipment to give residents the
 highest possible standards of care. The construction phase presented many challenges,
 Mr Speaker, which had to be overcome, as the original project by the previous administration
 envisaged 92 beds, subsequently reduced in number to create a fit-for-purpose facility with
 better and more spacious living conditions. Hillside boasts a fully equipped kitchen area,
 1275 snoezelen room and chiropody and other services. There is also a garden area with different
 types of flowers and plants for sensory stimulation. All rooms are coloured for dementia, while
 furniture has been specifically designed as recommended by our UK dementia consultants. The
 soft flooring throughout the building similar to that in toddler parks and signage is also dementia
 friendly. Verandas on the various floors have been opened to enhance views and give a greater
 sense of unrestricted space to patients. There will be eight beds available to provide respite for
 1280 family carers.

Mr Speaker, it would be a gross dereliction of duty if I did not thank Susan Vallejo and the
 superb team at the ERS for all of their efforts in bringing yet another milestone project to
 fruition under a GSLP/Liberal Government. **(Hon. Chief Minister and Hon. Miss S J Sacramento:**
 1285 **Hear, hear.)** One of the most wonderful aspects of my new responsibilities, Mr Speaker, if not
 the most fulfilling, has been the opportunity for me to meet with so many compatriots who
 carry their vocation in their heart and their soul and who are always willing to go the extra mile
 for those in their care. I cannot praise them enough, Mr Speaker.

As part of the continuous professional development of nursing staff within the ERS, annual
 updates on mandatory training are being carried out. In collaboration with GHA professionals,
 1290 staff receive continuous in-house training in various areas of nursing for elderly care. In addition,
 accredited modules, delivered through the School of Health Studies, have been made available
 for elderly care nursing staff. Staff from different areas of the service have, for the first time,
 been able to participate in a leaders and management courses. Major training has been carried
 out in dementia train the trainer courses. The training has been enhanced with a particular focus
 1295 on dementia and Alzheimer's in addition to the introduction of accredited courses in
 recreational activities. The ERS has also introduced palliative and end of life courses.

The ERS has seen the introduction of two practice development nursing sisters after having
 undertaken training in the UK. ERS qualified staff are currently participating in mentorship with
 the GHA School of Health Studies to support the ongoing training of all of our staff. Currently,
 1300 ERS senior staff are undergoing training that will qualify them to become internal verifiers and
 will allow them to assess and oversee all of the NVQ training. Further, a total of 11 nursing
 assistants have joined the enrolled nurse training programme and have developed to qualified
 nurses. Four ERS nursing assistants are currently undertaking a degree level course with the
 School of Health Studies which will eventually see them qualify as registered nurses.

1305 Further still, Mr Speaker, three GPs have been introduced within the ERS to provide medical
 specialist care to all residents. The ERS will also see the introduction of a dedicated speech and
 language therapist and an occupational therapist.

For the enhanced safety and welfare of both residents, staff and visitors, around-the-clock
 security guard presence and CCTV have been introduced.

1310 Mr Speaker, turning quickly to activities, when we first came into office ERS employed
 1.5 activities co-ordinators at Mount Alvernia and one activities co-ordinator at John Cochrane
 Ward and Calpe Ward. This administration has increased to five activity co-ordinators at Mount
 Alvernia and three for the wards. As the House will know, the cherished residents of our care
 homes and the wards have access to a safe outdoor environment across all locations. Outing
 1315 activities are numerous and there is an internal health and safety policy in place, the objectives
 of which are to safeguard the residents and staff when undergoing outings. The policy sets out

1320 the roles and responsibilities of staff to ensure that residents going on an outing are well
prepared, that the loading and unloading of vehicles is carried out safely and that the venue of
choice is appropriate for the residents attending. Outings are pre-arranged and only residents
1325 who have given consent are taken. Staffing levels are adjusted to ensure appropriate
supervision. Staff in attendance always includes a qualified nurse. Venues visited by residents
are risk assessed; so are the residents attending. Outings depend on the outcome of the
assessments. We also have a bus with wheelchair access, which operates between 10 in the
morning till eight at night, to convey residents to different venues. In addition, ERS has allocated
1330 a member of the activities team specifically to the second floor of Mount Alvernia, where there
are principally residents with dementia. This member of staff permanently organises activities
tailored to the cognitive capacities of the residents, so that all residents, independently of their
cognitive impairment, can have an adequate activity to their degree of dementia.

1335 Mr Speaker, all residents are encouraged to participate in the outings which are organised;
however, there are residents who do not wish to participate and we respect their choice. We
also facilitate an extensive indoor programme for residents who are unable or choose not to
participate in outdoor recreational activities. At this juncture, I wish to place on the record the
fantastic job that the Friends of Mount Alvernia carry out with the residents and who provide
assistance when some big outings are organised, and also the assistance provided by members
1340 of the Jewish community.

Mr Speaker, in light of the above it would be remiss of me not to highlight that outings under
the previous administration in 2010 totalled 35 a year. In 2016, there were a total of 170
outings, which is a welcome increase of 385%. And despite all that we have done, we are not
complacent and we are determined to keep developing and improving the services which we
1345 provide to our elderly.

Mr Speaker, I turn to the Care Agency and I start with the Adult Social Services. As the House
knows, the overall aim of Adult Social Services is to provide the highest possible standard of
service and care. Adult Social Services provides and commissions a range of services for different
groups of people who are considered to be vulnerable as a result of different health or social
1345 care needs.

During the last financial year Adult Services received 627 referrals for social work assessment
and support. These referrals are received not only from other professionals but members of the
general public who are either self-referring or from relatives or neighbours who wish to raise
concerns about a vulnerable person. This represents an increase of 136 from the previous year.

1350 Domiciliary care continues to be provided to assist vulnerable, elderly or sick people at home.
The cost of providing care has been negotiated carefully with care providers to deliver the best
value-for-money services possible. This has meant an increase in the number of hours available
without an increase in the overall cost. At present, 263 members of our community are receiving
domiciliary care. Mr Speaker, I am sure that all Members of the House will applaud and welcome
1355 the Government's determination to ensure that all our elderly who can continue to enjoy life in
the community do so under appropriate and fully assessed packages of care. It is a truism that
governments should be measured by how they care for the most vulnerable members in their
communities, and by that measure there is no doubt that we on these benches are trying our
hardest to guarantee that our elderly and vulnerable community members have the right level
1360 of care and support at home. Such a community-centred approach to care also removes what in
my view is the evil of our elderly becoming institutionalised in hospital in circumstances where
this could have been entirely avoided by a compassionate approach to health and social care. A
compassionate approach to social care, Mr Speaker, in fact also makes economic and financial
sense, as it is far more cost effective to develop individual packages of care than for an elderly
1365 person to become a long-stay patient in hospital.

Mr Speaker, it may well be prudent to pause and note that domiciliary care and support
services in the UK have never been free. Most people have to pay something towards their own
care and some will have to pay for all of the costs. In the UK, the local council may cover some or

1370 all of the costs of care but they are always means tested. The level at which persons begin to pay
for their care is capped at £23,000, which means that in UK persons will not receive free social
care if they have £23,000 in savings and property. In Gibraltar, Mr Speaker, as we all know, this
is not the case. Persons requiring social care are not means tested and are provided with the
free care and support services that they require.

1375 Mr Speaker, moving on to safeguarding, awareness continues to increase every year. In the
last financial year, 30 referrals in respect of a range of different alleged abuse of vulnerable
people were received and assessed. These referrals have been received from both professionals
and also people in the community, clearly demonstrating that the public is becoming more
aware of the issues and that it is everyone's responsibility to protect the most vulnerable in our
community.

1380 Two additional social workers have received training to become designated risk managers
and close working relationships continue to develop and strengthen with all departments
involved in these arrangements. An increase in designated risk managers has meant that the
number of assessments completed has doubled over the last financial year. In addition to this,
specialist training has been undertaken to support people with specific learning needs. This has
1385 strengthened the already close relationship that Adult Services has with the Learning Disability
Service.

Working relationships with the RGP in the area of domestic violence has continued to
develop, including training carried out recently, and expanded throughout the last financial year.
Clear co-ordination and procedures from both Departments are now in place in relation to
1390 domestic violence cases. The inter-agency procedure makes the multi-agency approach of
offering joint support seamless and beneficial to families who experience domestic violence.

Moving on to the day centre at Waterport Terraces, Mr Speaker, I am pleased to note that it
continues to provide an excellent and popular service to our senior citizens, who have been
involved in a range of different community events. The centre has recently been refurbished to
1395 increase the number of facilities available. The service is valued not only by those who attend,
but also the carers who are able to leave their relatives in a safe, warm and caring environment,
knowing relatives' support needs will be met and they will have the opportunity to enjoy
themselves with their peers.

Mr Speaker, the House may recall that the Child Protection Committee was restructured and
1400 the composition revised in December last year. The Child Protection Committee is responsible
for co-ordinating with the relevant organisations on how they should best work together to
safeguard and promote the welfare of children and young people and ensure that they provide
an effective service. The Committee is also responsible for the training of all professionals
working with children and analysing trends in children's safeguarding issues to advise the
1405 Government on the development of appropriate services and resources. The Committee now
acts as the Executive Committee and delegates operational functions to the relevant responsible
officials.

To ensure the Committee's ongoing professional development, the Care Agency organised a
three-day training event, delivered by a senior consultant from Barnardo's in February this year.
1410 The programme was divided into three segments. Additionally, the previous financial year, the
Safeguarding Training Sub-Committee, comprised of practitioners from the Care Agency, the
GHA, the RGP and the Education Department, delivered a total of nine Tier 1 Safeguarding
training workshops, where a total of 240 professionals from different departments and agencies
were trained; and a total of two Tier 2 Safeguarding training workshops, where a further 29
1415 professionals were trained.

The Child Protection Committee has been working on specific areas to ensure the safety of
children. One of these is online safety and, as such, a working party led by the RGP has
developed an anti-sexting awareness presentation aimed at parents and adolescents.

Another important area is vetting and members of the Committee have been working with
1420 the Ministry of Culture, the GSLA and the OFT, and considered systems on how to ensure all

groups, associations and businesses that work with children are adequately vetted. In this respect, Mr Speaker, I wish to place on the record my thanks to my hon. Friend and colleague, Mr Steven Linares, for the serious work the GSLA has already undertaken to introduce robust safeguarding procedures in respect of registration processes for entities using Government facilities, namely sporting associations, commercial fitness groups and leisure providers. May I also thank Mr Reagan Lima for having picked up the baton in this respect with so much commitment and enthusiasm. I am sure the whole House will applaud all efforts undertaken to protect and safeguard children in the public sphere.

Mr Speaker, Children's Services encompasses all social work with children and their families. The Care Agency's vision, with which I am sure all hon. Members agree, is that children deserve the best start in life. They deserve the best opportunities, as this will undoubtedly influence the decisions and paths they choose later on in their journey through life. I do not think that we can underestimate the critical importance, therefore, of this service.

It is important to highlight, Mr Speaker, that Gibraltar Children's Services, under the leadership of my hon. predecessor, has moved from being a reactive child protection led service to being an active, early intervention focused service. This will have a long-term beneficial impact on children and families, giving them increased opportunities to succeed and achieve, while also having the longer-term benefit of being cost effective, as the consequences and aftermath of abuse costs are great and can be seen in issues related to mental health, criminality, family unit breakdowns and parenting issues.

Mr Speaker, the House will recall that Children's Services has adopted the Signs of Safety model into Gibraltar's social work service because of the positive impact it has on children, families and the general community in areas in which it is already practised.

The Children's team continues to work with between 200 and 250 children at any given time, and received 471 referrals in the last 12 months alone. There has been, however, a significant decrease of 57% in the number of children in need of child protection plans, and I think this is an important statistic as it can be directly attributed to early intervention and family support work that has been conducted with families, meaning that issues have been dealt with in a timely manner at root, avoiding situations for children becoming high risk.

The Government's commitment through Social Services, together with the RGP, Health, Education and Youth Service amongst others, along with the focus on earlier intervention, means that vulnerable families in Gibraltar are being provided with the highest standards of support and protection.

Further still, Mr Speaker, the Children's Services team has evolved towards alternatives to residential care for children. In having the flexibility to organise and restructure teams depending on the needs of the community, the Care Agency has inevitably enabled the deployment of resources to areas of greater need.

During the last financial year, the overall aim has been to reduce the number of children that become looked after in residential settings, as the understanding is that no matter how much training, support, supervision and funding is invested in residential services, children want to and should grow up in family units, which is the best place for them. To have the opportunity to grow up in a healthy family unit is the aspiration for every child and we must do all that we can towards that noble endeavour – I would say, Mr Speaker, towards that human right.

With this in mind, the strategic plan consists of further investing in the Fostering and Adoption Service. The annual awareness campaign recruited 11 applicants for fostering and adoption. The successful training programme for prospective foster carers and adoptive parents guaranteed that the applicants favourably considered domestic adoption and long-term fostering for children in Gibraltar. In this respect, Mr Speaker, we have seen a significant increase in children in foster placements in the last year, from three to nine children, which is a solid 200% increase. There has also been a 60% increase in children being cared for in family placements – that is from 10 to 16 placements in the last financial year. The Fostering and Adoption Service has worked very closely and actively with the Children's Residential Services to

1475 ensure that any children who require care should be placed across placements within family units. The placements ensure the well-being of the child and provides the type of continuity of care only a family can provide. Training has been provided on a number of topics over the past 12 months to social workers, foster carers, prospective adopters and members of the Fostering and Adoption Panel to ensure the learning is embedded into practice.

1480 Mr Speaker, the Therapeutic Team continues to offer a range of specific therapeutic expertise and support. This takes place through their ongoing continued work with the Children and Families, Disability and Probation Services.

1485 The key elements of the Therapeutic Team's service provision for the previous financial year have been: provision of ongoing consultation and working in collaboration with social work colleagues on all cases – a total of 142 clients received ongoing weekly or fortnightly therapeutic interventions and support; individual assessments and evaluations, including court requested reports – these included 45 cases requiring a more extensive, systematic and comprehensive review in addition to the therapy already being offered; a total of 22 clients have undergone the co-parenting programme to address acute acrimony in separation and divorce cases – I know that the Hon. Mr Phillips was asking me about that in a previous answer to questions; a total of 18 clients have engaged and undertaken the Freedom programme, which deals with domestic violence.

1490 Mr Speaker, in respect of Disability Services, the Service has made a great effort to ensure that training is more specialised to learning disabilities and tailored to the specific and current needs of service users. An intensive programme of in-house and outsourced training has continued to provide the staff with professional development. In this respect, there has been an 8% increase in training hours provided in relation to the previous year; and feedback from staff has been very encouraging, with 89% recording a very high satisfaction level.

1495 There are service users who continue to receive consultancy support from Care and Support in the UK. The consultations are organised with a multidisciplinary team, comprising, amongst others, psychiatrist, learning disability nurses and an occupational therapist. During their four visits throughout the year, the following have been devised according to individual needs: positive behaviour support plans, forensic and learning disability assessments, sexualised behaviour guidelines, and pathways and formulations of care. It is extremely important to ensure that the best care plans are put together to best meet the needs of our service users, allowing for a fuller integration into the community.

1500 The Supported Employment Scheme, Mr Speaker, offers sheltered employment for service users of St Bernadette's Resource Centre and the Dr Giraldi Home, and this continues. As of February 2015, there were 10 service users completing employment; there are nine companies involved. To date, feedback has been extremely positive, which is reflected in both the companies' and service users' comments and level of participation. We are very thankful and appreciative of the support provided by these companies and would encourage other employers to consider the value and benefit that their organisation could provide to individuals.

1505 Mr Speaker, St Bernadette's Resource Centre welcomed two new service users in September. The Centre has developed a transition programme for young persons with learning disabilities so that they can begin to be integrated into the care as soon as they leave St Martin's School. This enables a seamless service where support and education continues to be provided.

1510 Afternoon Respite Service from 4 p.m. to 9 p.m. has offered a total of 16,000 hours, and during the same period Overnight Respite Service has totalled almost 14,500 hours, which represents a 57% increase in the amount of afternoon respite and a 4% increase in overnight respite hours, which has enabled service users to enjoy breaks from their families and undertake activities in line with their abilities. Activities undertaken are outings within town, amongst others.

1515 Within Dr Giraldi residential services there have been four admissions during the last financial year and three new flats have been opened and refurbished dependent on the needs of the residents. There has been, Mr Speaker, a move towards flats in the community and away from

1525 the main residential setting. This has enabled the integration of persons with learning disabilities into the community, where they can live within flats in safe and supportive neighbourhoods. And once again, Mr Speaker, in that respect I wish to thank the hon. Lady, Samantha Sacramento, who has been instrumental in moving as quickly as she did to allow us to have properly resourced community flats to achieve the aims I have just mentioned.

1530 Three of the new admissions have come about due to the successful transition programme between children and adult disability services, where those who are known to be moving from one service to another are co-worked between the two services, ensuring tailor-made plans are facilitated and individual moves are consistent and provide continuity.

1535 In November 2014, a Service User's Wishes and Feelings Questionnaire and a Nearest Relative Questionnaire were introduced. The degree of satisfaction from service users and relatives has increased, importantly. An example of improvement is that in the previous financial year there was 85% satisfaction in the attendance at the Centre, whereas in this financial year 95% of service users have expressed that they are happy to attend the Centre. This, of course, Mr Speaker is very welcome news and reflects the sterling and hard work by my hon. Predecessor, which she discharged in her stewardship of the Care Agency and her dedication and passion in improving all areas of the service.

1540 Mr Speaker, as a Government we are committed to further protecting and promoting the interests and welfare of persons with disabilities through the development of effective policies and the creation of training programmes for care staff at St Bernadette's and Dr Giraldi.

1545 Mr Speaker, it is simply not possible to name all the excellent professionals at the Care Agency, and so I simply thank all of them for their dedication, commitment and professionalism and to let them know that we all sincerely appreciate their hard work.

1550 Mr Speaker, I turn now to my Justice responsibilities and I start with the men and women who day in and day out keep us safe: the Royal Gibraltar Police. The force is committed to providing the best value for money to the community and maintaining a fair work-life balance for its workforce, police officers and civilian staff alike.

1555 The report conducted by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabularies concluded that whilst the force faced a high demand load, it did not fully understand its demand profile. Therefore, to best utilise its available resources, the organisation carried out an in-depth needs-based analysis of its current demand profile. This has led to a major restructure of the organisation's existing resources and the manner in which it carries out business in order to improve service delivery. The organisation has moved away from its long-established four shift system and adopted a new five shift system. The old seven-two working day to rest day split has been replaced with a six-four cycle. Whilst this has meant slightly longer working days, the cycle provides for better rest periods and adheres to the Working Time Act provisions. Significantly, an element of overlap has been built into the new shift pattern, which ensures more staff are available at times of greater demand, as indicated by the demands analysis.

1560 The RGP will continue to self-assess its demand against its capability and remains committed to working with the Government in pursuit of improving service delivery to the community. In this context, the RGP is submitting a business plan for further consideration.

1565 Mr Speaker, the force restructure has meant a change in the manner in which the organisation carries out its business. The force fervently believes in keeping the community at the heart of how it carries out its functions, and with this in mind adopted a neighbourhood policing philosophy and created a Neighbourhood Policing Unit. This ensures that police presence in areas such as residential estates, upper town, etc. is maintained. Uniformed officers are also tasked with conducting focused patrols. These are designed to tackle specific issues in specific areas and at specific times.

1570 The RGP continues to invest in our future generations and therefore has maintained its School Liaison Officers. These officers continue to work closely with schools, youth clubs and organisations. They deliver talks and presentations to various age groups, covering a broad range of subjects such as stranger danger, cyber bullying, sexting, drugs awareness and binge

drinking. Additionally, these officers deliver seasonal themed talks, which include but are not limited to Halloween talks.

1580 During the last five years, the force has been actively involved in the planning and development of an integrated IT platform across multiple business areas, not just within the RGP. The platform is modular in approach and addresses business areas such as custody, case management, personal history and crime recording. Whilst not an entirely paperless system, it will greatly facilitate the documenting and recording of information. The case management module, for example, once in operation, will see a seamless transition of case dockets from the
1585 the moment they are initiated, through the investigation phase to their final destination at the courts for trial.

Once completely delivered, the entire platform will consist of 15 modules, of which 10 will be in use by the RGP. The other modules will be used by, amongst others, the Office of the Attorney General, Probation Service and the Prison Service. The project is currently in the delivery phase,
1590 with four modules – Occurrence Book, Crime, Intelligence and Personal History modules – already in operation. The next module due for delivery will be the Custody module and the Command and Dispatch module. This will encompass all custody procedures from reception through detection to final resolution.

During the course of the last financial year, the RGP has increased the number of resources it allocates to the investigation of financial crime. In part, these increases are governed by the MoneyVal requirements. The organisation now has two separate departments investigating financial crime and money laundering: the Financial Crime Investigation Unit and the Money Laundering Investigation Unit. Both units are led by a detective inspector and consist of two
1595 detective sergeants and six detective constables. The units also have a terrorism financing investigation capability.

The Money Laundering Investigation Unit currently has 10 ongoing investigations involving circa £1.7 million. In a separate case already dealt with by the courts, over €10,000 has been forfeited. In addition to this, five other cases are subject to either restraining orders or money has been seized pending further investigations or court decisions.

1600 Mr Speaker, as we all know, Gibraltar sits geographically at a major maritime crossroads. In addition to being a major artery for commercial maritime traffic, the Straits of Gibraltar is one of the main trafficking routes for the movement of drugs from the North African coast to mainland Europe. The RGP's maritime assets are therefore at the front line of the international fight against this illicit activity. Police motor boat crews, together with their local partner agencies, patrol British Gibraltar Territorial Waters to deter and interdict any such activity taking place. In
1605 the final quarter of the last financial year, over five tonnes of cannabis resin valued at an estimated £25 million have been recovered from the sea, and several RHIBs have been seized. The RGP's fleet of vessels is intrinsic to these successes. Despite its purpose-built vessels, however, these operations are not without risk, with RGP officers being regularly exposed to and
1610 having sustained serious injuries in the past.

The fight against trafficking is not constrained to that occurring across the Straits. Earlier this year, the RGP, together with Customs and Port Authority partners, executed a major intelligence-led anti-drug operation on motor vessel Mount Faber. The vessel, currently in Gibraltar for bunkers from Colombia. Intelligence shared by international law enforcement
1620 contacts suggested the vessel had been attached with a parasite container with a substantial amount of cocaine. Following an exhaustive search of the vessel and its hull, the latter requiring the use of specialist diving contractors, the container was found with approximately 108 kgs of cocaine concealed inside. The street value of the drugs was estimated at around £6.5 million.

Mr Speaker, the force, as the House may recall, also acquired several portable breathalyser units and drug wipe test kits prior to Christmas last year. The equipment enables officers to
1625 conduct breath tests on drivers suspected of driving whilst over the prescribed limit at the time of being stopped. Similarly, the drug wipe kits enable the officers to confirm whether a driver has traces of drugs on him, alerting to the possibility that the driver may have been consuming

1630 drugs prior to driving and therefore still under its influence. Whilst individuals testing positive would still need to be further tested at the police station, the tests have reduced the number of individuals arrested on suspicion of these offences and subsequently released when testing negative or under the prescribed limit of alcohol.

1635 Mr Speaker, I know that we are all in this House extremely proud of our men and women of the Royal Gibraltar Police and I wish to place on the record our sincere thanks for their tireless work and for keeping all of us safe.

I turn to the Gibraltar Law Courts. Following recent retirements of Justices of the Court of Appeal, this year we have seen the swearing-in of two new Justices: the Rt Hon. Sir John Goldring and the Rt Hon. Sir Martin Moore-Bick, maintaining the complement of the Court of Appeal at five members.

1640 During 2017, following advice from the Judicial Service Commission, five new Justices of the Peace were recruited and appointed.

As reported in previous years, there continues to be no backlog at the Magistrates Court and the Supreme Court in respect of dates being provided for criminal trials and for civil and family applications waiting for first-hearing dates.

1645 The Gibraltar Courts Service continues to modernise and improve the services provided to court users. Since October last year, court users enjoy the use of WiFi facilities in all courtrooms. The Gibraltar Courts Service website continues to be regularly updated with judgments being available for the Supreme Court and the Court of Appeal since 1997 to date, and since January last year sentencing pronouncements for criminal trials at the Supreme Court are also being made available to download from the website, thus enabling the general public and service users to keep up to date with court decisions.

The Laws of Gibraltar Judgments website continues to be up to date with all reported judgments since 1812 available for download, with future reported judgments to be uploaded subsequent to their publication in the Gibraltar Law Reports volumes.

1655 Organised visits to the Gibraltar Law Courts arranged by the Gibraltar Courts Service in unison with the judiciary remain popular with local middle schools as well as with overseas colleges and universities, where students gain a good insight of how the justice system works in Gibraltar and helps to enhance the reputation of our legal system in respect of external visitors.

1660 The Gibraltar Courts Service is constantly looking at ways in which to improve their services and level of performance, with court users today enjoying a modernised, open and approachable court service through which the public can have access to the justice system. Mr Speaker, I wish to thank the excellent staff at our Gibraltar Court Service, as well as our Justices of the Peace and judiciary.

1665 In respect of the Prison Service, I am glad to say that it has been another generally uneventful year for the Service. The atmosphere within the Prison Service is relaxed and positive. Statistics in respect of prisoner indiscipline remain static at around 2.5 cases per month, most of these being minor infractions.

1670 In respect of population figures, the first two months of 2017 show a decrease when compared to last year, while the subsequent months show an increase. Daily average inmate population figures for January stood at 47 prisoners, down from 57 last year. March 2017 saw an average of 55 prisoners, up from 51 prisoners in March 2016. The average population for the last financial year stood at 53 prisoners, down from 59 prisoners in 2015-16. Between April 2016 and March 2017 there have been a total of nine female admissions and five juvenile admissions.

1675 In respect of rehabilitation, the Prison continues to be well served by professionals offering a variety of programmes to assist offenders in breaking the offending cycle and becoming productive members of the community. Visits by different counsellors and a psychologist provide a valuable service in this respect. Organisations like Narcotics Anonymous that attend weekly are very popular with inmates. Vocational activities, including woodwork and handicraft classes, are typically well subscribed. Sports and exercise is ever present and encouraged by

1680 Prison management. Educational classes are providing many inmates with the opportunity to learn and achieve qualifications in a variety of subjects.

The management of sex offenders has been an area that has seen a considerable increase in resources required over recent years, due to the rise in prisoners committed to prison for such offences. In this respect, the Prison has been actively involved from the outset with the Public Protection Unit. The Prison has four fully qualified designated risk managers who work with sex offenders and produce valuable assessment reports that assist in the management of such offenders once they are returned to the community.

1690 Prison representatives continue to attend the Foreign Office Overseas Territories Directorate conferences every year. This gives Prison management the opportunity to share experiences with counterparts from the other territories and explore common areas, concerns and aspirations.

In terms of industrial relations, Prison management continues to work with staff representatives in a holistic and constructive way. The conclusion of the resource review for the Service is anticipated to further enhance the service that the Prison can offer in the future. This will not only benefit staff but will also allow for the expansion of rehabilitation programmes.

1695 The Prison Board continues to provide a valuable service to the community through their frequent inspections and meetings, keeping Prison management in check and ensuring that prisoners are well treated and that their grievances are heard and addressed.

1700 Prison management continues committed to its core precepts: keeping safely those in custody, looking after them with humanity and encouraging their self-respect; assisting them in leading law-abiding and useful lives whilst in prison, with a view that this is continued once they are released back into society.

The Office of Criminal Prosecution and Litigation within the Government Law Offices is predominantly our Criminal Prosecution Service. As such, criminal litigation has occupied most of its time. Since the introduction of the Criminal Procedure and Evidence Act, there are now increased pre-trial functions required of prosecutors in each case that appears before the court. Disclosure has become quite a substantial item and the sort of case review that is now being conducted by the Office of Criminal Prosecution is much more detailed than it was in the past. The Office of Criminal Prosecution is therefore, Mr Speaker, much better equipped to deal with and manage serious crimes of this nature. Recent convictions have undoubtedly increased public confidence, resulting in members of the public coming forward with historical complaints. As a result, we have also seen an increase in Public Protection Orders obtained.

1710 In terms of convictions generally, Gibraltar compares favourably with the conviction rates of England and Wales.

1715 Mr Speaker, the Office of Criminal Prosecution also works closely with the Care Agency in matters concerning child protection, elderly care services, adoption, fostering and special guardianship. The Office of Criminal Prosecution is represented on the Fostering and Adoption Panel and is also involved in the development of the Overseas Territories Safeguarding Children Committee, where, along with other Overseas Territories as Bermuda, the Cayman Islands and the Falklands, Gibraltar is leading on developing and enhancing several areas of child protection, such as the mutual recognition of orders.

1720 Mr Speaker, I turn to matters regarding legislation and I highlight some of the issues we have dealt with and which we are currently working on.

1725 This year we enacted and commenced the Crimes Act, which fulfilled a manifesto commitment in that it made provision for a specific offence to combat revenge porn. The Act created a new offence of disclosing private sexual photographs and films with intent to cause distress. The Act also updated the offence of meeting a child following sexual grooming by changing the minimum number of communications from two to one, which brings the offence in line with its UK equivalent. Following representations from the Gibraltar Women's Association, an additional offence to target paedophiles who communicate sexually with a child was included. This means that it is now a criminal offence for a person aged 18 or over to

1735 communicate with a child under 16 years old if the communication is sexual or if it is intended to elicit from the child a communication which is sexual. I am particularly grateful, therefore, to the Gibraltar Women's Association for their support in this area and for actively coming forward with relevant, proportional and practical proposals in strengthening our laws. We are all agreed, Mr Speaker, that sexual offences against children are horrible crimes and that it is vital to protect children from falling victim to such abhorrent behaviour.

1740 Mr Speaker, a Bill for a Law Commission was published in March this year. This Bill provides for the creation of a statutory body made up of myself, Her Majesty's Attorney General and experts in different fields such as education, the environment and financial resources, which will be tasked with examining various areas of laws which may either be obsolete due to the passage of time since they appeared on the statute book, or require amendment due to particular local circumstances. As the Parliament will be aware, it is intended that one, if not the first, project that the Commission will be asked to undertake will be to review local sentencing laws to ensure that they cater for the needs of Gibraltar, rather than being tied to sentencing guidelines which have evolved for another jurisdiction with its own particular issues that do not necessarily apply to Gibraltar. As a result, it gives me great pleasure to announce that the following eminent members of our community have agreed to be appointed Law Commissioners: Mrs Justice Prescott, Learned Stipendiary Magistrate Charles Pitto, John Restano QC, Mark Isola QC, Dr Liesl Torres, Dr Joey Britto and Mr Lawrence Podesta. (*Banging on desks*)

1750 Mr Speaker, progress is being made on the publication of a Bill for a Legal Services Act. Parliament will be aware that a formal joint consultation was undertaken last year. We will publish this Bill in July. As a result of this, consultation changes have been made and a further consultation on a draft code of conduct to support the proposed law is being undertaken with a deadline for responses in September. The Bill as currently proposed and the draft code of conduct will affect all persons who provide legal services, including those employed as in-house lawyers. It is this Government's intention that the Bill will become law and be commenced by the end of September of this year.

1760 Mr Speaker, the Government is also progressing substantively on discussions with the Bar Council on reform to the legal assistance legislation. This does not mean that we have stayed still in the interim to address some of the more serious issues that relate to that legislation. The Government has already amended the law to allow for legal assistance to be granted in cases before the Parole Board and also before the soon to be in place Mental Health Tribunal. I very much look forward to pursuing my discussions with the Bar Council to finalise our joint reforms.

1765 Following this Government's desire to ensure that our local judicial decisions are subject to rules and regulations which take local circumstances into account where this is appropriate, this Government will publish in July a Bill for a Damages Act 2017. This will ensure that the so-called discount rate for calculating damages in personal injury cases is one which is appropriate for Gibraltar and not one necessarily tied to the UK. The rate will be set by the Chief Justice after consultation with the Financial Secretary, so as to ensure it is both independent and accurate.

1770 Mr Speaker, I have just relayed to this House the many policies on which we on this side of this House were elected in respect of health, social and elderly care and in relation to justice, and which I am implementing by the good offices and the unstinting efforts, competence, good cheer and enthusiasm of my many teams who are flat out working to improve, to deepen, to better, to perfect and to do more in serving our community. I have mentioned many of them by name, but I cannot name them all in one speech, save to here and now thank them for day in and day out carrying their community in their hearts and minds and going the extra mile to help, to assist and to be of benefit.

1780 All that I have reported to this House, Mr Speaker, reflects the facts on the ground. However, to hear the Opposition's incessant caterwauling, complaining and prophecies of doom – which, incidentally, would make Prince Hamlet of Denmark seem joyous and a violent party animal by comparison – one would be forgiven for thinking that Gibraltar is not the safe, progressive and prosperous community it is in fact. It would seem, Mr Speaker, that the Opposition's existence is

1785 oxygenated by the construction of a parallel and false reality, which, if it shattered like a cheap
mirror, would bring down on them the damning realisation, obvious to everyone else in
Gibraltar, that they are, certainly in their current constellation, politically finished. The last
1790 financial year has been replete with many instances where the Opposition has been caught out
in their shrill, inherently contradictory and oftentimes patently disingenuous political discourse;
and whereas in the last four years I have avoided preparing a Budget contribution that mentions
the Opposition, I think that this year they have been especially solicitous of my views on their
performance and on their disservice to the community, and therefore hereby highlight their
most sublimely outlandish policies.

Mr Speaker, I start with the Opposition's incongruous position on the parole of Mr Marrache,
1795 which they shamelessly tried to milk, only to end up with a bitter taste in their own mouths. The
House will recall that the Court of Appeal delivered a judgment in relation to my appeal against
the judgment of the Hon. Mr Justice Adrian Jack in connection with the parole of ministers, the
main point in issue being whether I had the power to discontinue a set of proceedings
commenced under section 54 of the Prison Act crafted by the Opposition when in Government.
1800 The Court of Appeal unanimously held that the Minister for Justice does have the power to
withdraw a section 54 application prior to its determination by the Supreme Court and that such
a construction 'of the law both accords with principle and has practical benefits'.

The background relating to this matter is well known, Mr Speaker. The Board, guiding itself
by the law passed by the previous administration, recommended Mr Marrache's release on
1805 licence. I asked the Board to reconsider its recommendation. It did so and it confirmed its
advice. As I was still in disagreement with the Parole Board's decision, I applied to the Supreme
Court for it to determine the matter. The law passed by the GSD administration is silent as to the
procedure I had to follow in respect of such an application, and so – rightly, in my view – I
followed the legal advice from Government's Queen's Counsel and senior Crown Counsel as to
the form of the application. After I filed the application, however, further evidence emerged that
1810 dealt with my concerns, and again following legal advice, I issued instructions to withdraw the
application to the Supreme Court. On the advice received I was convinced that the legal test in
the GSD's law had been met in full. The Supreme Court disagreed with the procedure I had
followed and questioned whether I had the power to withdraw the application. The Court of
Appeal unanimously determined in my favour.

1815 In any case, Mr Speaker, it is important to note that the Hon. Mr Justice Jack had previously
accepted in his ruling that the Government's view was perfectly arguable and that the final
disposal of the matter, including the licence conditions, was perfectly satisfactory. The
Opposition, unsurprisingly, made no such mention in their politically pernicious press releases;
nor did they ever concede the point that in the UK and in all other democracies governed by the
1820 rule of law, it is neither extraordinary nor unprecedented for independent judiciaries, like our
excellent judiciary, to freely examine and decide upon the use of statutory powers by Ministers.
Indeed, it is the right manner in which such differences are settled in a vibrant democracy that
holds judicial independence as sacrosanct.

Further still, Mr Speaker, as the Court of Appeal rightly states in its judgment, the appeal
1825 raised an important point regarding the powers of the Minister for Justice and duties under the
Prison Act. The Court of Appeal has now made it clear beyond any doubt that where a Minister –
any Minister – considers that a particular course of action is mandated by compelling reasons of
justice or the public interest, it would be 'a dereliction of his duty as a public authority if he did
not take the course of action'. In fact, the Court of Appeal stated that in this particular case it
1830 would have been counterintuitive if I could not revise a decision on receiving further
information. In short, and contrary to the GSD's mean-spirited and poisonous suggestions, I had
at all times acted correctly. As a result, for the Opposition in their many press releases to lecture
me to the contrary and insinuate that I was not undertaking my statutory duties seriously and
that my actions may have had an adverse effect on Gibraltar's international reputation had been
1835 shown by the Court of Appeal's judgment to be not just incorrect but misconceived and not just

1840 a little pathetic. Entirely unsurprisingly, the Opposition did not retract their statements and instead issued a press release – a rather touching one, really – expressing surprise that I had issued a press note on the Court of Appeal’s judgment, even though they erected their usual circus tent in this House and pressed us for answers on this case, knowing fully well that the matter was *sub judice* and after I had made the point that I would make a statement at the conclusion of the appeal.

1845 And further still, Mr Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition should know that at all times, even if I had made a wrong decision – we are all human, we all make mistakes, and even if I had made a wrong decision, which it has been determined I had not – it was always in good faith and on the premise of the highest-quality legal advice and evidence available to me. On this premise, for the Opposition to have suggested that I may have received calls for my resignation if the Court of Appeal had disagreed with my decision is shockingly asinine as it is hypocritical because I cannot recall a single occasion where a GSD Minister resigned following a judgment decided against them – and I can think of many decisions which were held against them when they were Ministers and the Hon. the Leader of the Opposition was the Minister for Justice.

1850 Did they think that I or the community would have forgotten that there were various such cases, such as the Privy Council’s decision – the highest court in the UK and all the concomitant expense that that entailed – against the GSD Government’s appallingly discriminatory and unconstitutional policy on the allocation of Government housing in the case of Nadine Rodriguez?

1855 Did they forget, Mr Speaker, that when they were in Government they spent part of our national treasure, over £100,000, in trying to stop a person in a loving and stable relationship from adding her name to her partner’s tenancy, solely on the basis that they were a same-sex couple? Shame on them, Mr Speaker. They spent taxpayers’ money and deployed the full and formidable machinery of the Government all the way to the UK’s highest court to stop a loving couple from enjoying the same rights as other couples because of their petty, mean and dinosaur-like prejudices. These are the values that the GSD represents. (**Several Members:** Hear, hear.)

1860 Or the case –

1865 **Mr Speaker:** Have you finished?

Hon. N F Costa: Almost, Mr Speaker.

1870 **Mr Speaker:** Please come to a conclusion.

Hon. N F Costa: Yes, Mr Speaker.

Mr Speaker: Okay?

1875 **Hon. N F Costa:** Yes.

Mr Speaker: I am going to tell you why in a moment.

1880 **Hon. N F Costa:** Or the case of Social Services and Joanna Hernandez, where the Government sought to advance the most ridiculous argument to redefine what “a week” means in law, and so despicable were they in their callous litigation against personal individuals that they argued the point all the way to Gibraltar’s Court of Appeal.

1885 It reminded me of a wonderful quote by Groucho Marx that he must have been thinking of this GSD Opposition when he said politics is the art of looking for trouble, finding it everywhere, diagnosing it incorrectly and applying the wrong remedies.

1890 Mr Speaker, Mr Llamas has turned out to be a political gift that has kept on giving, and I was
sorely tempted but I will not refer to Dog-Gate, but I must refer to the misconceived statements
on the Care Agency's subcontracted workforce, once again in circumstances where I had been
unable to answer his questions in Parliament because Mr Llamas did not attend Parliament
1895 himself to ask them. Mr Llamas was clearly unaware that investment in Gibraltar's domiciliary
care had more than quadrupled over the last five years and that the Government must look at
the best ways of maintaining the highest possible standards and providing the best care to some
of the most vulnerable members of our community whilst ensuring value for money. It has
1900 already been explained to Mr Llamas that care in residential facilities is subcontracted to cover
different types of leave and to cater for an increase in service needs. Carers who are
subcontracted to work at Dr Giraldi Home do so continuously, alongside Care Agency staff, and
are vetted to discharge their responsibilities to the Care Agency's exacting standards. What
1905 really was quite something, Mr Speaker, was for the GSD to have suggested in its press releases
that the work done by subcontracted carers is inferior when the GSD used exclusively
subcontracted workers for domiciliary care. They are just not serious, Mr Speaker! And in any
case, the Hon. the Leader of the Opposition also sought to get in on the action by complaining
about the number of subcontracted workers at the Care Agency, even though I have explained
ad nauseam that all subcontracted workers are carers and, as I explained already, in the UK
1910 persons pay for their domiciliary care so surely if the GSD are complaining that we are using
subcontracted care then they must be suggesting that we either charge the most vulnerable in
our community for care and support because we must therefore employ everybody directly by
the Care Agency ... and if that is their position they should come up and say so. What does he
want? Does he want the most vulnerable Gibraltarians to be charged? Does he want
Government expenditure to increase even more? He cannot have it both ways, Mr Speaker,
although they will certainly try.

1915 It is this Government that deeply appreciates the vocational work that care workers
undertake for those in our community. The Government recognises that the work is often as
challenging as it is rewarding and it is right that care workers are provided with the support
necessary to fulfil their responsibilities effectively. As a result of negotiations with Unite the
Union, the Government submitted a package of proposals to Unite the Union in line with their
original concerns for their consideration and 72% of care workers of those participating in the
ballot voted in favour.

1920 Mr Speaker, once again reflecting on the Opposition's un-choreographed tap dance, I was
reminded of another delightful quote, this time by Albert Einstein: 'Only two things are infinite,
the universe and human stupidity, and I'm not sure about the former.'

1925 And then, Mr Speaker, the Hon. the Leader of the Opposition returned to his favourite
political hobbyhorse, GHA morale, and he repeated the accusations that he made on GHA
morale. Mr Speaker, we have had the discussion across the floor of the House and the press
releases, so I will not repeat it save to just say once again that 61% of doctors said that they
were not low on morale.

1930 Mr Speaker, if he wants to talk of an independently verified, scientifically taken poll, then we
must refer to the independently verified survey that was carried out at the Gibraltar Health
Authority when the nursing section of Unite put a series of questions to allied health
professionals, doctors and the ancillary staff. In that staff morale survey, contrary to the one
which was an informal consultation where 61% said there was no low morale, asked if staff
morale had improved in the new hospital 97% of everyone polled said no; 98% did not think that
it was safe to practice and to fill wards and departments at their full capacity with the current
staffing levels; 97% did not think that senior management listened to their concerns; 90% did
1935 not consider staffing levels adequate. That did not happen when we were in government, Mr
Speaker; it happened 10 years after the GSD had been in office and responsible for the GHA.
(Hon. Chief Minister: Hear, hear.) So when they were in government, 97% of their nurses

thought they were doing an appalling job – and they have the cheek and the temerity to raise a perfectly proper internal discussion, which was leaked, among doctors.

1940 Mr Speaker, I really could say a lot more about the unsubstantiated gossip they bring to this House, the callous concerns that they try to raise, but I think what best summarises my view of the Opposition is that for them it is better to remain silent and be thought a fool than to speak and to remove all doubt. *(Banging on desk)*

1945 And so, Mr Speaker, as I conclude I would like to take the opportunity to thank my wonderful staff at the Ministry: Simon, Zoe, Elizabeth, Louise-Anne, Natalie, David, Kevin, Martin and Evelyn, who do an amazing job.

I also wish to place on the record my sincere thanks, Mr Speaker, to you and to your fantastic Parliamentary team: Paul, Frances, Kevin and Danny, who are unfailingly patient, kind and helpful. *(Banging on desks)*

1950 Thank you.

Procedural

1955 **Mr Speaker:** Clearly I am very sorry, but I have to tell the Hon. Minister that I find it very difficult to analyse and to see what is the relevance of the personal statement that you have made regarding the Isaac Marrache parole case to the estimate of expenditure for any of the Departments for which you are responsible. There is no connection, it is irrelevant, and what you should have done instead is, at the beginning of this meeting of Parliament, made a personal ministerial statement on the issue. That was the time and that was the place for you to defend yourself correctly, but not at the end of a speech on the Estimates of Expenditure. No matter how liberal one is, I find it difficult to see what is the relevance between that and what we are on about. I am sorry, that is my ruling.

1960 We will now have a recess until six o'clock.

Chief Minister (Hon. F R Picardo): Mr Speaker –

1965 **Mr Speaker:** Chief Minister, we are going to have a recess until six o'clock. Please –

Hon. Chief Minister: Mr Speaker, if you –

Mr Speaker: I am very tired.

1970 **Hon. Chief Minister:** Mr Speaker –

Mr Speaker: This morning you asked me whether I wanted to have a break; I did not. Now I need to have a break, Chief Minister. Therefore, we will have a recess until six.

1975 **Hon. Chief Minister:** We will recess –

Mr Speaker: I will allow you afterwards to say whatever you want.

Hon. Chief Minister: We will recess immediately, then, Mr Speaker.

1980 **Mr Speaker:** Thank you.

The House recessed at 5.39 p.m. and resumed its sitting at 6 p.m.

Procedural

Mr Speaker: The Hon. the Chief Minister.

1985 **Chief Minister (Hon. F R Picardo):** Mr Speaker, thank you.

Just on the issue that we were dealing with before the recess a moment ago, I am grateful. I rise to express the gratitude of the Government for the two indications you have given during the course of this debate as to how you would like to see ministerial contributions handled in future.

1990 The practice of the House since I have been a Member has been that this debate is a report, and I say as much in the context of my introduction usually, not just in relation to the number of the estimates, not the letter of the law literally but the number of the estimates that we are looking at, but also a general debate, and therefore Ministers have traditionally contributed in a wider view of their responsibilities rather than in a narrow view of their responsibilities.

1995 In respect of the final issue that you raised in respect of Mr Costa's contribution, the way the Government determined we should respond in respect of that matter was in this debate because of the consequence for the outturn figure of the legal fees incurred in the context of that debate. But we of course entirely accept that your suggestion may even have been a better one and a more topical way of dealing with the issue if we had done it at the beginning of this meeting rather than during the course of this debate, which is so lengthy that indeed many Members are in and out and not everyone may have heard what the Hon. Minister said. So we will certainly bear that in mind next time, that there is a topical issue that relates to cost and is about this time of the year. Rather than simply sweeping it up into this debate we will certainly consider making a more timely intervention as a ministerial statement in pursuit of your ruling.

2005

Mr Speaker: I can see that, to the extent that substantial legal fees were involved; I can see the relevance of that. Fair enough. It is a point that had not quite occurred to me. Nevertheless, I will say this: if the Hon. Minister had approached me before the meeting, explaining that he intended to answer criticism and defend himself, I would still have advised him to do so at the beginning of the meeting, make a ministerial statement and get it off your cuff, and then obviously if something arises during the course of the debate on the Estimates, fair enough. Okay?

2010

Hon. Chief Minister: Mr Speaker, it is good advice well received on this side of the House.

2015

**Appropriation Bill 2017 –
For Second Reading –
Debate continued**

Mr Speaker: So, where are we? The Hon. Elliot Phillips.

2020 **Hon. E J Phillips:** Mr Speaker, thank you for your direction and I welcome the comments in relation to the last part of the Hon. Minister's comments in relation to the Marrache case. I thought for one moment we would escape the annual rant of the Minister for Justice, but alas we did not, and I felt that I was almost transported to Bayside Comprehensive again during an A-level literature lesson with Mr Gonzalez. But here we are. Mr Speaker, I also thought we possibly could have been transported to the Globe.

2025

But the relevance of the issue relating to the Marrache case is clearly one of cost, and the parole case. This side of the House has made clear that it expects an answer in relation to the costs of all of this litigation deployed by the Minister for Justice and why he did not feel the need

2030 to instruct able and local counsel in this jurisdiction rather than go to probably the world's most
2031 eminent QC to conduct a very simple administrative question to be put before the court. But
2032 look, he clearly fails to have confidence in the local Bar and I am sure that will be felt quite
2033 extensively by that decision, Mr Speaker.

2034 Moving to more germane matters, it is a privilege to form part of our political debate at such
2035 an interesting time in our history. The political landscape across the globe is moving in a
2036 treadmill-like fashion and we are certainly moving along with it. We are living through a
2037 monumental period in our history and we all face significant challenges as a result of the United
2038 Kingdom's decision to exit the European Union. In addition, our communities face threats to our
2039 peace from extremism. We, as a community, have to be united behind our political leaders and
2040 community leaders against the horrific scenes unfolding in the United Kingdom and across the
2041 world. We must continue, all of us, to condemn the actions of those who would seek to create
2042 fear and chaos on the streets of peaceful communities. **(A Member: Hear, hear.)**

2043 Mr Speaker, we are fortunate to live in a small but relatively safe part of the world and I am
2044 sure that all of us would not want it any other way. We are an accepting, tolerant and peaceful
2045 community, and whilst we watch from afar the terrorism on the streets of the lands of our
2046 cousins, we must remain vigilant always to those who would seek to threaten our way of life.

2047 At this stage, Mr Speaker, I would pause to congratulate all those who work within the law
2048 enforcement agencies and those who work hard to keep our community safe. I would also echo
2049 the words of the Minister for Justice in respect of those who work at sea, who curb the illicit
2050 traffic of drugs and tobacco.

2051 It is right that we had the recent exchange on the question of our security; and, although
2052 there is a different approach and difference of opinion, we hope that the exchange did in some
2053 way remind our community about keeping vigilant.

2054 Opposition politics, Mr Speaker, is not easy, as you yourself will know, and I do not think
2055 anyone on this side of the House who took the oath for the first time ever thought it was going
2056 to be. Being an Opposition Member of this House brings with it huge responsibility to hold the
2057 Government of the day to account and also serve our community in a way which represents
2058 their needs. We promised to work for our constituents, help where we could, but most of all we
2059 promised to listen. Whilst we promote the politics of individual and collective responsibility to
2060 our community, there is no escape from the fact that there remain large swathes of young
2061 people who are distant from politics, a number of them without opportunity. And whilst the
2062 Hon. the Chief Minister repeats his mantra that things could not be better, that is certainly not
2063 what is being felt by many young people that we see and many people that we speak to.

2064 It is right, Mr Speaker, that our agenda in opposition has been progressive and positive, in
2065 stark difference from the reactive politics we are seeing being played out on the Government
2066 benches. Policy by policy the GSD continues to lead and mould the political debate here and
2067 outside this place. We led the debate and supported co-education as far back as 2014 **(A
2068 Member: Hear, hear.)** and now the Government follow. *(Interjection)* Well, we couldn't in 2014
2069 for one simple reason: we were not in Government. But anyway ... our Government to change
2070 the age boundaries and changes to key stages were announced by the GSD back in 2014 and
2071 now fully adopted by the Government three years later. Where we lead, the GSLP follow. Next
2072 we will hear, Mr Speaker, that Bayside is being replaced by the stadium project, and Governor's
2073 Meadow and Bishop Fitzgerald will move into the Westside Comprehensive complex. Yes, more
2074 initiatives by the GSD back in 2014.

2075 On providing our young people with equivalent opportunities in skills and training and the
2076 creation of a modern-day apprenticeship, we led the debate, and it would appear from the Chief
2077 Minister's statement on a new style of apprenticeships that the Government are following
2078 where we have led.

2079 On the creation of means testing of Government housing we continue to lead the debate on
2080 that subject.

2080 On public finances we lead the debate by being the advocate for prudence, responsibility and the creation of a Public Accounts Committee. Save for the last point, it would appear that the Government are trying at least to put up a front in terms of prudence.

On ridding our community of a culture of entitlement, promoting civic responsibility and respect, we have led the debate in our community. (**Hon. D A Feetham:** Hear, hear.)

2085 The Chief Minister's intervention yesterday about promoting hardworking people looks as though it was lifted directly from our manifesto at the last election. I suppose we should be flattered by this imitation, happy for the Government to tick off *our* promises.

On sport, again we led with a joined-up agenda which proposed the magnificent development of Victoria Stadium in order to bring football back home.

2090 Where we lead the debate, others have followed. Perhaps that is what Opposition politics is about: challenging the Government, showing them that there is a better way. We will continue to lead the debate in our community in a way which serves the best interests of our community as a whole.

2095 Mr Speaker, the GSD is the natural party of government and many of our citizens are experiencing the false dawns and seeing the significant fault lines and the shaky foundations of the GSLP/Liberal Government. The GSD will always be the party which protects the most vulnerable in our society, because whilst we focus on building an economically and politically stable prosperous community we do so in order to better help those less fortunate in our community.

2100 Participation in politics must be about ensuring that our children can continue to grow up, as we all did, in a Gibraltar which is safe, secure and prosperous. I have said it before, that the principal way in which we provide long-term prosperity for our community is investing in our people, Mr Speaker. Our people ultimately are our only asset and without that investment we will be nothing. We are as strong as our weakest link and therefore we must ensure that we provide sufficient support for those who really cannot help themselves. That is why my Budget address will focus on the creation of better opportunities and young people.

2105 Much of the work that the Opposition have focused on this year and which we will continue to be focused on relates to that very subject, about creating better opportunities for young people and investing in their future. Our young people need opportunity and a hope for a better future. The numbers of young people and parents of young people worried about the future and that of their children is shocking, Mr Speaker, and we must do more to provide opportunity and hope for those people who do not see any progression because of the archaic training practices of the Government. Not a day goes by without a young man or woman coming to me or Members of the Opposition complaining of the lack of opportunity, complaining about the future job opportunities in this community.

2115 We have consistently advocated for the promotion of skills-based learning and the development of apprenticeships. The call from the unions and the Chamber during the election campaign was one. We are on a skills cliff edge and we need to do something about offering young people hope for a better future in the job market. The Government clearly do not agree with a policy which puts at the centre the objective of creating better opportunities for young people. The Government have at every corner attempted, in and outside this place, to denigrate the policy of the GSD amongst business; I have seen it with my own eyes. The Government's orchestration, namely writing to businesses up and down our streets seeking to undermine our work on apprenticeships, is having the opposite effect. Even today I received a number of emails copying me in to the letter sent by the Hon. Mr Bossano, who referred to later the 800 letters, and telling me what a disgrace it is to see such a letter being written to them.

2125 Our policy on apprenticeships and a modern skills programme has received overwhelming support from members of the public who remain very concerned about the opportunities for the next generation. I take the opportunity to thank the thousand that support our programme for better opportunities – a dynamic, progressive and forward-thinking policy which will create a diversified, highly adaptable, trained workforce for the job market.

2130

2135 The Government continually hails the £66 million – or, put it another way, £1 million a month, or nearly £1 million a month – spent since February 2012 on the Future Job Strategy as a success. It is not. It fails to inspire our young people, it fails to provide sustainable opportunity for our young people, and worse still it will create a lost generation of young people devoid of opportunity and hope. It is regrettable that this will be the legacy of the Future Job Strategy.

2140 As I said, Mr Speaker, the Hon. Mr Bossano has spent an inordinate amount of time trying to denigrate our policy, going to the extent of using his own Department for political point scoring. As he said yesterday, he sent out the 800 letters to businesses about our policy. Needless to say, and the feedback I have received today is that they have approached me and one has actually described the conduct as despicable. I am not surprised, Mr Speaker, by that at all. This is the GSLP through and through, a party which purports to represent the worker. They do not. They represent nothing of the sort. The Government's policy is one of simply filling skills gaps as they go along without any thought to how our community will look or where we want to take the community in the future. We must at all costs look towards building a highly skilled, adaptable workforce in the modern technologies. But this is not new. We have continually raised the issue of training at the political level at every opportunity that we can.

2145 Be that as it may, and leaving aside the 800 letters and waste of paper, I was gratified yesterday to hear of another Government U-turn and its new commitment to technical education and apprenticeships. It again demonstrates a recognition and completely vindicates the GSD's policy in this area. We started the debate on the modern-day apprenticeship, which is about learning and not working, and it would appear some on the Government benches are starting to get the message. The Government now, for the first time, has started – and the Chief Minister mentioned it – a new style of apprenticeships, something which the Hon. Mr Bossano has been denigrating for years, and now we see a conversion of some sort. Again, I welcome the Government's U-turn on apprenticeships.

2150 Many hon. Members in this House have been here for many years and I think we were all impressed to hear that this was the Hon. Deputy Chief Minister's 19th Budget address. There are three Members of this House who are just shy of 40 – I believe the Hon. the Minister for Justice, the Hon. Mr Llamas and myself. I note that my old adversary at the Bar, the Minister for Housing, has recently reached a particular milestone and no longer belongs to the under-40s. I wish her many happy returns. **(Several Members: Ooh!)**

2160 But on a serious note, what does this say about the House generally? Why are we not trying to fill some of these seats with younger Members? Is this a reflection of the younger generation's disengagement from political life and service? Engaging our young people at every level of political life is important. We as a community should actively encourage political participation by our young people. Generally, young people are distant from decision-makers and that cannot be right. When I speak to young people, many say that they are simply not engaged or that they simply do not trust politicians. We need to change that thinking through education. I understand that the former Minister for Education was supportive of expanding the Gibraltar Studies course beyond year 3 and year 4, although we need to work within the curriculum. I really do feel that whilst learning about our culture, heritage and natural environment is a positive experience, we do need to understand our development of us as a people and the main players who have built modern-day Gibraltar. I was gratified to see our celebration referendum exhibit – more of that, please, Mr Speaker. I think we need to go further, so that young people can have a wide appreciation of Gibraltar itself and its role in the wider world. If we truly want to encourage wider participation of young people in politics, we must create civic pride, responsibility and respect through programmes which teach our young people about what it is to be Gibraltarian and our values. Young people are important and we must not lose sight of that.

2175 Mr Speaker, I have said that we are fortunate to live in a relatively ... I know I am boring some over on the other side of the House, but I will continue. We are fortunate to live in a relatively safe community, but that does not mean that we do not have our fair share of problems. The

2185 scourge of drug-related crime appears to affect our community in the same way it does others.
We note the Government's suggestion to take stock and progress made in this area in
yesterday's announcement of a summit. Although I do not doubt the commitment by the hon.
Lady who has taken back this portfolio from the Chief Minister, we simply need to do much
more about addiction and drug-related crime from a rehabilitation perspective.

2190 The Government this year presented the community with mixed signals on the question of
legalisation and/or decriminalisation; however, it was clear that the Government has now
cemented its views on this important question, and in that regard I recall a synergy between the
position of the Government and the Opposition, where both my learned and hon. Friend and I
participated in a GBC *Viewpoint* on the subject alongside the hon. the independent Member.

2195 I have spoken at length with addicts and those in recovery, and I am sure that my hon. and
learned Friend opposite has as well, and the message I receive is that addiction is a lifelong issue
that needs a lifelong response for those who are recovering. I know that we have hardworking
professionals within the service and we need to harness support right across all Government
Departments. Substance abuse and addiction is not only an issue for the addict; it affects the
core of family life and its wake can be felt in society as a whole, and the response must be co-
2200 ordinated and multi-agency. Over the last five years, various inter-ministerial committees have
been established to tackle drugs and substance abuse, but what we need now and the message I
am receiving is action on the part of those committees.

In relation to the point made by the Minister for Justice in relation to legal assistance, what
we need to do and need to ensure is that those who most need to access justice can access
2205 justice, and I would invite the Minister to make sure that steps are taken to really progress the
level of access afforded to those who really need to instruct lawyers.

In relation to prisons, one point I would make just in response to the Minister for Justice's
comment that five juvenile admissions had been made at the Prison ... in my respectful view to
the Minister, an adult prison cannot be the place for a child; it can never be a place for a child. I
2210 know that those are sentiments that he echoed when he was sat on this side of the House –

Hon. D A Feetham: On many occasions.

2215 **Hon. E J Phillips:** – on many occasions, I am reminded, but I think we need to now look at
ways in which we create a possibility of some alternative to prison for young people. It is not
right, in my respectful submission. There are circumstances where they are placed in the adult
prison because there is nowhere for them to go. I have heard the argument, Mr Speaker,
relating to the use of prisons for young people and the fact that it would be hugely costly to the
taxpayer to have a specific institution to house juvenile offenders, but I would ask the Minister,
2220 if he could, to take a look at that issue. It does affect a number of people, particularly young
people, which I think he would agree, and the message that I would like to repeat is that an
adult prison is not for a child.

In relation to prisons more generally, I remain convinced that we can do much more than we
are doing in the area of rehabilitation of offenders, particularly those with substance abuse
2225 problems. Reoffending is linked to a lack of opportunity, and whilst those convicted of crimes
must make reparation to the community, we must ensure that those with criminal convictions
can access opportunity so that they can re-enter mainstream society; a criminal conviction
cannot be a lifelong stain on the individual. It is hoped that Government policy on second-
chance education may go somewhere in rehabilitating offenders back into the community. We
2230 need to create further training in and outside the Prison which targets the solid rehabilitation of
an offender into mainstream society.

In relation to the Employment Tribunal, we highlighted a number of serious difficulties being
experienced by claimants and other service users at the newly reformed Employment Tribunal.
Whilst we supported the new regulations establishing the rules and the constitution of the
2235 Employment Tribunal, it is clear that there are a number of mechanical difficulties and a

significant backlog of cases. By identifying the problem and raising it to a political level it is understood that the Government has now engaged a qualified mediator to deal with the backlog. We welcome the Government's reaction to our press release and we will continue to monitor the situation closely.

2240 One key observation we make is that we continue to make constructive proposals for the creation of a courts and tribunals service. We would invite the Government to think again and look at ways in which we can offer a centralised infrastructure for the provision of tribunals, which will improve the service ultimately to the public.

2245 We in the Opposition have been looking at ways in which the Courts Service could be assisted by the e-filing of court documents, and I know that the Minister talked about, in his address, the ways in which the Courts Service is actively looking at ways of doing things better. As the Government will know, the courts of England and Wales have piloted schemes in relation to e-filing of documents and have now recently rolled out the digital filing of court documents. We would invite the Minister for Justice to look at introducing a system by using existing digital
2250 platforms.

In relation to a question that was posed in the last session of Parliament, we talked about the investigation of major fraud cases and we note from the statistics that were provide that over a third of all major fraud cases were 12 months or older. We would ask the Minister to again take a look at why that is and why do a third of major fraud investigations – which are those that are
2255 over £10,000, as so described to me before, complex major fraud cases – are taking so long to reach either prosecution or at least a determination of that particular investigation.

Mr Speaker, in relation to education, we note the full adoption of GSD policy on education. We will support the policy but we will reserve our position insofar as the practical application and the rolling out of co-education in Gibraltar. The Chief Minister spoke, in his address, of a
2260 214% increase on spending on tertiary education, and of course it is right that we continue to support those who wish to continue their education by taking advantage of further and higher education opportunities, but we cannot ignore the needs of those from whom higher education does not, for one reason or another, feature. This is why the Opposition supports the introduction of industry-designed degree apprenticeships, which are described by the
2265 Department of Business and Innovation Skills in the United Kingdom as an innovative new model bringing together the best of higher and vocational education. More of that, Mr Speaker, in due course.

The Government has promised before, in its glossy manifesto, five new schools – now, I believe, seven. Many are asking questions: where are the plans; how will the Government fund
2270 these commitments, particularly given that the book makes no reference to a provision for it; and how will the works be managed in already very busy areas? All of these questions by the public are genuine concerns, particularly from parents, educators and students alike. Mr Speaker, not one brick has been laid and it is clear that the Government will not be able to build five – now seven – new schools, as it promised our community in 2015.

2275 Of course, whilst building new schools it is important that there are other pressing issues raised by the GTA. We note the existence of a social partnership agreement between the GTA and the Government, and although that should open a framework for co-operation between the profession and the Government, much more needs to be done. I spoke of how important our young people are, and our teaching professionals are as important to the development of our
2280 young people. Our teachers are on the bleeding edge and the front line each day and we need to listen to them more closely and create better working relationships with our teachers. At this point I would like to take the opportunity to thank all teachers for the work they do in shaping our children. I cannot think of a more demanding job than being charged with the responsibility of shaping our future citizens.

2285 Mr Speaker, in relation to the University, we in the Opposition are creating very strong links with the University and hope to create a solid dialogue with the University outside this place. Although we may have concerns as to the level of funds afforded to the University by the

2290 taxpayer, it is fair to say that we have always wished it well. Indeed, we believe that the
direction of travel under the stewardship of Professor. Tilbury is the right one and we are
impressed to see that there are significant synergies between the Opposition's policies and
apprenticeships and we are happy to see the University is looking into areas of development
that we have been focused on for some time.

2295 In summary, what I say about the copy-and-paste job of this Government on education and
training, this Budget, apart from those measures, and, Mr Speaker misses the point. It fails to
provide opportunities to our young people, it fails to provide a strategic plan for the future
generation, and what we will do on this side of the House is remain vigilant as to the progress
and implementation of these important policies. *(Banging on desks)*

2300 **Mr Speaker:** The Hon. Samantha Sacramento.

Chief Minister (Hon. F R Picardo): Is that it, Mr Speaker? Well, I suppose he is busy.
Mr Speaker, I move that the House do now adjourn until tomorrow at 9.30 in the morning.

2305 **Mr Speaker:** The House will now adjourn to tomorrow at 9.30.

The House adjourned at 6.29 p.m.