



# PROCEEDINGS OF THE GIBRALTAR PARLIAMENT

**MORNING SESSION: 9.33 a.m. – 12.51 p.m.**

**Gibraltar, Wednesday, 12th June 2019**

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# The Gibraltar Parliament

*The Parliament met at 9.33 a.m.*

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

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

## **Appropriation Bill 2019 – For Second Reading – Debate continued**

**Clerk:** Meeting of Parliament, Wednesday, 12th June. We continue with the Second Reading of the Appropriation Bill 2019.

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

**Minister for Housing and Equality (Hon. Miss S J Sacramento):** Mr Speaker, it seems incredible that this is the last Budget speech of this Parliament, and that it is the eighth time that I have risen to deliver a Budget address.

10 During our two terms in office it has been my privilege to have held many portfolios. Of all of those portfolios there has been one that I have held from the very first day, and that is Equality. I am Gibraltar's first Minister for Equality, a responsibility that I am very proud of.

15 As Minister for Equality, I lead the Ministry for Equality, a Department that we as a Government created and which, for the first time, is dedicated to upholding equality principles and eliminating all forms of discrimination. It has been immensely rewarding to have been at the helm of a responsibility that has been groundbreaking in philosophy, in ideas, in policies and most importantly in legislation.

20 In December 2011, Mr Speaker, there was a fundamental change in that the electorate got a Government that stands for fairness and equality for everyone in our community. Our progress has been such that many may well have forgotten that we took over from an administration that did not share these fundamental values.

25 Equally, many will not have forgotten what it was like back then. As unimaginable as it may now seem, those were times when a same-sex couple had to challenge the then establishment, to be determined by the highest Court in the land, at great public expense, in order to assert their rights to a joint tenancy of a Government rental flat. Needless to say, the Privy Council determined that the State had discriminated against this couple. An administration with many shortcomings, Mr Speaker, and none clearer and more obvious than in equality; and, in particular, gay rights.

30 Thankfully, those dark days are gone and since the new dawn of December 2011 the imbalance on equality has been redressed and such shortcomings addressed because what, for them, was not even a dot on the radar of importance in contrast, for us, has been a priority.

35 June is considered to be the month to mark Gay Pride and it is therefore fitting, I think, that I should commence my address marking our progress on this important subject. It is incredible to now think that the first time the word 'gay' was mentioned in this Parliament was in my very first Budget speech in 2012 and gay rights were first properly achieved in this House in 2014.

Indeed, the first Bill that I ever moved in this Parliament was the Civil Partnership Act in March 2014, a landmark piece of legislation because for the first time in our history it enabled the formal recognition of relationships between couples of the same sex. It was also progressive because it extended to opposite-sex couples as well, something that we did ahead of the UK where it has only just recently been changed as a result of a challenge.

Up until that point, Mr Speaker, the gay men and women who lived in Gibraltar did not have their relationships, love and commitment recognised in the eyes of the law. This Act represented a historic step on what had been a long journey for respect, dignity and above all recognition of gay couples.

In our second term in office, in October 2016 I brought the Civil Marriage Amendment Act to this House to allow for the civil marriage of gay couples. At the time, the response to the consultation paper was the most overwhelming we had ever had, mostly in favour of the proposed Bill. The passing of that Act again demonstrated our commitment to reflect respect for all individuals regardless of their sexuality, and also strengthening the institution of marriage ensuring that it remains an essential building block of modern society. In addition, we have also legislated to outlaw homophobic hate crime and hate speech in 2013; such crimes are now aggravated offences.

Mr Speaker, equality is at the heart of this Government and it affects everyone. In July 2015, in recognition of our transgender community, we made provision to extend protection from discrimination for individuals who have undergone gender reassignment. The Department of Equality is currently preparing an awareness and information programme to raise awareness of the rights of individuals who have transitioned and also work with partner departments who provide services to ensure that the members of the transgender community are supported.

Mr Speaker, our Government's commitment to equality is embedded in everything that we do. Gender equality is another important strand of my equality portfolio. At the start of my tenure as Minister for Equality, I was keen to develop and introduce policies that would promote greater gender equality. Before that time, this was not something that was really discussed. I believe most resolutely that gender equality is a vital component of a mature and modern society and it is an intrinsic factor in our quest for social justice.

One of the strands of our Gender Equality Strategy is the economic empowerment of women. The annual overall earnings gap, as distilled from the Employment Survey, indicates that men earn significantly more than their female counterparts. We know that more gender-diverse and inclusive teams, organisations and businesses fare better than their less diverse counterparts. We know that having a gender balanced workforce and closing the gender pay gap can add millions to a country's economy. All of this has been amply demonstrated and widely documented by global and international agencies and these are indisputable and clear goals that the Ministry for Equality is working towards.

In order to secure more precise data, this year I issued Gibraltar's first Gender Pay Gap Survey to accompany the Employment Survey. I am very heartened by the positive response of the local business community. The survey which, this being the first year, is voluntary was issued to employers who employ 20 or more employees and we have had a response rate of 58%. In addition, a further 271 employers with less than 20 employees also returned a completed survey. So that is also very encouraging, Mr Speaker. I look forward to the final analysis of the data which will provide a clearer picture of where horizontal and vertical segregation may exist in the workplace. This will allow us to develop strategies to address these imbalances.

My recent attendance at the Equal Pay International Coalition's technical conference in Iceland in April was a prime opportunity to keep abreast of how to promote better indicators, statistics, data and policies to reduce the gender pay gap. Needless to say, Mr Speaker, closing the gap is a moral and social issue with micro and macro-economic benefits that we would be foolish to ignore, and we will therefore continue to address.

The under-representation of women in leadership and management is another issue which the Gender Equality Strategy seeks to change and we have embarked on various initiatives to

90 achieve this. The mentorship programme for women is another important part of our strategy on the economic development and advancement of women. I am delighted to say that after the great success of the pilot cycle which we commenced last year and saw the participation of 50 mentors and mentees, we have recently launched the second cycle. Interest in this initiative continues, and what is a key indicator of its success is that over 50% of the mentors who participated in the pilot cycle have committed to participate in this cycle once again.

95 Mr Speaker, the programme is going from strength to strength. It has been very well received by the business community and enjoys the support of key stakeholder organisations including the Chamber of Commerce, Federation of Small Businesses, Women in Business, Girls in Tech and EY, all of whom are represented in the selection panel.

100 I am most grateful to His Excellency the Governor, the Chief Minister and all of the other mentors who gave up their valuable time to give back, and to everyone involved in making this important initiative a success.

105 In some people's minds, Mr Speaker, gender equality is a women's affair – led by women and exclusively about women's issues. This is an erroneous idea and one that needs to change, and this is why we always involve men as well as women in our conversation. We are acutely aware of a contributor to the barriers that women face in their professional progression when it comes to recruitment, promotion and retention and on this basis I commissioned bespoke training on gender diversity and inclusion and specifically on unconscious bias for both the public and private sectors.

110 I am delighted to say that the response to the training was extremely successful with 100 attendees from the private sector. I believe that this engagement is telling of the business community's desire to ensure that women are more equitably represented in their workforce, and to harness the potential of all their employees. The training was also delivered to over 140 public sector officers including the uniformed bodies. All who attended are eligible to sit on recruitment boards and panels and this represents approximately two-thirds of people involved in public sector recruitment.

115 Challenging gender stereotypes is also an intrinsic part of our Gender Equality Strategy and it is particularly crucial when advising on professions and career paths available. Women are under-represented in certain STEM fields and we are working closely with the Department of Education led by my good friend, the Minister for Education, the private sector entities and NGOs, to address that.

120 At the Ministry of Equality we are used to dealing with matters that are innovative and groundbreaking. Another of our latest ventures in the quest for challenging gender stereotypes and advancing equality is the consideration of introducing statutory paternity and/or parental leave. Traditionally, women disproportionately take the majority of the responsibility of childcare. This is one of the contributors to the gender pay gap, where the gap widens around the age that most women have children. Furthermore, it is important to make the rights that are available to mothers equitable with fathers, so that fathers can play a more active role in childcare from an early age and effectively give couples more flexibility at an important time in the family's life to choose who looks after the children. Introducing parental leave would also benefit those in same-sex relationships.

130 After extensive research on the matter having been undertaken by the Ministry of Equality, we are now ready to commence a consultation to introduce proposed changes to maternity leave, to explore the options of paternity or parental leave which will be undertaken as soon as the consultation paper is finalised. We will be consulting with stakeholders, including the private sector, through the Chamber of Commerce and the Federation of Small Businesses as well as consulting with the Trades Unions. The Government is clear, Mr Speaker, that we must move away from maternity leave to parental leave. Our consultation will be on 'how'.

135 Mr Speaker, the local political arena, as you know, is another area where women are under-represented and warrants attention if women are to consider leadership positions and participate more actively in the democratic process, and this House is to be more representative

140 of our community. As I always say, there is nothing that I would like more than to see a more gender-balanced parliament. I am hoping that the proposal to extend parliament to include backbenchers will also assist in this, and that is not to say that I believe women should not be on the front bench alongside their male counterparts.

145 As Minister for Equality, and also as Ambassador for the Girl-Guiding movement, it was lovely to invite guides to an 'Equali-T' at my offices ahead of International Women's Day this year. The aim of the event was to promote discussion of gender equality, as well as to provide insight into the workings of Parliament and of women's suffrage in Gibraltar and in the UK – another aspirational measure, as I hope that I may have planted a few seeds in the minds of these young ladies and I will continue my work with them on this front.

150 Challenging gender stereotypes through raising awareness and information events is also central to the work undertaken by the Ministry for Equality. Marking International Women's Day with A-level students is now firmly established in the schools' calendar. It is a combination of an expression of the issue through speeches as well as through art and it is very important that the younger members of our community are given an opportunity to reflect upon and articulate their views on gender equality.

155 This year we extended our traditional Gender Equality Art Competition and used the winning images to create Gibraltar's national stamp for International Women's Day. It gives me great satisfaction that their message, in the form of stamps, is literally travelling the world. I also promote the concept at every opportunity that I have when I travel, particularly since the majority of my travels since the issue of the stamp have been on the topic of gender equality. I am also particularly proud to say that they are also in Royal hands as I was able to present a first-day cover of the stamps to Her Royal Highness, the Duchess of Wessex, when we met at a reception in New York recently.

160 We know that a world free from gender stereotypes would allow each individual to develop their full potential, free from limiting roles and expectations. The worst we can do is to narrowly demarcate and rigorously police what women and men can do, say or aspire to become.

165 Some may say that a lot of gender stereotypes are imposed on us from a young age, even in the way that the general theme in fairy tales is where the girl is either a hapless victim or a beautiful princess waiting to be rescued by Prince Charming. On this basis, and for these concepts to be given some thought and indeed challenged, I am arranging a short story competition where I will encourage such stereotypes to be challenged by our community.

170 We should never be complicit in limiting the full range of human emotion for men and women. The worst that we can do is to create, believe in and perpetuate hyper-feminine and hyper-masculine stereotypes that do not reflect the full range of human experience. That is a type of control that can prove to be very damaging and even fatal.

175 Consequently, changing gender stereotypes is extremely important as we know that these can have an impact on the specific physical and mental health challenges for the men in our community. That is why the Ministry for Equality has also marked International Women's Day at the comprehensive schools in the last few years. Additionally, last year we also celebrated International Men's Day by organising an information and awareness-raising event, together with the GHA mental health and public health services and local charities Prostate Cancer Support Group and GibSams on 19th November for the first time. We look forward to building upon this initiative in the coming year and would like to galvanise the entire community to support our endeavours.

180 On a more social side of the gender equality, Mr Speaker, last year I also amended the legislation to provide for breastfeeding in public places so as to support and protect mothers who choose to do so without discrimination.

185 Mr Speaker, turning to domestic abuse, this is something that has been at the forefront of my equality agenda. Early on in my tenure I set up a working group with a view to producing a national strategy on domestic abuse that would deal with the issue in a coherent and consolidated manner. The working group is made up of the heads of key stakeholder

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Government Departments. The role of this group is twofold: first, to ensure that as Government Departments they have robust internal policies to deal with instances of domestic abuse; and additionally that their policies are aligned in a way that they work together in a co-ordinated fashion – as it is likely that those who encounter abuse will require the support of more than one service – and ensure that there are proper referral pathways so that they are afforded the best protection available. Those who suffer domestic abuse are entitled to feel safe.

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Mr Speaker, I am acutely aware of the issues as well because I am constantly approached by individuals who have suffered domestic abuse and they tell me their stories first hand. Only in  
200 this past week I have seen two such individuals.

This strategy is working well, but of course is under constant review because there is always room for improvement. Over the past few months I have personally met with the heads of each of the relevant Departments so that they could update me on the progress being made. One of the focuses at the moment is to gather statistical data in a better way, in a way that is holistic  
205 between the Departments.

Of course, continuous training is fundamental to strengthen the understanding of the subject matter. Indeed, some of the representatives from the working group will be attending a domestic abuse conference in London next week.

Awareness is also key and we have run a very successful awareness campaign by way of an information clip, posters in public sector offices and now even on the back of buses to make them more visible. Additionally, the Department of Equality works very closely with the Department of Education and deliver the ‘Respect Programme’ in schools in an age-appropriate way – another successful multi-agency initiative that is also going from strength to strength. Support is also paramount, Mr Speaker, and Minister Costa’s announcement yesterday of two  
210 additional counsellors in the Care Agency will also go a long way to help tackle this matter.

Mr Speaker, I chair the working group and the strategy is co-ordinated from my office. In addition to thanking those involved in leading on this in their respective Departments, I would like to single out the staff in my office who drive this: Crown Counsel Karina Khubchand and my personal assistant Donna Mcleod, who incidentally is also in addition responsible for our very effective awareness campaign.  
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The throwaway comments made by the Leader of the Opposition on Monday demonstrates not only how little he knows about the subject, but also how little he has sought to learn because, despite the announcements that I have made on progress, he seems to just refuse to even acknowledge them. If anyone is out of touch, it is them.

Mr Speaker, making our community safe through effective public protection has been one of the highest priorities throughout my time in office. I chair the Strategic Management Board of a multi-agency public protection partnership that is responsible for the assessment and management of the risk posed by registered sex offenders and persons of interest in our community. Designated trained professionals from each of the partnership agencies have undertaken specialist training which is commissioned annually and takes place over the course  
230 of a couple of weeks in Gibraltar.

As Chair of the Strategic Management Board I have made it a point to ensure that no stone is left unturned when it comes to public protection of this nature. It has been a priority that all other partner agencies understand that the work of MAPPa is crucially important. Prevention and reduction of risk is paramount and this rehabilitation is achieved through intervention work.  
235 The risk managers are all highly trained in intervention work and this allows them to provide specific behavioural therapy and sex-offender-specific rehabilitation programmes.

Mr Speaker, I would like to thank everybody involved in MAPPa at every level, because it is something that is very difficult to do. I would also particularly like to thank the Deputy Chair, the  
240 Commissioner of Police.

Turning now to disability, there can be no doubt that this Government has done more to promote inclusion of people with disabilities than any other before. The Ministry for Equality has been extremely busy since its inception with the most landmark progress being the introduction

of the Disability Act passed last June. The Act changes the dynamic, and disability and inclusion really have a priority focus throughout the public sector in a way that is unprecedented.

245 Naturally, legislation underpins rights, but that is only part of our approach. We have always taken it further by developing policies and promoting good practice through training and awareness.

250 The introduction of the Disability Act was quickly followed by the passing of the Building Rules Approved Document R Regulations, which is similar to part M in the UK and gives the Department of Town Planning and Building Control the tools it needs to ensure all new building projects are as accessible as they can be.

255 We have drawn a line, Mr Speaker, and we have set the standards now needed to ensure Gibraltar is more inclusive in future. And for existing buildings we heard the Chief Minister announce relief to incentivise businesses and encourage more inclusive spaces within the next 36 months. Even before this landmark piece of legislation, we were preparing the terrain by ensuring that enough training opportunities were given to the relevant authorities and Heads of Departments within the Public Service. Indeed, much of this training was also offered to the private sector.

260 Since we took office it was already the policy of the Government, ahead of the legislative changes, that all our new projects were accessible. Many existing premises were also refurbished to make them accessible. It is therefore safe to say that we have changed the landscape on equality; and I mean this literally as well as in the philosophy.

265 No sooner had we announced our intention to pass the Disability Act, Mr Speaker, the Ministry of Equality was already making the necessary arrangements to provide familiarisation training for the new Act to all heads of the public service. Indeed the private sector has also had a chance to learn more about the new Act at our recent Disability Symposium – a symposium aimed at local businesses and also portrayed the benefits to a business that is inclusive.

270 This symposium on disability is a first for Gibraltar and included professionals who spoke about the law and disability, on making premises accessible and on interacting with people who have learning or communication difficulties; and there was also a part on appropriate language and etiquette. All in all, a very varied programme which was very well received.

275 Mr Speaker, the Ministry of Equality has of course continued to provide training during the last financial year. Last summer, the Disability Language and Etiquette training that forms part of the Government's Human Resources training programme now, was delivered to all Lifeguards and Beach Attendants employed that year as part of their training programme. This training was also extended to toilet attendants serving public beaches and the bathing pavilion. The same training had already been delivered the previous year to parts of the Civil Service and employees of both bus companies that provide our public bus service and private event organisers.

280 We have already seen the benefits this training provides. This House may remember the initiative introduced a couple of years ago at the Gibraltar Fair, where sensory adaptations were made for the first couple of hours to allow access to people with autism, photosensitive epilepsy and visual or hearing impairments; and also the sensory performances made available by Leisure Cinemas and by the Gibraltar International Music Festival. These initiatives came about because of the training and learning opportunities that the Ministry of Equality had organised; and Gibraltar is all the better for it.

285 During the last financial year, Mr Speaker, the Ministry of Equality has also continued to provide training on awareness. The latest seminar of our autism series, 'Working with Families' – the fifth in the series – was once again very well attended by the public and workers from the Department of Education and the Care Agency. Further training and awareness on learning disabilities and autism was also given to NGOs that had already attended the tier 1 training the previous year. We are planning a further seminar on autism in the autumn.

290 The result is that since the inception of the Ministry of Equality there are now more professionals, NGOs and family members aware of autism and learning disabilities in general.

295 This awareness leads to a better understanding of your role as a parent, professional or leader  
and this in turn leads to a more inclusive society.

This has always been my aim, Mr Speaker, to open up Gibraltar for the benefit of all who live  
in it or visit it. That is why under this Government our beaches are some of the most accessible  
in the world. This is why we have provided platforms and stands for our major events so that  
300 people can join their family and friends and not have to stay at home. This is why this  
Government continues to invest in training and continues to try and make Gibraltar more  
inclusive.

Indeed, Mr Speaker, it was our Government who introduced the 'Changing Place' toilets. For  
those who may not be aware, this is larger than an accessible toilet as it needs room to cater for  
305 people who have severe mobility impairments and may need the use of a hoist and an adult  
changing mat. Gibraltar already has a number of Changing Place toilets – in fact, more than are  
usually found in cities much larger than us. I still wish to improve further and my Ministry is  
liaising with the Department of the Environment to get this off the ground as soon as possible.

The Ministry of Equality is also in consultation with their colleagues at the Department of  
310 Education in order to include disability awareness in the classroom. This is an important step in  
ensuring that inclusion becomes second nature to future generations. I would like to add at this  
point, Mr Speaker, my thanks to my good friend, the Minister for Education, and teachers and  
staff at the Department of Education who, from the very beginning, have shown to be eager to  
attend all the training and informative seminars we have provided, and have supported us and  
315 our message all the way. It is thanks to the feedback we have received from them that we are  
now working together to identify relevant training that will enable them to further foster  
inclusion in the classroom.

As part of our objective to promote inclusion and independence, Mr Speaker, our latest  
progress is that the Ministry of Equality has launched the Disability Information Card. This  
320 initiative is purely voluntary, but will allow the user to carry a card that can be used as a discreet  
communication tool. In order to ensure that this project is as successful as possible, the Ministry  
of Equality consulted key stakeholders, disability groups and charities at the beginning of the  
planning procedure.

This card will be especially useful to people with invisible disabilities that may need to  
325 communicate their needs in a discreet way, and could be particularly useful to users that may  
find themselves alone and in a situation where they would otherwise find it difficult to  
communicate to others. The information contained in this card will also be beneficial in an  
emergency situation as all emergency services were consulted at the planification stage and are  
aware of its use.

All in all, Mr Speaker, it is abundantly clear that our Government's commitment to equality  
330 has naturally resulted in remarkable progress in achieving an inclusive society and is a  
recognition of modern Gibraltar. I am extremely proud of the work undertaken by the Ministry  
of Equality, a Department that I have seen grow and which is in no small measure responsible  
for such progress because of the true dedication of a small and hardworking team headed by  
335 Sabina Guillem.

Mr Speaker, I will now turn to my housing responsibilities. Housing is a fundamental  
cornerstone of our community. It is without the shadow of a doubt that our Government has a  
track record in the provision of housing needs for Gibraltar at every level. Providing affordable  
housing to a high standard is a top priority for us, not least because of its natural consequential  
340 effect on the demands on the overall housing waiting lists.

In our first term in office, Mr Speaker, we provided almost 1,000 new homes by building two  
new estates at Beach View Terraces and Mons Calpe Mews. Add to that a further 161 homes  
that were formerly MOD premises. In this term we have announced *three* new housing estates.  
We have already launched Hassan Centenary Terraces and Bob Peliza Mews and at the end of  
345 this month we shall be launching the third estate, on the site of Westside School. In all, these  
estates will provide a total of a further 1,365 homes.



I know that there are many families who are very excited at these new opportunities. In relation to Hassan Centenary Terraces alone, we have received 2,341 applications. That is almost four times the number of flats available and therefore proof as to the interest in acquiring these properties.

350 Importantly, as well, we have introduced stringent measures to do away with the speculation and abuse and excess profits on resales in future to ensure that affordable housing continues to be available and affordable. The Leader of the Opposition, Mr Speaker, acknowledges that this is a good thing. He did, however, describe it as a 'minor adjustment'. But this is anything but  
355 minor; it is a fundamental shift, but I suppose that offering double congratulations is too much, even for him.

This review is a real game changer and on the whole the response to it has been overwhelmingly positive. There may be some who do not like it but all that belies of them is that they did not purchase for the right conditions.

360 I have one further new announcement to make, Mr Speaker, in relation to changes made to the resale of affordable housing, and that is in relation to those who own property on co-ownership terms. Up until now the practice has been to sell them on terms as if there were owned on a 100% basis, having acquired the remaining share from the proceeds of sale, but before completion. This is not what was intended in practice and we will be writing to all  
365 practitioners setting out the new mechanism whereby homeowners must purchase any remaining share of their properties with their own funds before being able to sell on a 100% basis.

So, Mr Speaker, to summarise, in our two terms in office we have offered a total of 2,181 affordable homes for sale, compared to a total of 807 flats offered by the GSD in their *four* terms in office. Essentially we have provided over 2½ times of what the GSD did in half of that time. I make this point because yesterday the Leader of the Opposition said that housing in Gibraltar was broken. Nothing could be further from the truth: what was broken was their systems and not providing a constant flow of homes; and what was literally broken, Mr Speaker, were the blocks that they built at Nelson's View, Bayview and Cumberland and where this administration  
375 has, as we heard the Chief Minister say on Monday, had to invest hugely in remedying the defects.

They make a lot about the fact that they built an estate for rental at Mid Harbour Estate. Guess what? That *one* estate they built is broken, literally, as well, due to faulty construction. The taxpayer will have to remedy that, too. I wait to hear the full extent of the report and what  
380 is required in that respect.

Mr Speaker, in addition to the construction of affordable homes for purchase, we have also built purpose-built flats for the elderly. In our first term we built Charles Bruzon House and Seamaster Lodge. I have already announced that we will be constructing further purpose-built homes for the elderly in the new affordable-housing estates, replicating the successful model at  
385 Seamaster Lodge. Both new estates will therefore provide additional rental flats which will also have a knock-on effect on the rental stock available by the release of this rental accommodation.

It is clear, Mr Speaker – or, rather, it seems to be clear to everyone, except some – that there will be a direct knock-on effect on the demands of the housing waiting lists for rental.

Regrettably, Mr Speaker, the GSD has a one track mind in this regard. They continuously  
390 repeat their mantra of demanding means testing for housing, which shows just how out of touch with reality they are, because this just does not work.

Another baffling argument that they propose is that young adults should be precluded from joining the housing waiting lists, essentially preventing them from the chance of getting into the system. Again, demonstrating the GSD's little understanding of how the system works.

395 Mr Speaker, by providing a continuous stream of affordable housing, people aspire to purchase in such schemes and this has a much better net effect on the waiting lists for rental for those who cannot afford to do so. It is that simple. A broken housing system is one where you do

not provide sufficiently; and that is what they did – and that is a real legacy problem that we had to inherit, but we have turned around.

400 That is why we gave careful thought to our categories in allocation, to achieve the fairest all-round allocation priority in the new affordable housing. In the first round of applications for Hassan Centenary Terraces we have at present received applications from 130 people, who would release vacant possession of Government flats on completion.

405 In addition to this, Mr Speaker, I am also happy to announce a new initiative in relation to elderly people who own their homes. We have had many approaches from people, most of whom live in the first wave of affordable housing schemes and are therefore now at an age where they would much prefer to live in the purpose-built flats for the elderly, and they have expressed to us their wish to surrender their own homes in order to take up the opportunity to live in rented, purpose-built accommodation. *(Interjection)*

410 Mr Speaker, some people on the opposite benches maybe interested in what I am about to announce, because on this basis, given the interest that has been expressed to us, I can announce that those who wish to do so may surrender their flats to Government in return for being able to avail themselves of rental flats for the elderly, on the basis that the property being surrendered is worth at least the development value of the rental flat.

415 In addition to this, Mr Speaker, let's also recall the number of post-war rental accommodation that was sold off under the GSD policy. We stopped this practice but in the end there were 183 flats sold in total. This was a bad deal for everyone involved and I am often contacted by those who regret having purchased, particularly more elderly people, because they would much rather avail themselves of moving into our purpose-built flats for the elderly instead.

420 We heard the Chief Minister announce on Monday the rate at which the Government will reimburse everyone who has changed their mind, having purchased these post-war flats. If everyone were to return their flats we would have a further 183 flats returned to the rental stock that has been denied to us. Essentially that is the equivalent of building a small estate of rental flats – which have been denied to us.

425 It is painful to hear the GSD say that housing is broken. If anyone broke it, Mr Speaker, it was them; and they did so for sure. They cannot hide from that fact. **(A Member: Hear, hear.)** They just do not seem to understand the consequences of their neglect of our community's housing needs and still do not understand how they should be met, because they continue to insist that there should be construction of homes for rental to tackle the waiting lists.

430 To make the point, Mr Speaker, let's do the numbers and demonstrate how, by constructing affordable housing and rental homes for the elderly, as well as the return of post-war flats sold, we have increased the rental stock with its obvious natural, consequential effect on the housing waiting lists – without having to construct additional flats for rental.

435 The figures are as follows: 130 flats returned by those who have applied for Hassan Centenary Terraces and who would give us vacant possession upon completion. No doubt there would be more in the other two upcoming developments, but let's stick to the figure of 130 for now. Also, 119 new homes for elderly rental accommodation in the forthcoming estates that we are building; and add to that, 142 flats for elderly rental already built at Charles Bruzon House and Seamaster Lodge. Add a further 183 post-war sales flats, which have been taken from the rental stock – and they should never have been lost from our rental stock, Mr Speaker. If all were to be returned we would have an additional 183 – and I sincerely hope that they are.

440 That, in total, Mr Speaker, is effectively an additional 574 homes for rental returned to stock so far in our two terms. *(Interjection)* That provides just slightly less than all of the rental stock in our two terms in office than they built in their *four* terms in office with Mid Harbour Estate, Bishop Canilla House and Albert Risso. *(Interjection)*

Needless to say, the additional construction of affordable housing, which I have not factored into these figures, will naturally alleviate the remainder of the waiting list. The mathematics just could not be clearer and I cannot understand how they can be so blinkered as to not see it.

450 And that is, Mr Speaker, allocations as a direct result of our construction alone. We must add to that the allocations of rental stock by way of the normal turnover of the Housing Department rental flats. *(Interjection)* And when I say 'normal turnover' I must congratulate my Department because the turnover this year is anything but normal because we have had a record number of allocations.

455 Furthermore, insofar as providing rental accommodation for those on the waiting list who are unable to afford to purchase, I am extremely proud to say that the Housing Department is providing a turnover of refurbished flats for allocation at the record fastest rate ever. This is one of the real successes of the Housing Department and the figures prove the unprecedented performance of this Department which is serviced by a truly dedicated, professional and hard-  
460 working team.

To put that into context, Mr Speaker, a total of 265 allocations have been granted since 1st April last year to date; and 37 of these have been to senior citizens by way of purpose-built flats for the elderly. This is an incredible achievement and a record high considering that there is no longer the direct knock-on effect of the Beach View Terraces, Mons Calpe Mews, Charles  
465 Bruzon House and Seamaster Lodge allocations, the benefit of which we mostly took last year when we had a high number of 312 allocations. But the year before that, Mr Speaker, in 2016, the number of allocations were 109; and the year before that, in 2015, the figure was 127. So the evidence is that this year's figures are a true testament to the improved workings of the Housing Department and we are seeing the results of the focused changes that we have made.

470 Mr Speaker, since 1st April 2018, the Housing Department has received a total number of 662 applications for Government housing. The Reporting Office at the Housing Department continues to process reports and forward these to the relevant Departments and authorities. They continue to obtain feedback for clients on the progress of the work by way of the counter, telephone calls and emails. They have established a good, proactive working environment with a  
475 large number of entities such as: the Housing Works Agency, GGCC, GJBS, the Environmental Agency, Gibelec, AquaGib, Technical Services, Britannia, the Royal Gibraltar Police, Gibraltar Car Parks, the Gibraltar Health Authority and the Care Agency.

Mr Speaker, in 2018 the Housing Department Reporting Office received a staggering total of 15,287 reports for repairs and refurbishment of flats. The Reporting Office now has a more  
480 leading role in the managing of the work orders and flat refurbishments and, in order to accelerate the allocation of flats, a very tight deadline is set for their refurbishment. I have set key performance indicators in the Housing Department as if it were a private company that needs to report to its shareholders. We take into account the works that are required and the Reporting Office is a key player in ensuring that the departmental KPIs are met. They chase this  
485 and they liaise on a daily basis with the Housing Works agencies and the subcontractors in order to achieve the targets so that the deadlines are met.

Our traffic light system, which we have recently implemented, allocates different targets depending on the complexity of the works. But on average, Mr Speaker, the turnaround on the refurbishment of a flat should take no longer than three months, whereas in previous  
490 administrations the more likely average was closer to two years. All information on the refurbishments is updated daily in order to achieve this.

Mr Speaker, the Housing Department continues its hard work in the recovery of rent arrears, as well. Since the Department commenced its concerted effort of recovery in 2016, it has to date reduced the outstanding amount by £1.3million. But, more importantly, it has put the brakes on  
495 the pace at which arrears are being accumulated. This has been achieved by using a multi-faceted approach.

By expanding the options available in which to make payments of rent, it allows a tenant the flexibility to be able to pay by their preferred option whether this is online, by way of standing order, or via deduction from their salaries or pensions. Payments, therefore, are easier than ever  
500 before and I am happy to say that 65% of rents are now collected by these secure methods. We therefore ensure that rent is paid.

We are now also engaging with the private sector for employers to offer this facility to their employees who are Government tenants who may wish to take this up. The Department has also ensured that the correct systems are in place and notifications are received to alert the Department immediately if any tenant commences to default on their rent. This process enables them to contact the tenant far sooner than ever before and engage with them before any debt begins to build up and becomes a further burden on the tenant.

The Department continues to meet with tenants on a daily basis to arrange a repayment plan or adjust an existing repayment plan, to meet both their needs and ours. These meetings are very useful as they allow the Department to identify those tenants who have genuine hardship and are unable to pay their rent. All cases are considered on a case-by-case basis and careful consideration is given to those who may have social or medical aspects. This helps the Department determine those who genuinely cannot pay and those who do not want to.

Since June 2018 a total of 283 interviews have been held with tenants in arrears. They have made agreements with the Housing Department in order to repay the outstanding debts. The amounts secured via agreements, Mr Speaker – and this is very significant, because they may not necessarily reflect when we talk about the balance that is recovered ... but the balance that has been secured by way of agreement is £606,362.

No, sorry, Mr Speaker, that is the wrong figure, the Housing Department by way of agreements has secured £2,034,655. So that is the significance of that process which is again something else that did not really exist before.

However, despite all of these initiatives and, as the Department continues to strive to engage with all those in arrears, there is regrettably a minority of tenants who *can* pay and do *not* pay. These tenants have no social or economic hardship which would qualify them for rent relief, and yet they continue to default. For these people the Department has therefore been left with no option but to commence legal action to recover the unpaid debt and, to this end, the cases have already been sent to the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions to pursue recovery of arrears in Court.

As you can see, Mr Speaker, the Housing Department as a whole has taken a very proactive approach in ensuring that none of its tenants fall behind in payments causing an increase in arrears, and certainly not at the unprecedented rate of 2011. The reality is that it is very difficult to recover arrears of rent after 20 years of no action whatsoever. As an example – and the Leader of the Opposition may wish to note this figure – there are 231 tenancies which owe rent, but whose tenants had passed away before December 2011. That just paints a picture of how difficult recovery is, but is one example, Mr Speaker. We have a very close relationship with the various tenants' associations and the help and guidance that they offer us in relation to issues in their particular estates is always incredibly helpful.

Turning to the refurbishment of housing estates: last year I was honoured in declaring that both Glacis Estate and Moorish Castle Estate were virtually complete. The morphed changes to these estates has most definitely boosted the living standards of tenants and visitors alike. This is more noticeable at Glacis Estate and Laguna Estate – estates which have made a big positive impact on the skyline in the area, being one of the main access arteries into Gibraltar. First impressions are of paramount importance and when you provide a much-needed mega-uplift to existing buildings in estates that were once considered the forgotten estates, you end up with two brand-new estates. These estates will not be maintained by themselves and that is why the Government will be further exploring the implementation of maintenance and repair programmes so that these estates do not fall into disrepair again.

Mr Speaker, it must be further expressed that the magnitude and success of this Government's enterprise is down to the sheer determination of all those involved with the project, from the Ministry for Housing by way of the Housing Department and Housing Works Agency to the contractors, GJBS, and all those service providers and subcontractors. The three projects have gone beyond their original and pre-determined scope but this has also been due

to additional works and other significant variations that will complement the overall appearance of the estate.

555 Mr Speaker, the Government will also commit to carrying out external refurbishment of other housing rental building that form part of the Government's remit. There are many that we have already commenced which are very close to completion, such as Alameda Estate, Bishop Canilla House and Catalan Bay which will look glorious once we have finished it very shortly – just to name a few estates. But, Mr Speaker, the importance is that we ensure we have robust  
560 maintenance programmes for all our estates going forward so that they do not fall into disrepair again.

Still on Housing, Mr Speaker, and in addition to all this, we also have an ambitious project of urban renewal of Government pre-war properties in the Upper Town. We have been very proactive in identifying many properties that were empty during the GSD years and many have  
565 been sold to provide further housing. And already 20 tenders have resulted in over 120 dwellings.

We continue to develop urban renewal and there is a specific project where the remaining pre-war dwellings continue to be strategically decanted so that tenders can be undertaken in clusters. And, Mr Speaker, when the Leader of the Opposition referred to the Auditor's Report  
570 on Monday, in relation to void properties, the majority of the void properties relate to these properties which have been decanted for the benefit of the urban renewal project. As a result of this project we are about to issue a tender for the next one: the renewal of the Old Married Quarters next to Moorish Castle Estate. This building consists of 10 apartments of varying sizes and a tender notice will be issued shortly.

575 Mr Speaker, turning to controlled rent I have already announced that I have set up a working group to undertake a thorough review of the Housing Act. This commitment arises out of the need to make necessary changes so that the legal framework works more efficiently for the Government as well as for those who we serve. This review also includes the provisions that relate to private residential landlords and tenants and particularly controlled rents.

580 The review has already highlighted a number of amendments which would be required. These have been drawn up as a result of a consultation process which of course is ongoing. The latter is something that has been ongoing with successive Governments but I believe, Mr Speaker, this is the first time that a review including professional advisers and stakeholders has occurred.

585 I have personally met with representatives of the newly established Landlords' Association on a couple of occasions and we have agreed on a couple of principles going forward. I have also received representations from Action for Housing, which are most helpful.

The key is to find a balance that is realistic in this day and age, while maintaining to protect tenants with particular rights. We need a fair resolution to the problems and issues that are  
590 currently faced. It goes without saying that decontrolling rents is *not* an immediate short-term solution and there is no need for concern by those who are afforded statutory protections. The Government's approach is a long-term, holistic and integrative one to deal with the problems that arise from the Housing Act and to balance this with the Government's drive for urban renewal, particularly regeneration of the Upper Town.

595 The Government has a duty to ensure that tenants who have the benefit of controlled rents are not rendered homeless; however, it is equally acknowledged that extremely low rents are no longer sustainable in the long term as this makes it almost impossible to maintain. At the same time, Mr Speaker, tenants cannot continue to live in substandard conditions. I am committed to changing the law to achieve a fair outcome. On the basis of the representations from  
600 stakeholders that I have received, I have already commissioned a thorough study of rent-controlled properties in Gibraltar and will issue a consultation paper as soon as this is concluded. An immediate change that I have already commissioned is the creation of a register specifically for controlled tenancies so that there is a clearer picture of the situation, and which will also protect from abuse by fictitious tenants.

605 Finally, on Housing, during this year Mrs Geraldine Reading has been appointed Principal Housing Officer – my congratulations to the leading lady of the Ministry for Housing on her promotion; (*Banging on desks*) and as well, of course, to her truly dedicated team at the Housing Department.

610 My thanks also of course to my team at the Housing Works Agency led by Ruben Rodriguez, not least for the continued changes in working practices which we have implemented and given effect to the changes we have seen. Mr Speaker, I would like to thank all the groups and voluntary organisations that we work with and who provide us with invaluable advice as we strive to reach our common objectives.

615 Last, but by no means least, I must thank the team in my ministerial office led by my Private Secretary, Audrey Vella, for their indefatigable dedication to the work that we do on a daily basis and to their commitment. On some days it feels as if the whole of Gibraltar calls our office for help, but they will always endeavour to help everyone with the dedication and the passion that they always do.

620 Mr Speaker, finally, I wish to extend thanks to yourself; to the Clerk and to the team here in Parliament; and particularly to the Clerk who looks after me so well on all our CPA travels and given my particularly heavy involvement with the CWP.

625 It has been a year where the Chief Minister and the Deputy Chief Minister have once again proved their unstinting dedication to our community, navigating the treacherous waters presented by Brexit; (**A Member:** Hear, hear.) but with their leadership (*Interjection*) and my Government colleagues working together as a team, we have provided our best for our Gibraltar.

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

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

630 **Hon. L F Llamas:** Mr Speaker, it is with great honour that I rise to deliver my fourth Budget address, in all likelihood the final one I shall deliver to this Parliament for the foreseeable future.

635 It has been a tremendous privilege to serve this community over the past four years. Being able to serve our people in one of Gibraltar's critical junctures has not just been a major learning curve but more importantly a duty I have executed with pride. (*Banging on desks*) Thank you.

I hope people who I have met through the trajectory of my term in public life have felt that I have represented them well. I certainly have given it my best shot.

640 Before addressing the areas of my responsibilities, I shall touch upon some of the initiatives I have led throughout the past year since my last Budget address. To this day the issues which I have raised are still affecting our community.

Mr Speaker, I would like to start my address with what I feel is the most important area within my shadow responsibilities and that is mental health – an area which should continuously remain at the top of the political agenda.

645 In an appropriation of almost £130 million towards our Health budget, only a very small percentage will in actual fact reach the mental health services – 6% in 2017 by the Minister's own admission. Mr Speaker, I say so once more, according to the Hon. Minister for Health just 6% of the budget reaches mental health services. As a result there is still a long way to go before mental health is treated equally to that of physical health.

650 I welcome the recent announcement from the Minister for Health regarding the new liaison nurse based at Ocean Views as an improvement to the existing service; however, I strongly believe this is simply not enough and more radical policies have to be implemented.

655 I have publicly stated what the GSD position is regarding mental health. Firstly, the need to care for persons within the community as much as possible by expanding the domiciliary care into mental health services and starting household care services too. Secondly, we believe there is a need to create supported internships for persons living with mental health illnesses. I would like to take this opportunity to recognise the good work done by the charity Positive Pathways in

this area, but far more needs to be done and I shall talk about supported employment later in my address. Thirdly, the GSD's published policy is that there is a need for a crisis and management team to deal with instances of crises, but also follow-up care and management services.

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Last October I undertook the Healthy Minds Matter Survey. The point of this was to try and understand what the drivers affecting mental wellbeing are, together with what the issues that affect service users living with mental health illnesses are too. I was pleased it did in fact serve its purpose. One of the main points revealed in the survey was how easily people who are living with mental health issues can give up on seeking appropriate care if the appropriate care service is not there to embrace them.

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Mr Speaker, accessibility is key. Additionally, for those persons already in the system there are instances in breaks of continuity of care and an apparent lack of aftercare which dramatically undermines the chances of long lasting recovery.

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During the summer of last year, there was a major crisis in the mental health services with the rapid turnover of psychiatrists, or rather the lack of active psychiatrists in our community. The crisis was eventually overcome and psychiatrists were brought in; however, I am still to this very day receiving concerns from service users as to the turnover of psychiatrists and how their care and relationship with the professional is effectively reset to zero every time a contract is not renewed, or a psychiatrist decides to leave because of the instability of the post.

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Therefore, the Government's recent announcement that a liaison nurse has been assigned the responsibility of essentially fronting the service is not enough. We must do more to ensure that not only we retain the best professionals in the service but that we increase investment in resources and not just in the buildings. We must do more to ensure there is a liaison team who can properly manage care in and out of the community. Service users build a relationship over time with consultants and professionals and it is safe to say that it is simply not right to have to explain what their health issues are every time there is a new consultant.

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Mr Speaker, during the last year I have tried to understand low morale and absenteeism in the GHA. Last year I carried out a survey on morale and the results coincide with everything that is being said by our Unions and workers, not just in our Health sector but in law enforcement agencies and Civil Service Departments too.

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Workers feel neglected and often not consulted. Workers claim to be undervalued and under-resourced. There are also allegations of bullying and intimidation which often do not get reported or, if they do, are not rigorously investigated. Greater consultation and communication with employees in the sector is required. This must be conducted in a safe and secure manner that does not expose employees to any negative detriment.

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At the same time, absenteeism is of huge concern. I have tried to understand through questions in this House the extent of absenteeism in our public health sector, together with the reasons for the absenteeism too. Unfortunately, I have not been able to study any statistics in relation to this, because the Government does not adequately harvest any data. However, absenteeism is a costly affair with relief cover running into millions of pounds and substitution allowances being paid left, right and centre.

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This is a serious issue which must be tackled. The Government has not given this the priority it deserves. In the Principal Auditor's report from 2015-16, the Principal Auditor highlights the mismanagement and lack of control in the GHA with regard to sick and annual leave records. This goes to the heart of why we need e-services, not just for service users but for the Government as an employer too.

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The Principal Auditor has also given examples of leave records not being updated for over seven months in some cases. He has also highlighted approximately 24% of records examined as inaccurate. This is worth investing in and managing. We have the technological advances at our fingertips to turn this around, but instead we are not doing anything about it.

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Mr Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Hon. Minister for Health, Care and Justice, Mr Costa. He has opened the doors to the Ministry and made available senior

officials to discuss particular cases or issues. I applaud his non-partisan approach when dealing  
710 with matters brought to his attention. (*Banging on desks*)

With a proposed budget for this financial year of £128 million, questions about the GHA's  
efficiency and value for money need to be made and I do trust that the Minister is very  
thoroughly looking into it. It can certainly be said that our GHA is not limited when it comes to  
715 funding, and long may it continue, Mr Speaker; but there are systemic problems in our Health  
Service which means the investment does not trickle down to the relevant services.

The GHA is to be commended for the number of surgical and non-surgical procedures it  
undertakes and the Minister should be rightly proud of his legacy in this area which he has  
fought hard to achieve. However, the breakdown in communication systems internally and with  
patients is a gap that needs to be addressed. The proper filing of records and the ability to locate  
720 files promptly are critical matters which must be addressed too.

Additionally, the need to repatriate services has never been more essential than it is now,  
with the backdrop of Brexit and the challenges this may bring. Whilst I appreciate that the  
Government has been focused on this issue, evidenced by the record-breaking £19.4 million  
spent on sponsored patients in 2016-17 to £11.4 million spent in the last financial year.  
725 However, the increase in this year's forecast to £14 million sends mixed signals as to the  
intention of the Government moving forward.

Mr Speaker, I have publicly asked the Government to provide details in relation to contracts  
entered into with health providers. It may be standard in commercial contracts that parts of it  
may be commercially sensitive, such as the itemised value of specific services; however, there  
730 should be certain information which could be made public.

I therefore repeat my plea to the Government to respond on what I feel are reasonable and  
legitimate questions that is: the overall value of the contract; whether fees are payable per  
patient treated or a flat monthly fee, or a combination of both; the commencement and  
expected duration of the contracts; the number of patients currently receiving care at these  
735 tertiary centres, and the expected number of patients expected in the future under these  
agreements; and finally, what aftercare patient support procedures are in place.

I would be grateful for clarification as to why the increase in the forecast for the current  
financial year is to £14 million with regard to sponsored patients.

Despite the huge budget in our Health system we are still dependent on tertiary centres for  
740 standard cardiac and neurology care. This surely must become a priority for our short-term  
future. I call on the Minister to seriously consider employing full-time specialists in these areas  
locally.

We welcome the Minister's achievement in securing access to pharmaceuticals at the best  
prices via the NHS drugs framework in two years' time and the exceptional interim procurement  
745 of pharmaceuticals via NHS Trusts – this will no doubt reflect in a positive cost reduction for the  
taxpayer.

Mr Speaker, I would also like clarification regarding the rental contracts entered into for the  
new Primary Care Centre and the new Paediatric Centre. We know the rental costs will exceed at  
least £1.3 million per year, but how much has the actual extension building cost? What has  
750 happened to the new building for the new ambulance and the new MRI, supposedly catered for  
in last year's estimate alongside the new Primary Care Centre and Paediatric Centre?

Finally, what would happen if Government-owned buildings better located become available  
and a future Government would wish to consider moving the facilities of the Primary Care  
Centre and Paediatric Centre to a Government-owned property? What are the arrangements  
755 regarding the buildings built on rented land paid by the taxpayer?

Now moving to the Primary Care Centre appointment system, I must say that the system  
finally seems to be working better and the investment of £75,000 is certainly money well spent. I  
commend the Minister and his team in this regard. The feedback I receive is generally positive;  
however, there is a need for an online system that cuts back the time to book appointments  
760 with specific doctors. There is also a need to prioritise appointments with specific doctors for



persons with disabilities and persons with recurring illnesses. I hugely welcome the forthcoming changes for persons up to the age of 18 with disabilities when services are transitioned to the new buildings. However, additional needs has no age and a bespoke service should be extended to all those who require greater support regardless of age.

765 Since I first entered this House I have been calling for greater measures for carers. It gave me great pleasure to hear the Minister recognise the 'silent champions' in our economy that carers are. We must commit as a House to recognise carers beyond thanking them, but to look into proper policies which take into account training, respite, additional support and a carers' allowance.

770 Mr Speaker, I now turn to another area of my responsibility, the elderly. It is no secret that we have an ageing population. As such, we have a duty to ensure that we care for the most vulnerable in our society, but crucially we must also ensure that we can protect the benefits that our elderly enjoy for future generations. Planning the future Health and Care Services for an ageing population is a reality. Financial investment is crucial. We must develop a sustainable  
775 public policy which returns a dignified and high level of care for generations to come whether persons are affected by low mobility or are living with dementia.

Mr Speaker, we in the GSD strongly believe there is a need to create a sustainable elderly care plan where funds are ring fenced to ensure appropriate Health and Care Services for the future. If elected, the GSD is committed to this. That is to say that the workforce of today  
780 prepare to finance their own care of tomorrow.

Additionally, Mr Speaker, the Government should be promoting and facilitating community building initiatives, especially those done to support the most vulnerable in our society. As an example, it is unacceptable that the GADS – the Gibraltar Alzheimer's and Dementia Society – were given notice by the Housing Department to vacate Bishop Canilla House via a letter, with  
785 no consultation. We owe a debt of gratitude to this society who is continuously fundraising and channelling those funds into areas which enhance the service provided to service users.

I therefore fail to understand how the common room at Bishop Canilla used by the society was revoked. The society hosted support group meetings to create fidget blankets, amongst other things, which were designed to help those living with dementia and their carers.  
790 Mr Speaker, I hope that this can be resolved urgently and commend the good work done by GADS for the most vulnerable in our community.

Moving on to elderly housing, the Government recently announced that it would be building more specially built accommodation for the elderly. The GSD started this, as the creators of such a life-changing policy for our elderly. We of course welcome the announcement.

795 We welcome the announcement of today from the Minister to include elderly persons who live in private accommodation. However, we do differ in that we believe in means testing and as part of our means-testing policy the eligibility criteria to reside in one of the current or future elderly Government rentals shall be extended to those who live in private accommodation. This would allow elderly individuals who currently own a private accommodation to pay a  
800 substantial, means-tested amount to rent or purchase into Government specially built accommodation.

Additionally, Mr Speaker, the Stay and Play programme during the summer proves extremely successful for the period it runs; however, we in the GSD for reasons already expressed publicly believe that it should run until the Friday before school commences. But also that this sort of  
805 initiative should be extended to the elderly, to keep the community engaged and motivated throughout the year.

Finally, Mr Speaker, the Government has accepted the principle to reduce supply workers as much as possible. My concern is always one based on continuity of care whilst appreciating the balancing act when bringing costs into account. Last year when the Government decided to pull  
810 Grand Home Care out from John Mackintosh Wing and award the future care contract to MedDoc, it was welcoming to learn that the majority of employees were transferred from one provider to another. However, I shall be asking the Government for an explanation at

Committee Stage as to why the estimated appropriation for last year of £1.1 million has resulted in £1.8 million and is expected to grow further to £2.3 million.

815 Mr Speaker, I now turn to the youth. I must pay tribute to the dedicated youth workers in our community. They are truly vocational and make the most of the resources available to inspire our younger community. The investment in GAMPAs is also to be welcomed, together with the work done by the extraordinary professional team. This is now transcending into our schools and the positive effects are remarkable.

820 Yet we must find ways to get children away from their screens, interacting and developing their skills. The long lost Cinema under the Stars was a fantastic community event. I urged the Government last year to bring this back, whether at the Alameda Open Air Theatre or alternative venue. It makes sense from a family point of view but also from a tourism point of view. Perhaps the Minister for Culture can enlighten me today with an announcement with this regard?

825 Mr Speaker, I welcomed the regulation on sales with regard to energy drinks. Despite not having any inclination to do anything about this back in September 2017, I am glad the Government had a change of heart. However, Mr Speaker, it is important to be consistent in approach. If the Government is serious about introducing measures to promote children's health and launch the Children, Healthy and Active Multi-agency programme, known as CHAMP, then  
830 how can they defend approving the conversion of the former South District Post Office as a sweet shop next to a large school?

Indeed, Mr Speaker, the lack of threading policies throughout Government actions is demonstrable. Indeed, the same can be said for the options available in public facilities around Gibraltar in vending machines in hospitals – not just for our children but our adults too –  
835 drawing particular attention to the amount of fizzy drinks available at Ocean Views.

Moving to another area of my responsibility, families; and later this week I shall be publishing an opinion piece based on the proposed reform on parental leave – an attempt not to just equalise the gender pay gap, but also to narrow the gap between the private and public sector.

840 Mr Speaker, one thing I would like to bring to the attention of the House is the number of men who come to see me who fall out of the system following relationship breakdowns. We have a duty to support men who often lose out on quality time with their children and find themselves in unfortunate accommodation facilities. I believe Women In Need assist those men as and when they are able to do so, but at the end of the day they function as a charity for women who have been subjected to domestic violence, not a shelter or hostel, and certainly not  
845 designed for men. I would like to pay tribute to the work done by Gianella Attard and Michele Perera, and not least to Claire Borrell who founded the charity and built it to what we see today.

Whilst on the subject of families, Mr Speaker, I would like to add my perspective on the sale of the 50% equity share on the six affordable housing estates: Waterport Terraces, Cumberland Terraces, Bayview Terraces, Nelson's View, Beach View Terraces and Mons Calpe Mews. If the  
850 Government has raised £165 million which is to be used to fund new affordable co-ownership projects, why is it that purchasers are being asked for substantive monthly payments beforehand which would be equal or higher than their future mortgage payments? Why not means test those monthly payments instead?

855 And, whilst on the issue of affordable housing, Mr Speaker, what is happening with our imaginative designs? The new schools and the new Bob Peliza Mews look pretty much the same. Where is our diverse talent and vision in architecture?

Mr Speaker, I now turn to drug misuse, another extremely important area of my shadow responsibility. I must state my disappointment at the Chief Minister for not addressing this area within his Budget address; it does not augur well from a perspective point of view.

860 In a four-hour speech the Chief Minister seemed to either forget, or conveniently forget, to include a reference to the drugs issue which is appalling to say the least. Not one word on policies, on the future or on how the Government intends to tackle the problems we have ahead.

865 Over recent months, there has been a considerable amount of public debate on drugs.  
Mr Speaker, the GSD has a track record and was a pioneer in the area of addiction and  
rehabilitation, in particular former GSD Minister Hubert Corby and the Bruce's Farm Trust  
employees. It is lamentable that the project has not changed much in the past eight years, other  
than by diminishing the number of beds offered. We have committed to providing alternative  
870 pathways to the criminal route based on care, education and support to those individuals who  
are caught with Class A or B drugs that amount to personal use.

Depending on the class and quantity of drugs this is to include: specifically designed  
education classes; compulsory attendance at support group meetings; community service; and  
rehabilitation programmes. The same will apply to those who test positive in A&E. Over the past  
875 two years we have had more than 500 cases reporting at A&E. However, we in the GSD believe  
that there should be a criminal fallback position for users who do not wish to engage in  
alternative pathways and that drugs will remain as illegal and criminal substances in law. This is  
our view and this is what we would wish to tackle when it comes to recreational drug users.

In addition, we have also set out our wider policy on drugs. This includes providing a crisis  
care and management team to assist addicts in the community at times of need.

880 Regarding rehabilitation, we believe that addicts should be rehabilitated from home as much  
as possible and that the rehabilitation programme should be diversified as much as possible. We  
would also look to provide a system of seamless transition from pre-rehabilitation to  
rehabilitation to aftercare. Moreover, we would further focus on employment for recovering  
addicts in the form of supported internships and increasing aftercare services.

885 Yes, Mr Speaker, we need to put an end to the cliché 'war on drugs' with a balanced,  
measured and sensible approach that would see law enforcement officers work with drug  
support workers. I also advocate tougher sentences for importers and distributors of drugs. It is  
unfair for anyone to suggest that we lack vision, leadership or conviction when we have set out  
our deeply consulted policy months ago.

890 We have done our homework and reached out extensively culminating in a published  
approach which is based on education, support and care with the default position in law  
remaining illegal where law enforcement officers will continue to be the first point of reference  
in order to assess the breach, before taking the matter to the courts for large quantities or  
referring persons to drug support workers, for personal use. Essentially, a new approach which  
895 would see law enforcement officers work with drug support workers in order to achieve the best  
results for our future.

It is important not just as a politician but as a parent to ensure we all understand, especially  
our youth, that serious actions have serious consequences and to mitigate those consequences  
it is going to require willpower and commitment. I welcome the announcement from the  
900 Minister for Justice with regard to the introduction of the new drug counselling service for  
persons in prison, together with mandatory drug testing programmes in coming months.

Mr Speaker, turning to the medicinal cannabis and exportation project, our concern in this  
area is that Gibraltar simply cannot harvest enough cannabis to sustain the local market, let  
alone export. We would therefore like clarification as to how this would actually work and  
905 whether there is an element of importation before packaging and exportation linked to the  
process, or how is it that the proposal is intended to work.

With regard to the prescription of unlicensed medicinal products the GSD's position remains  
that these decisions should lie with the clinicians and structured within a well-regulated system  
of medicinal products – as such, since the Drugs Advisory Council in the UK recommended the  
910 parameters and framework moving forward, the GSD immediately took heed and advocated for  
Gibraltar to follow suit, based on the professional advice.

The GSD is of the opinion that products recommended by leading clinicians should be made  
available to alleviate the suffering of specific patients who are identified by doctors to fall within  
the category of persons who could benefit from such products via the GPMS prescription  
915 service.

Mr Speaker, I now turn to another area of my responsibility, that of supported employment.

I often meet adults who are unable to obtain employment and this leads them to seek political solutions to their employment crisis. These individuals already feel socially marginalised due to their mental health issues; disabilities; criminal history; and/or drug or alcohol addictions.

920 Nevertheless, as a compassionate society, we should be empowering these persons with chances and opportunities, giving them the tools and a fair platform to improve their lives as individuals in an integrated manner. Instead, Mr Speaker, all they get is a row of shut doors.

It makes complete sense from a political perspective, as well as from an employer's point of view, as to why setting up a supported internship programme in Gibraltar will work. A properly  
925 implemented policy will stimulate employment, get people into the right employment and genuinely assist those who are struggling in this regard. The vision is not a complicated one to visualise. The Minister with responsibility for supported employment asked me during the last Question and Answer session for ideas which could improve this area and I am more than happy to share this with him: firstly, we must offer employers and associated staff the continuous  
930 support and structure to deal with challenges they may have to overcome in order to provide the necessary assurances to all parties involved.

Secondly, by officially launching the Gibraltar Supported Internship Programme this would allow employers to boast their accredited status as an inclusive employer, sharing with the community and their business clientele their participation in a worthy internship programme as  
935 well as inspiring other employers to sign up too.

Finally, the benefits for the intern are fantastic: the boost in confidence and the social inclusion and motivation will manifest in happier, contributing individuals with relevant associated health benefits in certain cases.

There is no need to reinvent the wheel, the European Union for Supported Employment  
940 already has underpinning values and principles to assist us as policymakers in how to develop our own policy. But nothing can happen if we do not invest in this project and establish a dedicated team of professionals and clear criteria for the team to work on. There is an important demographic in our community who must be listened to. Their issues may not be headline-grabbing or fashionable, which is why we have a greater duty to bring their needs to the fore.

945 We must focus on the real issues affecting people day to day and less on playing to the apparent masses. The electoral calculation of vote catching must be parked – permanently. We have many seminars in lavish locations, but no one is tackling a proper system to support the most vulnerable in our community. Why is the Government clearly pussy-footing on this issue?

In the words of Elvis Presley himself, Mr Speaker: 'a little less conversation, a little more  
950 action, please'. (*Laughter*) (**A Member:** Very good!)

Mr Speaker, I now turn to E-Government and the idea of having a fully fledged digital public service is one that really excites me. It is regrettable that we have lost the thrust in particular on technological advances over the last 10 years and the increase in persons having access to the internet too. More lamentable is the delay in not delivering e-services as initially roadmapped by  
955 the IT&LD by 2015 and, particularly with Brexit in mind, we should be increasing efficiency and strengthening our public service digital block. I look forward to the coming measures that the Minister for E-Services has announced during the summer

The Government have so far spent £2.1 million on e-services and I would be grateful for clarification as to whether this expenditure figure has now been exceeded and what the total  
960 contracted services for the provision of e-services are expected to be? The Government claims they have procured this through proper and fair processes. However, the Principal Auditor has highlighted in a value-for-money audit the disaster that was the contract between the Government and Maverick costing the taxpayer £1.83 million, not related to e-services but it is related to rebranding and internet services; and also, Mr Speaker, it highlighted an expenditure  
965 to the tune of £662,000 with ElitAd Internet Limited and Elitechlab UK Limited. In his report the Principal Auditor highlights amongst other concerns: a) poor procurement, as it by-passed

national procurement tender regulations; b) a lack of consultation with Government's IT&LD; and c) potentially even breaching EU procurement thresholds.

970 It appears the Government has not learnt from their mistakes. That is, not to consult closely with the IT&LD, given their recent demonstration outside this House – clearly, they have been completely sidelined by this ministry, and I strongly believe it is vital to consult and build on the expertise from within.

975 Mr Speaker, I must also align myself with the concerns of the Principal Auditor regarding entertainment expenses claimed by LPS together with motor vehicle expenses and petrol. As concerning as this may be, it is symptomatic of the urgent need to bring actual Government-owned companies into the scrutiny of the Gibraltar Audit Office. It is a touch unfair to highlight these expenses as 'a drain on the public purse' whilst not being able to tackle wholly owned Government companies which are financed by the taxpayer.

980 And whilst on the subject of the good work done by the Principal Auditor and his team, when is the Government going to introduce legislation for the Gibraltar Audit Office to provide us with, and I quote: 'a more efficient audit office fully independent of Government' during the first year in office, as they committed to do in the 2011 election?

985 Where is the Bill, Mr Speaker? It seems like banning the importation of ivory is higher up on the Government's agenda. The need for the new legislation is evidenced by the fact that the Principal Auditor sent his latest report to this House in January this year, but we have only received it barely two weeks ago.

990 Last year during my Budget address I spoke about the allegations of bankruptcy thrown from the Opposition benches year on year to the Government of the day. I stand by what I said in that 'I sincerely trust no Gibraltarian would ever want to intentionally jeopardise the economic future of our nation, more so those who stand for election and have earned the trust and respect of the elected'

995 Therefore, I was happy to hear the Chief Minister say in this House late last year, and I quote: 'the allegation of purported or near-bankruptcy has been one thrown from the Opposition benches, whoever might have been the incumbent, to those on this side of the House, whoever might have been the incumbent, without even the shame of waiting for a year when people had changed chairs'

1000 However, the lack of transparency and information regarding how we are expected to repay projects – for example, our schools – is regrettable. For example, Mr Speaker, in 2015-16 it was forecast that £4.8 million would be spent on the refurbishment of the St Bernard's School project at the old St Bernard's Hospital. It is reported by the Principal Auditor that this expenditure was transferred from the I&DF to a Government-owned company at the request of the Financial Secretary.

1005 Similarly, the Government received a payment of £13.9 million from the Government-owned company in respect of works previously paid from the I&DF. These are clear transactions to the benefit of Government which accumulates almost £19 million.

The Government can argue that school refurbishments are linked to sale of property, either decommissioned former school buildings or new parking spaces, but this should not excuse the Government for not incorporating the revenue and expenditure of these projects through the estimates book.

1010 And, on the topic of schools, I must make reference to the unprioritised delivery of St Martin's School, promised to parents by May 2017 and only just recently seen works commencing recently. I am sure it will look great, but the fact that it has not been prioritised despite the flurry of projects the Government has embarked on and completed is regrettable.

1015 Additionally, I would be grateful if the Government could provide details regarding the Crown land sold for £50 million in 2015-16 given this created a substantial amount of revenue for the Government – and we have asked the Government before in this House. This amount is highlighted by the Principal Auditor and I think it is only right that we receive clarification as to what that transaction is.

1020 Mr Speaker, I, as well as my colleagues on this side of the House have demonstrated Gibraltar  
is not as rosy as the Government would have you believe. Should you go into the online  
presentation of the Budget, you will simply find the costs of capital projects but no details as to  
how they will be funded or, more importantly, how they will be repaid by this community. The  
debate on our public finances should be one based on honesty. As projects go up, we should  
know how they are being paid and how they are going to be serviced in the future. There has to  
1025 be a recalibration in the way politicians deliver projects.

If you spend £95 million on a new energy plant, levy the relevant revenue source to cover  
that expenditure, let's not pretend electricity prices do not have to go up and the Government  
should continue to subsidise consumption to the extent that it does. If not just from the  
environmental angle but from a fiscal angle too, be clear with people of what is expected from  
1030 them in return. That is the GSD way of doing things: there was no fear as to whether our public  
spending was too high, we had every faith in the hands of Sir Peter Caruana. *(Interjections)*

If you are going to boast about ideas and obtaining value for money, do not spend £40 million  
on cladding for a facelift on buildings built more than 50 years ago when you know you can build  
better quality homes for the fraction of a price. Let's have a long-term vision in how we do  
1035 things and develop our land for the next generations.

I have tried to be as balanced as possible in delivering my address, praising the Government  
where credit is due and holding them to account and highlighting flaws and areas where, quite  
frankly, more needs to be done and where things could have been done better. But one thing is  
certain, Mr Speaker, despite our political differences, despite the diatribe at times in this House,  
1040 I know that we have more that unites us than divides us.

Mr Speaker, I would like to thank you, the Clerk and his team for the hard work they do, and  
wish you all the very best in preparing for the next general election.

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

1045 **The Speaker:** The Hon. Steven Linares.

**Minister for Culture, the Media, Youth and Sport (Hon. S E Linares):** Mr Speaker, this is my  
20th Budget speech (**Several Members:** Hear, hear!) *(Banging on desks) (Interjections)*  
**(A Member:** Twenty more, 20 more!) and eighth on this side, *(Banging on desks) (Interjections)*  
1050 and many more to come!

**Minister for Health, Care and Justice (Hon. N F Costa):** Sixteen more, 16 more!

1055 **Mr Speaker:** The Godfather of the House. *(Laughter and interjections) (Banging on desks)*

**Hon. N F Costa:** Brilliant!

**Hon. S E Linares:** Mr Speaker, what an honour!

1060 Well, Mr Speaker, I start my speech by giving a synopsis of what has been achieved over the  
last year and some of the things we intend to do this coming year in relation to my areas of  
responsibility as the Minister for Culture, the Media, Youth and Sport. I will start with my  
responsibility for Culture.

1065 In last year's Budget speech I announced that the Government remains firmly committed to  
the development of Culture locally and to exporting our arts at an international level. I am  
delighted to confirm that, in line with this policy, Gibraltar Cultural Services (GCS), on behalf of  
the Ministry for Culture established a Cultural Development Unit in November 2018. It saw the  
employment of a full-time Cultural Development and Educational Officer. The Unit has already  
been instrumental in introducing training programmes for cultural officials, groups, coaches,  
performers, administrators and others involved in the cultural field.

1070 It supports educational establishments, the Youth Service and other stakeholders. It is developing generic cultural educational programmes; it is promoting our art galleries and our public library, amongst other duties. The Unit has been very proactive and has managed to organise art, drama, music, photographic, poetry/creative writing and social media workshops and courses.

1075 This has happened in conjunction with different societies, groups and companies such as the Photographic Society, the White Light Theatre, Wright Tech, and many more. The unit has been instrumental in also organising a theatre lighting and sound three-day course allowing young people to explore the processes and techniques involved in creating lighting for stage. The Development Unit introduced an Art Treasure Hunt that will be part of this year's Summer Sports and Leisure Programme with guides taking groups around. They worked on the second Youth Arts Jamboree. Therefore the Development Unit has proved to be a great move and a total success story.

1085 Mr Speaker, this year we will see the launch of the Gibraltar Cultural Services Cultural Awards to celebrate the best of Gibraltar's Arts and Culture. This will take a similar form to the GBC Sports Awards. It will be an event that will recognise the potential, ability, talent and achievements for individual or collective excellence in our cultural community. The Awards will also support our community's cultural development. The first Cultural Awards will be celebrated on the Thursday, 5th December 2019.

1090 GCS on behalf of the Ministry of Culture have organised a great number of events which range from: a Cultural Art Exchange held in January at *Palacio de la Diputación Provincial de Cadiz*; the project 'Easterly Winds' saw 17 local artists presenting their works there. It was led and curated by Magda Bellotti with GCS overseeing it. The next Phase will be in 2020 when artists from Cadiz will exhibit here in the Gustavo Bacarisas Gallery.

1095 The Gibraltar-Berlin Art Residency project took place for a third year, in July 2018. This saw a Gibraltar artist taking up an art residency in Berlin and a Berlin artist doing a residency in Gibraltar. A book and exhibition of the residency was launched in October 2018 at the John Mackintosh Hall.

1100 We continue to support the participation of local artists in competitions and exhibitions abroad. Examples of this policy in action are: the Royal Academy Summer Exhibition; Paul Cosquieri and Karl Ullger at the Lloyds EC3; and the Edinburgh Art Fair event, to name but a few.

In autumn we are organising a cultural art exchange together with the JM Memorial Foundation. This is the first phase of the project that will see artists from Tangier coming to Gibraltar to exhibit their work. All the above gives effect to our strategy of exporting our culture to the world.

1105 Mr Speaker, this year GCS have introduced a number of new initiatives with a view to market and promote our art galleries. Working with the Tourist Board via their Visitgibraltar.gi website, the galleries are advertised on a weekly basis using different images. The galleries have also been promoted via social media. We have also trained freelance walking tour guides, so they are now able to include the galleries as part of their tours itinerary.

1110 A rededication and Open Day at the GEMA Gallery and presenting to the public a new exhibition of works, with artworks belonging to the Government's Art Collection are examples of further promotion. We have also opened up one of the vaults at GEMA to local artists and groups, with a number of successful exhibitions already organised to date. More monthly exhibitions are planned for the rest of the year.

1115 GCS has been busy organising World Book Day; the second Youth Open Day in conjunction with the Youth Service; the second Artisans Christmas Market at Line Wall Road Boulevard, with the Tourist Board; the Literary Festival; the Street Art Murals with the Ministry for the Environment; the Three Kings' Cavalcade; and the fifth edition of Gibraltar Talks.

1120 GCS, on behalf of the Ministry, is also running the usual programmes and festivals that are organised on an annual basis. This includes the Spring Festival; Shakespeare for Kids; the Autumn Programme; the Gibraltar Fair and national celebrations; the New Year's celebrations;

the international art competition; literary and poetry competitions; May Day; the Drama Festival; the Christmas Festival of Lights; and classical concerts among many others.

1125 An important part of the work that GCS has done now for a number of years; together with many other Departments; including my own Department for Youth is the updating of the Cultural Organisation's Register. This is in keeping with Child Protection policy as directed by the Child Protection Committee. In the last six months they have ensured that all of the groups have completed or signed up to one of the Safeguarding Children Tier 1 courses and they have processed new groups and are ensuring members are vetted accordingly.

1130 We are currently working on an information booklet to inform all cultural organisations as to how they can formally register locally. I will say more about this later given that this format is replicated in my responsibilities for Sports and Youth.

1135 Mr Speaker, GCS has been leading on the cultural programme for the Island Games. This involves the organisation of the following: a major Retrospective Exhibition jointly with the *Gibraltar Chronicle* to celebrate Gibraltar's participation at the Island Games from 1985 to 2017, which will be launched on Tuesday, 18th June 2019 and will run until after the Island Games on Saturday, 13th July; an Island Games Art Residency that will be held in Gibraltar from 23rd June to 6th July – this is organised together with Kitchen Studios, culminating in an exhibition at the John Mackintosh Hall launching on Thursday, 4th July 2019, and multidisciplinary artists from numerous participating islands will be involved, working together with local artists in a variety of workshops and events; Supporting the Island Games Committee with the Games Opening Ceremony; the annual Gastronomy Festival, Calentita will kick-start two weeks of events at Casemates Square on Friday 5th July – Casemates will be known as 'Games Square' where Summer Nights will be held daily from 6th to 13th July 2019 respectively, and this will also include some of the Games medal ceremonies; and organising a tree-planting ceremony during the Games on Wednesday, 10th July 2019.

1140 GCS as part of its contract with the Ministry for Culture has undertaken works to all its major assets. Many of the rooms at the John Mackintosh Hall have been refurbished and new roofing has also been provided above the changing rooms.

1150 The Inces Hall has had the auditorium, entrance lobby, staircase, backstage and corridors painted and a new air-conditioning unit has been installed. Other minor areas have also been refurbished.

1155 GEMA, the Gustavo Bacarisa Gallery, and many premises occupied by clubs and associations have been refurbished, repaired and painted. GCS has also acquired a number of new artworks which will be added to the Ministry of Culture art collection.

1160 Mr Speaker, I move on to the Gibraltar Academy for Music and the Performing Arts (GAMPA) and I welcome the hon. Member's positive remarks on GAMPA. It is right to remind everybody at this point that the idea of setting up an Academy was a manifesto commitment of this GSLP/Liberal Government. (A Member: Hear, hear.) The Academy continues to be a success story, and in fact over the last four years GAMPA was so successful that it had outgrown their premises! In September, we moved GAMPA to new premises at 7 Hospital Hill.

1165 Extensive works were undertaken in order to modify the premises to their requirements. This building has 12 classrooms of different sizes as well as storage facilities, a homework room, a boardroom, waiting areas and a reception area. GAMPA currently has over 350 students involved in tuition, both in one-to-one and in group classes.

1170 Mr Speaker, I am happy to say that GAMPA's old premises at 63 Flat Bastion Road have been transformed into a Studio Theatre. The drama fraternity had long been asking for more space and room to be able to stage small productions. GAMPA has been able to provide an atmospheric venue for small performances by converting the magazine at 63 Flat Bastion Road. The new use has fully respected the heritage of the site. It is yet another example of the Government tastefully converting a heritage building to a modern use. It will be known as the Magazine Studio Theatre. Works for this were funded by GAMPA through profits made over the past year.



1175 The Magazine Studio Theatre is kitted out with a 10 m<sup>2</sup> stage and a light and sound rig as well as a dressing room and waiting/bar area. GAMPAs also purchased a vintage grand piano to be used to entertain the waiting audience. Both of these premises are used daily. Percussion classes and exams are all held at the Magazine Studio theatre which also stages performances every four weeks. This includes both plays open to the public and private recitals.

1180 Mr Speaker, this year GAMPAs took on a Gibraltar-wide programme called 'I Am Me'. They toured all the schools giving self-esteem and character-building workshops. They also held choir workshops with all school choirs and recorded the 'I Am Me' song, featuring all local schools choirs as well as recording a video of the song. The aim of this programme is to promote a positive message of togetherness and it also worked as an anti-bullying campaign. It was a way to reach the younger generations and promote their wellbeing through a positive message.

1185 During 2018 GAMPAs have been involved in a great number of performances and initiatives, such as: offering drama therapy classes for eight weeks for students with special learning needs and challenges; the Gibraltar Youth Choir which represented Gibraltar at the World Choir Games in Tshwane, South Africa, obtaining third place in the Pop Ensemble; acting students taking part in the Shakespeare for Kids workshops organised by UK-based company and GCS; a Technical Theatre course offered to acting students by GCS technician, Mark Cortes, at the Magazine Studio Theatre; workshops for instrumentalists in collaboration with the Philharmonic Society; Reena Nagrani participating in the Elena Cobb winners' concert at the Royal Albert Hall in London; 'Kids Rock ... The Concert', this is the annual Parasol Foundation sponsored end-of-term show held at the John Mackintosh Hall Theatre, featuring over 200 students from the academy.

1190 These are just a few of the many events that they have organised alone or together with other groups.

1195 Mr Speaker, GAMPAs continued to work very closely with the Parasol Foundation in order to develop the Parasol Foundation Scholarship Programme. The scholarships awarded are for: Students who show a high level of skill or have the potential to excel; Beginners who showed potential and have achieved considerable progress in a short space of time; Students in financial hardship. And the ensemble which is open to all students of the Academy in order to be able to develop a Youth Orchestra, which is another of our manifesto commitments.

1200 GAMPAs is very proud in continuing to offer examination opportunities to students who choose to study both classical and rock and pop music as well as in acting and drama.

1205 Mr Speaker, our Annual Mega Concert, now 'Gibraltar Calling', goes from strength to strength. This was one of our manifesto commitments. It has become an event that has excellent international appeal. Every year we see how people flock to Gibraltar to enjoy the two-day festival of music. Our visitors come mainly from the UK. It is great for our economy.

1210 Mr Speaker, the hon. Member, Mr Clinton again mentioned the 'magnificent Gibraltar Calling' and said that to date we have spent in the region of £11 million, but as per usual from him he forgets about how much direct revenue comes to GOG which is about £5 million. During the years it has been running, the value of the festival in bringing people to Gibraltar is ignored by the hon. Member and the value of the exposure we get abroad is also ignored. Just as a conservative estimate, the value bringing people is approximately £200,000 for every concert we have had – i.e. eight concerts which then equates to £1.6 million. The values of the exposure is approximately half a million per concert which is x8, £4 million. So together it adds up to £5.6 million.

1215 Further, the fact that hotels, restaurants, shops, etc. are employing more people and paying more taxes and social insurance. In fact it was relevant to hear the Chief Minister and my colleague Minister Licudi report to this House that all tourism statistics were *up* and that hotel occupancy is *up*.

1220 Mr Speaker, event-led tourism works. We see how artists and bands use social media to announce that they are coming to Gibraltar. This generates even more publicity to Gibraltar. As an example, Stormzy, on Twitter has 1.1 million followers and last year he tweeted he was

1225 coming here, using the word 'Gibraltar'. Rita Ora has 6.8 million followers and she too mentioned Gibraltar.

I would like to read a short email that was forwarded to me to make precisely this point. The email is from a journalist to the organisers: 'Hi Richard. Hope you are well today. I received Suzie's OOO so I wondered if you could facilitate linking us with someone that works in Tourism PR for Gibraltar. *Mirror Online* would like to run a piece on Gibraltar as a great weekend destination – tagging in Gibraltar Calling – but we need to provide them with a breakdown of latest hottest restaurants, places to visit/stay etc. Deadline copy 14th Aug (but I would like info by Monday 13th). Would it be possible for you to connect us with someone that can give us this information? Thank you! Polly.'

1235 This free publicity is worth hundreds of thousands of pounds which we would otherwise have to spend in marketing Gibraltar. And to boot, it is a festival that nearly everyone in Gibraltar enjoys. So the benefit of continuing 'Gibraltar Calling' is *huge* and therefore we will continue to do so.

I now turn to my responsibilities regarding the Media. I am pleased to report that construction of GBC's brand-new media centre at South Jumper's Bastion is now well underway.

1240 The building's steel frame has now been virtually completed, with internal works proceeding well too. Technical fit-out is now due to start this coming February, with GBC Television and Radio Gibraltar expected to start live transmissions from the new venue next summer. The Government is very much looking forward to our national broadcaster finally being able to operate from purpose-built facilities that will also provide a much more pleasant working environment for GBC's employees.

1245 The relocation project continues to be the priority this year for GBC's management team, who are liaising with expert consultants and service providers on how to extract the highest possible benefit from the new building. The project has its challenges, as it is preserving the heritage value of the site while incorporating the new build. It is being designed with an efficient use of all available space.

1250 The new Broadcasting House will provide an excellent facility for our national broadcaster. While it is being constructed, the life of the current building is being stretched to ensure television and radio programming can continue in the interim. Investment continues on electronic systems that will be relocated next year to South Jumper's Bastion, while other 'end of life' systems are being carefully maintained by GBC's engineers to avoid duplication in costs, before being decommissioned. Moving a television and radio station is logistically complex, when one of the main considerations has to be at minimal disruption to the programming. Despite that, plans are well in hand to relocate the facilities in 2020.

1260 The past 12 months have seen the expansion of radio services, with the introduction of an alternative schedule overnight on Radio Gibraltar Plus, which now carries up to 14 hours a day of additional programming, providing a wider choice for listeners. This has been achieved by maximising technology and reorganising assets always having in mind value for money.

1265 Radio Gibraltar has and will continue to ensure that it is always a big part of our community with a strong schedule of programmes that are both informative and entertaining, with a high level of listener interaction. It achieves this by staging roadshows at events throughout the year and thereby living and breathing Gibraltar through the airwaves.

1270 The selection of TV programmes offered nowadays by GBC is a far cry from those that were on our screens just a few years ago. Since 2013, this Government has provided GBC with the much-needed additional resources for them to improve the variety and quality of both its local and international programmes. The past 12 months are a testament to this, with the number of television programmes produced increasing. Now we can see *Viewpoint*, *The Hub*, *City Pulse*, *The Powder Room* and *The Sports Locker* and they have become the main stay of the studio-based shows.

1275 Other new and returning series included are *In Their Footsteps*, *Fortress of Fortresses* and *Working with History*, all of which focus on Gibraltar's rich history. There are too many

1280 programmes to list, but it is worth mentioning the many outside broadcasts and Christmas and Easter Specials that are also produced, as well as the live UEFA Nations League and European Qualifier games, and the very successful GBC Sports Awards celebrating the achievements of our many sports men and women. Being the Minister for the Media *and* Sport the event could not be more fitting in the context of this overview of my Ministry's activities, for which I am delighted that the Awards are now a firm fixture of both the broadcasting and sports calendars.

1285 Gibraltar's vibrant economy, the local political scene, a busier-than-ever social calendar, as well as the ongoing Brexit story, means that GBC's team of journalists have been working at maximum pace to keep Gibraltar informed. GBC has total and absolute freedom of impartiality and that is what is to be expected from a public service broadcaster when it delivers news reports to the consumer via the traditional means of radio and television, as well as through the corporation's very active social media and online platforms.

1290 Mr Speaker, one of the biggest successes for GBC is its long-standing charitable arm, the Open Day Charitable Trust. The community fundraises throughout the year, with all of it coming together on the second Wednesday of December when marathon radio and television shows are staged. The event very much brings everyone together just ahead of the festive season.

1295 This year the all-time fundraising record was broken with a huge £165,000 collected for local worthy causes. The Trust provides funding for specific projects nominated by locally registered charities. The more recent one is that of a £75,000 First Aid unit for St John Ambulance. The Trust has also donated £50,000 to the Society for Cancer Relief and £17,000 for the funding of numerous fitness activities for the elderly organised by the Physical Activities Association for Mature Older Adults among several other donations.

1300 Mr Speaker, there are not many countries, if any, our size that have the benefit of having its own national television and radio service. It says much about Gibraltar as a mature society, while providing a sense of nationhood. GBC has currently 80 proud professionals at all levels who give their all to ensure the corporation delivers the best service, including television and radio programmes, online content and daily news coverage. Work on programming for the next 12 months is already very much in production. This will include coverage of next month's Gibraltar Island Games, more live international football, a new series of *Inspired by ...* that travels to India, 1305 this time to focus on Gibraltar's Hindu community, and a second series of *A Life Abroad*, among many others.

1310 Broadcasting in Gibraltar is moving forward, with radio, television and online services into the future as a result of the investment into the sector being made by this GSLP/Liberal administration.

As Minister for the Media I am happy to say that there are now a number of *other* private broadcasting entities in the market. YGTV is running a good service with its online services. Rock Radio has recently gone on air offering listeners music geared for the young, but also for the not-so-young.

1315 Our traditional two daily newspapers the *Gibraltar Chronicle* and the *Panorama* keep us very much informed of all that is current through the traditional print format. They are also available on social media and online platforms. We also have a number of magazines in the market covering social, cultural and musical events. This shows that we enjoy a wide variety of events in our social calendar which are then reported upon and recorded by the media in general.

1320 Mr Speaker, the Gibraltar Youth Service continues to open its doors, and have created and developed programmes that have reached to more young people. It is great to see our Community Youth Workers developing programmes designed for youngsters to acquire life skills and at the same time doing all kinds of community and charity work.

1325 These programmes are: the 'Insight Project' which aims to increase the awareness of young people about the employment and career paths that are available to them. The Gibraltar Youth Service has been reaching out to Government Departments and local businesses in order to facilitate an insight experience for young people on what it might be like to work in these places.

1330 'The Zone' started in September 2018 and it provides a safe place for young people during lunchtimes where they can have a healthy meal prepared by young people who are gaining experience in the catering business and have undertaken health and hygiene courses. This is open on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays.

1335 And here, Mr Speaker, I would like to inform the hon. Member, Mr Llamas, that this programme is geared towards what the young people eat – he commented about how young people are now eating different things. Well, this programme is specifically to try and educate and inform what is good to eat or not. I may add as well that with the advent of what is happening with the environment there are many young people who are now opting to be vegans and to change their lifestyle so we should take an example of that, and I agree with him on that. **(A Member: Hear, hear.)** Because they are giving us a lesson on how we should look after the environment and be healthy at the same time. **(A Member: Hear, hear.)**

1340 This programme, the Zone, on Tuesdays also continues in the afternoon and it is further extended to young people who are not in education, employment or training. It is also open for anyone who requires additional support with employment and life skills.

1345 'The Mingle' is a programme that the Youth Service, together with the Care Agency and the Department of Education have recently embarked upon. This is a new community initiative with young adults up to the age of 30 years who have or experience mild learning difficulties. This has increased the joined-up approach amongst organisations that come into contact with vulnerable adults.

1350 Again, he mentioned about people not having support and not having the backing when they are unemployed, support employment and all that. This programme is actually tackling that.

1355 The project is in its infancy and the Youth Service are very excited about its potential.

1360 Joyful Riot – this started October 2018 as an inclusive community choir initiative where people of all ages are welcome to attend. Performances have taken place at St Theresa's Church during Christmas; also as a road show to various adult services including St Bernadette's, the Elderly Residential Services, Clubhouse and the Community Day Care Centre for Adults. The power of music increases social fulfilment, boosts confidence and reduces anxiety and stress levels.

1365 For this, I would like to also congratulate the young people, because they do get in contact with the older generation, and it is great to see how they can interact one with the other. This is another programme that is introduced by the GSLP Government and this is another programme that the Youth Service, I am happy to say, are working on really well.

1370 #sitforcalpehouse – this started in April and saw many people and groups take pictures on a throne and donate the proceeds to Calpe House. Most of the Members of this Parliament have done so. Currently the throne is on tour, continuing to raise funds for Calpe House.

1375 In partnership with 'Sams' and Gibraltar Dyslexia Support Group, two videos were filmed and edited by GYPT to raise awareness of mental health issues and dyslexia. Again another example that we are concerned and we do take seriously issues like mental health.

1380 Mr Speaker, as we have seen recently, young people are very keen to make a statement about climate change. 'Going Green' is yet another project which the Gibraltar Youth Service has introduced. The objective is to reduce their environmental impact in the office and in the youth clubs. Establishing gardening projects, recycling all goods and using these items in their arts and craft sessions are some of the practical effects. They have upholstered all their sofas instead of purchasing new ones. They have sourced eco-friendly cleaning products and continue to recycle their waste. They do not purchase single-use plastic cups and encourage their employees and club members to bring their reusable drink bottles.

1385 They participate annually in the 'Clean up the World' campaign. They are also working with Island Games in designing and creating sea model creatures from recycled goods – 'Clean Seas, Our Future'. These will be exhibited at the youth clubs during the week of the 6th to 12th July, during the Island Games.

1380 What was known as the Gibraltar Youth Council has now changed its name to the Voice of  
Young People (VYP). This group was formed in order for them to highlight issues which concern  
young people. To date, they have created a young person's local directory which features health,  
leisure, education, general advice and other support services that young people can use at any  
given time.

1385 They also prepared a questionnaire for teenagers. This was completed by 1,302 young  
people. The aim was to find out what issues they are facing today. Bullying, mental health, drugs  
and underage drinking were the top four.

1390 The VYP group are already working to address these issues and have already met with the  
Chief Minister. In these meetings they informed the Chief Minister of the work they were doing  
and how they intended to progress. They have also met with Minister Cortes and officials from  
the Department of Education to see how bullying was being tackled and to influence current  
policy.

1395 They have also been instrumental in highlighting the issue of teenage mental health. To this  
end they have seen how the Health Service is dealing with it and learnt how there will be a  
health councillor soon in the schools to be able to deal with these issues at an early stage. They  
will be meeting soon with the RGP to highlight the issue of drugs and underage drinking which  
was a concern high on their agenda. All in all, this group has been very proactive and the youth  
service will continue to work with them to highlight the priorities of young people.

1400 Youth Day 2019 was a joint event with Gibraltar Cultural Services. This year a Youth Day  
committee was formed comprising young people representing various youth organisations. The  
committee had the opportunity to debate and decide on all matters concerning Youth Day. Their  
responsibilities for delivering Youth Day ranged from choosing a date and the venue, to email  
administration, promotion of the event and working during the event itself. The experience the  
organisers have gained was immense and will serve them well in the future.

1405 Bikeability is a partnership programme with the Ministry of Transport. One of our youth and  
community workers will be training professionally in the UK to teach cycling skills to adults and  
children.

Lastly I would like to mention the participation of the Youth Service on our January 2019  
Cavalcade Float. This year their float supported and promoted the Island Games.

1410 The Youth Service continues to participate in further professional development. For example,  
Managing Challenging Behaviour is a course that the staff have recently attended. The Youth  
Service is now a vibrant proactive service which continues to form part and contribute to various  
multi-agency forums. They are represented on the Child Protection Committee and Sub-Training  
Committee, the Drugs Advisory Council, the Youth Advisory Council and the Children Healthy  
and Active Multi-agency Programme (CHAMP) initiative.

1415 The Laguna Youth Club, Dolphin's Youth Club and the Plater Youth Club continue to open  
their doors to a younger age group of children aged 7 to 14. They have developed a debating  
project. This is a fun way for young people to research, learn, develop their knowledge and most  
importantly to be confident when speaking in front of an audience. They have been developing  
their employability and problem solving skills through the planning and fundraising of an  
educational trip to Poland, which will include a visit to Auschwitz.

1420 As a result of the success of the work done by the youth clubs, and the increase in numbers  
coming in to the clubs, more support workers have been called in for these sessions. The Youth  
Service is now well positioned to continue with the great work they do for young people going  
forward into the future.

1425 Mr Speaker, I will now move to my responsibility as the Minister for Sport and Leisure, and I  
will start with the King's Bastion Leisure Centre.

1430 In the King's Bastion Leisure Centre, there have been a number of major projects carried out  
during the last year. One of these projects involved the installation of the Funcard System. This  
system has replaced the POS stations at the Bowling Alley, Ice Rink, Fitness Gym and Reception.  
This meant the installation of card-issuing kiosks in the Bowling and Fitness Gym areas and the

addition of card readers to each of our 60 arcade machines, with extensive cabling required throughout the Centre to connect all the equipment to the servers.

1435 With this Funcard system, users are able to put money onto the card which they can then use for any of the activities in the Leisure Centre excluding the Cinema and Restaurant. The benefit to the Centre is that it removes the cumbersome task of cash handling, particularly the coins from the arcade. This potentially will result in an increase in revenue of about 15%, which will help to offset against the cost of installing the system.

1440 All the wood panelling beneath the carpets in the right-hand cinema screen and in their kitchenette, which was suffering from severe dampness, was also replaced. New mirrors were installed in the fitness gym and one of the ice rink compressors in the chiller pit became faulty and also had to be replaced.

In the amusement arcade, three new games machines have been added. A thorough inspection of the ceiling of the bowling alley concluded that extensive refurbishment work had to be carried out ahead of its refurbishment.

1445 The ice rink had been leaking for some time. These works meant the closure of the rink for a few months. Now this has been repaired, the Centre embarked on a principal project planned for this year. The previous bowling alley which was hailed as the state of the art when it opened in 2008, on the watch of the people on the other side, was actually a second-hand system which was already 15 years old before it was placed in the King's Bastion Leisure Centre. So much for value for money!

1450 Therefore it was not in a fit state to bear the rigours of the Island Games taking place next month. I am happy to say that this has now been completely replaced by brand-new bowling lanes, a new scoring system and new mechanical equipment. This is now up and running and our bowlers have been able to train there in preparation for the games next month.

1455 And since, Mr Speaker, I am on the item of the King's Bastion Leisure Centre, and the hon. Member mentioned about the cinema outside, which was a great success, which I totally agree with, there are already moves to see whether the other park that is being done can have a place where cinema shows can be done – and my hon. Friend confirms that, that there will be a place where a screen can be placed and shows of cinema can be done. So again, the GSLP Liberals delivering.

1460 As hon. Members are very much aware, we will shortly be hosting the 18th Edition of the NatWest International Island Games. The opening ceremony is scheduled for 6th July and marks the start of what will be a week of great sporting competition. Gibraltar and the other 23 territories will battle it out for medals.

1465 It will also be the culmination of four years of extremely hard work by a large cross-section of the community. Since the opportunity presented itself to host the Island Games whilst in Jersey in 2015, I have seen the local sporting fraternity pull together in a way only Gibraltarians can. The work undertaken by those involved in the Games, together with the assistance offered by many other sectors of the community, means that Gibraltar will no doubt host a truly memorable week.

1470 I would like to place on record my personal thanks and that of the Government, to all those who have worked tirelessly to make the Games a success, many of whom have done so on a voluntary basis. I will not name them as there are too many to mention and I do not want to omit any individual or entity from the list.

1475 We are now at a point where these Games are very much a reality and will be Gibraltar's biggest sporting event to date. The journey has not been an easy one; no one expected it to be. I think we need to be reminded that some 2,500 visitors will descend on the Rock for approximately ten days, with this figure including athletes, officials, team members and press to cover the Games. Images and reports of our country will be sent back to their respective islands.

1480 The importance of this positive exposure cannot be underestimated.

As I mentioned earlier, the Island Games will feature a full and varied cultural programme. I urge everyone to support the Games, by supporting Team Gibraltar at the different venues or by engaging with our visitors with our famous Gibraltarian hospitality.

1485 At this juncture I am pleased to announce that the Island Games expenditure will be in keeping with what was submitted in the original bid document. In the last financial year, recurrent expenditure under the Island Games sub-Head has been reconciled at £1,520,970 with revenue totalling £212,500.

For the coming financial year this expenditure, which should be finalised by September, is projected to amount to £894,475 with revenue projected at £1,304,500.

1490 When analysing both the expenditure and the revenue over both financial years, the net cost to HMGoG is £898,445. This is in fact less than the £1 million that was originally estimated, which is great news.

1495 The fact that the Games will result in visitors eating in local restaurants, staying in local hotels and spending in local shops whilst enjoying our tourist sites and everything else Gibraltar has to offer for a full ten days will bring approximately £3 million to the economy in general.

It is also important to remember that apart from the legacy that the Games will leave, the figures I have just quoted include expenditure in many other smaller but crucial legacy items that our sportspeople will be able to benefit from for a very long time.

1500 The Sandpits Lawn Tennis Club and the Multi-Use Games Area at the Bayside Sports Complex have benefitted from a resurfacing programme that will be at Bayside Sports Complex, in particular to be utilised by the community in general.

The spectator experience at the Tercentenary Sports Hall has been greatly improved by the installation of glass panels in the stands, making the entirety of the playing area visible irrespective of where you are seated.

1505 Willis's Magazine is currently undertaking a repair and refurbishment programme that will make it an iconic venue for the Pistol Shooting events during the Games and will make the chambers available for use in a controlled manner not only for the Gibraltar Pistol Association but to others also post the Games. These chambers were lying unused and after extensive consultation with all relevant stakeholders and with input from the Development and Planning Commission, the Heritage Trust, the Department for the Environment and others, they have been revived and will be re-used.

Over 200 bespoke barriers have been purchased for the road events, namely the cycling and the triathlon. These will be available for future sporting events and are an asset that will be used for other cultural events such as the Cavalcade.

1515 As a final point under this item, we must also consider all the equipment that our registered sports associations involved in the Games have received. This will help them develop their respective sports and contribute to raise standards when we compete at an international level.

1520 The hosting of the Island Games has been the main focus this year. However, Gibraltar has continued to organise and host numerous events, many of which form an integral part of the annual calendar of International Federations. The expenditure in this respect has totalled nearly £1.3 million. These international sporting events have real value in publicity terms. In this respect, they also: provide exposure on major sporting television networks during prime time slots, as is the case of the pool, darts and snooker events; fill local hotels during quiet off-peak periods of the year, as is done with the Chess Festival, which continues to grow in strength and reputation and is revered the world over; maintain our sporting fraternity active at an international level, with many of the organisational models employed locally now serving as templates for other host countries. It is worthwhile to continue to attract them to Gibraltar.

Event-led tourism has always been a policy of this GSLP/Liberal administration. And as I said before, it is working. The list I am about to provide is a testament to this.

1530 Over the last financial year, the Government has, via the GSLA, supported, been involved in or directly organised the: World Snooker Gibraltar Open; PDC Darts; World Pool Masters; International Chess; 8th International Junior Chess; European Backgammon Event – Mr Speaker,

on all these I have in my speech how much the value is of each of them, but I will not go through them; I will just state one which is the one that I use as an example of all the rest, and I tend to use that nearly every year, which is International Chess, which attracts 400 persons x 11 nights, which is 2,000 bed nights in Gibraltar. When you multiply that by at least £120, which is what people spend on average a night, including the hotel bed, one can work out how much the whole of the thing brings to our coffers.

Mr Speaker, there are the Gibraltar Squash Open; the Table Soccer World Cup –another great success, 400 people for 11 days as well. There are a lot more, Mr Speaker, but I will cut it short and say that the value to our economy of hosting all these events in Gibraltar is as follows:

All these events had a total of 15,225 bed nights; and an approximate extra, other smaller tournaments which are not in this list and equate to another 2,700 bed nights for tournaments mentioned ... Therefore the total of 17,925 bed nights.

For each bed night, it is now considered to be worth £120 per bed night, including general expenditure by visitor, being hotels, food, beverages, amenities, tourist attractions and shopping. The value to the economy is more than double the expenditure.

This does not include day visitors and all those who come to the events independently.

The GSLA has also assisted the Gibraltar Football Association with the hosting of the Champions League and Europa League qualifiers last summer. It has also been an integral part of ensuring that our National Team once again play official UEFA matches at the Victoria Stadium.

The Bayside Sports Complex, the Multi-Use Games Area, commonly known as the MUGA, is a hive of activity during good and dry weather but falls foul in inclement weather. We have therefore decided to convert it into a semi-rigid covered area. Works will start after the Games since the area has been prepared to host tennis matches during the Games.

Mr Speaker, sport plays a vital role in our society. We host many events, which take up time from local use of our existing facilities. All of our 42 registered sports associations have continued to organise and complete their respective seasons. It has been a testing year and I would like to thank those that have been affected for working so closely with the Ministry of Sport and the GSLA to try and maintain normality as much as reasonably possible.

Our sportspeople have understood the magnitude of the Island Games. More importantly they have seen the benefits of the new infrastructure projects that we will be providing. Their co-operation has been instrumental in allowing the Project Team and the GSLA to fulfil their responsibilities.

HMGOG financial support for the local sporting fraternity has been unwavering. We will continue to support our sportsmen and women. A total of £621,000 has been provided via the Gibraltar Sports Advisory Council.

Mr Speaker, the previous administration had budgeted in 2011 to spend a total of £516,000 on grants to sports associations, international competitions, sport development projects, and including the hosting of special sports and leisure events. We have currently budgeted for this year a total of £635,000 for grants to sporting associations, international competitions and sport development projects, excluding hosting of special sports and leisure events.

I repeat, *excluding* the hosting of special sports and leisure events.

The Hosting of Special Sports Events, which is shown in the Estimates Book as a separate item, is an additional £1 million. This shows that not only are we providing events which the community enjoys, as I mentioned above, but we are also investing in our sporting associations in order to host many events here in Gibraltar. This brings all the spin-off benefits to our economy as I have described earlier.

These events have only been possible after GSAC – which is made up of voluntary representatives voted for by the associations themselves – sifted through every single application and applied the set criteria. These individuals give up of their free time in what can become very long meetings and are a vital cog in Gibraltar's sporting machinery. My thanks to them also!



1585 Mr Speaker, in order for these associations to receive financial or logistical support they have to meet certain criteria at the point of annual registration. As Members will be aware, this GSLP/Liberal administration set up the Child Protection Committee with representatives from the GSLA sitting on the executive committee as well as the various sub-committees. It was therefore logical that child protection policies and safeguarding criteria form an integral part of the registration process for sporting and leisure entities.

1590 With this in mind, the GSLA's Sports Development Unit has rolled out an extensive training programme that has meant that in the last financial year 170 coaches and/or individuals who deal with children and young people have received safeguarding training delivered by the GSLA.

1595 This leaves the total since November 2017 at over 350 if we add to this all those coaches who receive safeguarding training via their own sport-specific coach education. Huge strides have been taken in ensuring a safer environment for those involved in sport and leisure.

The period of grace for the submission of adequate child protection policies has also elapsed but I am very glad to report that the vast majority of the registered sports associations have already submitted finalised versions, whilst those that have not are working very closely with the GSLA to finalise them.

1600 Whilst dealing with the participation of children in sport and leisure, I would now like to move onto the Summer Sports and Stay and Play programmes.

The Summer Sports and Leisure Programme 2018 once again improved on its previous year's attendance. 540 children were registered with the main arm of the programme, namely the Sports Train and Stay and Play programme. Amazingly, repeat attendances totalled over 10,000 units over six weeks – one unit is equal to one child attending one session.

1605 The Sports Train offered sporting and leadership activities for 7-to-14-year olds every weekday morning. The Children's Corner offered appropriate sport and recreational activities three days a week for 5- and 6-year-olds.

1610 The Family Evening Sessions noticed a marked improvement in attendance, with sessions attracting groups on average of 45 people and 90-plus on some occasions.

Mr Speaker, the Stay and Play programme offered sport, physical, arts and leisure activities for children with disabilities five days a 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.

1615 In addition, the Care Agency was actively involved in the induction training programme for 2018 adding to the quality of delivery whilst safeguarding the interests of leaders and children alike. There was a need to call upon the services of MEDOC during the programme as the availability of those on the supply list did not meet the ratios for the service users attending.

1620 Due to the hard work of those involved with the Stay and Play programme and its success, I am happy to announce that the purpose built premises at the boat house will be extended this financial year to accommodate the high demand of children attending. This is a far cry from the days before 2011 when the Stay and Play programme was conducted from a small unit in the boathouse.

1625 The GSLA together with the Government Departments has provided 20 sport associations and leisure providers with a range of sport coaching courses and taster sessions for children and young people. Sports and Leisure is an extremely dynamic industry and the information I have provided shows that the Ministry for Sport and all its components are certainly in tune with what is required and are providing the community with the service, support and facilities that they require but most importantly deserve. Therefore it is only right to invest in Sports.

1630 Last year in my Budget address I said that:

... never in the history of Gibraltar has a government invested so much time and effort in sporting projects than our GSLP/Liberal Government.

How true it is and we will be seeing the fruits of this investment in the coming weeks and months as we roll out the completion of the works. Therefore I will not now go over or mention all the new facilities we have built. I will allow the general public to judge for themselves.

1635 Last year, I also asked the people to be patient in the final year before the Games. I would like to thank the whole of the population for allowing us to work for you.

Thanks also go to the Sporting Associations who have endured disruption to their training schedules or venues. It is an honour to have been able to deliver facilities which will be there for many years to come.

1640 Many of the events that were mentioned above will once again be part of our calendar. Given that Gibraltar is now enjoying new and improved sporting facilities, we are actively working to try and attract more international events to Gibraltar. Each option is being studied with value for money and international exposure in mind. These are the main criteria that must be fulfilled before contracts are signed or commitments are given. The new facilities will allow us to develop our sports industry, and the sky is the limit, Mr Speaker. With our wonderful facilities  
1645 we will be in a position to attract clubs, schools, and national teams of all levels coming to Gibraltar to compete with our athletes and/or to do their training routine.

Therefore the Government will be encouraging our sporting fraternity to host more international events. We have seen how our hotels fill up. It is good to see new hotel projects going up and increased capacity to Gibraltar by air. This is a reflection of the exposure that  
1650 Gibraltar has received.

It is also the result of working closely with the Tourist Board who also market our events abroad. The plethora of new sporting venues will be worth every penny spent. (A Member: Hear, hear.) More venues will also mean that local competitions and development programmes will be able to continue with hardly any disruption, if any at all. The GSLA will now have more  
1655 options through the use of alternative facilities, instead of having to postpone or cancel league fixtures or training programmes.

All in all, a win-win situation which has only happened as a result of the GSLP/Liberal vision and our unprecedented investment in sports. This sports industry may well become another pillar of our economy and we will succeed, Brexit or no Brexit.

1660 Mr Speaker, I would like to close my address this year by saying thank you. (Several Members: Hear, hear!) Good – I am glad you are all listening! It is great to see that they are enjoying my speech and listening. Whilst the others were saying it, and everybody went out of the House – but never mind. Thank you for staying.

‘Thank you’ goes to the staff, at Gibraltar Cultural Services, at the Gibraltar Academy of Music and Performing Arts, at Leisure Management Services from the King’s Bastion Leisure Centre, at  
1665 the Gibraltar Sports and Leisure Authority, at GBC and at the Youth Service.

I would like to thank all members of the Youth Advisory Council, the Voice of Young People, the Sports Advisory Council, all the cultural groups from the arts, drama, photographic and dance fraternities.

1670 I would like to thank, for their patience, all those who have been in any way affected by the works that have been taking place and to the general public who are or have endured any inconvenience such as road closures or diversions. I am convinced that they will understand the importance of the Games and that next month they will be even more understanding when the Games are actually on. Thank you for allowing us to work for you.

1675 Thank you also to all the members of the governing bodies of those sports who are and have been involved in delivering the state-of-the-art facilities which will leave a lasting legacy well after the Island Games have passed. I am extremely grateful to the Organising Committee of the Island Games, most of whom do this without any financial interest.

1680 However, I must single out one person for a special thank you and that person is Linda Alvarez. Linda’s leadership has been truly exemplary throughout the process.

To all the volunteers in the Committee and all those who have put their names down to be ambassadors of our proud country. The team at AKS and at Orfila’s that have and are producing

all the architectural and technical designs for all the sporting and cultural projects that I am involved in.

1685 Thanks to the contractors, Casais for the wonderful student accommodation they have completed on budget and on time; and to GJBS, all its workforce and all the workers from their sub-contractors who have worked round the clock.

Thanks to those at the Technical Services Department and to the Chief Technical Officer for their valuable input into these projects.

1690 Thanks to the Financial Secretary, who has given me direction related to funding; to LPS for their advice and guidance related to land issues.

Thanks to the all the essential services who have worked with the Organising Committee of the Games.

1695 Thanks to you and your staff at Parliament, Mr Speaker; and last and definitely not least, my staff at the Ministry of Culture, the Media, Youth and Sports at City Hall. Without them, I would not have been able to implement all the positive policies and manifesto commitments which I am involved in. They have definitely been my right hand.

Thank you to all.

1700 **Several Members:** Hear, hear. (*Banging on desks.*)

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

1705 **Hon. E J Reyes:** Mr Speaker, this is my twelfth address to this House in what is known as the Budget Session and I wish to commence with sports-related matters by saying that I am a firm believer in unity, where possible, for the benefit of Gibraltar's greater interests. Therefore, Mr Speaker, 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 of international sporting bodies. (**A Member:** Hear, hear.) (*Banging on desks*) The antics and shameful actions taken above all by our neighbours to the north are wearing even thinner as each year flies past and I pray that, slowly but surely, other international sports governing bodies will judge Gibraltar's applications on their own merit and not shamefully allow themselves to be coerced by our neighbour's unjustified and often unscrupulous arguments.

1715 Gibraltar's longstanding and cross-party policy of assisting sporting associations will certainly continue to receive the Opposition's wholehearted support and I sincerely wish sporting associations, for example Rugby amongst others, all the very best in their continuing battles to obtain their respective international memberships which are rightfully and legitimately theirs.

1720 Mr Speaker, the GSD Opposition wishes the Gibraltar Football Association all the very best in their ongoing refurbishment and upgrading of its own national stadium. It is particularly gratifying to see the Victoria Stadium almost full to capacity whenever our national team play a home game. The home venue, thereby using Victoria Stadium as our home ground, albeit with necessary upgrades undertaken, was the location first promoted by the GSD. It seems that where there is a will there is a way, and therefore the GSD has proved it was not wrong from the outset in choosing the Victoria Stadium as the best site for an UEFA and FIFA fully approved facility. It is indeed a far more viable and attractive option for local sports lovers to attend and support our teams who will be playing their qualifying home matches for the season 2019-20 in respect of the Europa League qualifications.

1725 I am sure this House is unanimous in wishing our teams participating within the Europa League all the best in their forthcoming games. Europa FC and Saint Joseph's FC have everything to play for in their imminent games in order to obtain qualification onto the next stage of the International European Competition, and I hope that stadium is full to capacity, as we know we can do.

1735 We also wish the best of Gibraltarian luck to Lincoln Red Imps FC for their forthcoming  
Champions League qualifying game. Despite their game being played away from Gibraltar this  
year, I am certain football lovers will still be equally as proud and supportive of our national  
representatives.

1740 Mr Speaker, the forthcoming developments at Victoria Stadium are resulting in an  
improvement to football facilities in Gibraltar. However, despite the fantastic and ambitious  
project to be undertaken by the GFA, there is still a great need for further training facilities if our  
future generations are to aspire to improving their overall standards. It continues to break my  
heart to see so many Gibraltar-registered football teams having to go over into Spain in order to  
train in preparation for local and international matches. *(Interjection)* Indeed, more facilities are  
1745 very much needed if we are to continue to aspire progressing beyond the qualification stages in  
respect of European Champions League and the Europa League.

The GSD continues to believe that alongside the new facilities which will soon be enjoyed by  
the football fraternity, there is still a great need for extensive training facilities in Gibraltar to  
cater for participants in numerous sports. These facilities should ensure that the introduction  
and development of our youngsters into the world of sports, very often arising from our schools'  
1750 curriculum and sporting clubs' commitments, are equally catered for. It is the duty of the  
Gibraltar Sports and Leisure Authority to make these facilities available for our general public at  
large who wish to participate in sporting activities.

The new facilities which are being constructed in connection with the Island Games should  
ensure to a certain extent that Gibraltar continues to produce worthy local athletes and  
develops their wide-ranging sporting talents. We often have results which make our neighbours  
and our sporting opponents in official competitions envious of our rather good and consistent  
1755 results. I sincerely hope that the new constructions meet local requirements well beyond the  
Island Games themselves.

Indeed, many Gibraltarians are currently heavily involved in carefully planned training  
sessions with the aspirations of proudly representing Gibraltar at the 2019 Island Games, which  
will for the second time in the Games' history, be held in Gibraltar. I am sure I speak for the  
whole House as we offer our collective best wishes to all forthcoming participants who, through  
their committed efforts, will hopefully yet again make us proud of our sporting fraternity.  
1760 *(Banging on desks)*

1765 Mr Speaker, those new facilities which have been completed are so far looking good.  
However, it is a pity, that with less than four weeks to go some facilities are still not complete  
and ready for use. Their availability prior to the start of the Island Games would allow our local  
representatives to get better acquainted with the venues where they will compete.

Despite the justifiable pride which I hope Gibraltar will feel in hosting the 2019 Island Games,  
1770 we must record a special mention in respect of the fantastic achievements attained by several  
sporting bodies throughout this past year. Unfortunately, CPA matters will require me to be  
away from Gibraltar during the earlier part of next week so, therefore, I wish to record my  
apologies for being absent at next week's Reception to be hosted by His Worship the Mayor,  
where he will be paying special tribute to the recent successes attained by our Netball  
1775 representatives. Also being specially honoured at the Mayor's Reception will be our evergreen  
over-60s Football Team and the promising youngster, Sebastian Desoiza who participates within  
the tough competitive world of Golf. *(Banging on desks)* The age range of sportsmen and  
sportswomen being recognised by His Worship shows that in Gibraltar participation in sports is  
enjoyed by all irrespective of age.

1780 Given recent results such as those I have highlighted together with many others – let's take,  
for example, the Special Olympics – it seems we have justifiable expectations for equally notable  
achievements for the forthcoming 2019-20 season.

Mr Speaker, with your leave, I would like to repeat the offer I made last year, as well as the  
year before that, during this Budget contribution. Although I am a firm believer that individual  
1785 sports governing bodies should be allowed to manage their own affairs with no political

interference, I once again urge the Minister for Sports, more so in his capacity as Chairman of the Sports and Leisure Authority, to take a particular interest and take appropriate action 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 obligation for the Sports Authority to ensure that, where desired by a club or individual citizen, membership in their relevant local governing body is open to all in an equal and fair manner.

I yet again offer myself to sit down and discuss with the Minister for Sports 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 sports issues. Some disputes have been dragging on for far too long now and I am hopeful that by working together with all affected parties solutions can and should be found.

Mr Speaker, I wish to reaffirm my personal convictions that through the collective celebration of social events, participating Gibraltarians contribute towards reinforcing our identity, culture and history as a people and a community. Both the performing and fine arts fraternities have always proved 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 very many cases, even gaining top awards. It is always a personal and collective pleasure to be able to say how proud we are of the international achievements of our fellow Gibraltarians.

Mr Speaker, during their last term in office, Government purchased both the Queen's Cinema and Queen's Hotel sites for the development of a theatre and related activities. There are somewhat mixed feelings amongst the local community as to how these sites will be developed and at what cost. Government announced through its 2015 Election Manifesto that a lot of progress on the design of the new Queen's National Theatre had been made in order to make the old Queen's Cinema a venue for touring productions. It went on to say that now that preliminary land use designs had been finalised they would continue to work with the committee of local drama experts to finalise the internal designs and facilities required, alongside exploring the possibility of commercial use of the theatre complex facilities. This year's Estimates show a provision of £1,000 under the Improvement of Development Fund Expenditure set aside under Head 102 – Projects, Subhead 4 entitled 'Theatre'. Could it be that the Theatre is yet another matter which still remains to be addressed shortly – whenever that 'shortly' may be?

In respect of the Queen's Cinema site, I sincerely hope that the development of this site will be real value for money and that our local culture, in the widest sense of the word, is enhanced. Local performers may often be heard to say that if we can afford £3½ million for a two-day Mega Concert, then surely our local performers, entertainers and audiences are entitled to ask for a theatre which is fit for purpose and available throughout for 365 days a year. (*Banging on desks*)

Mr Speaker, moving onto Educational matters, I wish to start by citing once again from a passage I have used before in this Chamber. It said:

Children must be able to play, study and grow in a peaceful environment. Woe to anyone who stifles their joyful impulse to hope!

With this in mind, Mr Speaker, I cannot stress enough the need to ensure we get it absolutely right when planning and building facilities which will serve our children's educational purposes in preparation for adult life.

Much has been said in respect of Government's projects for the re-provision and expansion of our school. For our pupils' benefit I sincerely hope that decisions taken have been based above all upon feedback received from the professionals in the field – namely, from school teachers themselves. Unfortunately during this past year, the Gibraltar Teachers' Association highlighted that they had at times felt ignored and not consulted on a number of educational reforms that the Department of Education had embarked upon.

1835 We have been reassured that September 2019 will see the introduction of the final stage of  
coeducation across all schools in Gibraltar. There is no question that coeducation has been long  
overdue and I hope, for our children's sake, that the new buildings will be completed in time and  
to the highest of standards.

1840 However, Mr Speaker, many parents, teachers and even ordinary citizens have expressed  
serious concerns about the expected inevitable high levels of congestion which seems to be  
coming round Waterport area in September. I sincerely hope there will be a sensible and  
workable traffic plan in place before the schools open this coming September.

1845 Given that teachers have reinforced the need for, and importance of, vertical communication  
on the current and future reforms in education, I hope that their voices have been heard if the  
vision being acted upon by Government is to succeed. Again, I fully empathise with the teaching  
profession who on the issue of collocation feel a golden opportunity has been lost to explore  
different models within the constraints of the land available to achieve an optimum educational  
solution. Teachers feel that the issue is not just about what is being provided, but about what  
could have been provided had there been more meaningful consultation with classroom  
teachers themselves.

1850 As both a teacher and a past president of the Gibraltar Teachers' Association, and someone  
who still has educational matters extremely close to his heart, I extend a recommendation to the  
Minister for Education to listen and continue to work as closely as possible with classroom  
teachers – albeit alongside his senior management teams. Classroom teachers want to be part of  
any process that changes our educational system and want to be involved in meaningful  
1855 consultation before final decisions are taken. Surely the way forward proposed by these  
professionals can only but contribute to the wellbeing and best possible future of our children.  
This is something which I hope we can all agree is paramount.

1860 I am pleased, Mr Speaker, to have heard from the Minister, that Key Stage alignments will  
now coincide with the year in which pupils are scheduled to move from lower to upper primary  
and, likewise, from upper primary to secondary schools. These realignments make logistical and  
educational sense in respect of providing teaching and learning resources which the schools  
necessarily require.

1865 I would like to take this opportunity to also recommend to the Minister that in their plans for  
building and resourcing of new schools, careful consideration be given to current trends in  
respect of developments in schools' curriculums. An example of this, Mr Speaker, is the initiative  
already taken by one of our locally based private schools which now offers Computer Science at  
both GCSE and 'A' levels. It is courses like these which will serve to prepare today's pupils to  
become the skilled workforce which Gibraltar will need for tomorrow as the future will be  
dominated by digital technology.

1870 Likewise, Mr Speaker, the GSD have raised the concept of modern apprenticeships in the past  
and we still believe we need to offer more in this field than we currently provide. Those pupils  
who do not wish to pursue an academic future need to be provided with the opportunity of a  
modern apprenticeship programme which, if properly structured, has the same standing as  
higher education. We need to create a gold standard for an apprenticeship programme so that  
1875 employers have confidence in the system. The time for investment is now, Mr Speaker – not just  
in formal academic education heading towards entry into higher education, but also in the co-  
ordination of training and skills through vocational courses that carry international accreditation.

1880 The Minister for Education has made reference to the introduction of 'T' levels at secondary  
schools: I welcome this introduction and see it as a step towards a possible introduction of  
future scholarships in favour of pupils who wish to pursue Further or Higher Education in respect  
of what are commonly referred to as traditional trades, rather than theory or academic  
qualifications.

Mr Speaker, we must not forget the ultimate aim of providing education for our future  
generations: it is our duty to ensure all pupils always achieve their maximum potential.

1885        Whilst desiring only all the very best in respect of the forthcoming educational reforms, I cannot but end by reinforcing that the views of the professionals in this field must be heard and acted upon. There is no better formula for success than to cultivate a sense of ownership amongst all tasked with the education of our children.

1890        Furthermore, the GSD believes that schoolteachers are a priority that is both needed and from which society will receive huge benefits. The job that they do benefits everyone. (**A Member:** Hear, hear.)

1895        Teachers are not a group who are prone to industrial action or making a fuss about nothing. They do not crow the loudest. (**A Member:** Exactly.) I concur with the views expressed recently in an opinion piece published last month in the *Gibraltar Chronicle* and I have to quote Mr Jonathan Ablitt, who is now lecturing in the United Kingdom. Teachers have:

‘for so long ... silently and diligently “got on with” the underappreciated and deeply challenging job of providing an education – formal and otherwise – to generation after generation of Gibraltarians’.

The recent exchanges and recriminations with the Government over the NASUWT pay claim, and the way it has been handled, has not benefitted anyone so far. I hope that the Government will make a realistic effort to heal this festering wound by making sensible suggestions in order settle the teachers’ claim.

1900        No one has been more critical of Government spending than the GSD have been over the last seven years. It has advocated prudence and pointed to the dangers of uncontrolled spending. This does not, however, amount to austerity. It is about prioritising Government’s spending in areas where it is needed or where, as a society, we are going to get the greatest benefit. The teaching profession is one such area.

1905        Mr Speaker, before I sit down, I must take this opportunity to once again thank you and all your staff of Parliament for the patient and yet professional way in which you have dealt with us. I know that you have always led by example in being able to advise Members on both sides of the House, and conscious that it is an election year and no one knows what the future will be, I will end up by perhaps quoting the recently deceased Doris Day: Que sera, sera, Mr Speaker.  
1910 (*Banging on desks*)

**Chief Minister (Hon. F R Picardo):** Mr Speaker, given the disclosure of material that the Hon. Member Gentleman has just made, I think it would be appropriate for us to break now until, say, 3.15 this afternoon to hear the two remaining speeches – both of which I must say I am very much looking forward to – and return then.  
1915

**Mr Speaker:** The House will recess till 3.15 this afternoon.

*The House recessed at 12.51 p.m.*