



# PROCEEDINGS OF THE GIBRALTAR PARLIAMENT

**MORNING SESSION: 9.31 a.m. – 1.37 p.m.**

**Gibraltar, Wednesday, 28th June 2017**

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# The Gibraltar Parliament

*The Parliament met at 9.31 a.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**

**Clerk:** Wednesday, 28th June, Meeting of Parliament.

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

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**Minister for Housing and Equality (Hon. Miss S J Sacramento):** Mr Speaker, this is my sixth Budget address. This year, I rise with a considerably shorter title. Mr Speaker will be happy to hear that this year my speech will also be considerably shorter.

10 For over five years, until the last ministerial reshuffle, I held the Social Services portfolio, a Department that I worked on with great vigour and passion because I do not exaggerate when I say that it needed to be rescued from near disaster after having been neglected for so many years. In this context, it gives me great satisfaction to have handed it over to my successor as a properly structured and resourced Department with a clear business plan and a direction, and more so when I heard the updated statistics from my friend Minister Costa yesterday, as these  
15 are all the results of my hard work coming to fruition. I am very heartened by the statistics that he represented.

Mr Speaker, my star sign is Taurus, and something popped up on my newsfeed last night on Taureans: it described us as hardworking and focused on specific goals. The safeguarding of children and child protection was one of the principal reasons why I stood for election, so seeing these things that I implemented starting to materialise makes all those long, sleepless nights worthwhile, because I have achieved that goal. In particular, seeing the implementation of the Signs of Safety policies that I set up is wonderful and it is reassuring to hear that it is a success. Incidentally, the other one was that Taureans are very stubborn – that, of course, is also true.

20 Finally, Mr Speaker, when talking of how great it is to see my things coming to fruition, one of my first flagship projects was the residential dementia facility at the old Royal Naval Hospital site. I planned the remodelling of a place that was not fit for purpose to the magnificent facility that it is today. It is just amazing to see all the designs that I had to visualise on paper not only come to existence but also to see it up and running and making such a difference to the quality of life of its residents, something that would not have been the case had I not changed the old  
25 plans I inherited from the previous administration.

I miss my colleagues at the Care Agency. We have a bond that was formed from working so closely in the trenches – literally, Mr Speaker – in the first few years, when there was virtually no management and very little professional staff. I have no doubt that their good work will continue under the leadership of their new Minister.

35 Mr Speaker, let me start with a responsibility that is not actually in my title, which is maybe why it is short! I suppose that there is simply no nice or elegant way of saying that I am the

Minister for drugs, and to say that I am the Minister with responsibility for drug and alcohol rehabilitation services, awareness and strategy and policy development is a bit of a mouthful. But everybody in this place, relevant professionals, stakeholders, service users and those who matter, are fully aware that drugs is my responsibility, and that is what counts. Basically, the point that I am trying to make, for the avoidance of doubt, is that all Government Departments and services that in any way deal with drugs report to me as the Minister tasked and entrusted with this responsibility by the Chief Minister.

I was very pleased to have once again been returned the responsibility for drugs following the last ministerial reshuffle, as this was previously a department within the Social Services structure, as it always has been since the inception of the Care Agency in 2009. Mr Speaker, it must be recalled that this is a therapeutic service and not a medical one.

The Government's view on drugs is clear and unequivocal, and when I say that I say so as the view of the whole Government and not just mine. There is no question of drugs in our community being legalised or decriminalised. We and all our professional advisers are acutely aware of the damage that drugs cause to lives and families, and there is absolutely no evidence to suggest that legalising drugs would mean otherwise. I trust that this reassures the families who may be worried that drugs would be legally available to their children.

Of course I make the distinction between the recreational use of drugs and drugs for medical reasons, the latter which would be acceptable in defined circumstances and where the substance is also licenced.

It is important to recognise the GSD Opposition's support of the Government on this critical issue. It is right that they do so and I am grateful to Mr Phillips for his public statement during his intervention yesterday and that he also recognised the work that I have done on this front.

Mr Speaker, drugs misuse has ramifications throughout all of our community, and that is why the Government employs a holistic approach and we continue to build on the success of our services year on year.

Let me explain, for the avoidance of doubt, to anyone who may not understand what the services of my drugs department entail. There are two services: the rehabilitation services, and the policy, strategy and awareness responsibilities. The rehabilitation service has two strands. It consists of a residential service at Bruce's Farm and the same programme and outreach is now also offered in the community, including prison. Each is able to offer a full rehabilitation programme to suit the specific needs of our service users. All our services are continually reviewed and actively pursuing the best prevention measures and outcomes for those affected. From a strategic perspective, we will continue to develop consistent and unambiguous policies. As a caring Government we must develop measures to reach out and actively target those who need help to overcome the consequences of drugs misuse.

Addressing the issue of addiction is a complex matter because therapy cannot be forced upon anyone. Those accessing our services often present with chaotic and challenging circumstances. We have for a few years now organised very well the co-ordination of a number of agencies so that a holistic treatment programme is in place with timely assessments, psychiatric input, detoxification and a wide range of support services. The programmes have to be needs led and require robust care plans, family support, community outreach support and aftercare. Partner agencies need to provide a seamless service for healthy recovery paths. An overarching principle is that the service user is always involved and at the centre of our care planning process. We aim to empower them to be part of the solution and not the problem.

Over the last 12 months there have been positive developments regarding partnership agencies and how they interact with each other in the interests of our services users. We have instituted enhanced protocols with the Housing Department – and I should expect so, because the Minister for Housing is fully committed with Mental Health because of course the Minister for Health is equally committed – and the Probation Services and the Police and the Care Agency, because of course the Minister is committed. Of course, because we provide a holistic approach, I also work very closely with my colleagues the Minister for Education, the Minister

for Youth and the Minister for Sports. Our protocols are set out on the basis that we all work  
90 together on the provision of an integrated rehabilitation and recovery service to provide the  
best possible outcomes for those on their path to recovery.

Bruce's Farm continues to strive to become a centre of excellence in providing effective  
holistic treatment and aftercare for people in Gibraltar who access the service. Our robust care  
plans, which support the recovery process for each service user, are put in place when someone  
95 is admitted. The exit meeting, equally as important on completion of the programme, will  
consider what aftercare is required to support reintegration of the person in the community.  
This will include, when appropriate, an outreach package of support. The service user is central  
to the process and attends all meetings having a clear voice regarding their views, progress and  
ongoing needs. Meetings are now multidisciplinary and partnership agencies each assume  
100 ownership of the role that they play in the person's recovery as part of the package of support.  
This approach is already paying tremendous dividends: 2016 saw the busiest year at Bruce's  
Farm since its inception; we had a total of 48 admissions where the yearly average in the four  
previous years prior to 2011 had never exceeded 25. I am proud to state that under my tenure  
Bruce's Farm has seen its five busiest years.

Many former service users who have undergone the Bruce's Farm programme continue to  
retain contact and seek assistance through the Community team. Additionally, the Community  
team provides a focus for any individual who may want to be informed or access our range of  
services. Importantly, prisoners are offered counselling and assistance as part of their pre-  
release process. The Community team also offers support and treatment within the community  
110 and to those in contact with the criminal justice system. An important part of the team's role is  
that of raising awareness about the effects of drugs and alcohol and the impact this has on  
mental and physical health. We will continue to develop awareness campaigns targeting specific  
issues and sectors within our community, particularly the young people. And I am delighted to  
announce that one of the priorities in our business plan this year will be to work with the  
115 Minister for Education and the Department of Education and our youth services in our  
prevention through education programme.

Mr Speaker, indeed, I have also just this morning opened a seminar of public servants that  
has been organised by my highly committed Drug and Alcohol team to mark the occasion of  
World Drugs Day on Monday. This forum, which was packed, boasts over 60 delegates  
120 representing all Government Departments and public bodies who have a part to play in tackling  
the harms that drug misuse exact upon our community. It will serve to showcase our services  
among our partner organisations, how we interact with them, and to consolidate and improve,  
where necessary, all the systems and processes that we have all worked so hard to implement in  
the last year.

It is important, Mr Speaker, to acknowledge the role that voluntary organisations play,  
enhancing the work of the statutory bodies. Alcoholics Anonymous, Narcotics Anonymous and  
Families Anonymous and significant family and friends of the service users all play a crucial role  
in providing support and services to those at all stages of their recovery. We have developed a  
close synergy with these voluntary organisations, as a majority of their members are former  
130 service users of ours. Regular dialogue occurs, providing support to these groups as well as  
feedback on how our services meet their needs. Our counsellors will often continue to provide  
family support and counselling services long after the initial treatment period.

Mr Speaker, I think it is clear that no one, regardless of where they sit in this house, can  
disagree on the continuing improvements that we have made and continue to make both in  
135 terms of the quality and the increasing range of services that we provide.

Turning to Housing, Mr Speaker, we continue to make unprecedented developments in  
housing on all fronts and at every level. Homes matter to people, and people matter to us.

Let me commence with our most recent notable achievement, and that is the 142 homes that  
we have recently delivered to our elderly community: our flats at Charles Bruzon House and Sea  
140 Master Lodge, which are purposely built for elderly individuals so that they can live at home

independently for longer. These flats have been meticulously designed in consultation with all the relevant experts to incorporate the latest accessibility features, such as colour contrast to assist the visually impaired, spacious layouts to provide for turning circles for wheelchair users, non-slip tiles and panic buttons to name but a few of the innovative features. The Housing Works Agency's painstaking attention to detail while engaged in the snagging process has ensured that the design and construction specifications were exactly adhered to. The building clearly provides a convivial family atmosphere, particularly with the communal lounge areas provided, which I am sure will serve as a venue for many a celebration. Having met the tenants on a number of occasions since they have moved and hearing of their positive feedback, as well as that of their families, all of whom express delight with the quality, design, functionality and finish of these purpose-built developments, I can say hand on heart that this new accommodation represents a valuable and significant addition to existing Government rental stock. **(A Member: Hear, hear.)** *(Banging on desks)*

The construction of these homes of course has a knock-on effect on the housing waiting lists and we will see the real effect of that very soon. As people move into their new flats, they are vacating larger Government rental accommodation, which has now started to be returned to our stock. These need to go through the process of cleaning and being refurbished over the next few months and this will then enable us to start allocating them to those on the housing waiting lists, so we will see considerable movement of the lists in the next six months, I am delighted to say. I am convinced that this type of accommodation is the best that we can provide for our elderly community; the people from the generation that has done so much for Gibraltar deserve nothing less. And this is how we get vacant flats returned to our stock, so therefore I can very proudly announce that we will continue to construct this type of accommodation.

I can also announce that we are about to commence the refurbishment of Bishop Canilla House before that block which houses so many of our elderly community falls into disrepair. The refurbishment will entail the replacement of the entire roof including the lantern roof, the part enclosure of the balconies and the applying of external cladding system to the façade. The upgrade will greatly improve the overall environmental performance and characteristics of the building. Works have already started on the lifts and will include replacing one of the standard lifts with a stretcher lift and also upgrading the other. And insofar as the other block of elderly flats, Albert Risso House, repair works here are ongoing as we continue to remedy the shortcomings in the design because those who commissioned it did not do so with as much love, care and attention as we did in our elderly flats. **(Hon. Chief Minister: Hear, hear.)**

I am pleased to say, Mr Speaker, that the major refurbishment works to the estates that were forgotten and neglected by the GSD are now in their final stages. These projects show our investment in the living conditions of our tenants as their blocks are enhanced and beautified and these projects evidently contribute to visually transform what was previously a dreary, lacklustre and neglected architectural scenery at Gibraltar's land entry point. To appreciate the magnitude and success of our Government's enterprise, the scope of these projects has augmented, far beyond the original consignment for the refurbishment of the building fabric, to encompass the upgrading of electrical, communications and highways infrastructures that service these estates. These estates – Glacis, Laguna and Moorish Castle Estate – are, as I said, in the final stages of completion and, as I said in Parliament last week, will mainly be completed by the end of this year and some next year. I am very proud of our Government's huge investment in our people, Mr Speaker. **(Hon. Chief Minister: Hear, hear.)** *(Banging on desks)*

These, of course, are not the only refurbishment works that we are undertaking. Turning to Alameda Estate, the works at Picton House are now almost complete and the preparatory works for Victoria House are well underway with works scheduled to start in the next few months. This will be followed by works to Alameda House, the last block remaining on this estate, both of which will be completed in the lifetime of this Parliament. We have also almost completed the refurbishment of the New Police Barracks. These works have been on schedule and are

practically complete and we are expecting that the three new lifts that we have installed here will be operational next month.

195 Mr Speaker, the tragic disaster following the fire at Grenfell Tower in West London two weeks ago has been very prominent in our minds because one of the contributing factors to the blaze was the cladding. We have, of course, cladded some of our blocks as part of our refurbishment and we were extremely concerned to provide public assurance of the safety of our works. Immediately upon hearing of the fire, I consulted the Chief Technical Officer and the Principal Housing Officer for assurances as to the works on our estates. The Principal Housing  
200 Officer and I spent the whole day meeting with all other relevant Government officials and our contractors looking at every detail and can confirm that both the materials and the method used in our cladding systems are different to those used in the blocks in question in the UK and are safe. Mr Speaker, on that day a meeting was convened by the Chief Minister and, following that, we issued a detailed and lengthy statement.

205 I have also set up a fire safety review working group comprised of the top Government officials and instructed them to look into fire safety and prevention measures in all our housing rental stock and co-ownership estates. I chaired the first meeting last Friday, and while I am satisfied of the assurances that I have been given as to the safety of our cladding system, I have also arranged for these to be independently tested and verified in the UK in an abundance of  
210 caution. Safety of citizens, Mr Speaker, is of paramount concern to us and we look at every detail to ensure that our tenants are not at risk. I now await the outcome of the report. In fact, today our Principal Housing Officer is at a housing conference in the UK. The theme of the conference has changed at short notice and understandably there is now a great emphasis on fire prevention and themes of this nature are considered in the course of the next few days  
215 while the conference is going on. I am receiving daily reports from the Principal Housing Officer, who is telling me how absolutely valuable attendance at the conference is.

Mr Speaker, the refurbishment of our housing estates will, of course, continue. The Housing Department and the Housing Works Agency have jointly devised a five-year plan of  
220 refurbishment works, so that the remaining housing stock can also benefit from major refurbishment. We will not neglect our housing stock or its tenants. This programme includes the six remaining blocks at Chilton Court and Edinburgh Estate. With regard to Chilton Court, initial preliminary investigations are being undertaken with a view to replacing the roof covers to two blocks within this estate and these works are scheduled to start next year. Our continued refurbishment will also include external refurbishment to Schomberg House, Stanley Building,  
225 Heathfield House, Willis' House, Coelho House, McMillian House, Knight's Court, Vineyard House, Rosia House, Penney House, Belvedere House and Scud Hill House, and external refurbishment and new lifts will be part of the programme at Tankerville House, Harrington Building and Churchill House.

Finally, Mr Speaker, we are currently refurbishing Sea View House in Catalan Bay, and I am  
230 delighted to announce that our housing stock at Catalan Bay will not only undergo a refurbishment but a transformation. We will paint our stock in the prettiest of pastel colours to create a marvellous village to be admired and, I dare say, envied by other Mediterranean coasts. (*Banging on desks*) I have already discussed this with my senior housing officials and we are waiting to devise a colour scheme with the town planner, so that it can be put to the residents of  
235 Catalan Bay for consultation. Not only will this be a marvellous enhancement of our housing stock, but it will no doubt also make for a magnificent sight for all to admire, including tourists.

Turning to the operations of the Department, Mr Speaker, we have made many changes to streamline the running of the Department and make it more efficient. This has enabled us to provide a faster turnaround to both tenants in the delivery of their repair works, as well as to  
240 allocation of flats to those on the housing waiting list. We also work much better with other stakeholder Departments, making the whole process seamless. Furthermore, we have also introduced a paperless billing system as part of the Government's drive for the Thinking Green

Agenda, where the option of email billing is offered, and to date 660 tenants have taken up this option.

245 Of course I must mention the results of our very successful arrears collection strategy. It must  
be recalled that the housing rent arrears escalated by 600% when the GSD were in office. In  
March 1996 when the GSD first took office, the balance of arrears at the time was £655,031. It  
continued to increase year on year until it reached £4 million by the time they left office in  
250 December 2011. Had we continued to follow the trend of the rent arrears, had we not  
intercepted and commenced the execution of our collection of arrears strategy in January 2016,  
the arrears would today be in excess of £7 million. But instead, I made an announcement last  
week that the balance of our arrears was below £5 million. Since I made that announcement just  
under a week ago, I am delighted to report that we have since recovered a further £18,000 and  
the current balance of rent arrears is £4,977,410 – a remarkable achievement in a very short  
255 period of time, even if I do say so myself. (**Hon. Chief Minister:** Hear, hear.) (*Banging on desks*)

Mr Speaker, for the period since the arrears started to accumulate, since 1996, there was a  
culture of expectation that there would be no consequences for non-payment of arrears of rent.  
During a GBC interview last week I was asked by the interviewer what I had done to recover the  
arrears, and when I watched my interview back I had said, ‘Well, I sent people letters,’ and it  
260 sounded quite silly when I was hearing it because it is quite incredible that for this period of time  
people were not even told that they were in arrears, let alone action the chasing of them. To be  
honest, such a simple thing as sending letters to people saying ‘you are in arrears of rent that  
need to be paid’ had an effect that really did not have any cost consequences for the  
Government or the taxpayer; it was a simple administrative exercise that we did.

265 In addition to that we have implemented various strategies which have been very effective,  
not least the deduction of rent at source for all public servants and the tremendous volume of  
debtors who have been seen by the people in my Department – they have seen almost a  
thousand people in this period. People are not entitled to luxuries such as berths at the Small  
Boats Marina or parking spaces for their cars if they are in arrears of rent, and the point that I  
270 need to make is that the Government makes the distinction between people who do not pay  
rent because they would rather sustain a more luxurious lifestyle and people who genuinely  
cannot pay rent for reasons of genuine hardship. It is the latter who are not a priority but it is  
the former against whom we will absolutely enforce, because it is now high time that the  
taxpayer must be stopped from having to subsidise these luxury lifestyles of people who do not  
275 pay rent because they simple do not want to and because they think it is acceptable because  
they have been getting away with it for so many years.

I am grateful to the GSD, and Mr Clinton in particular, for their acknowledgment of the  
progress that I have made in the recovery of the rent arrears – thank you. (*Banging on desks*)

280 Finally, Mr Speaker, turning to a matter that so many in our community have been eagerly  
awaiting, and that is of course the announcement on the construction of further affordable  
homes. There is of course a lot of mischief making by the Opposition benches because they love  
to do that when we make announcements that are so good and so significant and important to  
the people of Gibraltar, and they are loving the fact that there has been a slight delay in making  
announcements on this front. But nothing needs to be read into this. There has been a delay due  
285 to technical reasons of infrastructure. Infrastructure is an important preliminary issue and we  
wanted to get every detail right before making any further announcements. This may affect the  
footprint of the new development to some extent but not in a way that will be disadvantageous.  
I expect that the technical advice and the administrative process will be complete before the  
end of this year and I am delighted to announce that we will be in a position to have started the  
290 process of selling our new flats and give so many people the opportunity to be homeowners  
once again. I will be in a better position to make a more detailed announcement in September.

So, Mr Speaker, after that very important announcement on progress, it just leaves me to  
thank the Principal Housing Officer, all my staff at the Housing Department, particularly those  
who have been instrumental in the collection of rent arrears, the Housing Works Agency and

295 also LPS, GRP, GJBS and all the small building contractors who now undertake the household  
repairs and refurbishment works. A special mention to my PAs: Daniel Payas, who is actually at  
the Island Games in Gotland and has received quite a few medals already (**Two Members:** Hear,  
hear.) (*Banging on desks*); and to Krystle Acolina, who despite a very important milestone in her  
300 life next week is also in the UK accompanying the Principal Housing Officer at the housing  
conference. Despite their very junior grades, they are literally my right and left hands when it  
comes to housing and I wish to thank them. (**A Member:** Hear, hear.)

Mr Speaker, finally turning to my last portfolio, that of Equality, what a wonderful progress  
and a magnificent year for equality in Gibraltar this year has been (**Two Members:** Hear, hear.)  
(*Banging on desks*); I really could not ask for more. I take great pride in being Gibraltar's first and  
305 only Minister for Equality. It was the foresight of our Chief Minister who recognised the  
importance of equality matters and the importance of having a Minister and a Department  
dedicated to developing the equality agenda, (*Interjection*) and I wish to give the Chief Minister  
my heartfelt thanks both for doing it and for allowing me the continuity to be able to complete  
all the tasks that I had set on my agenda. But I really need to credit the tremendous progress  
310 that we have made in this year to my excellent and fabulous new team at the Ministry of  
Equality. This is headed by Sabina Guillem and her two officers who have joined our team very  
recently, had no previous experience of matters of equality but have truly embraced the  
principles. Really, I can literally say that not only is my Department running with the concept,  
they are flying with it, because the outcomes that we have had in the last year are the most  
315 positive that we have and I am tremendously proud of their work, their progress and how they  
are assisting all our other Government Departments in ensuring that the Government's equality  
agenda is met.

Mr Speaker, as you will recall, last year we passed in this House an amendment to the  
Marriage Act to enable people of the same sex to get married. This was a manifesto  
320 commitment that we had to consider the principle. It was something that was obviously very  
important to the community, something which we consulted on extensively – in fact it was the  
consultation that had generated the most response and the most interest – and a group of  
Ministers appointed by the Chief Minister to consider these issues spent a lot of time  
considering all the individuals' and groups' points of view. We came to the conclusion that we  
325 did; I am very proud that we are where we are and we have made the progress that we have on  
that front.

Mr Speaker, the most progress that we have made on the equality strands this year, and  
which was a priority in my Department's business plan, is of course on disability equality. The  
passing of the Disability Bill is imminent before this Parliament and will be undertaken as soon as  
330 the parliamentary diary and commitments permit. In the meantime, because equality and  
diversity and particularly disability equality are not just about a legislative framework ... Of  
course our new law is important and I cannot wait for that debate in this House, but perhaps  
more importantly than the legislative framework is the information and awareness that we have  
invested in delivering, because for the legislation to be successful we have to ensure that we win  
335 the hearts and minds of our community and we have to make sure that our community embrace  
the principles of disability equality, because that is the only way that our law will succeed.

Gibraltar is an extremely caring community and as a Government we have been leading from  
the front. We have set the benchmark and have been the role models to ensure that we are  
setting the standards for disability equality. In the last year I think I have probably lost count of  
340 all the training seminars and workshops and awareness days that the Ministry of Equality has  
provided to our community, both to managers and professionals in the public sector as well as  
to people in the private sector. I really have to thank the Chamber of Commerce and the  
Gibraltar Federation of Small Businesses for embracing our initiatives and supporting them  
throughout. They are an essential part of the puzzle in the delivery of our mandate of inclusion  
345 and I am tremendously grateful to both chairs for having met with me, discussed it at length and  
supported wholeheartedly our awareness events.



Mr Speaker, the strategy in relation to disability equality I would say has three strands in terms of awareness. We can break it down into the physical accessibility to environments and we have provided training to professionals to ensure that they are aware and buildings are accessible to people with disabilities, because as my hon Friend Minister Balban explained yesterday, shortly after we pass the Disability Bill we will be changing the building regulations to introduce part R, which will mean that all new buildings and any buildings that require refurbishment have to be completely inclusive to people with disabilities. So we have provided, for the last four years, training on that front to make sure that we have done enough in terms of capacity building so that when the time comes and the new legislation is introduced everybody is equipped to understand it and process it properly.

We have also been delivering training to frontline staff on how to communicate with people with disabilities in a way that is respectful – and we call it disability etiquette, Mr Speaker – because we need to make sure that people who are delivering services to individuals with disabilities do so properly, and that is what will make it truly inclusive. We also have a particular training on autism, which we provide at a professional level to those who work with people who are on the autism spectrum: professionals at the GHA, the Care Agency and the Department of Education. But more importantly we have devised a programme delivering support information and training to parents. We had our first session a few months ago and it was tremendously popular and was welcomed greatly by parents and the societies, and we have a schedule of further training for parents organised for the autumn.

Mr Speaker, before I turn to another equality strand, I cannot thank enough the groups and societies and individuals who come and see me and with whom I consult when we are preparing our policies, because of course our stakeholders' advice and their guidance is absolutely essential so I really wholeheartedly wish to thank everybody involved.

And of course, Mr Speaker, the final strand of equality that I wish to speak on is that of gender equality. In our business plan this year we have concentrated a lot on disability equality because of the new legislation that we will be introducing and I wanted to make sure that everything was in place. Once that starts to settle down in the next few months the Department will turn its attention to really focus and develop gender equality in the same way. You may recall that earlier in the year, in March, I announced a working group to look at issues of the gender pay gap and women in the economy. That is a study that of course is very involved, will require resources, but it is something we are very keen to develop and to finish because we have to make sure that the equality agenda continues to be rolled out. When I am speaking of this I am reminded of the very kind words of my good friend the late Juan Carlos Perez, who at the end of November when I was selected as a candidate for election for the GSLP, he was the one who broke the news to me in these words – he called me up and he said, 'Samantha, a woman's place is in the House.' (*Banging on desks*) I will always remember those words, Mr Speaker, because one of the things on my agenda is clearly for there to be more diverse representation of our community in this House.

Continuing on the theme of gender equality, the final topic that I wish to speak on is that of domestic abuse. The Ministry of Equality deals with this at a strategic level. I chair a working group of multi-agency professionals, the work of which is ongoing, and we look to see how we can support victims of domestic violence and how we can work with perpetrators of domestic abuse with a view to breaking the cycle, and of course in circumstances when children are involved, ensure that they obtain the proper support.

The final point on equality is that I would like to mention my role as Chairman of the senior management board of MAPPA. MAPPA is a multi-agency public protection forum where we deal with the management of sex offenders in Gibraltar. This is a very serious matter, one which we have invested in heavily in the last three years to ensure that the Gibraltar public are protected and also, and importantly so, that our professionals work with the perpetrators in the prevention of further offences, thereby minimising the risk. Mr Speaker, I am very proud of the developments and the works that have been undertaken by my Department in this regard, and

by of course all the agencies that sit on the senior management board of this committee and  
400 also the people on the front line and the people at middle management of the MAPPA structure,  
which is understandably very complex.

So, Mr Speaker, to round up it just leaves me to thank incredibly my personal staff in my  
private office. They are the people who look after me day in day out, ensure that my work is  
done, ensure that I get to places on time – and if I am late it is entirely my fault, not theirs, but it  
405 is usually because I have to be in two places at once. I have, I am delighted to say, a truly  
excellent, dedicated, hardworking and loyal team. I could not be happier with the people I have  
around me and the work that they do not only for me but for the community which I serve. Yes,  
Mr Speaker, I am very lucky indeed.

At this point I would like to thank Albert Bruzon, who very recently retired, and I would like to  
410 mention the effect that the Opposition have had in Mr Bruzon's retirement, because they have  
been *playing* politics. We are in this House to *do* politics, not to play politics and not to play with  
individuals. Mr Bruzon had to retire ... He did not have to retire, but he retired from his previous  
post on account of ill health, and a few months later when he recovered he returned to public  
service only temporarily for a fixed period at a lower grade and only for a few days in order to  
415 assist me to see particular projects through. Mr Bruzon, who is a longstanding, very loyal and  
dedicated public servant, a person who has dedicated his career to the public service, did not  
deserve to be named by the GSD so publicly in the way that he was, and I wish to publicly thank  
Mr Bruzon for his dedication to the public sector, to the Civil Service and for the work that he  
420 has done with me over the years. He has worked very diligently and I dare say even very  
protectively of me, and I am sure that he has always delivered such diligence, loyalty and hard  
work to all the Ministers he has worked with.

So, Mr Speaker, on that note, once again I wish to thank everybody who has helped me in the  
last year – my staff, people who I see, people who I consult.

Mr Speaker, that was 45 minutes – I hope you find that acceptable. Thank you. (Banging on  
425 desks).

**Mr Speaker:** The Hon. Lawrence Llamas.

**Hon. L F Llamas:** Mr Speaker, I rise to deliver my second Budget speech, focusing on care and  
430 tourism. I will once again strive to provide my humble opinion of Government's performance,  
whether good or bad.

Last year I dedicated a great deal of my address to the Disability Bill. Although this Bill has not  
been presented to this Parliament, I trust and hope that it is imminent and I shall be debating  
the detail and merits of the Bill at an appropriate time. For the time being, I shall say that it  
435 adopts more principles of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2006  
than the Command Paper published in October 2015. It will reinforce some of the basic human  
rights enjoyed across society as being rights equally to be enjoyed by anyone with a disability.  
But the work is not complete; further work must be done to extend the full definition of equality  
to all members of our community, creating a truly equal and inclusive Gibraltar.

Last year, I took the opportunity to congratulate the Government for making public areas  
440 such as playgrounds more inclusive; however, despite welcoming a refurbishment to the  
playground at Europa Point, it is regrettable that persons with disabilities are still not catered for  
at this playground. I hope the Government will rethink its inclusion policies in playgrounds and  
add disability-specialised equipment when reviewing our playgrounds in the future.

The Government has over the past year increased its capacity in full-time care for adults with  
445 disabilities. It has increased the number of flats from six flats as at December 2015 to the 11 flats  
which we have today. I understand that the majority of the additional flats are actually within  
our community, and as such commend and applaud the Government for this initiative. However,  
I continue to have concerns. Over the past three years we have seen a surge in subcontracted  
450 staff, of care workers, such that the service is split on an almost 50-50 basis between directly

employed employees and subcontracted workers, with most of the new flats dependent on subcontracted workers. Mr Speaker, service users are there for the long run, they are not there for the short term, and with this policy we need to recruit ... If we have long-term service users who are going to be in their flats for a long time, we need to cater for them with a long-term vision. I do not necessarily disagree with having subcontracted staff, as long as the conditions which they have offer them stability and a secure job with working hours and a contract in order to enable a worker to plan a career and a life, but more importantly provide a continuity of care for the service users, who are the priority in this equation – especially if they claim they have record surpluses.

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Domiciliary care, a policy properly initiated and developed by this Government, a policy which I fully support, is also heavily reliant on subcontracted workers ... actually, I think it is 100%, and these subcontracted workers are on zero-hours contracts. We must remember that in times of care one's dignity and vulnerability is fully exposed. The relationship with carers should be a constant and special one, one cherished between the parties involved. However, I am concerned as to the real effect of the care in this sector due to the lack of continuity of care.

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Last year I also congratulated the Government for the inclusion in the Estimate Book of Project Search. Only last week I asked the Government what inroads had been made with regard to Project Search or any similar supported internship projects. Minister Bossano replied: 'There has been no further development of Project Search or other supported internship model.' Thankfully, Minister Cortes knows otherwise and has acknowledged and launched the project, a step in the right direction. I now urge the Government to grow and broaden its approach in order to tackle this adequately.

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Now, Mr Speaker, I would like to deal with the lack of prioritisation given by this Government to St Martin's School and Early Birds Nursery. Before I make the point, and in expectant anticipation of the 'blame the GSD' chief ministerial tirade when he exercises his reply, let me remind him that he has been in Government since 2011 and is therefore ultimately responsible for the situation this school is currently facing. In 2012-13 the number of students stood at 48. There has been a steady increase year on year in student intake with a sharp rise in the coming intake for 2017-18 of 66 students, a percentage increase of 37.5% on this Government's watch. Delivering a new school should have been a priority; instead, these incoming children will have to be taught in the deplorable surroundings of portakabins placed on a small car park. I say this in light of a Government that has tried to make cheap political points on this issue. Yes, the GSD did not have this in its manifesto, but I can assure you that I would have yelled from the rooftops if our team had been elected into government and not prioritised the refurbishment of a school in need and done a refurbishment of No. 6 at £6.5 million or the Small Boats Marina at £25 million instead of catering for those most in need of our care – and they claim to be a socialist Government. It is indefensible and shameful and will be a shameful black mark on this Government's tenure in office. St Martin's school is also in need of a new bus. The Government knows this and committed itself to providing it in last year's Budget. Nevertheless, a year on and there is still no bus and no mention of when this bus will be delivered.

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It is, however, commendable to both the Government, for offering courses, and teachers who have taken the offer of undertaking courses in special educational needs. SEN is on the rise and we must ensure we learn and adapt to provide the best educational platform possible to ensure we maximise students' potential.

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Moving on to tourism, a sector which has so much more potential but is still not being given the priority it deserves, we need to build strong foundations in this area in order to stimulate economic activity which is viable and enduring, particularly in the post-Brexit environment. The tourism sector is doubly important as it is intertwined with the offering for our community, and we should endeavour to ensure that our offering is available to tourists as well as our citizens. A good starting point would be, for example, the World War II Tunnels, which are still closed on Saturday afternoons and Sundays. Gibraltar must become a viable destination beyond a cruise call or the off-chance day tour because you happen to be within our proximity. We really need

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to wake up and smell the coffee. The tourism sector should not be operating, as we have been operating for years, on an April-to-October season basis. All around the world tourist destinations are trying to level out the peaks and troughs in the tourism sector. This can only be achieved by maintaining and provide an offering all year round. We have to broaden our product. We have to professionalise our sector and raise the bar. Post-Brexit our tourism sector is bound to change our market, but we have a rough diamond the size of the Rock. A year has already elapsed and we are not in a much better position than where we were last year. We need to be ready for this change and pre-empt the change, develop the markets which will boost our economy, embrace the best we have to offer together with other markets in our proximity which could work in tandem. I acknowledge and support the Minister's recent trips to Morocco and look forward to seeing the fruits of such visits.

Mr Speaker, I fully agree and support the business-related tourism through Meetings, Incentives, Conferences and Events – otherwise known as MICE – the Government is embarking on. It has the potential of leading in the tourism market and providing a new niche with great economic returns. However, we need a round circle product – visitors want to work and play – infrastructure and technology to energise the visitors and thrill-attractions which create the platform required. WiFi hotspots, although located in key areas, are limited in websites users can access. We must ensure to provide further connectivity to all sites, as encouraging tourists to share and post their visit to Gibraltar will certainly boost the #visitgibraltar.

Wedding tourism plays an interesting role in our market. This market can grow further, but we need to ensure that our product is up to standard. Our Registry counter looks so outdated and is crying out for a refurbishment; sadly, it does not provide a good first impression.

And talking about first impressions, Mr Speaker, we seriously need to address our first point of entry via sea, but more importantly via our border with Spain. Apart from its outdated image, it lacks maintenance therefore making the area look unclean.

Mr Speaker, we also have been approaching the summer bathing season as a mid-June to mid-September season. I acknowledge that the battering storms we experience may provide hurdles, but these are no less than hurdles faced by the coastlines in the Iberian peninsula which are open for business all year round, and they bounce back from storms within an appropriate period. A year-round maintenance policy must be implemented sooner rather than later. The official summer season deadline to restore most of our beaches to bathing conditions has elapsed and we are still seeing last-minute works being carried out on our beaches – without mentioning Camp Bay and Little Bay, which have been left very much wanting and should have been tackled a lot earlier as they look a complete mess.

We must consider and respectfully value and analyse the tourist experience in Gibraltar. What are tourists seeing, experiencing and living? What image and memories are they taking with them? We must be monitoring and assessing by looking at statistics which the Minister for the Environment does not see the need to obtain. The need is vital to assess the movement of tourists in the Upper Rock, to see how tourist sites are performing, to monitor their performance and the historical lesson being taken back by tourists. I can assure this House that it does have its value, as I dread to fear that many just come to the top of the Rock to admire the view – but it offers so much more. I do have my reservations as to whether tourist sites and beaches, fundamental pillars in the tourism sector, should be managed by the Environmental Ministry rather than the Tourism Ministry.

In the Upper Rock there has been a great deal of work carried out, more notably the suspension bridge inaugurated last year and the glass look-out, which unfortunately has not opened in time for this year's tourism peak. However, in the meantime there are serious hazardous areas in the Upper Rock which are in so much need of refurbishment and should have, in my opinion, been prioritised, especially in light of a surge in walking visitors.

We have also seen an investment of £135,000 in O'Hara's Battery, an attraction which has been closed since October 2016 and Government have been unable to commit as to when it will be open. This is one of the works from a £1.3 million-worth of works which have been awarded

555 without proper local procurement directives being taken, as highlighted by the Principal Auditor last year. The reason for its permanent closure is lack of manning levels; however, within the same breath the Government deems fit to spend £19,000 on street art, which they claim to be a tourism initiative, but does not have the capacity to open O'Hara's Battery. The Government have simply not been able to match the cart with the horse.

560 I look forward to the focus the Government will be giving to urban regeneration from a tourism perspective and would expect to see tangible results from this project in the near future, given the Government first announced this back in 2013.

I note with delight the increase in air connectivity resulting in record-breaking records in the number of passengers handled by the air terminal. The positive impact on recurrent aviation fees is encouraging, with an increase of £1.2 million for 2016-17 and an increase of £1.5 million estimated for 2017-18 when compared to 2015-16 – an increase of 33%, an additional £2.8 million of recurrent revenue over two years. I also note the cruise industry breaking records in 2016, and scheduled to have an even better 2017.

570 Mr Speaker, unfortunately the same cannot be said about our land visitor arrivals, which continue to drop from a 11.4 million record in 2011 to 9.4 million in 2016. This represents a 17% overall drop in five years.

The increases in volume of passengers travelling by air and sea have simply not been able to restore the tourist expenditure with the estimate for 2016 standing at £211.91 million, still 24% lower than the figure as at 2011 when the increasing trend of tourism expenditure reached a historical record of £279.79 million. In 2012 the figure dropped by 12.5% to £244.75million. In 2013 it dropped by a further 15% to £207.24 million. In 2014 tourism expenditure hit a 13-year low of £168.04 million, a staggering 39.94%. How does this generally affect Gibraltar PLC? Well, Mr Speaker, it translates as a potential loss of at least £367.08 million in tourist expenditure since 2012 to date had the expenditure levels been maintained.

580 The revenue collected by the Upper Rock Nature Reserve has also fallen, from £3.26 million to £3.07 million, a fall of 5% despite an increase in the number of visitors to the Upper Rock of 13.5% from the previous year. Since the foreign vehicle ban in the Upper Rock, the method of travel to the Upper Rock has naturally changed. When comparing 2015-16 to 2016-17, cars have reduced by 99%, coaches have increased by 10%, taxis by 38%, walkers by 80% and cable car by 20%. Despite the transport sector directly benefiting from the policy, there is one sole transport person or company which has failed to pay £108,000 in entry fees.

I understand that our official tourism website is being reviewed. I must say that it is regrettable that it is not being expedited. The same can be said for the Upper Rock Nature Reserve app. I would not have envisaged this to be a monumental task or to take this long and would have expected a simple bridge-over of issues, such as the possibility to download a brochure that could have been added in the interim.

595 Last year I also highlighted the Europa Point waste ground by the lighthouse, an eyesore which we have endured for the last seven years, and rather than spending £25,000 on providing a 'dog park' at the Alameda Gardens it is my opinion that it would have been far more useful to have landscaped the Europa Point waste ground and put that money to better use.

Swiftly moving on to the Port, despite bunkering going up and cruise liner passengers going up, the recurrent revenue for the Gibraltar Port Authority is estimated to go down in the current financial year by 1.9%. I note the Gibraltar Port Authority has been actively involved in attending seminars and conferences abroad, thereby raising its profile internationally; this can only be of benefit to Gibraltar PLC's future in this sector. Last week, the Minister for the Port announced he will be extending compulsory insurance obligations to all vessels in Gibraltar. I have been highlighting the issue for some time and welcome this policy measure.

600 Finally, Mr Speaker, I would like to thank you, the Parliament staff and all civil servants who ensure that Government answers are put together in what are sometimes lengthy, time-consuming answers during Parliamentary sessions. (*Banging on desks*)

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**Mr Speaker:** The Hon. Steven Linares.

**Minister for Culture, the Media, Youth and Sport (Hon. S E Linares):** Mr Speaker, this is my 18th Budget speech and my sixth as a Government Minister.

I will begin my speech by giving a synopsis of what has been achieved in the past year in relation to Culture. As it is now known, when we entered into Government we found the mess that was concocted by the previous administration weeks before a General Election in relation to the Gibraltar Culture and Heritage Agency. The replacements and reforms that we have undertaken have proved now for the past three years to be not only the right decision but also a great success. The formation of Gibraltar Cultural Services and having the Ministry of Culture running different events has gone a long way in promoting, enhancing and developing our local culture to the rest of the world.

In conjunction with the Gibraltar Tourist Board, the Gibraltar Literary Festival was organised as part of the events-led tourism initiative. This event, now in its fifth year, has proved to be one that has given Gibraltar the academic as well as cultural profile comparable to any literary festival held in the UK or elsewhere. In fact, we have given the GLF our own local flavour. It has brought to our shores many intellectuals, writers, commentators and others, giving the GLF a unique prestige.

The annual Drama Festival held in March 2017 was the biggest to date with 17 entries, a whole week of theatre. We now see international drama groups participating from the UK and from Spain.

GCS have started work on a major retrospective exhibition for January 2018 that will celebrate fashion design in Gibraltar. This is part of our ongoing cultural development initiatives.

The same can be said of the Gibraltar World Music Festival, which we sponsor. This festival is now being commented on around the world as one which is exporting our harmonious society. This year the theme of 'Uprising' has attracted the coverage of international TV channels. 'Convivencia' was the motto this year and workshops and seminars were held in our University that analysed how religious and cultural diversity and how religious differences can live in a small society such as ours.

The Gibraltar-Berlin Art Residency Project will take place for the second year. In July this year we will see Shane Dalmedo, our local artist, taking up an art residency in Berlin and a Berlin artist doing a residency in Gibraltar. This initiative is proving to be very successful in exporting our artistic talent. We again financially supported the participation of local artists in competitions abroad, such as the Royal Academy of Art Summer Exhibition and others.

GCS is responsible for overseeing and organising traditional events in our calendar such as Miss Gibraltar, Spring Festival, Autumn Programme, Summer Nights, Gibraltar Fair, national celebrations, New Year celebrations, international art competitions, literary and poetry competitions, and classical concerts in conjunction with the Philharmonic Society, amongst others.

In May this year, Shakespeare was back in town. As part of the Spring Festival, *Hamlet* was performed and a number of workshops for schoolchildren were held. These workshops were carried out by the Young Shakespeare Company, who were especially flown over from the UK.

The GCS will also be heavily involved in the opening and closing ceremonies of our Island Games in 2019.

On 2nd June, GCS organised the second anniversary of the opening of yet another manifesto commitment of having a National Art Gallery, as we all know named the Mario Finlayson National Art Gallery.

Apart from developing, promoting and supporting cultural events, GCS also do facilities management. They not only run the Ince's Hall, Mackintosh Hall, Retreat Centre, the Central Hall, the Gibraltar Exhibition of Modern Art, Fine Arts and the Gustavo Bacarisas Galleries, they also now help many groups and associations with the maintenance of their premises. When we came into government we realised that premises of which the Government was the landlord

660 were not being maintained, and this resulted in one of the tenants making a claim for damages  
due to water ingress. Now we have a programme of maintenance which identifies problems in  
premises, and GCS will deal with these issues soon so that tenants, groups and associations can  
continue with their good work. They have repaired and fixed things like the roof of South  
Barracks Recreational Rooms to avoid further water ingress; repairs to lighting, guttering, façade  
and installation of hand rails at the South District Senior Citizens' Social Club; repairs to the  
665 caving-in of the floors at the Gibraltar Downs Syndrome Support Group Unit at the  
Retrenchment Block; repairs to roof and guttering at 35 Town Range and 72 Prince Edward's  
Road, and many more. This we do because we value the work that all these groups do for our  
society.

The Mac Hall Library has gone through a massive transformation in 2014, and I am glad to say  
670 that the Hon. Roy Clinton visited the library recently and found out the extensive improvements  
that the library has gone through – pity he didn't mention it in his address. New books are  
constantly being purchased and CCTV cameras installed in the children's area, fiction section,  
main reception and reference rooms.

As to repairs at the theatre, which is now complete, these consists of refurbishment of the  
675 sound and light control room with new sound and light equipment; new floors and seating;  
removal of seats to create disabled access; increased capacity from 380 to 408 seats; new  
curtains; new carpet for the upper theatre gallery; new frosting to main doors; LED lights  
replaced for the courtyard area; extra furniture bought; new doors; new ticket office built for  
public use and hire; landscape posters displayed; and many more improvements which have  
680 made the Hall a place which we can now be proud of. I see the hon. Member is giggling  
underneath, but these are actual improvements since 2011, since we came into government,  
because they had it totally neglected. The same can be said with many improvements at the Fine  
Arts Gallery, the Gustavo Bacarisa Gallery, the Central Hall and the Ince's Hall.

I would like to say at this point, Mr Speaker, that GCS is also heavily involved in making sure  
685 that child protection for all cultural groups is a priority. They are working hard. Every group that  
is a cultural group has to register with GCS that they have a programme for child protection.

The Ministry of Culture has also been heavily involved in organising events such as the Jazz  
Festival, Winter Party in Town, Darts Trophy, pool and snooker tournaments.

The Ministry of Culture is and has been leading on the organisation of Gibraltar Calling. We  
690 have been working for the past two years to be able to partner with the biggest brand in the  
world and the most important music TV channel, that of MTV, to be able to deliver a music  
festival that will be shown around the world. Our GMF was one which was very successful and  
attracted our locals as well as tourists to our shores. I would like to take this opportunity to  
thank those who were involved in the GMF in having helped us produce the biggest event in our  
695 social calendar, and I hope that they will continue to be involved in Gibraltar Calling.

It is obvious that the vision that we had as a manifesto commitment is now reaping the  
benefits. Our policy of events-led tourism is working and the figures of hotel occupancy, as all  
the other statistics that the Chief Minister mentioned in his address, show this. We now have  
700 moved this event to the international arena and the representatives of MTV, who were very  
impressed at our product, have teamed up with my Ministry to create an event which will be  
beamed live to more than 30 countries. The value of this is immense. To give you just a snapshot  
of the benefits of this partnership, I will give this House a few figures – and I will also give the  
hon. Members who are talking, if they want to listen, these figures.

The following figures are only conservative estimates in relation to the media value that  
705 partnering with MTV will mean. The TV programmes being produced, which will be broadcast in  
30 countries and have an audience of about a billion, are estimated to have a value of  
£½ million. The 1,500 minimum 30-second broadcast advertising spots are estimated to be  
£150,000. Twenty-plus social media posts with a reach of three million-plus and one of its  
Twitter accounts having a following of 15 million-plus people is estimated at another £150,000.  
710 Press coverage via MTV will reach upwards of £1 million in media value. Minimum total forecast

of the media value is therefore £1.7 million. All the above does not include the events and tourism marketing we do ourselves via our own websites.

715 MTV is without doubt one of the biggest brands in the world. Gibraltar can benefit from the brand association to project its forward-looking position in the world. When talking to MTV's director and producer of Gibraltar Calling when they visited Gibraltar last week, they mentioned the fact that they wish to do filming of programmes for their channel here, since Gibraltar has not only a lot to offer in cultural and social events but also because of our unique surroundings and geographical position.

720 Now that this event is being filmed, Gibraltar will have a lasting legacy from the festival. Multiple high-quality media assets will be generated, which will be used by other Government agencies to promote Gibraltar, in particular as a music and cultural destination.

725 Gibraltar has been able to leverage MTV's relationship with artists to attract top talent on excellent commercial terms. Within the festival industry the current line-up is being seen as of a very high standard, some of whom performed in the Glastonbury Festival last weekend. (**Hon. Chief Minister:** Jeremy Corbyn!) Well, we can invite him as well to give us a speech, but I would rather have you as the socialist giving a speech!

730 One important aspect of the value of this event is the fact that many of the tickets sold to date for Gibraltar Calling are from people who intend to come to Gibraltar for the event. We expect to sell much more than we did last year, but taking the same figures of last year's GMF, at which we had over 2,500 people from abroad coming, means that the economy in general benefits in the region of £½ million. Therefore, taking together only the estimated media and visitor value of the event to our economy, our economy can easily be said to be in the region of £2.2 million. These are obviously very conservative estimates and do not include the cultural, social and other benefits to our community.

735 At this stage I would like to just go off script and tell the hon. Member about tourism: that we are not a destination for the bucket-and-spade brigade. We are a destination where we attract people to events, and this has been working now since we started doing events-led tourism. The hon. Member must recognise that all the events that we do attract many tourists to Gibraltar.

740 Mr Speaker, I now move on to GAMPA. In the 2011 manifesto we committed to three main things that we believe to be of great benefit to our society. These are learning an instrument, having a youth orchestra and the setting up of an academy for performing arts. I am delighted to say that the academy called the Gibraltar Academy of Music and Performing Arts, referred to as GAMPA, was set up in September 2015 at 63 Flat Bastion Magazine, Flat Bastion Road. For this, I would like to take this opportunity to publicly thank Mr Freddie Gomez for having cleaned up, looked after and maintained Flat Bastion Magazine for many years. He did this voluntarily without any help from the Government at the time. After he had been using the premises for years, he handed them back to Government and he is thrilled that his hard work is now used for the community in the form of the Academy. Since its set up it has been a great success, so much so that it has already outgrown these premises and GAMPA is currently outsourcing spaces in South Barrack Road Recreational Rooms as well as the drama studio and music room in Bayside Comprehensive. We are looking at alternative premises where we can house all students in the same venue and hold all classes in a centralised place.

755 When GAMPA initiated the Learn an Instrument campaign, one of the commitments in our manifesto, they realised that many children did not know the variety of instruments there are. Therefore they offered a total of 32 places for middle school children to learn instruments such as brass, flute, saxophone and clarinet. This promotion has been extremely positive.

GAMPA has developed the Infant Music Club, where children from as young as four years old can start learning an instrument and become interested in music.

760 GAMPA has become the official representative of Charanga music in Gibraltar. More than 10,000 teachers use Charanga programmes in over 3,000 schools. It produces engaging, exciting, innovative digital music teaching and learning resources in both primary and secondary schools to support music teachers and their students.



765 GAMPAs been working very closely with the Parasol Foundation in order to develop the Parasol Foundation Scholarship Programme. This programme has been designed to help the next generation of musicians and actors develop and have more teaching contact and prep time. This programme has been renewed for another year.

Two scholarships for excellence and promise were offered to students who show a high level of skill and have the potential to excel. Three scholarships were offered to beginners who showed potential and have achieved quite a lot in a short space of time.

770 Ensemble scholarships are open to all students of the Academy. GAMPAs been offering string ensemble, woodwind ensemble, corps of drums ensemble, aural skills and vocal ensemble classes in order for children to accompany and to play as part of a group. This will develop their ensemble skills with a view to having children play together to fulfil another manifesto commitment to form a youth orchestra. These classes have no maximum limit of students.

775 Further scholarships were offered to students with financial hardship. I am glad that this happens, because some of the children are not able to do it and I am glad that GAMPAs taken this on. Extra-curricular activities can prove to be expensive to a student who feels they really want to dedicate themselves to a certain series of classes.

780 All in all, the success of GAMPAs been such that we are looking at expanding to have more premises to be able to cope with the demand.

Together with HM Government, the Parasol Foundation have also supported the Academy with a scholarship for drama and by purchasing music books in order to complete the Academy's library, as well as funding of more instruments.

785 The ABRSM – I hope Mr Speaker does not ask me what these mean – exams have been taking place in Gibraltar for decades under the supervision and management of the College of Further Education. It is important to note that it also does singing and performing courses, of which recognised examination has been conducted. GAMPAs therefore become an examination centre for the ABRSM. The Trinity Rock and Pop exams have proved to be very successful and the Trinity College London Drama exams. Every exam has been allocated a level and a number of credits in the Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF) in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. GAMPAs very proud to be offering tuition and examination opportunities to students who choose to study classical, pop and rock music as well as acting and drama.

795 Mr Speaker, I now move on to the media, which forms part of my responsibilities for the first time. I have been able to closely work with the Chief Executive of our national broadcaster GBC to ensure that standards of service are maintained and, where possible, improved. GBC is a far cry from the television and radio station of just five years ago due to the lack of investment by the previous administration, with huge improvements having been carried out to its programming since then. This has happened thanks to the funding provided by our Government and the commitment of its management and staff to make it work. The efforts have paid off. The feedback received by the Corporation continues to suggest that a majority of viewers and listeners enjoy GBC radio and television Gibraltar programming. Live and on-demand programmes via GBC online have a good following too, as do their social media platforms, where GBC News is relied upon as an authoritative and reliable source by thousands.

800 TV shows such as the recent *Port Ops*, which focused on activities in the Gibraltar harbour, *The Collectors*, which showed the unusual collections owned by several Gibraltarians, and *Rock Explorers*, which every week shows a different element of local natural history, are shows that would only be produced by a local channel, proving GBC's value to the community. There has been a significant number of local series and specials produced during the past 12 months, with these including the ordination of Bishop Zammit, which was broadcast live from Malta, as well as his installation at the Cathedral of Saint Mary the Crowned, also covered live. This year GBC has also carried live several Gibraltar-related political events from Westminster and the United Nations, ensuring viewers and listeners remain well informed on issues that affect them. This is also the case with respect to the current Island Games in Gotland, where there is a team of GBC journalists and producers who are reporting on Gibraltar's participation.

815 In addition, GBC Sports Awards, which has been a firm fixture of the annual social calendar,  
was once again aired in March, and I take this opportunity to once again congratulate the  
winners of these such deserved trophies. As Minister for the Media and Sports, I am really  
pleased that GBC has taken this initiative in which sportsmen and women are rewarded for the  
820 hard work and effort they put in to be able to at times reach very high standards at international  
level.

I must also mention the GBC Open Day, which last Christmas raised an incredible  
£142,000. The Open Day is an institution on the Rock, for which it is extremely gratifying that  
our national broadcasters lead on the event, which is followed by practically everyone in  
Gibraltar, knowing that their donations will help a variety of local worthy causes.

825 The last 12 months have seen several staff changes at Broadcasting House, with some of the  
household names we have been used to over the years either retiring or leaving to pursue other  
projects. In particular, I would like to thank Mr James Neish, Christine Clifton-Psaila and Stephen  
Neish for their many years of service to the Corporation, while wishing the new faces and voices  
who have replaced them every success in their new careers.

830 This Government continues to provide GBC with the funding required to keep up with  
technology. This year, the focus has been on the replacement of the ageing TV studio lighting  
grid with much more environmentally friendly LED lights, the first phase of which has now been  
completed. The second phase of this project will take place during this financial year. The  
station's satellite transmission facilities have also been upgraded, including the replacement of  
835 two 25-year-old dishes with new motorised ones that will allow greater reliability and flexibility  
for satellite reception, which is being used more frequently as GBC provides coverage of a  
greater number of international events, including the football.

Mr Speaker, GBC is swimming against a tide of international broadcasters that are made  
available locally by cable operators, which is not easy but proves its worth by providing well-  
840 produced local content and quality imported programmes. However, it does so from a building  
that is far from ideal and which in all honesty has seen better days. It therefore remains this  
Government's intention to relocate GBC for the Corporation to enjoy the working conditions the  
staff deserve and which will no doubt encourage them to build on their current successes.

As happens in all areas, there is always room for improvement. I therefore must pay tribute  
845 to the around 80 staff employed by GBC, who are at all levels ensuring that Gibraltar has a  
successful public service broadcaster with high editorial standards, who give of their free time to  
ensure that things like Open Day ... as well as to the members of the public and commercial  
sector who support it and give so generously, and that reflects the Gibraltarian identity through  
numerous locally produced programmes.

850 Moving on to the Youth Service, I can announce that it has undergone a number of significant  
changes, most noticeably within its structure and staffing arrangements. All the administration  
that was working from Montagu Bastion Youth Centre has now been transferred to the City Hall.  
This has meant that the supporting role to the service has increased since they can now double  
up with officers based at the main office of the Ministry of Culture. The qualified element of the  
855 Youth and Community workers can now work from the Youth Centre and can dedicate their time  
to direct contact with the young people.

The complement now of the Youth Service consists of a principal youth and community  
worker, two seniors and 5 JNC qualified youth and community workers (YCWs). It is great to  
have seen that two of these YCWs have gained their qualifications locally via courses accredited  
860 by De Montfort University in Leicester.

One further change implemented by our Government recently is that of regularising the  
employment status of all youth support workers. These workers, who are complementary to the  
work of the YCWs, are no longer on a supply basis but on a contract that gives them continuity.  
So much for what the hon. Member Mr Llamas said. They are also being trained in order to raise  
865 the standard of work done to achieve best practice.

870 Since the New Dawn of 2011 we have been keen for the Youth Service to encourage  
volunteers to help deliver youth work. This House will recall that volunteers were done away  
with by the previous Government and we believe that volunteers in the past contributed many  
positive things to the service. Therefore the Youth Service has introduced to everyone interested  
875 in working with youngsters a locally recognised and assessed course in Understanding Youth  
Work for volunteers and support workers. This year trainees were able to select the assessed or  
non-assessed route. The non-assessed route offered the trainee a certificate of attendance  
along with the chance to volunteer their services to various youth work projects. Due to the  
success of our training, we have once again offered Understanding Youth Work training to youth  
work trainees, who started the course in October 2016 and will have completed their training by  
this Friday.

880 Professional development is paramount for youth workers and to that end we are committed  
to supporting the staff to be able to train and learn new innovative ways to be able to deliver an  
excellent service. From the principal youth worker and his two seniors, who have undergone  
training on issues relating to grievance, discipline and dismissals ... to train all others in the  
service courses to do with Safeguarding Children, Health and Safety, First Aid at Work, Basic Fire  
and Rescue Training.

885 The Youth Service has been part of the Multi-agency Child Protection Committee since it was  
formed in 2015. It is imperative that child protection is at the heart of all agencies, associations  
and entities that are in contact with children. (**Hon. Miss S J Sacramento:** Hear, hear.) (*Banging  
on desks*) The Youth Service is a member of the Child Protection Committee, and following a  
request by the Care Agency in November 2015 the Youth Service agreed to join the Safeguarding  
Children and Young People training team as from January 2016. The Youth Service has increased  
its commitment to support child protection in Gibraltar. They have subscribed to the Signs of  
890 Safety model by committing themselves to taking a multi-agency approach in managing  
safeguarding issues and placing the welfare of children and young people at the heart of  
everything they do. In addition, the Youth Service will very soon be in a position to support the  
Care Agency by committing a senior member of staff to becoming a Safeguarding Children Tier 2  
trainer for the multi-agency team.

895 All Youth Service staff underwent a very successful weekend of personal professional  
development training, taking of their own time, that focused on the importance of supervision in  
youth work.

900 Since the MoU was signed by the Youth Service and the RGP, they have been able to build  
and establish a professional relationship of trust that has made significant progress in many  
areas that has improved the service to young people in this community. As an example, the RGP  
Charity Committee has helped in the funding of residential weekends away for youngsters on  
which some officers accompanied them. In turn, the RGP have benefitted from the Youth Service  
since they are providing training to new recruits regarding working with young people in our  
community. This partnership has also allowed both entities to be able to work with the  
905 neighbourhood to be able to understand community problems more closely.

910 Mr Speaker, at this point I would like to say that it was sad to hear the Hon. Elliot Phillips,  
who has not been hearing any of our speeches, and yet he spoke yesterday about many of the  
things that he did not even hear, and he is not here today to listen to all the good things that we  
are doing with the young people in our youth clubs and the Youth Service, and how we protect  
young people and how we look at issues of drugs and even youth justice, which he mentioned  
yesterday and he is not here to listen today. I would like to compliment the Youth Service  
because they do an excellent work. I do not know how many thousands of people he has  
queuing up either at his home or at his office, which he mentioned yesterday – thousands of  
young people going to him and telling him how bad things were. Well, I don't know, but even in  
915 the youth clubs ... We have four youth clubs and we do not get thousands. We get hundreds, but  
not thousands. He must have queues all down College Lane.

Mr Speaker, I carry on by saying that our Government continuously invests in the refurbishment our youth clubs. The Plater, Dolphins and Laguna Youth Clubs have undergone some significant interior refurbishment works that are complemented by new modern and up-to-date kitchens for young people to use and learn necessary life skills. One facility which we have invested in – unlucky that the Leader of the Opposition is not listening – and will soon be completed is that of the Girl Guides’ hut in the Upper Rock. This hut could no longer be used, since it was not fit for purpose, yet we found that the previous administration had plans for it but never started it. Grins from the opposite Members. We will see a new floor added to the accommodation and more beds. It will have new kitchens and the building will be accessible to all. The Girl Guides, who do a great job in forming the lives of young girls, have been asking for this for many years but it has gone to deaf ears. Therefore it gives me great pleasure to be able to deliver the state-of-the-art premises where they can continue to do the magnificent work that they do.

Our Government values the contribution of the Youth Advisory Council, which already has representatives from the Duke of Edinburgh, Girl Guides and Scouts. We have therefore seen fit to expand its membership to include the RGP, Education Department, GHA, Care Agency, St John Ambulance and the Drugs Co-ordinator. All these entities have a lot to contribute in helping deliver quality youth work.

Further to the Council, as Minister for Youth I have felt it important to give young people a voice in our community, again rebutting what the hon. Member stated yesterday – that we do not listen to young people. The Youth Service set up a number of meetings with young people where they could raise any issues they had with me. This year, members of the Youth Forum focused mainly on issues regarding education. As a result of these meetings, young people have had the opportunity to meet with the Minister for Education Dr Cortes, with the Director of Education, with the Principal Youth Officer and with me at the Youth Centre to discuss issues that concern them. The Youth Service is working closely with the young people so that the issues raised by them are taken seriously and acted upon.

There are many projects that are run by the Youth Service. These range from developing photographic and filming skills to personal and social development opportunities and even fun activities.

The Luce Foundation project has allowed youngsters to attend residential weekends where they experience activities which deal with environmental issues, issues of citizenship, Personal, Social and Health Education, and challenge them to take life decisions to be able to be responsible citizens.

Mental Health is an issue which concerns young people, and to this end not only have the Youth Service engaged in helping fund-raise, for example with Clubhouse, but they are also in discussion with the GHA officials on how a mental health service for children and young people could be set up. Drugs, cyber bullying and youth justice are also issues that the Youth Service participates in forums on to advise Government.

I will not go through all the projects that the Youth Service has been providing the youngsters with throughout the year, since these are too numerous to mention, but one that sticks out was the winning of the first prize of the youth section in this year’s cavalcade; a lot of hard work took place and I would like to congratulate them on this achievement.

Mr Speaker, the Youth Service takes the youth seriously. They work hard. Again, I must say the five-minute speech that the hon. Gentleman, Mr Elliot Phillips – who came for five minutes, spoke for five minutes and left – was absolutely saddening, to be nice to him, because he has not recognised the hard work, the increase and all the things I have said. He would have listened to it today and he would have learned something from what all the Youth Service is doing.

**(Several Members: Hear, hear.) (Banging on desks)**

**Mr Speaker:** I think this will be a convenient point at which to have a short ... before the Minister no doubt calls upon the House to acclaim last night's historic victory by Europa Football Club against the Welsh All Saints. So we will have a recess of 15 minutes.

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*The House recessed at 11.25 a.m. and resumed its sitting at 11.40 a.m.*

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

**Mr Speaker:** The Hon. Steven Linares.

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**Minister for Culture, the Media, Youth and Sport (Hon. S E Linares):** Thank you, Mr Speaker.

The Kings' Bastion Leisure Centre also comes under my remit as Minister for Leisure. When we came into government in 2011, the Kings' Bastion was a massive drain to the economy. It was costing – and I hope people take note of this, because it is interesting, though sad as well due to the economic drain – £2.6 million per annum with a mere £60,000 in revenue. After making changes and terminating lucrative contracts which were signed by the greatest

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Gibraltarian in history – the previous administration – and reforming the way in which it was run, we now see the deficit massively reduced.

Employees of KBLC were employed by the Gibraltar Sports and Leisure Authority (GSLA), and the revenue of the GSLA was actually fictitious since it was transferring money from one Government-owned company to the GSLA, which is also a Government entity. By transferring these employees to the Bayside Complex, where they were asking for more staff, and giving a contract to other GSLA employees who formed their own company, has reduced the running costs substantially. Now the KBLC is costing annually £1.6 million and is making revenue of £½ million and increasing every year. As can be seen, KBLC decreased their running costs by £1 million from £2.6 million to £1.6 million and have increased the income from £60,000 to £½ million, resulting in a significant reduction in the overall deficit. At the same time, they are carrying out the following improvements to the facilities.

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The fitness gym: a complete overhaul of the men's and ladies' changing rooms; all old equipment has been replaced with new equipment and an outdoor gym has been created in the back patio. The amusement arcade has seen the replacement of worn-out carpet tiles with high-quality fitted carpets in the games vaults and vaults repainted in bright colours. KBLC has cladded the ceiling and refurbished the Line Wall Road entrance to match the works carried out at the main entrance and they are in the process of repainting all the ironmongery, including columns and gates, on the Line Wall facade of the building. On the second floor, the cinema foyer area and toilet corridor has been repainted. Some damaged glass panels around the terrace areas have been replaced. Entrance tunnel and toilet passage walls painted and cladded with wood-face bricks.

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In the ice rink, new skirtings have been fitted to complete the refurbishment that was started in 2015. I would like to take this opportunity to say that the ice rink is a disaster in relation to the running cost. Whoever thought – probably the greatest Gibraltarian in history – of putting the ice rink on a second floor did not contemplate the amount of money it would cost in electricity. It is like having a fridge all day opened at the beach in the month of August. We are now looking at the possibility of putting solar panels on the roof, but we are finding it difficult due to the fact that even the roof is slanting the wrong way.

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Leisure Management Services, which are contracted to run KBLC, have agreed with the GSLA to provide basic maintenance services at the Bayside Complex and have employed an additional

maintenance staff member to cope with the extra work. This will provide more income to help them meet their running costs.

1015 During the current financial year LMS will be upgrading the consoles and software used at  
the bowling alley and will start work on replacing the bowling ceiling as well as installing LED  
screen panels for the back end of the bowling lanes. The latter will be useful in attracting  
marketing revenue. LMS, on behalf of KBLC, has entered into an agreement with the Gibraltar  
1020 International Airport authorities for the provision of a children's play area within the departure  
lounge of the airport, where they can install some more arcade machines. Both these initiatives  
will provide additional income streams for KBLC that will help them in reducing their overall  
running costs. I would like to congratulate both the management and the staff of LMS for having  
taken the task of running the Leisure Centre with a budget of less than £1 million from the  
previous set up and at the same time improving all the facilities – a far cry from what we  
1025 inherited in 2011.

I now move on to my ministerial responsibility for sport. Phase 1 of the works at the GSLA  
swimming pool complex has been completed, with phase 2's final completion scheduled for this  
summer. The works have included the installation of a second filter for the accessible pool as  
well as the installation of systems that will automate chemical dosing, backwashes and  
1030 automatic readings of water turbidity. Improvements are already noticeable in terms of  
efficiency, and once completed the reconfiguration will result in savings in chemical  
consumption, water consumption and maintenance costs.

Let's not forget that the photovoltaic panels, which cost £680,000, from which £290,000  
came from the EU – i.e. the expenditure of Government was £390,000 cost to the taxpayer – has  
1035 now been paid by savings. The saving to date is approximately £720,000. Not only are we  
making these savings with the photovoltaic panels, we are producing electricity in excess of  
what the swimming pool needs and therefore we are also feeding this to the main grid. The best  
of the system is that the facility is functioning virtually at 0% carbon emission. Additionally,  
these works form part of a scheme to offer the general public an enhanced service resulting in  
1040 the facility opening seven days a week.

Improvements are scheduled to take place in many areas in the Bayside Sports Complex. To  
begin with, and due to the fact that the three-padel tennis courts are extremely popular, they  
have suffered a significant amount of wear and tear and therefore we will be resurfacing after  
the Gibraltar Calling Music Festival in September. Currently, the turfs of these courts are laid  
1045 over sand substrate and users have been complaining that this is causing issues with the  
playability of the surface and in particular the ball bounce. Therefore the resurfacing will also  
include this time round the laying of a porous concrete base to replace the current sand  
substrate. This will resolve the current issues such as the ball bounce.

The boathouse area will undergo an extensive refurbishment this summer. The building,  
1050 which has been extensively used since it was built over 10 years ago, requires works to address  
water ingress as well as requiring improvements to the general areas. It has been the temporary  
home of the GFA for the last four years and they will be moving out imminently. It will now  
continue to house the associations which currently hold office space but will also become the  
official home of the Gibraltar Island Games 2019 organising committee, including the Games  
1055 director.

As is well known, the GSLA is charged with looking after the playgrounds and parks around  
Gibraltar. Within the GSLA there is a maintenance team who regularly go round the playgrounds  
and parks, mending, fixing and/or replacing the equipment. All the playgrounds and parks now  
have a notice where there is a hotline number for the public to contact should they see that any  
1060 of the equipment needs repair. The team will go out to fix on the spot, make safe and/or take  
away to repair. Apart from the continuous maintenance, every financial year there will be a  
continued programme of upgrades to the parks and playgrounds. The Chilton Court housing  
estate has been earmarked as an area that requires attention. This is an old park and play area  
that was inherited when the estate was transferred to the Government. Various options are

1065 currently being considered for the area with the tenants association liaising closely with the  
1066 GSLA.

The Government, via the GSLA, has been involved with the following events locally and  
internationally both at a logistical and financial level. Mr Speaker, with the football, as in the  
UEFA Futsal, I do not think I should go through all of them, just to highlight, for example, the  
1070 snooker, the pool, the darts, helping with the chess, the junior chess, backgammon, squash  
open, international regattas, Harley Davidson, even the International Song Festival. I have just  
left a few out there, Mr Speaker, because I will not go through them all. In addition, the GSLA  
offers logistical support and facilities for the local sports associations to complete their leagues  
and development programmes throughout the year as well as assisting schools in fulfilling their  
1075 PE curriculum both at the Bayside Sports Centre and at the GSLA swimming pool.

The Summer Sports and Leisure Programme 2016 once again improved on its previous year's  
attendance, registering over 9,500 throughout its different elements over six weeks. The Sports  
Train offered sporting and leadership activities every weekday in the mornings for seven- to-14-  
year-old children. The Children's Corner offered appropriate sport and recreational activities  
1080 three days a week. The family evening sessions noticed a marked improvement with the  
attendance of nearly 40. The Stay and Play programme offered sport, physical, arts and leisure  
activities for children with disabilities five days per week. This element in particular needed to  
review its scheduling, given the significantly higher attendance, and with this in mind the  
temporary staff complement has been increased for the upcoming programme. In addition, the  
1085 Care Agency will be actively involved in the induction training programme for 2017, adding to  
the quality of delivery whilst safeguarding the interests of leaders and users alike.

The GSLA also worked in partnership with sports associations –28 in total – to provide a wide  
range of sports coaching courses and taster sessions with children and young people. Other  
positive leisure providers, including the Government, the Ministry of Environment, the GHA and  
1090 the RGP ...

Mr Speaker, such is the success of this sporting programme that the sponsorship  
arrangement with NatWest has been extended, and we are grateful for their continued support.

The Government, via the Gibraltar Sports Advisory Council (GSAC), which is administered by  
the GSLA, has continued to support local athletes and teams when they travel abroad to official  
1095 international competitions. The GSLA advocates the fact that it is not purely to be a member of  
the international body, but local entities need to be active within them by participating in events  
and competitions or by participating at congresses or annual general meetings.

Sports development initiatives have also been supported with a view to increasing the  
qualifications, knowledge base and experiences of local coaches and administrators. This is  
1100 particularly relevant as it will reduce the need for the importation of officials for the 2019 Island  
Games. Part of the legacy element of the Games is not just the physical infrastructure but the  
knowledge base and experience gained in the lead up to and during the Games that will improve  
the chances of Gibraltar being represented internationally as umpires and officials. I would like  
to, at this stage, congratulate Nathan Stagno for having obtained his MBE for being one of the  
1105 best referees, umpires, of hockey. **(Several Members: Hear, hear.)** *(Banging on desks)* This will  
increase the pool of qualified sportsmen and women and will raise Gibraltar's profile even  
higher as a host location for international events.

In addition, some individuals who presented cases for financial support under the "Elite  
Athlete" category have been supported. Applications were considered by the relevant  
1110 subcommittee on a case-by-case basis.

The review of the guidelines – and I think this part is important for the sporting fraternity –  
for registering sporting associations has been completed with these becoming criteria.  
Registered sports associations, leisure providers and commercial entities have been informed of  
the new requirement, and, if it is not met, it will result in allocations and/or funding being  
1115 withdrawn. The main points to note are regarding training, with all coaches and leisure providers  
having to attend relevant Safeguarding Children and Young People workshops, the nomination

of welfare officers within registered governing bodies, the submission of an up-to-date child protection policy and proof of RGP vetting and relevant documentation from country of origin. The GSLA will assist all those concerned with training and support, and whilst there will be a transitional period whilst training is arranged and undertaken in the short term, the criteria will be stringently enforced in the future. Child protection is therefore a must from now on.

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Preparations for the 2019 Island Games are well underway. The organising committee, led by Linda Alvarez, is making significant progress in key issues such as accommodation, travel logistics and sport-specific requirements. There is regular contact with those associations involved in the Games and with the key stakeholders like the RGP, GHA and Technical Services to name but a few. Several members of the organising committee are now in Gotland, where Gibraltar will host an information evening – in fact, it is this evening – for all of the other member islands, to provide an update. In addition, meetings have also been scheduled with the International Island Games Association Executive Committee and several reps will also address the annual general meeting, which they did last night, held as part of the Games in Gotland. Mr Speaker, I was only in Gotland for hours but in the opening ceremony and all the receptions you could see the buzz of people wanting again to come to the Island Games in Gibraltar, which I think is brilliant because of the way that all the organising committee were dressed with the '19' and Gibraltar and everybody was asking questions on when it is and all that. So I am really pleased that it is going really well.

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Mr Speaker, the Government announced on 18th April that an agreement had been reached with the Gibraltar Football Association (GFA) on the constitution of a UEFA Category 4 National Football Stadium in Gibraltar. As is well known publicly, the GFA initially had objections to the Victoria Stadium as the venue for the new stadium. The Government has been assisting the GFA with a view to identifying an alternative site for the construction of a stadium in Gibraltar.

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On 20th March 2017 the GFA wrote to the Government informing that all sites had been considered, in particular Europa Point and Lathbury Parade, and said that they had turned out to be unviable for a number of reasons. The GFA informed the Government that it had explained its predicament to UEFA, who in the circumstances accepted the lifting of the standing objection to the Victoria Stadium on condition that the GFA acquired exclusive ownership of the Victoria Stadium. Government therefore happily acceded to the request. Given the current importance of that site to all other sports, the Government agreed to sell the site of the Victoria to the GFA for £16.5 million, which represented a fair value for the site and the cost of relocation of the sports that presently use that site.

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The sale includes the old Victoria Sports Hall and the right to redevelop the area of Winston Churchill Avenue and the adjacent petrol station upon relocation of the latter after opening the tunnel under the runway. The sale does not include the Tercentenary Hall or the rest of the Bayside Sports Complex. I would like to put to one side or at least quash all the rumours that have been going banding about that we are also selling the hockey pitch. The hockey pitch is not part of the sale to the Victoria Stadium; it is only the part of the track, the stadium and pitch 2, and obviously the sports hall, as I mentioned.

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The sum of £16.5 million is the amount that the Government will invest in re-providing the sports facilities presently provided for at the Victoria Stadium. In addition, the GFA will continue to allow the use – and this is important again for the people to understand this – of the Victoria Stadium for a number of community events and school use where this deconflicts from the GFA's own football requirements, which will then have priority on that site.

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The GFA will pay for the purchase in three instalments with funds it will receive exclusively from UEFA and FIFA: two instalments of £5 million, which will be paid in this current financial year; and a third payment of £6.5 million, which will be paid in the financial year 2018-19. In addition, the GFA will invest in the region of £15 million in the redevelopment of the Victoria Stadium and the old Sports Hall. As a result, Gibraltar will enjoy a National Football Stadium which will be developed at no cost at all to the taxpayer.

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1170 The Government will be investing the entirety of the sum of £16.5 million paid for the Victoria Stadium to redevelop the sporting infrastructure of Gibraltar affected by the sale. It will do so for the purpose of leading a total revolution and transformation of the sporting facilities available in Gibraltar and will do so in time for the 2019 Island Games. All these facilities will be developed by the Government as Government projects but will nonetheless be submitted to the Development and Planning Commission in line with current practice and will be developed with the new rules on accessibility of buildings forming part of the planning process.

1175 I think it is important at this stage to say that the Hon. Minister for Equality and Housing mentioned the fact that the law on disability will be coming in, but I can tell the hon. Members and Gibraltar that all the planning that we are doing is now abiding by the new law, so therefore these projects are already looking at the new law, as opposed to what we have currently. In addition, the Ministry for Sport will continue to work with the GFA and all the relevant sporting  
1180 organisations and representative bodies in order to get the results right on this investment in sport in Gibraltar.

In relation to the question of re-providing or re-siting sports facilities, we will be developing the site of Lathbury, where there will be an 800-seater, 400-metre, eight-lane track. This athletics stadium facility for athletics will also be a general purpose sports field and will be made  
1185 available to football and other sports in Gibraltar. This facility will therefore be larger than the current track at the Victoria Stadium.

Within the Lathbury complex a 52-metre pool will be built, which will fulfil yet another manifesto commitment. This new swimming pool will be a 52-metre, eight-lane pool with seating capacity for around 400 spectators. The Gibraltar Amateur Swimming Association is assisting the Government to ensure that this new pool facility complies with all international  
1190 requirements.

A full-size football ground which can double up as training pitches, especially for children, will be provided. This will be available to the GFA, to all the GFA league clubs, as well as to rugby. This facility will include a communications centre, a boardroom, a press area, a lecture room, an  
1195 infirmary and coaching and anti-doping rooms. In addition, a gym and indoor warm-up area will be provided.

New offices for the Gibraltar Amateur Athletics Association for the Gibraltar Amateur Swimming Association are also being developed as part of this new and exciting facility. The whole area will also benefit from a huge underground 1,200 parking space area. Facilities for a cafeteria will also be provided.  
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The athletics and playing field facility is anticipated to be ready by December 2018. I know that come December 2018 we will say, 'Why haven't you finished it?' Well, there might be a bit of slippage, but that is my target.

A full 100 metre x 68 metre plus 10 metre dead ball international size rugby ground, a cricket pitch and football training pitches will be constructed in a facility which will also be owned by the Government but run by a trust that will be comprised of the sports that will be using it and Government. The Government is working closely with the Gibraltar Rugby Football Union on the development of the rugby pitch in order to ensure that it complies with the necessary international standards. In addition to the rugby pitch, the facilities at Europa will also provide  
1210 for a rugby clubhouse.

The provision of facilities for an oval, 120 metres by 110 metres, is also catered for in this redevelopment. Three indoor and three outdoor cricket nets will also be provided. The Government is working closely with the Gibraltar Cricket Association to ensure that the development complies with the relevant international criteria. In addition, a new modern and fit-for-purpose clubhouse and pavilion will be provided for the Gibraltar Cricket Association. The outdoor facilities will have a 1,200-seater spectator stand.  
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Importantly, the Europa sports redevelopment will provide a 42-bed dormitory for visiting sporting associations and teams. This will be available to teams and associations of all sports and will assist in the development of Gibraltar as a centre for sports training.

1220 The development at Europa will include a new 49 metre by 33 metre sports hall and events  
space. This facility will be multi-functional. Also included will be six new squash courts with  
provision for 80 audience seats. Darts will have 12 practice lanes – oches, they are called –  
1225 provided within a 4 metre by 10 metre space. Additionally, boardrooms, offices, lecture rooms,  
gyms and treatment rooms will be provided, together with a rehabilitation centre. The sports  
hall will replace the Old Victoria Sports Hall, which will nonetheless still be made available to the  
whole community by the GFA in a manner that de-conflicts from their own needs. The Europa  
Sports Hall will provide for futsal, basketball, netball, volleyball and badminton, as well as for  
other indoor sports.

1230 None of the developments at Europa impinge on the existing playing facilities for children or  
the heritage assets in the area.

The Government's plans also provide for the construction of a much needed new facility for  
Special Olympics Gibraltar. The development will also be in the Europa area. The facility will be  
attached to a further new community sports hall and gymnasium with treatment and changing  
facilities as well as a bar, restaurant and kitchen. The technical designs in respect of the new  
1235 Special Olympics facility will be the following: a sports hall, gym, male and female changing  
rooms, treatment room, office, bar, restaurant and kitchen. These facilities, although built for  
our Special Olympians will be a place which all other sports associations and entities will be able  
to use. The concept of these facilities is for it to be inclusive and accessible for all.

1240 The construction of outdoor and indoor facilities in the area of Europa Point for all sports will  
also be helpful in the development of the University of Gibraltar and its ability to offer sporting-  
related courses as well as making sporting facilities available to students of the University as it  
grows and expands.

The construction of the new sports hall and events space at Europa will require the  
relocation of the existing facilities of the Gibraltar Target Shooting Association. The Government  
1245 is presently engaged in discussions with the committee of the GTSA on the development of a  
new shooting range. The Government is also already in contact with the International Sports  
Shooting Federation in order to ensure compliance of any new facility with the international  
requirements for sports shooting.

Mr Speaker, in conclusion, be it the changes we have implemented in relation to the mess of  
1250 the defunct Gibraltar Cultural and Heritage Agency, be it the reforms we have done on the Kings'  
Bastion Leisure Centre, be it the increasing of the funding to our cultural fraternity, be it the  
increasing of the funding of our sporting associations, be it the construction of the new Girl  
Guides' hut in the Upper Rock, be it the hosting of the Island Games in 2019, be it the Europa  
Point complex, be it the Lathbury Swimming and Athletics Centre, be it the wonderful Special  
1255 Olympics complex, be it the partnership we have done with MTV in relation to the Gibraltar  
Calling Festival, no one can question the advances this Government have made and will continue  
to make in the governance and development of our country. **(Two Members: Hear, hear.)**  
*(Banging on desks)* The future is bright and all our citizens know that there can only be one way  
forward and that is to invest in our people. I am honoured to be part of a Government that is  
1260 forward thinking and has a clear vision, from the way we are dealing with Brexit to the way we  
deal with day-to-day issues and all other aspects of governance.

I would like to thank all those NGOs such as the Youth Advisory Council; the Youth Forum; the  
Gibraltar Sports Advisory Council; all the cultural groups from the arts, drama, photographic and  
dance fraternities; all the members of the governing bodies of those sports which are involved in  
1265 delivering the state of the art facilities which will leave a lasting legacy well after the Island  
Games has passed and well after we have all passed; the organising committee of the Island  
Games, who do this without any financial interest; the team at AKS and Orfila's that are  
producing all the architectural and technical designs for all the sporting and cultural projects  
which I am involved in; those at Technical Services who help me steer these projects.

1270 Thanks also go to the staff at the Gibraltar Cultural Services, at GAMPA, at the Leisure  
Management Services from the Kings' Bastion Leisure Centre, at the Gibraltar Sports and Leisure

Authority, at GBC, at the Youth Service. Mr Speaker, last, you and your staff at the Parliament; and last, but definitely not least, my staff at the Ministry of Culture, without whom I would not be able to implement all the positive policies and manifesto commitments in which I am involved.

I commend the Bill to the House. (*Banging on desks*)

**Mr Speaker:** The Hon. Edwin Reyes.

**Hon. E J Reyes:** Thank you, Mr Speaker.

I wish to start my contribution today with matters pertaining to housing. In respect of repairs and refurbishments of Government rental homes, what has happened over the last few years is that an ever-increasing number of home refurbishments are contracted out to private companies without going through any type of transparent and accountable tender process. Furthermore, feedback from tenants who have had remedial works carried out in their homes indicates that more often than not the quality of the finished product leaves somewhat to be desired.

Last year, Mr Speaker, I mentioned that the Ombudsman had, in his annual report, said that his office continues to face difficulties when seeking information related to works which had been passed by the Housing Authority on to the Gibraltar General Construction Company Ltd, known as GGCC, which is the entity tasked with repairs to rental housing stock. When the works will be undertaken or indeed who will carry out the works is not information available to the Ombudsman directly from GGCC. Sadly, the Ombudsman had to add in his report:

It is very often a very tedious and difficult exercise to obtain information via the Housing Manager – who in turn finds it difficult to obtain information or indeed even replies from GGCC. Over a year on, of the above-mentioned situation we still have not seen any remedies to the system, so therefore it still prevents the Ombudsman from providing a proper and efficient service to those who have lodged a complaint – which in general are in respect of delays as tenants want to know when works will be undertaken.

Mr Speaker, these difficulties which the Ombudsman highlighted in his report continue to coincide with the feedback I still receive when meeting with tenants during clinics I hold with them. There is little faith among tenants that Government will fulfil their obligations as landlords in a timely and satisfactory manner. Surely tenants who fulfil their obligations, such as being up to date in payment of rents, should be treated with greater respect and priority.

Mr Speaker, the Opposition agrees with Government that action needed to be taken to ensure all tenants are up to date with rents due. Indeed, I have personally in the past stated approval of the actions taken by the Minister for Housing for having commenced a programme of agreements which should ensure all debtors are up to date with their rents within a given period of time. However, it is also equally just that tenants should have remedial works carried out to an acceptable standard within a reasonable period of time. If the Ombudsman finds it difficult to get answers to his questions, one can only then imagine what it is like for a tenant trying to obtain any answers directly by themselves.

I have also, during past Question Times, asked what plans Government has for the future of the Housing Works Agency. The reply has been to the effect that this is being discussed with the workforce and their union, but I regret to note that this does not seem to have yet been settled. I wonder if Government can commit themselves to a specific target date – after all, this can only be for the benefit of both the workforce and Government tenants as a whole.

Mr Speaker, Government had a 2011 manifesto commitment to provide a home to everyone on the housing waiting list and also on the pre-list as at 9th December 2011 – that is the allocation of homes to all applicants before what was to be the next General Election, which came in late 2015. The pledge was to eliminate the then existing waiting list and pre-list. Unfortunately, this target was not met by the time the 2015 elections came along, and I am still sad to note there are, in June 2017, still applicants who have not been allocated a home despite

being on the waiting list prior to that date of December 2011. A very serious explanation is surely owed to those applicants as to why Government has still not fulfilled its promise.

1320 The Government's website with statistics in respect of the Housing Department is still not available. I feel that perhaps Mr Speaker would also appreciate a revival of these statistics online, as it does curtail questions which I otherwise have to pose in this Parliament. I wonder if Government are now in a position to say by when the website with statistical information pertaining to housing matters will be fully operational.

1325 Based on the June 2017 figures I was given at Question Time, there are currently 960 applicants on the waiting list proper, with an additional 269 on the pre-list giving us a grand total of 1229 applicants. Mr Speaker, these statistics show how the election pledges made in 2011 under the heading 'Waiting reduced to 3 years max', and then further stating 'The supply of new homes will be kept under review in the light of applications received from 9th December onwards. Nobody in future will have to wait for more than 3 years to be re-housed.' This, Mr Speaker, has have simply not been met.

1330 And, Mr Speaker, the 2011 promises went even further. They were reinforced in the section dedicated to youth under the subheading 'Housing'. It read as follows:

Young people who are entitled to housing (as provided for in the Housing Act) will not wait more than 3 years for a home.

1335 Mr Speaker, it is a fact that there are still housing applicants who, despite the promises, are still patiently waiting to be allocated a home. What adequate explanations, I ask, does Government have that will satisfy these forgotten applicants?

1340 Mr Speaker, there are some very serious and genuine applicants who cannot aspire to purchasing their own home due to financial restraints. Despite the popularity of co-ownership schemes, this Government has, with the exception of homes allocated exclusively to senior citizens, failed to build any new homes for rental purposes. This sad situation is not the Gibraltar I would love to see, that is a Gibraltar caring for its citizens who genuinely are not able to own their own homes.

1345 Mr Speaker, we were awaiting, perhaps during this budget debate, details of the Bob Peliza Mews and Hassan Centenary developments. The Chief Minister had mentioned in the New Year that letters were being prepared to go out to prospective purchasers, but it now seems that infrastructure issues have delayed this project. There seem to be some modifications as to the footprint of the project and we will have to wait until September for more details to come forward. I hope that in September there will be a firm commitment which will be adhered to as to when these houses will actually be ready to allow the new purchasers to be able to move in.

1350 Mr Speaker, the Opposition had suggested prior to the last General Election that rents in respect of new rental homes allocated should be means tested. Not everyone is able to obtain a mortgage and therefore purchase their own home through the popular co-ownership scheme. However, there are many who can afford to purchase and yet they opt out of doing so, knowing that their monthly rents are a pittance when compared to the level of their personal wages.

1355 Many new homeowners have expressed to us their feelings of unfairness, as the only way in which they could obtain a home in keeping with their family requirements was through co-ownership, and this brings with it new financial burdens and in some cases has even led to hardship. Their claim of unfairness is that not only do they now have a mortgage to pay – I will give you an example: it will be around £200 a month for a two-bedroom home – they

1360 additionally have to pay community fees or service charges, which at current rates in some co-ownership estates are even greater than what a Government rental tenant pays in rent per month. Indeed, there are more and more people asking why should the tax payer have to subsidise rental homes, given that the annual cost of expenditure for upkeep of rental homes is greater than the sum received from rents due.

1365 Mr Speaker, there are now many Gibraltarians who have moved into their new co-ownership homes. I have had an opportunity to see some of these homes myself and I am happy to report that many aspects of these new constructions are very welcome by their new owners. However, there are some aspects which I would like to bring to Government's attention in the hope that the relevant Minister will be able to look into this further.

1370 Numerous purchasers at Eastern View Terraces have continuously brought to my attention –

**A Member:** Beach View Terraces.

1375 **Hon. E J Reyes:** Sorry, Beach View Terraces. Sorry, a slip of the tongue. Purchasers at Beach View Terraces have continuously brought to my attention their concerns in respect of the quality and reliability of the lifts installed. A recurring example of why the lifts give serious cause for concern is the unfortunate frequency with which they seem to break down. Last year I mentioned that I sincerely hoped that this would be looked into with some priority and that, likewise, proper monitoring during the installation of lifts at the existing rental estates which are currently having these installed will take place. It is still sad to say that the problems with the lifts at Beach View Terraces continue as a recurring nightmare for many residents.

1380 Mr Speaker, I would like to ask the Hon. Minister once again to spare some time and look into the numerous new problems which have arisen within many homes in the estates where refurbishments are presently being undertaken. I have received information from tenants – even with photographic evidence, which I can share, if so required – showing that as a result of the cladding and installation of new roofs they are now suffering from water ingress, an issue which tenants say had never occurred in the many years they have been living in their homes. In wishing the Minister all the best and hoping that refurbishment works are completed as per the reviewed schedules she has recently provided through answers to questions I have posed in this House, I appeal to her personally that new remedial works such as those I have just given examples of are also completed within the same time span as all major works are due to be completed.

1390 The revised completion dates have recently been announced as December 2017 for Glacis and Moorish Castle Estates, but for Laguna Estate the projected completion date is December 2018. These completion dates will be of little comfort to the tenants presently residing in these Estates. Not only are they, in many cases, fed up with the long delays, as they had been led to believe the works would be completed much sooner, but they are desperate with the disruptions being experienced. Tenants were expecting some inconveniences whilst works were being undertaken, but the way works have been programmed and the manner materials have been stored or left lying around in the area has in many cases led to desperation. Loads of concerns in respect of health and safety have been expressed and to be able to offer such little hope of a normal living area until December 2018 will unfortunately come as no consolation.

1400 The Opposition recently wrote to the Minister for Housing in respect of concerns arising from the saddest of incidents at Grenfell Tower. We are confident that the pertinent authorities are looking into these health and safety matters, such as we have been informed by the Minister already in this House, but we would welcome a public statement explaining eventually what fire safety tests have been conducted and what the full result in respect of Gibraltar's housing stock is. We patiently await these results.

1410 The positive side of the refurbishments is that one day residents should be able to pride themselves about their dwellings and surrounding areas. However, whether one can attribute the cause of increasing unsociable behaviour within the estates to be a by-product of ongoing works or not remains to be seen. Decent and law-abiding residents of housing estates are desperate to see the appropriate authorities making a concentrated effort to stop this unacceptable unsocial behaviour as soon as possible.

1415 Likewise, Mr Speaker, routine maintenance works in other rental estates such as Mid-Harbours does not seem to be happening to tenants' satisfaction. I know the Chief Minister has

not long ago visited this estate for himself and I am hopeful he will have instructed routine maintenance works to be carried out. However, there needs to be a maintenance team all year round ready to tackle any necessary works. Gibraltar should be efficient in the way it maintains its housing estates without the need to have to appeal directly to the Chief Minister for any works to be tackled.

Mr Speaker, moving on to sports-related matters, I wish to commence by saying that I am a firm believer in unity, where possible, for the benefit of Gibraltar's greater interests. I am glad to see that Government continues with the long-existing policy to assist all local sporting bodies to overcome any foreign government's politically inspired attempts to block our membership and/or participation in international sporting events. *(Banging on desks)* In the past, we have rejoiced together in respect of landmark achievements, namely the acceptance of the Gibraltar Football Association as a full member of UEFA and then FIFA. The policy of assisting sporting associations will certainly continue to receive the Opposition's wholehearted support and I sincerely wish other sporting associations, such as rugby amongst others, all the very best in their continuing battles to obtain their respective international memberships, which are rightfully and legally theirs. **(A Member: Hear, hear.)** *(Banging on desks)*

The GSD Opposition wishes the Gibraltar Football Association all the very best in finally having its own stadium. It is particularly pleasing to hear that the National Football Stadium will now be sited at Victoria Stadium, *(Banging on desks)* a location first promoted by the GSD. It seems that where there is a will there is a way, and therefore the GSD was not wrong from the outset in choosing Victoria Stadium as the best site for a UEFA and FIFA fully approved football facility.

The terms and conditions settled by the GFA mean that they will become the custodians of Victoria Stadium and we will offer our full support to the GFA in this respect because there have already been more than enough delays in ensuring home matches are played at home – and that means within Gibraltar itself. It is indeed a great pity that the first round of qualifying home matches in respect of Champions League and Europa League competitions have for the first time this year required players and spectators to make the tedious journey to Faro in order to compete in these prestigious competitions. I must take this opportunity to wish players, officials, and not least the faithful spectators, a safe journey to and from Faro. May the best of Gibraltarian luck accompany Gibraltar's teams in all our matches. **(Hon. Chief Minister: Hear, hear.)** *(Banging on desks)*

Mr Speaker, I mentioned before ... You beat me to it; we did have a conversation behind the Speaker's Chair this morning and you beat both the Minister and myself in offering our unanimous congratulations to Europa FC. I managed to see, I think, 90% of the game online. It was a magnificent performance. We were 1-0 up – I nearly got the prayer book out when it was 1-1, but the efficiency of our players managed to give us a 2-1 away win, so we certainly look forward to a continued success when we play at home, albeit in Portugal.

**Chief Minister (Hon. F R Picardo):** The players, not the prayers!

**Hon. E J Reyes:** Yes! We also take this opportunity to wish St Joseph Football Club, who I see from social media are already in the blue bus making their way to play their home game, and Lincoln, who I believe are playing away this week, the best of luck. When duties from this Parliament do not prevent, I will certainly try and be present at all the home matches, as has become now my tradition.

The latest developments which should see an improvement to football facilities in Gibraltar will be accompanied by an opportunity to re-provide facilities in favour of other sports elsewhere in Gibraltar. I sincerely trust that the funds which will become available from the premiums paid by the GFA are used wisely and in close consultation with the relevant sporting bodies so that Gibraltar may continue to produce worthy local athletes and develop its sporting talents to the envy of many of our sporting opponents in official competitions.

1470 I am grateful to the Minister for the abridged explanations he gave us of facilities and I certainly wish him to know that I am more than willing to sit with him as often as needed behind the Speaker's Chair so that together we may produce the best facilities and therefore have the best set of local home-grown athletes that will become the envy of many around the world.

1475 With your leave, Mr Speaker, I would like to repeat an offer I made last year during the Budget debate. I offered to the Minister, saying that although I am a firm believer that individual sports governing bodies should be allowed to manage their own affairs with no political interference, I urged him, in his capacity as Chairman of the Sports and Leisure Authority, to take a particular interest to ensure that publicly owned facilities are used in a fair manner for the benefit of all sports lovers. There is both a duty and moral obligation for the Gibraltar Sports Authority to ensure that, where desired by a club or individual citizen, membership in the relevant local governing body is open to all in an equal and fair manner. I offer myself to sit down and discuss with the Minister for Sports and Chairman of the Gibraltar Sports and Leisure Authority possible avenues which may be looked into in order to set up a special independent body tasked with matters pertaining to and requiring arbitration related to local sporting issues. Some disputes have been dragging on for far too long and I am hopeful that by working together with all affected parties solutions can and should be found.

1485 Whilst we have been debating this year's Budget in Parliament during the course of this week, other Gibraltarians have been proudly representing Gibraltar at the 2017 Island Games in Gotland. I am sure I speak once again for the whole House as we offer our collective congratulations to all participants who have achieved podium medals, but we also thank those participants who may not have been as successful in their achievements. We are proud of them because their efforts, always to the best of their ability, continue to make us proud of our sporting fraternity. (**Hon. Chief Minister:** Hear, hear.) . (*Banging on desks*)

1490 In recent Questions I asked the Minister for Sport what were the plans for the future use of the Old Garrison Gymnasium. Through his reply this House was told that refurbishment works were being carried out so that this facility could then become available for use by our local sporting fraternity. However, it has been brought to my attention that over the last few days a sign is now situated outside the Garrison Gymnasium signifying that these premises have been allocated to Europa FC. An update with details of any deals that may or may not have been entered into is therefore something which this House should be provided with.

1500 To conclude, Mr Speaker, I wish to reaffirm my personal thoughts that through the collective celebration of social events, participating Gibraltarians continue towards reinforcing our identity, our culture and our history as a people and as a community. Both the performing and fine arts fraternities always prove themselves to be very proactive within their own specialised areas and I take this opportunity to congratulate all the groups and individuals who have done Gibraltar extremely proud through their international participations and in numerous cases even top awards gained. It is always a personal and collective pleasure to be able to say how proud we are of the international achievements of all our fellow Gibraltarians. (*Banging on desks*)

1510 **Mr Speaker:** And last, but not least, the Hon. Marlene Hassan Nahon.

1515 **Hon. Ms M D Hassan Nahon:** Mr Speaker, before I start, I would like to echo the words of Minister Linares and my hon. Friend Edwin Reyes, and take this opportunity to congratulate the wonderful achievements of our sports men and women at the Island Games in Gotland, and to Europa FC on their win last night. (*Banging on desks*) As always, Mr Speaker, our homeland is doing great, and from this small corner of the House I want to send them my heartfelt congratulations as the medals and victories keep coming in.

1520 Mr Speaker, it was on this occasion a year ago that I stood up to address this House with my maiden Budget speech. As it happened, this was also my first major contribution as an independent member of opposition, and I used it as an opportunity to make my intentions as such clear to both the House and to the people of Gibraltar as a whole. At the time, I was

naturally anxious at the turn my parliamentary career had taken, but I was nonetheless always secure about the decision I had made. Over these months, I have been working hard towards meeting these intentions and trying to demonstrate to the electorate that I deserve the privilege they afforded me at the 2015 election. My status as an independent Member has only increased  
1525 the sense of responsibility I feel at serving the people of Gibraltar, and 12 months later I can confidently declare that I have found my feet in the business of this House. For that, Mr Speaker, I must thank you and your staff – Danny, Kevin, Frances and of course Paul – for the guidance I have received in terms of parliamentary, clerical and administrative procedures, as well as for the helpful advice that has been provided to me in the discharge of my responsibilities. As an  
1530 independent Member of this House, this assistance has been invaluable to me, as it is easy to feel somewhat adrift when one does not have the backing of a party machinery or even the Leader of the Opposition’s part-time salary. I have always found your staff approachable and willing to help, (*Banging on desks*) and I have never felt left to my own devices when finding my way through the practices of this Chamber.

Likewise, I am grateful to all my parliamentary colleagues for their support and encouragement, because while we may all have differing ideologies and approaches, I am in no doubt of the commitment that both benches have to our nation – a commitment that I constantly aspire to replicate in my endeavours. I feel particularly indebted to Minister Neil Costa, who has always treated me with respect and who has always shown himself willing to listen to my ideas and to the concerns I have taken to him. Many have been the times that I have consulted him outside the context of the parliamentary debate and he has proved keen to engage with me and to develop a close partnership for the benefit of the people of Gibraltar.  
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Finally, and most importantly, I would like to thank the many people who have reassured me, counselled me and congratulated me either in person or by other means. The kind words I have received over this time have further convinced me of my purpose in this House, and the apprehension I may have felt a year ago has been replaced with a stronger sense of conviction to serve this community and continue in the work that I have been carrying out since my first Budget response.  
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As I reflect on these past 12 months, Mr Speaker, I appreciate what a steep learning curve my first year as a Member of this House has been. There is a great deal that I have had to learn about diplomacy, negotiation, procedure, public relations and the many facets that shape a modern politician. In many ways, in fact, this has very much felt like going back to school, although in school I never got sworn at for failing to do my homework. But it is a learning process that I have enjoyed, and I look back at this year with both fondness and pride.  
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I am proud of the fact, for example, that this year this House took a momentous step towards a fair society for all by legalising single-sex marriage. I was encouraged that we acknowledged that our democracy is mature enough to recognise the rights of others, regardless of sexual orientation. It will be remembered, however, that I felt that the Bill did not go far enough in eliminating the final bastions of discrimination in our community by allowing Government employees to refuse to discharge their duties on prejudice grounds. To my mind, this ground-breaking Bill that aimed to eradicate discrimination with one hand was devalued by allowing it with the other ... undermining the Chief Minister’s claim earlier this week that ‘on this side of the House we do not believe in discrimination’. I remained unconvinced by the Government’s explanations and reassurances, as I felt they did not address the principle being protected. This is not giving same-sex couples exactly the same rights, as per the Chief Minister’s assertion. I was therefore proud to have fought against this clause, and was pleased that three Members of the Opposition broke ranks against their own leader and supported my amendment. This unusual act showed me that this is a House with a conscience, and I daresay that there were more than a few individuals on the opposite side who would have liked to have done likewise.  
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The debate we all had about mental health and the motion that was subsequently carried through also assured me, Mr Speaker, of this Parliament’s genuine commitment towards representing the interests of the less fortunate members of our society. There is no doubt that  
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1575 mental health patients in Gibraltar are now better served by the decisions we have made in this Chamber, and we have repeatedly demonstrated that we have listened to the concerns of those most affected.

1580 What I was less encouraged by, however, was to see this debate tarnished by an Opposition heavy in its criticisms but light in its proposals, and by a Government focused on trumpeting its own successes while, as usual, belittling the efforts of the previous administration. This conduct is unbecoming of our status as politicians and does little to protect the vulnerable. Of far more value, I felt, was for me to engage with stakeholders in the mental health field – professionals, patients and families – and to come up with a constructive strategy of proposed solutions to improve the services currently available to these individuals. At the same time, the amendment which I proposed eliminated all the unnecessary propagandist bluster, in the process showing that it is possible for the Government and an Opposition Member to engage in constructive dialogue with the sole aim of helping our community and dispensing with the trivial games that so often blight Gibraltarian politics. I was pleased to see the Government recognise these efforts and include some of my amendments while withdrawing elements of their own; my only regret, however, was that my Opposition colleagues failed to acknowledge the merits of both the amendment and of my efforts, so I still feel that this was a wasted opportunity to show true unity in the House where the interests of our community are concerned. (**Hon. Chief Minister:** Hear, hear.)

1590 Since then, and as a result of this motion, there has been some progress in how these interests have been further developed. In addition to this, I must, for example, congratulate the volunteers of the Samaritans service recently established on the Rock, as this will give sufferers of mental health issues the independent telephone helpline and other help that we advocated in this House. This is undoubtedly a step in the right direction, but I am disappointed that some of the other measures that we agreed to – such as the publication of data related to mental health matters, and the appointment of more educational psychologists with expertise in these fields – are yet to materialise.

1600 Where I sadly failed to enjoy the support of either side of the House, however, was in the issue of medical cannabis. This was an exciting debate, one that once again demonstrated that our community is more than ready to engage with controversial topics in an intelligent, mature and passionate manner. The public discussion, which reached its zenith in the GBC *Viewpoint* programme that saw this subject at its heart, exposed troubling discrepancies in Government policy towards cannabis-related medications, with doctors unsure about their legal rights and patients frustrated about being denied treatments that could improve their quality of life.

1605 One could not engage with this debate, Mr Speaker, without empathising with the plight of members of our community who wake up to the prospect of constant pain, a reality that afflicts their lives and those of their families. This debate led to the Government approving the use of Sativex, a cannabis-derived product that is widely available in the United Kingdom but, until then, denied to patients in Gibraltar – or, even worse, made available to only some. I was glad that the inconsistencies in this had been resolved as a result of this debate, but once again I felt that these measures did not go far enough.

1610 I put forward a list of proposals that would have seen Gibraltar take the lead in the prescription, production, supply and research into these products, a strategy that would have embraced innovative thinking in the field of medical science and would have provided both patients and doctors with further treatment options based on the benefit of a natural product. Sadly, I did not win the argument, but I am proud that I fought for this important cause and that I stuck to my progressive principles. I am confident that, in time, these products will become increasingly available to local patients, but what saddens me, however, are the many pained tears that will be needlessly shed in the meantime.

1620 In my inaugural Budget speech last year, Mr Speaker, I vowed to take the Government to task on matters where I felt it was necessary. My record over this time has proved how committed I have been to this. I have drawn the Government's attention to issues as diverse as the worrying

1625 hole regarding student loan payments, where it transpired that Government was not even  
aware of this historical debt while local students were being chased up to pay debts defaulted by  
the Government; of broken promises made to the Private Sector Workers and Pensioners  
Association, who in this Budget still receive little attention, despite the Chief Minister's boasts  
1630 trendy concept of co-education and how a focus on this should not detract from other priorities  
facing our education system; on the poor security of some of our schools; on the issue of taxi  
licences; and even on the state of the paving in Main Street. In some of these cases, Government  
has itself commended my contributions and has taken action on the issues I have raised. On  
other matters, regrettably, they have not been so forthcoming. For example, I congratulated  
1635 Government on making the Victoria Stadium a smoke-free zone, but I proposed a further ban on  
smoking in children's play parks. This is something which Government said they would review  
but, as yet, nothing has materialised. My opinion, as well as one shared by many parents, is that  
this common sense solution should be implemented with no further delay.

There are also still grave questions that need answering on some aspects of the purchase of  
1640 the new Calpe House building. Our community is rightly very proud and fond of this institution,  
but the asbestos issue has cast the light of scrutiny on some seemingly opaque practices, leading  
me to call for a Government-led investigation, calls that have hitherto fallen on deaf ears. I have  
fought this fight on my own, but it is one that I am willing to continue until this Parliament gets  
the answers that it deserves. Likewise, I famously challenged the Government on school lunches,  
1645 a matter that still does not seem to have been satisfactorily resolved. In some of these cases, I  
have found the Government's response to be evasive, defensive and, in this last example,  
downright belligerent.

All of this flies in the face of the nonsensical accusations that have been levelled my way that  
my role is to be a cheerleader for this Government. The evidence clearly demonstrates that  
1650 nothing could be further from the truth. I have criticised the Government on a wide range of  
issues, but where I have disagreed with them I have tried to offer pragmatic solutions rather  
than standing on the sidelines picking holes. And when I have agreed with them I have said so,  
because Gibraltar is as fed up of criticism for its own sake as it is of those constant reminders of  
the GSD's 16 years in office. In fact, Mr Speaker, those detractors may wish to consider instead  
1655 those times when I have supported the GSD Opposition in their dealings with Government. I  
fervently agreed with them, for example, on the issue of the lamentable state of North Front  
Cemetery, and wholeheartedly supported the motion tabled by my hon. colleague Trevor  
Hammond, and I am sure that he matches my disappointment in seeing that this House's  
resolution has not yet completely rectified the situation.

1660 Like the rest of the Opposition, I also expressed concern at the £300 million mortgage taken  
on Government housing estates, a matter which I will take up more forcefully later in my  
response to the Budget but which at this point serves as an example of the times when the  
entire Opposition has been united on a matter of grave importance.

I have appreciated the Opposition's support on some of the other issues I have raised,  
1665 particularly that of staff morale and discontent at the employment practices in the GHA, an issue  
which I first raised in this House and which has been pursued further by my Opposition  
colleagues. Despite this Department's huge budget – one that is warranted, given its importance  
to our community – the GHA still went over budget by 15% in the last financial year. For this  
cost, we would not be blamed for expecting a Rolls-Royce service that is fit for the purposes of  
1670 each and every one of our citizens. Instead, however, we are seeing a staff that feels  
demoralised and burnt out and which recently threatened to walk out over these conditions.  
Likewise, we are seeing patients who, as a result of this mayhem, find themselves lacking  
confidence in this most crucial service provider. There are also concerns about how the  
integration of the Care Agency with the GHA is being handled. The Care Agency employees are  
1675 apprehensive about some posts being eroded by this process, and it is clear that there need to  
be more detailed consultations with employees as this delicate negotiation proceeds. A common

complaint among Care Agency and GHA employees is the lack of response to their concerns, and I am sure that they would appreciate greater openness and inclusion as these important decisions are made.

1680 Mr Speaker, I will continue to take this Government to task on issues of health and also housing, because most of the priorities concerning the many constituents who have come to see me over this time have revolved around these two portfolios, and I will continue to fight on their behalf, be it on my own or with the other individuals sitting on this side of the House. This is not about party politics, but about doing what is right; and besides, I am a 41-year-old mother of  
1685 four – I think my cheerleading days are long behind me. Instead, what Gibraltar needs are politicians of conscience and of a sense of responsibility, and working towards meeting those expectations is all that matters to me.

Education is another important priority for our community. Mr Speaker, I have been determined to continue my involvement in this area with regular meetings with the Gibraltar  
1690 Teachers' Association and by reaching out to the main stakeholders in the educational field, namely teachers and support staff, parents and of course students. It must never be underestimated that teachers are responsible for the future of our community, and we must never set them or the students in their care up to fail in this responsibility. Government must support educators as their current successes will breed future ones, and unfortunately I have  
1695 often found myself dismayed to learn about the issues that teachers confront on an almost daily basis. We are talking about a profession with noble intentions and with the interests of students firmly at heart; but sadly we are also talking about one that is regularly frustrated and demoralised in the exercise of its crucial duties.

A main complaint is that of environment. Many of our school buildings are in a serious state  
1700 of disrepair. There are issues of overcrowding, of underinvestment, and of facilities and equipment that are well past their sell-by dates. How can we expect our teachers and students to thrive in these environments? (*Interjection by Hon. Chief Minister*) Five, six, seven new schools have been promised within this term of office – I do not know how many – but so far we have seen little of substance, one has to admit, with teachers instead facing the uncertainty of  
1705 rumours and having to deal with a make-do culture that is inappropriate to the demands of the profession.

There are also issues with recruitment, selection and promotion, with schools sometimes having to wait lengthy periods for vacancies to be filled. This has a significant impact on school planning and continuity, as well as on pupil progress. Furthermore, these periods of uncertainty  
1710 have a devastating effect on teacher morale and on the very fabric of a school staff. It is clear that a far more modern and expeditious process is required, not just new schools, and one that moves away from tiresome bureaucracy and that more truly reflects the needs of schools. Head teachers should not have to face having to prepare for new school years without their school's complement being filled, and a proactive system that pre-empts forthcoming vacancies would  
1715 go a long way towards ensuring an efficient process that would ultimately best benefit our students.

Security is another grave concern for Gibraltar's teachers. It is a sad reality that access to some of our schools needs to be more tightly regulated. I do not feel that this is the correct forum to give precise details on some of the holes in the security of particular schools, but I  
1720 welcome the Minister of Education's commitment to rectifying this situation as soon as possible, because the reality is that we cannot continue to expose our teachers to any dangers that are presented by their profession and by the current times, and I am pleased to see that this is being made a priority.

Likewise, we also need to recognise that the ICT provision and support in our schools is failing  
1725 to keep up with the advances of the technological age, placing education at a significant disadvantage. Our students need to be supported to succeed in the world of tomorrow, and this requires investment in the ICT of today. It is simply not acceptable for teachers and students to

have to work with outdated and occasionally faulty equipment, and proper investment in these areas will demonstrate to these stakeholders that their contribution to our society is valued.

1730 Mr Speaker, there are also concerns about the programme that is currently offered in our secondary schools. While it is right that we celebrate our schools' successes at GCSE and A-Level, we also need to consider what is on offer for students with different abilities who can still make a valuable contribution to our community when given the correct support and curriculum. A clear vocational programme with long-term aims needs to be designed in order to address this  
1735 gap in our educational sector, ensuring that there is no shortage of skilled labour in the Gibraltar of the future. The College of Further Education's role in all this should also be examined, given that some of its former responsibilities have now been redistributed to the secondary schools and to the University of Gibraltar.

1740 The educational sector is being placed under tremendous pressure to succeed amid very difficult circumstances, and it is a testament to the integrity and professionalism of teachers and support staff that our students are succeeding despite these difficulties. They also raise issues in areas such as lunchtime provision and health and safety in schools, all valid criticisms from the people at the front line of education. Many point to the University of Gibraltar and question why our younger students cannot have access to similar investment.

1745 And, of course, many in the profession would also welcome precise details about how the move to co-education is going to be implemented, with teachers and parents expecting clarity on what could potentially be one of the most important educational decisions our community will face in generations. By ignoring our educators, Mr Speaker, we do a huge disservice to our children.

1750 Our children now need to be placed at the forefront of our priorities, because Gibraltar is facing one of the most turbulent and uncertain times in our history. The result of last year's EU referendum has made many Gibraltarians feel uneasy about our future. There is a natural concern about how Gibraltar will continue to prosper outside the common market and about how our neighbours may exploit the situation to further their ambitions and make life difficult  
1755 for Gibraltarians. The reassurances that have been given by the UK government are welcome, but they do not fully eliminate the doubts we now face. Of course, this situation is not one of our choosing, but we must nonetheless accept it and present Gibraltar's case with both eloquence and passion. To that end, Mr Speaker, I presented a submission to the House of Lords EU Select Committee's inquiry into the implications of Brexit for Gibraltar, the only elected  
1760 Member of this Opposition to do so. I felt it was my duty as a parliamentarian to supplement the Government's submission and clearly communicate the concerns among our community. It is easy, among the talk about the economy, trade, movement, customs and all the intricate technicalities of a Brexit negotiation, to forget the human angle, and I felt it was important to impart to the committee the worries of the average Gibraltarian who faces this future and this  
1765 uncertainty. These worries were confirmed when the EU's negotiating guidelines revealed the infamous clause 22 – now clause 24 – that effectively grants Spain a double veto over Gibraltar issues relating to Brexit negotiations. Once more, it was necessary for Gibraltar's politicians to mobilise themselves in defence of our rights as the world's media spotlight cast a bright light on this injustice. I appeared on both British and Australian television and radio, while also  
1770 submitting articles to international publications, continuously defending Gibraltar's cause and drawing attention to the hypocrisy of Spain and the EU's stance. (**Hon. Chief Minister:** Hear, hear.) At these times, I have consulted the Members opposite and ensured that Gibraltar was presenting a united front on all matters relating to Brexit. (*Banging on desks*)

1775 I have given the Government both time and space to co-ordinate their efforts in these troubled times and have offered them my support and my advice – for what it is worth – and I have done all this, Mr Speaker, because this is a time too critical for party politics and partisan priorities, and one instead of concord in our vision for a post-Brexit Gibraltar. I have spoken to visiting MPs and MEPs, and while I might feel that the Brexit Select Committee should be meeting more regularly, I have taken my membership of this body seriously simply because

1780 Gibraltar cannot afford for this to go wrong. (**Hon. Chief Minister:** Hear, hear.) (*Banging on desks*) And it will not go wrong, Mr Speaker. Gibraltar has weathered so many storms that fate and injustice have thrown in its path, and we have always emerged stronger and more dignified. We have coped with sieges and floating batteries, with bombs and evacuations, with closed frontiers and naval incursions, and I have no doubt that once again Gibraltar will emerge from  
 1785 this confusion as a prosperous and thriving community, as ever an example for the world to follow.

My attention now turns to this year's Budget. The annual debate of the Government's financial plans for the year ahead is a necessary demonstration of the openness and transparency required in a modern democracy. Parliamentarians should never forget our  
 1790 responsibility towards the taxpayers of Gibraltar, and it is imperative that these discussions are had. The issue of such transparency has been given significant focus by my Opposition colleagues, especially Roy Clinton, who have been calling for a Public Accounts Committee to be set up in Gibraltar. I sympathise with the principles behind this plea, but I also understand the Government's concern with the logistical and administrative problems this could cause. Indeed,  
 1795 Mr Speaker, you better than anyone will probably remember that my father's AACR Government adopted a similar move in the 1980s, only to find the system unsuitable. So, in an attempt to satisfy both sides of the argument, I once again repeat my call, as I did last year, for an Autumn Budget Statement, similar to the one had in the United Kingdom, that will add a layer of transparency and accountability to how the Government uses Gibraltar's money. This would  
 1800 present a valuable opportunity for parliamentarians to monitor spending without over-taxing civil servants with tasks that may remove them from directly serving the public, and I trust that a Government that has always prized transparency will not hesitate to consider the idea.

But, for now, I would like to thank Government for providing this year's Budget book – this Budget book – but I feel compelled to ask: where is the other book, (*Banging on desks*) the one  
 1805 with the details of borrowing and spending of all Government-owned entities and, most importantly, the spending that has been conveniently kept out of the public eye through financial engineering and legal opinions? Because, my hon. Friends, we are being asked to assess a Budget that is incomplete and presents only a part of the Government's borrowing and spending. There is an equally important budget of borrowing and spending that is never  
 1810 reported, debated or accounted for. This must change. Otherwise, this can feel like a hollow process, and one that does not give the appropriate scrutiny to how Gibraltar's finances are handled. (**Hon. R M Clinton:** Hear, hear.) There is no real distinction between the Government's useable cash reserves and the pools of cash held by Government-owned companies. Similarly, there is no material difference between the debt held by one public entity and another. It is all  
 1815 public debt, just as all Government spending is public spending. It should all be reported and accounted for to Parliament in *this* Budget. Pretending there is a difference and labelling some of the Government debt as unrelated to the public sector is doing a great injustice and the people of Gibraltar cannot be kept in the dark any longer. Across the community there is a growing demand for the Government to present the true picture of public finances and  
 1820 spending.

It may be a tough fact to swallow, but public debt includes the borrowing of public sector entities. This is the case in the UK, in the EU and across the world. Otherwise, does it not show the budget process to be little more than a sham?

Mr Speaker, our Government taxes and borrows in order to meet planned expenditure, so  
 1825 therefore I petition the Government to report on all current and planned Government expenditure. This is the only way to prevent our people feeling that they are being kept in the dark about what is being spent by Government-owned companies. It is wrong, Mr Speaker, to pretend that this spending is unrelated to the public sector, and I urge Government to rectify this issue in order to achieve the full transparency that this electorate deserves. (*Banging on desks*)  
 1830

1835 It is illogical, Mr Speaker, that what is missing from this year's Budget is the largest financial transaction undertaken by the Government this past year: a £300 million loan, mortgaged over the lion's share of Government-owned housing – our prized assets; £300 million amounts to over 97% of net public debt forecasted for March 2018. It is hugely material to the Budget presented. As much as we may be lured to believe that this loan is an investment in Gibraltar, the cold fact is that it is not an investment: it is a mortgage on our estates. (*Banging on desk*) When the term 'investment' is used to describe a loan, people are being misled in a fundamental and diametrically opposed way. It is abundantly clear that the groups that lent the money to the Government did so in return for a first lien on 80 estate buildings and a Government guarantee to return the capital with interest.

1840 Let's be very careful about what we are doing and saying here. If we are saying that the London lenders who provided the capital are bearing the risk of the investment, then we are also saying that there is a chance that the Government will default on the £300 million loan and the estate homes repossessed.

1845 So, what are the Government's spending plans for the £300 million? How much has already been spent? What are the returns from this spending that our estates are collateralising? This is also the Budget that I would like to hear about, and I cannot sit idly by and watch the people of Gibraltar being presented with only half the story. (*Banging on desks*) We deserve more, Mr Speaker, much more. Government has said that this borrowing is earmarked for infrastructure and other profitable ventures, not manifesto commitments or ordinary Government spending. However, we are yet to receive in this Budget or elsewhere detail of the actual use of proceeds. Gibraltar has made a significant infrastructure investment in the east side that has been looking for a developer for several years. How does the Government plan to be more successful with additional infrastructure investments and land reclamations while the east side reclamation lies barren?

1850 Much of regular Government spending, such as roads, parks, health services, education-related spending and university fees, have no specific identifiable monetary return. Can the Government guarantee that the borrowed money will be used to invest in projects with a higher return than the return promised to our lenders? What is the planned timing for the undisclosed spending? If we are indeed headed towards harsher times, then we need to tighten our belts and take prudent measures rather than doubling down by borrowing large amounts at a time of increased Brexit-related uncertainty. We should be protecting our borrowing capacity, rather than burning straight through it.

1860 For the sake of transparency and accountability, Mr Speaker, it is important for a broad range of information on public sector liabilities, obligations and contingencies to be made readily available, whether or not formally included within Government balance sheets. Concerned Gibraltarians see the increase in off-balance sheet borrowing from the savings bank followed by the estates mortgage as clear evidence that the Government has over stretched financially, and, as a result, it is now having to mortgage the family silver. But how can Government reassure us to the contrary when we are not actually entitled to scrutinise them?

1870 Debt is highly addictive, Mr Speaker: the more you borrow, the more you need to continue borrowing to keep up with the increased spending levels. If the Government's first term spending was partially funded by the debentures of pensioners and savers, and the second term by the mortgage of our housing estates, how will the commitments of a potential third term be funded? When we increase borrowing and spending in an unsustainable way, we are selling off our future income – we are spending today our children's income of tomorrow.

1880 Mr Speaker, we live in a world that does not respond well to a lack of transparency. We have witnessed economies suffer and even collapse as a result of incomplete government reporting and unchecked spending. Typically, when the actual state of government finances emerges, addressing the problem becomes costly and painful.

We need Gibraltar to run a sustainable, responsible and fully transparent sector. There is no viable alternative, not even on a temporary basis. The stakes are too high. It is not important

1885 who started borrowing and spending off balance sheet; what is important is who has the courage to end it. I implore the Government to find that courage for the good of our democracy and for the security of our future.

1890 The Budget is also an exciting time for a politician because it sees the Gibraltarian public engage more directly with this House. To this end, I publicly invited Gibraltarians to submit issues and concerns that they would like raised in this Budget session. Their responses ranged from much anticipation about the long-awaited tunnel, which is causing chaos and mayhem on our roads, to much concern on general Government overspending, or even to an elderly gentleman telling me that he was denied use of the hydrotherapy pool due to lack of manpower, as was the excuse given. So, Mr Speaker, it seems we cannot even get our basic needs to run smoothly, and yet there we are borrowing £300 million that we cannot even ask questions about.

1895 The state of our schools was also a big worry for many parents who spoke to me about the deplorable condition of the toilets and walls, with classrooms suffering from lack of heating in the winter and air-conditioning in the summer. And even if, Mr Speaker, we have been promised five, six, seven state-of-the-art new schools within this electoral term, this does not excuse what our children and teachers are enduring in this day, every day. Unsurprisingly, I received a number of complaints from parents about the state of St Martin's School. These ranged from severely cramped conditions to the fact that portakabins seem to have been added to the most impractical of places. This is causing chaos at pick-up and drop-off times, particularly for children in wheelchairs, and I can only imagine what the situation must be like on rainy days. Even if a state-of-the-art new school is planned for St Martin's, Mr Speaker, the current building cannot be neglected in the meantime in this way.

1905 I also received concern about the shortage of businesses open on weekends, especially when cruises are in town, as well as the lack of tourist attractions open on Bank Holidays. This dents our tourist product and economy at a time when we should be looking to be more dynamic than ever, Mr Speaker.

1910 So, offering our citizens a chance to express their thoughts and ideas about the current state of our homeland made for an interactive exercise that reflected the anxieties of the average Gibraltarian. In addition to mentioning these issues at this stage, I would like to reassure the respondents that I will be drawing the Government's attention to their concerns over the course of the parliamentary year and hope to get helpful and purposeful answers over the course of these debates.

1915 Individuals from the finance sector, for their part, also reported some reflections. With reference to insurance firms, in Enterprise we have seen a failure that sent shockwaves across Europe, yet any introspectiveness has been slow to progress, and if there have been findings they have not been made public. If we see another failure on this scale, can we recover, is the question. And as for gaming, with Paddy Power and Betfair leaving Gibraltar, and 888 and others mulling their positions, can we continue to use our tax regime as the primary draw for gaming firms? Access to the EU is no longer on the table. Uncertainty prevails, yet the current administration has placed us in a position of debt, the extent of which we have never seen and cannot see at the moment. Is austerity their answer? Is this another sign of a dark budget that must be brought to light, Mr Speaker? We have also seen Barclays leave, and Newcastle Building Society recently announced its departure. Last year, NatWest revealed that 13 staff members are being made redundant, despite the high-profile departure of Barclays. Why are we seeing workforce being trimmed when there is more demand on their service? We should seek assurances that they would remain, Mr Speaker, because we need a global bank for our global marketplace.

1930 With reference to distributed ledger technology we must be cautious in our approach to the regulation of virtual currencies, which are still immature and subject to skirt money laundering laws and legislation relating to the financing of terrorist activities. We must ensure the same strong controls and diligence that we hold our financial services to should not be compromised

1935 in our attempt to attract these firms to Gibraltar, and no shortcuts to regulation should be put in  
place. We should work with the early pioneers in these fields, while being bold in seeking to be a  
global leader in this space. These are all valid questions and concerns from experts in this field,  
Mr Speaker, and I look forward to raising their concerns more directly in Parliament and  
receiving suitable clarifications and reassurances from the Government benches, because this is  
1940 exactly what this Budget process should involve, Mr Speaker. This is a debate, an exchange of  
ideas where we consider various views and form conclusions based on what is best for the  
community we represent. As a Member of the Opposition it is my duty to challenge this Bill and  
continue taking the Government to task. It would be remiss of me not to raise the many  
concerns that are being expressed by members of the financial sector about the lack of clarity  
1945 and transparency in this Budget.

I am disappointed that some of the issues I have raised about education, health, housing,  
transport and many others are being neglected, and I worry about how sustainable these public  
debt figures are for our community – and I pray that the Government is correct in all its  
calculations and reassurances.

1950 However, I must say I find the Opposition's unprecedented decision to vote against this  
Budget irresponsible, cynical and completely against the interests of Gibraltarians. (**Several  
Members:** Hear, hear.) (*Banging on desks*) Irresponsible, because if it were to take full effect,  
the consequences to the community would be devastating, paralysing our community in its  
entirety from our schools to our economy and our essential services. (*Banging on desks*) None  
1955 other than Sir Peter Caruana himself – who has been dubbed as the greatest Gibraltarian of all  
times, although maybe I have a different view about that (**Several Members:** Hear, hear.)  
(*Banging on desks*) – the own GSD's own erstwhile leader, once remarked that it was important  
for all parliamentarians to vote in favour of a budget 'in order not to deprive the Government of  
funding and civil servants of their pay'. I therefore find this move to be little more than a  
1960 cosmetic and sterile marketing stunt that smacks more of desperation than it does a responsible  
approach to politics.

I have decided, instead, to put the interests of Gibraltarians first, as did the greatest  
Gibraltarian of all times. (*Banging on desks*) It has been a longstanding tradition for politicians in  
this House, in an act of statesmanship and responsibility, to vote in favour of budgets, even if, as  
1965 is the case with this one, they have honest doubts about them. I will not deploy gimmicks which  
undermine the welfare of civil servants and basic public services, if only symbolically, and I will  
not allow my vote, meant to represent *only* these interests, to be abducted in this way. I will  
therefore honour this longstanding convention and vote in favour of the Budget,  
notwithstanding the many criticisms I have already made. (*Banging on desks*) But this support,  
1970 Mr Speaker, comes with a word of caution. I urge the Government to heed the concerns that  
have been expressed from these Opposition benches on issues of transparency and rigour.  
These concerns are not just from the mouths of opposing politicians, but also from financial  
experts and members of our community who are genuinely anxious about our nation's spending.  
The questions that are being asked are legitimate ones and the Government needs to address  
1975 them, because if the Government does not heed these concerns it may find that it will not just  
be Opposition votes that it will risk losing.

So, to conclude, Mr Speaker, we are coming to the end of an eventful period, both for myself  
and for the political world as a whole. As I look back over these past 12 months, though, I find  
myself increasingly secure in my role, a far cry from any doubts I may have had when I addressed  
1980 this House at the last budget session. From what has been termed by some as this 'rocket chair',  
where two former Chief Ministers have sat before, from the minority status that has in times  
been enjoyed by the likes of Joe Bossano, Dr Joseph Garcia, Peter Montegriffo and Sir Peter  
Caruana, I have been able to discern my role most clearly: to provide a constructive opposition,  
one that challenges the Government when it is warranted but supports it when it is deserved.  
1985 My role here is not to simply pick holes, but to help fill them and to provide Gibraltar with the  
honest and productive democracy it merits.



1990 My position has given me an invaluable vantage point from which to obtain a true sense of the needs of our times. Mr Speaker, I have come to realise that this is a time for courage, not cowardice; a time to step forward and show face, not to hide behind fake profiles; a time for leaders, not mouthpiece activists; a time for stability, not disarray; a time for solutions, not problems; a time for criticism, not ridicule; a time for constructive proposing, not destructive opposing; a time for hope for a better future, not a craving for chaos in order to reach one's personal goals; a time for conviction, not indecision; a time for leading, not in-fighting; it is, Mr Speaker, a time for something new.

1995 People all over the world are crying out for a new kind of leadership, Mr Speaker, one that reflects the real hopes and aspirations of the people, built on the values of generosity and closeness, on honesty and on a bold, optimistic approach to politics. In response to massive global challenges, people are starting to vote not only with their minds but also with their hearts. I believe that here too, in Gibraltar, people want politicians who are close, honest and understand their real aspirations; politicians who work for their citizens, not for partisan visions, egos or agendas. (**Hon. Chief Minister:** Hear, hear.)

2000 I became an independent MP because I was not ready to let myself be dragged into the mire of mudslinging politics. (**A Member:** Hear, hear.) I will therefore not respond to insults and petty accusations thrown at me in this House. Nor will I engage with social media bullying, through fake profiles or not – not even, for example, with the Leader of the Opposition, who hides behind the profiles of members of our community to fight his battles against me. (*Interjections*)  
2005 And you, Mr Speaker – (*Interjections*)

2010 **Hon. D A Feetham:** Mr Speaker, a point of order!

**Hon. Ms M D Hassan Nahon:** And you, Mr Speaker: stand up and be counted!

**Hon. D A Feetham:** A point of order! (**Several Members:** Hear, hear.) (*Banging on desks*)

2015 **Hon. Ms M D Hassan Nahon:** Stand up and be counted! Stand up and be counted! (**Several Members:** Hear, hear.) (*Banging on desks*)

**Hon. D A Feetham:** A point of order, Mr Speaker!

2020 **Mr Speaker:** May I ask –

**Hon. D A Feetham:** Point of order, Mr Speaker.

**Mr Speaker:** Order!

2025 **Hon. D A Feetham:** Point of order, Mr Speaker.

**Hon. Ms M D Hassan Nahon:** If I may finish –

2030 **Mr Speaker:** May I ask the hon. Lady to sit down, and I ask the Hon. the Leader of the Opposition to sit down – and they are not to shout at me. I have told him before that I am not prepared to have him shout at me. If you want to raise a point of order, you do so calmly, but you do not shout at the Speaker. If he is in doubt as to where that comes from, he can read through this, as I was doing yesterday afternoon, anticipating, as I was, some trouble.

2035 Now, what is your point of order – and tell me, what is the Standing Order? What is the rule from this book under which you are raising your point of order?

2040 **Hon. D A Feetham:** Mr Speaker, the point of order is very simple. The hon. Lady has got to make herself responsible for any allegations that she makes before this House. She has said that I am hiding behind a fake profile or a profile from a member of this community. That is utterly false, and therefore if she has any evidence in relation to that she should bring it – or what she can do is not hide behind parliamentary privilege and therefore make the allegations outside, where at least I can then basically challenge her. *(Interjection)* **(Mr Speaker:** Order!) Mr Speaker, there is a rule in this House that you cannot make allegations without making yourself responsible factually for them, and what she has said is utterly not true.

**Hon. Ms M D Hassan Nahon:** Mr Speaker, I am grateful for that. I think it is very important for the Leader of the Opposition to demand clarification.

2050 I actually know the person that the Leader of the Opposition hides behind and I met him in Irish Town and asked him why he was speaking against me about Calpe House – Mr Michael Bain – and he told me, ‘Well, you know, it’s the Leader of the Opposition, who uses my profile,’ and I told him, ‘There’s a very easy way’ – *(Interjection by Hon. D A Feetham)* Mr Speaker, can I speak now, because I did not interrupt him. I said, ‘There’s a very easy way to stop that by changing your Facebook profile,’ and he shrugged like he did not really feel like he wanted to ask the Leader of the Opposition to do that.

2055 So I am very, very comfortable with what I am saying in Parliament –

**A Member:** It’s in *Hansard*.

2060 **Hon. Ms M D Hassan Nahon:** – and I want the media to know that they are welcome to interview me outside whenever they want and I will repeat the accusations because I know that they are true and I was told by the very person; otherwise I would not be so irresponsible. And let me say, Mr Speaker, he also attacks you under the profile of Michael Bain. *(Interjection)* Anyway, if I can carry on –

2065 **Hon. D A Feetham:** Outrageous, Mr Speaker!

2070 **Hon. Ms M D Hassan Nahon:** Yes, what is outrageous is for the Leader of the Opposition to be using another member of the community’s profile instead of *dando la cara* as the Leader of the Opposition should. *(Banging on desks)* **(Hon. D A Feetham:** Outrageous!) Yes, it’s very outrageous – it’s never been seen before!

**Hon. D A Feetham:** You’re destructive!

2075 **Hon. Ms M D Hassan Nahon:** Yes, yes, I’m destructive –

**Mr Speaker:** Would the hon. Member please sit down.

2080 **Hon. Ms M D Hassan Nahon:** I’m destructive to your aspirations!

**Mr Speaker:** Since 9.30 this morning we have had an excellent debate in which very high standards have been achieved and in which elected Members have been doing the business for which the electorate have put them here and pay them, by and large, most handsomely. I would urge hon. Members to keep to that high standard. It is a pity that at the end of nearly four hours of excellent parliamentary debate anyone, by an injudicious word, should lower the standard and bring the House into disrepute.

I urge hon. Members for the rest of this session: keep your cool. Do not shout, keep your cool – if you do not, one of you may have to sit in this Chair because I am not prepared to allow this House’s standards to be lowered. I have always said that I am the Speaker of Parliament,

2090 dedicated to maintaining the dignity of this Parliament for the sake of the city and the nation that we all love. So keep your cool and let us see if we can finish the session, renewing tomorrow morning as we have done up until now.

The hon. Lady.

2095 **Hon. Ms M D Hassan Nahon:** Mr Speaker, as I was saying, I did not leave the comfort of a party bench for this, and I did not expose myself to attacks from both sides of the House to engage in a childishness that disappoints and alienates the electorate. This is the real toxic behaviour we suffer from, Mr Speaker, and I have moved away from this for good. My job is to propose and to be useful for the Gibraltarian electorate, and this is what allows me to stay relevant, even if I am on my own. So I will continue working for the good of the people of Gibraltar regardless of how this impacts on either of the parties in this House. I work for them now, not for any of you.

2100 I feel that this new direction is just beyond the horizon, that these uncertain times are calling for an end to a stagnant political scene that has been dominated by the same two parties for over 25 years. These 12 months have shown me that I am ready for the next challenge in my political career – to offer Gibraltar new options, new ideas and new directions. I have proved that there is room in this House for a different way of doing politics, and I hope that the people of Gibraltar feel excited, like I do, about the possibilities that this could offer. I face the next year with optimism, with energy and with an unshakeable belief that the next 12 months will see us all emerge stronger together.

2110 Thank you, Mr Speaker.

**Mr Speaker:** The Hon. the Chief Minister.

2115 **Chief Minister (Hon. F R Picardo):** Well, Mr Speaker, I rise, to start my right of reply, to recess the House in order to do that tomorrow, but I would just ... I do not think I can recess the House immediately without saying that it looks like the countdown to ignition on the rocket chair has started. There is much that the hon. Lady has said with which I agree, much with which I disagree, and much which I just cannot believe; and as I pick my jaw up off the floor she has obviously taken off her rose-tinted spectacles and put on her Hassan-framed spectacles – I think she imitates her father in that respect.

2120

### Adjournment

**Chief Minister (Hon. F R Picardo):** I adjourn the House, Mr Speaker, to tomorrow at 10 a.m., when I will exercise my right to reply in respect of the Bill.

2125 **Mr Speaker:** The House will now adjourn to tomorrow at 10, when we will hear the Chief Minister's winding-up speech.

*The House adjourned at 1.37 p.m.*