



PROCEEDINGS OF THE GIBRALTAR PARLIAMENT

AFTERNOON SESSION: 3.40 p.m. – 5.00 p.m.

Gibraltar, Thursday, 23rd June 2022

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The Gibraltar Parliament

The Parliament met at 3.40 p.m.

[MR SPEAKER: Hon. M L Farrell BEM GMD RD JP *in the Chair*]

[ACTING CLERK TO THE PARLIAMENT: S Galliano Esq *in attendance*]

Questions for Oral Answer

CHIEF MINISTER

Q265/2022

Tax amnesty –

2016 six-month extension

Clerk: Meeting of Parliament, Thursday, 23rd June 2022. We continue with Answers to Questions.

Question 265/2022. The Hon. R M Clinton.

5

Hon. R M Clinton: Mr Speaker, can the Government advise how many individuals availed themselves of the six-month extension to the tax amnesty announced in the 2016 Budget and how much tax was collected?

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Clerk: Answer, the Hon. the Chief Minister.

Chief Minister (Hon. F R Picardo): Mr Speaker, a total of 13 individuals availed themselves of the six-month extension to the tax amnesty announced in the 2016 Budget and, as a result, a total of £516,843 was collected.

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Mr Speaker: Next question.

Q266/2022

Chief Minister's visit to Rome –

Cost to taxpayer and details of flights

Clerk: Question 266/2022. The Hon. R M Clinton.

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Hon. R M Clinton: Mr Speaker, can the Government advise the total cost to the taxpayer of the Chief Minister's papal visit, including Government employees, split between travel and accommodation, and could the Government also advise with which commercial airlines the flights were booked and class of travel?

Clerk: Answer, the Hon. the Chief Minister.

25

Chief Minister (Hon. F R Picardo): Mr Speaker, as I have already made public, the invitation from His Holiness was extended to me, as Chief Minister of Gibraltar, my wife, my children and my private secretary. I bore the costs of the flights of all members of my family and of my and my family's accommodation in Rome.

30

The exact breakdown of costs of flights has not yet been finally invoiced. When the invoices are received, the information will be provided on the Government website in the usual way. I flew to Rome with Air Europa from Malaga via Madrid and returned with Iberia, also via Madrid and Malaga.

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My private secretary flew via London with British Airways and returned with me with Iberia, via Madrid and Malaga. The cost of my private secretary's accommodation in Rome, which has been fully invoiced, was €641.36.

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Hon. R M Clinton: Mr Speaker, I am grateful for the Chief Minister's answer. Obviously, we would be grateful if the information were individually itemised as and when it is available to be uploaded to the Government website.

I do not believe I heard from the Chief Minister what class of travel he travelled in.

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Chief Minister: Well, on Air Europa, which is a one-class airline, and on Iberia, where I travelled club class in return to Malaga because the time we had available made it impossible to obtain economy seats either for me, funded by the taxpayer, or for the rest of my family, funded by me.

Q267/2022

Ministers' and officials' club-class travel – Details re cost and destination

Clerk: Question 267/2022. The Hon. R M Clinton.

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Hon. R M Clinton: Mr Speaker, can the Government provide a list of Government Ministers, including the Chief Minister, and officials who have flown club class in the period 1st October 2021 to 31st March 2022, giving details of cost and destination?

Clerk: Answer, the Hon. the Chief Minister.

55

Chief Minister (Hon. F R Picardo): Mr Speaker, the Chief Minister, Ministers and officials travel with one-class airlines – from Gibraltar, this means travelling with easyJet, which the Chief Minister often takes – or economy in Europe, where possible.

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Club-class travel is only taken when necessary – that is to say when economy flights are not available. These days, given the problems with airline frequency etc. and the late bookings which are often necessary in respect of ministerial travel, it is often inevitable that travel has to be club class if it is going to happen.

I now hand over a schedule with the information which is not publicly available on the Government website.

Answer to Question 267/2020

Chief Minister

DATE
04/11/2021
09/11/2021
17/11/2021
23/11/2021
16/12/2021

Deputy Chief Minister

DATE
06/11/2021
17/11/2021
23/11/2021
16/12/2021
19/03/2022

Minister Isola

DATE
12/01/2022

Minister Daryanani

DATE
08/10/2021
31/01/2022
23/02/2022
23/03/2022
13/03/2022
30/03/2022

Minister Bossano

DATE
25/03/2022

Minister Sacramento

DATE
13/11/2021
30/03/2022

Minister Cortes

DATE
04/11/2021

Minister Linares

DATE
30/03/2022

Government Officials

TITLE	DESTINATION	COST
Attorney General	London	£ 329.08
Attorney General	Brussels	£ 624.70
Attorney General	Brussels	£ 624.70
Attorney General	London	£ 911.00
Attorney General	Brussels	£ 553.40
Attorney General	Gibraltar to London	£ 1,487.70
Attorney General	London to Gibraltar	£ 885.70
Principle Private Secretary to the Chief Minister	London	£ 1,326.70
Principle Private Secretary to the Chief Minister	Gibraltar to London	£ 1,487.70
Principle Private Secretary to the Chief Minister	London to Gibraltar	£ 1,409.53
Principle Private Secretary to the Chief Minister	London to Gibraltar	£ 885.70
Principle Private Secretary to the Deputy Chief Minister	London	£ 1,304.00
Private Secretary to the Deputy Chief Minister	London	£ 388.07
Chief Executive	Milan	£ 624.70
Chief Executive	London	£ 550.10
Chief Executive	Helsinki	£ 1,693.62
Chief Executive	Edinburgh	£ 521.77
Press & Communications Officer	Edinburgh (Outbound Only)	£ 521.76

Hon. R M Clinton: Mr Speaker, with your indulgence, while we get the schedule, if I may ask a quick supplementary just to confirm that it is the Government's stated policy that travel within Europe should, in the first instance, always be economy.

Hon. Chief Minister: Mr Speaker, I think I am being asked to repeat the policy, because that is the policy. Unfortunately, as I have told the hon. Gentleman, very often it is not possible to get economy flights because all the flights are full these days, especially in Europe, and indeed we very often have to book at the last minute. We may be told on a Monday that we have to fly on a Tuesday – indeed, knowing the nature of the work that we do, hon. Members know that we might be told on a Tuesday that we have to fly on a Tuesday – and very often, these days, it is just impossible to obtain flights which are available in economy cabins at that time, whether it is travel from Gibraltar or travel from Malaga, which we also check in order to ensure that we get the best deal for the taxpayer, which is exactly what we want to ensure we achieve.

Hon. Members will know that you can be told that there are no seats on the plane and then you turn up and there are seats on the plane, so it is impossible to make a judgement about these things, sometimes, by looking at the panorama around you when you are flying. I have had to see colleagues fly on different aircraft to me because we have been told that there is no space on the aircraft, only to have a free seat next to me.

Mr Speaker, I hope that gives the hon. Gentleman the information he wanted.

Hon. R M Clinton: Mr Speaker, I have now had time to digest the schedule. There are two pages to the schedule – the first page is Ministers and the second page is Government officials – but I do not see any costs associated with the Ministers, and since my question was very specific in respect of club-class travel, unless he is telling me that everything on the Government website in relation to Government officials is club class and they all flew club class in the period ...

And secondly, in respect of the second schedule, Government officials, am I to assume that these are all –?

Hon. Chief Minister: Ask me one question at a time, and then I will ...

Mr Speaker: That is fine. Ask the question.

Hon. R M Clinton: Well, I will sit down and I would be –

Hon. Chief Minister: Mr Speaker, I just think it is more helpful for me to be able to answer one question at a time.

The reason he does not have any costs here is because that is already public information. I said at the end of my first answer, 'I now hand over a schedule with the information which is not publicly available on the Government website.' The cost of all of these flights is already available. It is, therefore, publicly available information. It is not susceptible to a question in this House.

The dates when we travelled club class for the period he asked are the dates which are set out here.

The Government website does not provide the information in respect of officials, so in respect of officials we have given him all the information he asked for which was not publicly available, and that is the information set out in the schedule.

Hon. R M Clinton: Very good. Mr Speaker, I guess all I need to do, then, is go to the Government website, look for dates of travel and it will tell me that those were club-class travel, by definition.

Going to my second question, Mr Speaker, which is everybody on the second schedule, which is Government officials – this represents club-class travel, yes?

115 **Hon. Chief Minister:** Mr Speaker, I do not understand why the hon. Gentleman is asking me this set of supplementaries, because his question is specific. His question is about club-class travel, so the only information he is being given, because it is the only information he has asked for, is about club-class travel. I have told him that there are other instances where we fly which are not club class and I have told him that we try not to travel club class if there is an alternative available, but the question is very clear, and for that reason the answer can only relate to the question.

120

Mr Speaker: Next question.

Q268-70/2022

**Office rent and service charge costs –
Breakdown re 2018-19; offices occupied by Ministers;
private sector offices rented by Government and GDC**

Clerk: Question 268/2022. The Hon. R M Clinton.

125 **Hon. R M Clinton:** Mr Speaker – Sorry, is something amusing?

Chief Minister (Hon. F R Picardo): Yes.

Hon. R M Clinton: What is it? Please share it with us.

130 **Hon. Chief Minister:** [*Inaudible*].

Hon. R M Clinton: Good for him.

Hon. Chief Minister: [*Inaudible*].

135

Hon. R M Clinton: Mr Speaker, can the Government provide a detailed breakdown of the office rent and service charge costs of £9,253,765 incurred in the 2018-19 Estimates Book by the Treasury Department?

140 **Clerk:** Answer, the Hon. the Chief Minister.

Chief Minister (Hon. F R Picardo): Mr Speaker, I will answer this question together with Questions 269 and 270.

145 **Clerk:** Question 269/2022. The Hon. R M Clinton.

Hon. R M Clinton: Mr Speaker, can the Government provide a list of all private sector rented offices occupied by Ministers as at 31st March 2022, listing each Minister, date of first occupation and the associated annual cost of rental?

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Clerk: Question 270/2022. The Hon. R M Clinton.

155 **Hon. R M Clinton:** Mr Speaker, can the Government provide a list of all private sector property rentals by it and the Gibraltar Development Corporation as at 31st March 2022, giving date and length of lease, annual rental with associated department or agency using the premises, and purpose?

Clerk: Answer, the Hon. the Chief Minister.

Hon. Chief Minister: Mr Speaker, the details of the charges allocated to the 'Government Offices, Office Rent and Service Charges' subhead are precisely that. The financial year 2018-19 relates to the lifetime of the last Parliament, not this one.

The annual Budget debate that deals with figures which are set out in the Estimates Book is when they get the opportunity to get breakdowns and to ask detailed questions on the subject. The question the hon. Gentleman is now posing was one for the Committee Stage of the Third Reading of the Appropriation Bill for 2018-19.

The details of all rents etc. for this financial year, which he seeks in Questions 269 and 270, will of course be provided.

I now hand over a schedule with the information requested.

Answer to Question 269/2022

Ministry	Address	Date of First Occupation	Associated Annual Cost of Rental
Ministry for Transport	Europort 735 & 834	01-Aug-22	£65,642.75
Ministry for Housing, Employment, Youth and Sport	Regal House, Suite GE Ground Floor	12-Aug-20	£94,714.00
Ministry for Business, Tourism and The Port	Suite 971 Europort	26-Oct-20	£120,088.36
Ministry for Digital, Financial Services, Health Authority and Public Utilities	Suite 771 Europort	05-Oct-98	£96,559.52

Answer to Question 270/2022

Department/Agency	Private Sector Property	Length of Lease	Annual Rental	Purpose of Property Rental
Ministry of Housing, Employment, Youth and Sport	Regal House, Suite GE, Ground Floor	6 Years	£ 94,714.00	Minister's Office and Supporting Staff
	Suite E Regal House	6 years	£ 84,216.00	Ministry for Housing, Employment, Youth & Sport
Human Resources Department	Unit 82 New Harbours	3 year review	£ 8,187.84	Human Resources Office
	Europort 73s	1 year	£ 1,800.00	Human Resources Office
	Europort 7b/16	1 year	£ 5,400.00	Human Resources Office
Housing Department	Europort 9b	1 year	£ 2,475.00	Human Resources Office
	Suites 9.3A, 9.7, 9.8 & 9.9 9th Floor ICC	12 years	£ 87,052.93	Housing Department's offices
Office of Criminal Prosecutions and Litigation (OCPL)	6TH FLOOR NATWEST HOUSE 57/63 LINE WALL ROAD	12 Years	£ 123,858.00	OFFICE USE
Technical Services Department	Suites 735 and 834 Buildings 7 & 8, Europort, Gibraltar	1 Year	£ 45,487.75	Offices of the Ministry of Transport
Gambling Division	Europort Suite 812 - 813	9 years 7 months	£ 41,620.00	Gambling Division Office Premises
Ministry of Justice	Suite 951 Europort	10 years	£ 91,477.00	Rented office space for Minister and Ministerial Staff
Ministry of Equality	Suite 955 Europort	10 years	£ 32,398.00	Rented office space for Minister and Ministerial Staff
Income Tax Office	Gibfirst Management Limited for offices situated at Suite 1a, Leanse Place, 50 Town Range	4 years	£ 36,200.00	To house our Income Tax - Social Insurance Contributions Section
Housing Works Agency	Suite 9/6-7, 12-13 Suite 10/6-9, 12-13 I.C.C	12 Years	£ 236,894.11	Housing Works Agency Offices
	UNITS 761 AND 761A, SIXTH FLOOR, BLDG 7, EUROPORT, GIBRALTAR	21 Years	£ 131,498.92	OFFICE RENTAL
Ministry of Health Digital & Financial Services	Europort Suite 771a	21 years	£ 52,745.00	Office Work Space
	Europort Suite 751	21 years	£ 91,477.44	Office Work Space
Gambling Division	Europort Suites 812 - 813	21 Years	£ 43,832.25	Gambling Division Office Premises
Tourism	43 03 Europort Suites	6 years	£ 27,000.00	Offices of the Gibraltar Tourist Board
	The main guard At 13 John Mackintosh Square	Indefinite	£ 5,556.00	Information office of the Gibraltar Tourist Board
	Unit 4.3.03, Eurotowers, Block 4, Eurport Ro	6 years	£ 27,000.00	Tourism
Department of Town Planning and Building Control 6 Convent Place	Suite 631, Europort	21 years	£ 166,755.75	Government offices for Town Planning and Civil Aviation
	Unit F1 Europa Business Suites	Indefinite	£ 4,755.36	Storage

Answer to Question 270/2022 cont.

Department/Agency	Private Sector Property	Length of Lease	Annual Rental	Purpose of Property Rental
Audit Department	Unit 3.13 World Trade Centre	21 years	£ 9,125.00	Audit Department
	Unit 3.26 World Trade Centre	21 years	£ 23,360.00	Audit Department
	Unit 3.28 World Trade Centre	21 years	£ 21,170.00	Audit Department
	Unit 3.30 World Trade Centre	21 years	£ 74,095.00	Audit Department
Statistics Department	Unit 3.22 World Trade Centre	21 years	£ 34,675.00	Statistics Department
	Unit 3.24 World Trade Centre	21 years	£ 28,105.00	Statistics Department
Audit & Statistics Department	Parking Space N39 & N40 World Trade Centre	N/A	£ 3,148.00	Audit & Statistics Department
Digital Services	323a & 323 01 Main Street	12 years	£ 109,584.80	Digital Services
Income Tax Social Insurance Concs Section	Suite 1A 50 Town Range (Lease Place)	8 years	£ 33,600.00	Income Tax Social Insurance Concs Section
Income Tax Social Insurance Concs Section & Environment	Town Range CPS 58A & 62 - 67	8 years	£ 9,100.00	Income Tax Social Insurance Concs Section & Environment
	Suite 1B, 2A & 2B 50 Town Range (Lease Place)	8 years	£ 181,080.00	Environment
Government Law Offices	Suite 6, 6th Floor 57/63 Une Wall Road	12 years	£ 123,858.00	Government Law Offices
Ministry of Education and Culture	John Mackintosh Hall	14 years	£ 125,000.00	Ministry of Education and Culture
Treasury Department - Central Arrears & Accounting Standards	19C 01 Town Range (Blake House)	N/A	£ 70,121.08	Treasury Department - Central Arrears & Accounting Standards
	Parking Space 10 15/21 Town Range	N/A	Included in Annual Rental for Blake House	Treasury Department - Central Arrears & Accounting Standards
Treasury - Payroll, Budget & Insurance	CPS 148-153 New Harbours	N/A	£ 240.00	Treasury - Payroll, Budget & Insurance
	CPS 17 Harbours Deck, New Harbours	N/A	£ 1,440.00	Treasury - Payroll, Budget & Insurance
Ministry for Housing, Employment, Youth & Sport	Parking Bay 5 & 18 Ground Floor Suite E Reg	N/A	£ 3,720.00	Ministry for Housing, Employment, Youth & Sport

170 **Hon. R M Clinton:** Thank you for your patience, Mr Speaker, while I peruse the schedule.

If I may ask the Chief Minister, in relation to the answer to Question 269 ... I do not see the Minister for the Environment listed here. I believe – I may be wrong and I am happy to be corrected – that he has offices in Leanne’s House. Is that correct?

175 **Hon. Chief Minister:** Mr Speaker, it is in the answer to Question 270. He will be able to see it there.

Hon. R M Clinton: I am grateful for that clarification. So, that, obviously, should be added to the answer to Question 269.

180 If I can turn, Mr Speaker, to his answer to Question 268, yes, I am asking for a historical breakdown, but I do not see why that should have been limited to questions at the Committee Stage. I am asking just for the factual breakdown of a number, which was published, in fact, as an actual number, for 2018-19. I do not see why that information cannot be made available by the Government.

185 **Hon. Chief Minister:** Mr Speaker, the question is are we going to have, in every Question Time, a debate about financial years gone past? The hon. Gentleman has asked, in effect, the same question about this year as he asked in respect of 2018-19 – a question about all our rents on 31st March 2022. The other thing he is asking us to do is go back, get out of storage all of the data in respect of 2018-19 and provide all of that breakdown – and check it, because when we bring something to this House it has to be absolutely correct.

I just think that it makes very little sense for us to be having that sort of debate at this time. If the hon. Gentleman wants it, with a bit more time I can assure him that he can have it in writing so that he can have it and I can make sure that it is correct, but otherwise, every Question Time runs the risk of becoming a Budget debate of any year gone past, because we are going to go back many financial years.

200 This is 2018-19, before the last election. It is not even an earlier Budget session of the lifetime of this Parliament. It is to go back to the previous Parliament. I really do not think that that is going to help elucidate matters any further; and we have to make sure that the information we give in this is correct, so we would have to go back and get that information and provide it. If the hon. Gentleman wants it, I will write to him and let him have it.

205 **Hon. R M Clinton:** Mr Speaker, as you keep on reminding us, this is Question Time. I have asked a question; I am not here to engage in a debate. He may not know why I am asking the question, but I have good reason to ask the question and I would appreciate the answer. If not, in written

form – I would accept that if you do not have the information available, but there is good reason as to why I have asked the question, and it is not to engage in a debate. I think I am entitled to an answer and I will gratefully accept a written answer, but I would, hopefully, get that answer sooner rather than later. In terms of timeframe, is he talking about the end of this week or is he talking about the end of this year?

Hon. Chief Minister: Mr Speaker, if he really wants it, he can have it as soon as I can make sure that I have it available, but obviously, as he knows, we are preparing for a Budget debate for the financial year 2022-23, not for the Budget debate of 2018-19.

Hon. K Azopardi: On this issue, just to clarify, because the hon. Member has asked a question, we are not sparking or expecting that there should be a debate analogous to the Budget debate. The Budget debate is a debate on the principles of the Appropriation Bill. We are not going to debate the principles of anything. He has asked for a breakdown of a sum of money. It is a bit like asking for a breakdown of the Music Festival that happened three years ago – it is something that can be asked. Or is the Chief Minister saying that, as a matter of principle, he thinks the Government is not here to answer these questions? I think he started there, but I do not think he has ended there, because he has offered the information in written format as long as he can check it. If that is the situation, well then, fine, my hon. colleague has accepted that position. I just want to clarify that.

Hon. Chief Minister: Mr Speaker, I think I have been pretty clear. I have said I am prepared to give the information but it requires us to go back and it requires us to ensure that we check that information, and because this relates to a previous Parliament ... In fact, Mr Speaker, their position was that they would not answer questions about things that had happened in a previous Parliament, and we were told –

Hon. K Azopardi: I have never been in government.

Hon. Chief Minister: Yes, you have. Yes, you have been in Government. Mr Speaker, the Hon. Mr Azopardi has been in government. The Hon. Mr Azopardi has a track record in government. The Hon. Mr Azopardi has been Deputy Chief Minister of Gibraltar and he cannot pretend that people should forget his trajectory and track record when he was in government in Gibraltar. The party that they represent has been in government in Gibraltar, and we were told by that party, including Mr Feetham, who was Minister for Justice in the Government that told us, representing the Gibraltar Social Democrats, that they would not provide information on things that happened in the previous parliamentary session – that is to say before the last election.

We are ready to provide that information because we consider not just that it is information about our administration, although we have changed a Minister, we consider it information which belongs to the taxpayer, and therefore, if it is asked for we shall provide it, but we shall provide it in a way that is designed to ensure that we can vouch for its accuracy.

Going back to something requires us to obtain it, to have it checked, and this year's rents are the ones that we have given. That is easy: we can provide it, and we provide it in the time available. But if the hon. Gentleman wants to go back further and further before the election, before the pandemic, all of that, which requires us to dig through the sands of everything that has happened since, to be able to provide it ... We will provide it, if they want it, but it is going to take us a little bit more time, and we are going to do it despite the fact that it goes back before a general election.

The information that they ... the party they represent, the Government of which Mr Azopardi was a Member, the Government of which Mr Feetham was a Member did not provide it, but because ... Despite the accusations that we were the ones who were not transparent – we have been more transparent than they have ever been; they are, to transparency, what chocolates are to teapots – we will provide the information.

260 **Mr Speaker:** So, the information is going to be provided. There is no timescale attached to this because the Ministers are involved in preparations for the Budget session, so I think that needs to be taken into account.

Proceed to the next question, please.

Q271/2022

Balaena Ltd –

Capability of performing obligation re dockyard lease

Clerk: Question 271/2022. The Hon. R M Clinton.

265 **Hon. R M Clinton:** Mr Speaker, can the Government advise how it has been satisfied that Balaena Ltd, a company registered in England and Wales with number 12030661, can perform its duties as guarantor under the new dockyard lease, given that its unaudited accounts filed at Companies House UK for the year ended 31st June 2021 showed it had, at that date, negative net assets of £21,992?

270 **Clerk:** Answer, the Hon. the Chief Minister.

275 **Chief Minister (Hon. F R Picardo):** Mr Speaker, the Government has satisfied itself that Balaena Ltd has the financial capability to perform its obligations as guarantor under the new lease. The Government reached this conclusion prior to entry into the new lease by carrying out its own due diligence on the Balaena Group. This due diligence process extended to the group's ultimate beneficial owner, Mr Simon Gillett, and has involved obtaining information on this individual's wealth.

280 An independent due diligence process was separately carried out by the sellers and their advisers over a significant period of time, spanning several months, prior to agreeing to enter into the sale transaction with Balaena. A similar due diligence process was also carried out by the financiers lending to the Balaena Group, who have carried out their own credit assessments and advanced funds for the acquisition.

285 It needs to be understood that these assessments were made at a given moment in time. As we have seen, this is a volatile world and things can change very quickly.

290 **Hon. R M Clinton:** Mr Speaker, I am grateful for the Chief Minister's answer, but how has he become satisfied that this entity can actually perform under the guarantee? Is he aware of whether there is a guarantee to this company from the group and if there is any call, or whether this entity has since been capitalised in such a way that it could meet any call? How can the Government be sure that this particular entity will be able to perform its duties under the guarantee?

295 **Hon. Chief Minister:** Mr Speaker, many of these things are subjective. Hon. Members know that we were rightly critical of them at times when they entered into arrangements with companies that had issued share capital of £2 and yet they gave those companies considerable tender awards. How were they satisfied that those companies could perform the obligations required under the tender when the company was capitalised at £2? Because they made an assessment of the people standing behind the company and they determined that they would be able to comply with their obligations.

300 In the context of this transaction, where there were a number of things happening – there was a sale but also a new lease being issued because of differences of opinion between the seller and

the Government as to whether the lease could be sold or whether a new lease should be issued, and that was compromised on the basis of the new lease being issued and entered into with the many advantages to the people who live in the area and to the Gibraltar taxpayer and economy generally – we took the view that, given what we knew, as I have indicated to the House, who the ultimate beneficial owner was and how he would be able, if necessary, to capitalise that company and to perform on its guarantee obligations, it was possible to go forward in this way.

What would happen in the event of the guarantee not being fulfilled? In other words, what happens in the eventuality that Mr Clinton is talking about, if the lessee does not comply with his obligations and if the guarantor does not step in to provide the sufficient payments to comply also with the obligations? The leases fall to the Crown.

Mr Speaker: Next question.

Q272/2022

**Arson attack on *HMC Seeker* –
Measures to prevent further incidents**

Clerk: Question 272/2022. The Hon. D A Feetham.

Hon. D A Feetham: Mr Speaker, what preventative measures, if any, are being taken to prevent another incident such as the one that took place on the evening of Wednesday, 18th May when *HMC Seeker* was the subject of an arson attack, so that the risk of reoccurrence is minimised?

Clerk: Answer, the Hon. the Chief Minister.

Chief Minister (Hon. F R Picardo): Mr Speaker, an investigation was opened as soon as the incident occurred, which included the assistance of the RGP scene of crime officers and the reviewing of CCTV footage. Inquiries have included engaging with members of the public in search of any information. Requests have also been sent to Spanish law enforcement in order to obtain any intelligence that might be used to identify and arrest the culprits. In addition, there have been increased operations and presence over the last four weeks in order to put pressure on the different crime groups that might be associated with this act. This is intended to demonstrate that attacks on law enforcement will not be tolerated.

Measures to prevent such a spontaneous assault from happening again are being explored. However, careful consideration is being given to such safeguards so that they do not hinder the Marine section's operations or affect their response times. What needs to be clear is that the community is not going to tolerate any actions or behaviours which compromise the safety of our great law enforcement agents. We fully support them, as I am sure the whole House will agree.

Hon. D A Feetham: Mr Speaker, I associate myself – on behalf of my colleagues, no doubt, on this side of the House – with the final sentiments expressed by the Hon. the Chief Minister.

If he cannot answer this supplementary question, I accept that, and perhaps it can be discussed behind the Speaker's Chair, but what measures are being explored in order to prevent a reoccurrence of this incident?

Hon. Chief Minister: Mr Speaker, that would be like telling the fox where the hole is in the wire, so that he can get in to cut off the heads of the chickens. I have never been known to be a turkey waiting for Christmas, and I am certainly not going to be doing that on behalf of measures which we will be putting in place to protect our law enforcement agents, so I would much rather

have a conversation with the hon. Gentleman without the cameras rolling and the potential bad guys watching.

Mr Speaker: Next question.

Q273/2022
Food imports –
Percentage from non-EU countries

350 **Clerk:** Question 273/2022. The Hon. the Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. K Azopardi: Mr Speaker, what percentage of food imports to Gibraltar come from non-EU countries?

355 **Clerk:** Answer, the Hon. the Chief Minister.

Chief Minister (Hon. F R Picardo): Mr Speaker, this figure fluctuates every year. The UK's departure from the European Union has obviously moved the needle on this considerably, as foodstuffs from the UK, which were previously from the European Union, are now classed as non-EU.

360 As at 17th June 2022 the percentage of food imports to Gibraltar from non-EU countries, which obviously now includes the United Kingdom, is 38.49%. The majority of the foodstuffs come, nonetheless, via EU countries.

365 **Hon. K Azopardi:** Thank you, Mr Speaker.

Does the Chief Minister ...? If I ask him this question, I am not sure if ... He may have the answer, but maybe, if he does not have it, he can write to me. He says it is 38.49%. Does he have a breakdown of the countries it comes from? And when he says that the majority comes through the EU, I assume by the majority he means either it comes via land or hits a European port first and then comes by sea. I am not sure what he means by that, but does he have a breakdown of land and sea arrivals?

370 **Hon. Chief Minister:** Mr Speaker, I do not have that breakdown, but it has to visit a European port if it is going to come by land and it is not EU, unless we were getting food from Russia or something.

375 **Hon. K Azopardi:** Will he give way? Perhaps I have explained it wrongly. What I meant was that it either comes via land ... Or did he mean, in terms of via the EU, that it might arrive by sea in Gibraltar but first arrives at a European port for some kind of processing? I am not sure how the importation is actually done.

380 **Hon. Chief Minister:** I do not have the breakdown, Mr Speaker, but it is done in various different ways. Food can come from third countries to the United Kingdom and from the United Kingdom, through the EU, to Gibraltar, or through the United Kingdom direct to Gibraltar – less so – or not through the United Kingdom but through another European port, either then still by sea or by land, to Gibraltar.

There are no direct links from Gibraltar to third countries operating at the moment, so there is no direct arrival of food from non-EU sources to Gibraltar from third countries. I will give him the example that we would all immediately think of: our fruit and veg from Morocco, when it comes,

390 comes from Algeciras because the commercial route from Morocco is to Algeciras and it has been for some considerable time, during the pandemic etc. I hope that is helpful.

Hon. K Azopardi: To clarify, it is helpful because the concern had been expressed to me, in terms of the future arrangements being negotiated, whether that would have an impact on arrival of food imports from outside the EU, but I take it from what he says that ... In his original answer he said that the majority of the 38.49% arrives via the EU. In fact, he is saying it is not arriving directly into the Gibraltar ports at the moment at all. I think I have understood his answer correctly.

400 **Hon. Chief Minister:** That is right. It is not arriving directly from any third country, so there is not a line from New Zealand to Gibraltar that brings us New Zealand lamb.

Mr Speaker: Next question.

Q274/2022
Secretary posts –
Applications by administrative assistants

405 **Clerk:** Question 274/2022. The Hon. the Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. K Azopardi: Mr Speaker, why is it not possible for administrative assistants to apply for job vacancies for secretary posts?

410 **Clerk:** Answer, the Hon. the Chief Minister.

Chief Minister (Hon. F R Picardo): Mr Speaker, as I understand it, this is not an issue that has changed at all since his time in office. When school secretary and/or personal secretary vacancies are advertised within the Civil Service, applications are invited from civil servants in the secretarial and administrative grades for appointment. I can therefore confirm that administrative assistants are eligible to apply for personal secretary and school secretary posts within the Civil Service, provided they meet the essential requirements of the post.

420 **Hon. K Azopardi:** Mr Speaker, I know it is longstanding and I accept that. It had been suggested to me, and it might be this, that there is a difference perhaps, that GDC employees who are parked in different Departments are not able to do that, even though they are occupying those posts. Is the Chief Minister aware of that?

425 **Hon. Chief Minister:** Mr Speaker, GDC employees are not members of the Civil Service – some of them are ring-fenced civil servants – and the position of the Civil Service unions has consistently been that only civil servants can apply for Civil Service posts. The people who are ring-fenced civil servants can apply for some posts in the Civil Service but not others, but that is not what his question is about, so if I am required to give any further information other than what I can tell him from my own knowledge generally – if he wants me to look into the issue of the GDC in particular – that would require a different answer, probably, and it would require looking at different rules and the interplay between those rules and the positions of unions which have been accepted by successive Governments.

430 **Mr Speaker:** Next question.

Q275/2022

**Proposed EU-UK treaty on Gibraltar's future relationship with the EU –
Number of articles**

Clerk: Question 275/2022. The Hon. the Leader of the Opposition.

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Hon. K Azopardi: Mr Speaker, can the Government state whether the proposed treaty between the EU and the UK on a future relationship with the EU for Gibraltar will have approximately 300 articles?

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Clerk: Answer, the Hon. the Chief Minister.

Chief Minister (Hon. F R Picardo): Mr Speaker, the number of articles in the proposed treaty between the European Union and the United Kingdom on the future relationship of Gibraltar with the European Union will be known only when the treaty has been drafted. To date, anyone who suggests they know how many articles such a potential treaty may have is merely speculating.

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Hon. K Azopardi: Mr Speaker, the reason for the question – and I caveat it by saying that when I read things in the Spanish press I take them with a pinch of salt and I hardly believe them, but sometimes you hear things first in the Spanish press and they trickle down and it has some modicum of truth. The Chief Minister may have seen a recent article, a couple of weeks ago, that asserted that the treaty would have around 300 articles and that 90% of them had been agreed and that there were some difficult ones. It is, of course, our duty to put that question. That had not been information that I had hitherto been given by the Members opposite and I wanted there to be some confirmation that there was not actually a draft of these 300 articles circulating around the negotiating teams and I wanted to enquire as to the state of the drafting exercise and whether the Chief Minister will confirm that that particular article that I have referred to is entire speculation.

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Hon. Chief Minister: Mr Speaker, the only thing I can say is Hamdulillah, Amen, Hallelujah – let's hope that there is a treaty, let's hope it has 400 articles, 200 articles ... They have drawn a pretty wide opportunity there to get it right. There are a hundred articles in it. As long as it is more than 299 and less than 401, the person who has said that to the Spanish press will be able to get it right. If you look at the number of chapters there might be, 300-odd articles is not a bad guess, but a lot depends on how the treaty is structured.

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As far as I know, there is not yet any agreed treaty provision, let alone a whole treaty. There is not any agreed treaty provision. Even the first words – 'This Treaty shall be referred to as the Treaty between the United Kingdom and the European Union and shall be entered into this first day of September 2022' – do not exist.

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There are different views on both negotiating teams on what the treaty would look like, there are different views on what treaty articles might look like if different options are agreed etc., but that has not happened yet. That agreement on those issues has not happened yet and therefore, given that this has been something which the hon. Gentleman, like I, has read in the Spanish press, it may be that the European Commission, in its preparation and work with the Spanish government on what they think the treaty looks like, has, in its top drawer, ready to '*descartarse*' by the time that we say we agree on a particular issue, a draft which has 300 clauses in it. That may or may not be true; I am speculating.

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I fear that the person who was being relied upon for that article was speculating and I do believe that we should have more respect for each other and for the information that we provide for each other. But if the hon. Gentleman ever reads anything like that and he wants to ask – and perhaps it is uncool to say, Mr Speaker, but we are in touch behind the Speaker's Chair and we

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have quite a good relationship in that sense – he should just text me and ask me whether the latest ‘*chorada*’ that he has read in the Spanish press has any truth to it, or not.

485 I will say for nothing, and I know that I will be making more enemies than I perhaps should, that the only thing I believe in the Spanish newspapers is the date, as long as it is the day that I am reading the newspaper, which my watch confirms and is the day that my iPad confirms. Other than that, the people of Gibraltar would do right to take a huge pinch of salt and garlic pepper with anything that they read in the Spanish press and know that something may have been placed in the Spanish press to create animosity between the Gibraltarians.

490 It is the easiest and first tactic of any negotiation to try to divide your opponents, and I would have thought that the people of Gibraltar, after having dealt with all of those Spanish newspapers in the time of Franco etc. would have learnt ... Perhaps the new online social media generation have not learnt, but they should.

495 **Hon. K Azopardi:** Yes, Mr Speaker, of course we are in touch, but – (*Interjection by Hon. Chief Minister*) It is not uncool, I think, to be in touch. I think that there are things we can do in a convivial way, but on a joking note, if I were in touch with the hon. Member every time I read an article about Gibraltar it would be all the time.

500 He needs to understand also that sometimes when we put questions it is not just because of that. Of course I can clarify the issue with the hon. Member, but because it is in the Spanish press, not only I have read it, other people in Gibraltar have read it, and sometimes it is important for people to get a clarification from the Government in public at this stage and in this forum, so that they understand what exactly is going on.

505 Can I just ask him, slightly related to this but on the basis of his answer as he has given it ...? I think the last time he updated the House was around a month ago. Can he take the opportunity, perhaps, to say where we are in terms of the negotiations, if he is able to do so? I appreciate he might not be able to do so, and he may not have moved on much more from where he was, but it would be helpful for everyone listening to know.

510 **Hon. Chief Minister:** Mr Speaker, I do appreciate that. I have been in Opposition for long enough to know that the question as public interest is also an important device of Question Time, so I have no difficulty with him doing so in those circumstances, but he will understand that the vehemence with which I have expressed my answer is exactly, therefore, what he wanted the public in Gibraltar to have, which is that clarity.

515 Mr Speaker, I will update the House on Tuesday during the course of my Budget address.

Mr Speaker: Next question.

DIGITAL, FINANCIAL SERVICES, HEALTH AUTHORITY AND PUBLIC UTILITIES

Q226/2022

Vasectomy service –
GHA provision

Clerk: Question 226/2022. The Hon. Roy Clinton on behalf of the Hon. E J Phillips.

520 **Hon. R M Clinton:** Mr Speaker, can the Government state whether it provides a vasectomy service with the GHA; and, if not, why?

Clerk: Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Health, Digital and Financial Services.

Minister for Digital, Financial Services, Health Authority and Public Utilities (Hon. A J Isola): Mr Speaker, it would seem as if the Hon. Mr Phillips is scared of coming to Parliament and asking questions on health. It is the second time. The last time it was the Hon. Leader of the Opposition and now it is Mr Clinton. He may have thought to take it in turns. Wherever he is, I wish him well and I look forward to seeing him back in due course.

Mr Speaker, yes, the GHA does provide a vasectomy service in line with their GHA sterilisation policy.

Q227-229/2022

NGOs and charities –

**Operation in under-resourced areas of public provision;
monitoring by Government to ensure best practice**

Clerk: Question 227/2022. The Hon. R M Clinton on behalf of the Hon. E J Phillips.

525 **Hon. R M Clinton:** Mr Speaker, can the Government state whether it is aware that NGOs and charities are filling the gap created by under-resourced areas of public provision, namely dentistry and speech therapy?

Clerk: Answer, the Hon. Minister for Health, Digital and Financial Services.

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Minister for Digital, Financial Services, Health Authority and Public Utilities (Hon. A J Isola): Mr Speaker, I will answer this question together with Questions 228 and 229.

Clerk: Question 228/2022. The Hon. R M Clinton on behalf of the Hon. E J Phillips.

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Hon. R M Clinton: Mr Speaker, can the Government state how it monitors compliance with best practice so that it can provide reassurance to the public that the voluntary service being provided by NGOs and charities is in line with what is a globally expected standard?

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Clerk: Question 229/2022. The Hon. R M Clinton on behalf of the Hon. E J Phillips.

Hon. R M Clinton: Mr Speaker, can the Government state what other areas which have traditionally been under the auspices of the GHA or other care/social services are now being partially picked up and supported by NGOs and charities?

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Clerk: Answer, the Hon. Minister for Health, Digital and Financial Services.

Hon. A J Isola: Mr Speaker, the GHA and Care Agency currently do not commission NGOs or charities to provide any core healthcare service. Should an NGO or charity decide to commission a regulated service, the regulation of said service would be dealt with within the framework of the pertinent regulating body.

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NGOs and charities provide invaluable support to people with a range of needs in the majority of health and care systems globally.

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Hon. K Azopardi: Mr Speaker, Mr Phillips is not here – he is unavoidably away, by the way – but as I understood the reason for him tabling questions on this, it is that recently there were some social media posts by an NGO inviting people who might need assistance in respect of child dentistry services and it seemed strange, in some ways, that that would need to be the case,

560 because if there were people who perhaps had means issues or needed practical assistance, why
wouldn't the GHA, as a matter of course, be dealing with those issues? I am not sure if the hon.
Member has seen those posts and whether he can comment on them.

Hon. A J Isola: Mr Speaker, no, I have not seen those posts, but what I will say is that the Care
Agency, and indeed the GHA, work very closely with a number of NGOs. How they operate,
565 independent of the Care Agency or, indeed, the GHA is absolute. In other words, they provide us
with invaluable support, which we accept, but in terms of providing core services, no, absolutely
not. And so, if the hon. Member will let me have that commentary, we can evaluate to what extent
it is or is not happening. I do not know, but I can certainly tell you that it is not our policy that we
should be outsourcing, to NGOs or charities, core services.

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Hon. D J Bossino: Mr Speaker, just by way of clarification, presumably he would consider
dentistry and speech therapy core services within that answer.

Hon. A J Isola: Mr Speaker, I think to use the term as a yes or no would be wrong because there
575 are many parts of that service that may well be core, and others that may not be. I am not going
to get into a discussion as to what is core in dentistry and what is not, for two reasons: (1) because
I do not know what the answer would be, but I can well imagine; and (2) because I have not been
provided with that information by the specialists themselves and therefore I would not hasten to
form a judgement on my own without their advice.

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Mr Speaker: Next question.

Q230/2022

Private-practice pharmacists – Payment re work done for Government

Clerk: Question 230/2022. The Hon. R M Clinton on behalf of the Hon. E J Phillips.

Hon. R M Clinton: Mr Speaker, just before I go on to the next question, I have found the advert
585 on social media and I will pass it to the Minister shortly.

Can the Government state how private-practice pharmacists are paid for the dispensing work
they do for the Government?

Clerk: Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Health, Digital and Financial Services.

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Minister for Digital, Financial Services, Health Authority and Public Utilities (Hon. A J Isola):
Mr Speaker, I have just seen an advert which, apparently, is in conjunction with the Dental Care
Centre, which is a private sector provider, and that may well be the case, but again, if he will send
it to me, we can always look at that later.

595 The community pharmacies are paid for the work they do under the GPMS scheme in the
following ways: (1) the cost of the medicines is paid in accordance with the Gibraltar Drug Tariff
price applicable for that product in the month that the medicine was supplied, i.e. the basic price;
(2) they are paid an additional 15% on the cost of the basic price; (3) they are paid a dispensing
fee per item of £1.80; and (4) any prescription charges collected from the dispensing of non-
600 exempt prescriptions, i.e. patient fees, is offset against the remuneration which is due from (1) to
(3) above.

Hon. K Azopardi: Have these arrangements been revised since they were entered into – at least, the historic arrangements that date back all the way back to the time before 2011?

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Hon. A J Isola: Mr Speaker, I certainly have not been involved in any discussions yet – we do intend to – but my understanding is that these are historical arrangements.

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Hon. K Azopardi: But the Minister is saying, from his answer just now, that they intend to engage in discussions with pharmacies on this? And, if so, has he set out the ...? I am not expecting him to tell me what he wants to necessarily negotiate, because that is a matter for discussions, clearly, but what would be the motivations for doing so?

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Hon. A J Isola: Mr Speaker, the hon. Member will be aware of certain changes we have already made to prescriptions. We are revisiting and reviewing the whole of that process, which will engage some discussions with pharmacies. As I have also referred to in previous answers, one of the intentions is to work closer with pharmacies to provide some sort of walk-in services from different places around Gibraltar. This will all be in the strategic review that is being conducted by the Director General and there will be more on that to come.

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Hon. K Azopardi: Would it be intended, once arrangements have been concluded, for there to be an announcement? Obviously these are private arrangements between the Government and the pharmacies, but does the Government intend to then say publicly that it has concluded new arrangements with the pharmacies? If not, then what we will do from time to time is ask him about the progress on the review.

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Hon. A J Isola: Mr Speaker, the review will form part of the strategic review being carried out by the Director General, so I think at that time he will be aware that the review is published and then how that is implemented will have a whole series of milestones which will tell us how we are doing in terms of meeting that review. So I think it will be public knowledge as and when we are in a position to make that move.

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Hon. K Azopardi: I may not have explained my question. I was asking specifically not about the publication of the strategic review but rather about the conclusion of the arrangement with the particular pharmacies in relation to the commercial arrangements. That is really what I was talking about, which is, I suppose, a small part of the implementation of the review.

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Hon. A J Isola: A very small part, Mr Speaker, and I am very happy to give him my assurances that as and when it is done I will let him know so that he can ask a question, if he wishes to, in Parliament.

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Q231-32/2022

EMIS –

How the system works; set-up and maintenance costs

Clerk: Question 231/2022. The Hon. R M Clinton on behalf of the Hon. E J Phillips.

Hon. R M Clinton: Mr Speaker, can the Government state how the EMIS for pharmaceuticals works in detail?

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Clerk: Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Health, Digital and Financial Services.

Minister for Digital, Financial Services, Health Authority and Public Utilities (Hon. A J Isola):
Mr Speaker, I will answer this question together with Question 232.

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Clerk: Question 232/2022. The Hon. R M Clinton on behalf of the Hon. E J Phillips.

Hon. R M Clinton: Mr Speaker, can the Government state how much it cost the taxpayer to set up the EMIS programme in the first place, and how much is the annual maintenance cost?

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Clerk: Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Health, Digital and Financial Services.

Hon. A J Isola: Mr Speaker, GHA clinicians use EMIS to generate a GPMS prescription for GHA service users accessing their services. The prescriptions generated are identified with a unique serial code and GHA user medical card number. These prescriptions are then presented for dispensing at the service user's community pharmacy of choice. The community pharmacy, using the EMIS dispensing module, enters the unique serial code and GHA number to dispense the items prescribed. At the same time that the said medication is issued on the EMIS dispensing module, the pharmacy will make a reimbursement claim to the GHA for the items dispensed.

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The initial cost to set up the EMIS programme was £233,367.50, with an annual maintenance cost of £184,492.

Hon. K Azopardi: Just one supplementary, if I may: is the Government satisfied that the EMIS system is working well, or is it part of the review that they are conducting of the general arrangements? Arrangements will be contractual in nature, but are there reviews of some of the logistics of the dispensing of the prescriptions that are being looked at, and is this one of them?

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Hon. A J Isola: Mr Speaker, I do not want to, in any way, inhibit or restrict the remit of the review. The review is of everything. We are reviewing all aspects of the services that the GHA and the Care Agency provide, including this aspect.

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In terms of how the EMIS is operating, it does the job I have described. I believe we can do it better, and so we will be looking for ways in which we can do it better. The introduction of the selective services through online appointments is by plugging into the EMIS calendar, because obviously the person who sees the patient must have access to exactly what has been prescribed within the system. So, it does its job but I think we can make it work better and that is certainly one of the things we are looking to do.

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Q233-34/2022

Philips –

Origins of long-term partnership with GoG; tender process re £17 million contract

Clerk: Question 233/2022. The Hon. R M Clinton on behalf of the Hon. E J Phillips.

Hon. R M Clinton: Mr Speaker, can the Government state how the long-term partnership with Dutch multi-national corporation Philips came about?

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Clerk: Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Health, Digital and Financial Services.

Minister for Digital, Financial Services, Health Authority and Public Utilities (Hon. A J Isola):
Mr Speaker, I will answer this question together with Question 234.

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Clerk: Question 234/2022. The Hon. R M Clinton on behalf of the Hon. E J Phillips.

Hon. R M Clinton: Mr Speaker, can the Government state whether the £17 million contract with Philips was subject to a Government tender process; and, if not, why not?

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Clerk: Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Health, Digital and Financial Services.

Hon. A J Isola: Mr Speaker, I can confirm that the contract with Philips was successfully awarded following a Government tender process.

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Hon. K Azopardi: Mr Speaker, Question 233 was about how the partnership came about. Was there a discussion leading to the tender? Were there previous discussions with Philips in relation to the things that were then eventually the subject matter of the tender, and they were the successful tenderer? Can he give us a bit of background as to the scope and the rationale and how these discussions originated? Was there an approach by Philips to GHA, or was it the other way round? If so, it would be helpful to receive some detail of that.

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Hon. A J Isola: Mr Speaker, the tender was issued in November 2021 by my predecessor. Two firms engaged in that tender process and discussions ensued with the two of them in respect of the breadth of service that could be offered, the price and over what period of time those services would be available. So it was a relationship that was developed as a result of the tender. I am not sure what else the hon. Member wishes me to ... The detail was put out in the tender as to what we were looking for and the kind of partnership we were seeking, and Philips was successful in the process.

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Hon. K Azopardi: This originated from the GHA and not the other way round? It is not that the GHA were approached on a commercial basis to offer them services and they decided to take up the idea that this might be interesting, they then tendered and they were successful? It was the other way round, so the GHA originated the concept that it would be helpful to have a contract for these services, and then put out a tender and Philips was the successful tenderer. Is that right? It is a large contract of some value, so it would be helpful to have some more detail on it.

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Hon. A J Isola: Mr Speaker, the hon. Member will recall there have been previous questions in Parliament as to imaging services and other services that the GHA required. The GHA had been discussing this for some considerable time before this tender was put out, with a number of different parties. The GHA then took the decision that the best way to get where we wanted to get to with a professional provider was just to put it out to tender, detailing the services and inviting firms to come forward, which is exactly what happened. I think the object of the exercise was to get specialisation in, and I am delighted that we have managed to contract with an international firm with the reputation and expertise that Philips has for the benefit of all users of the GHA.

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Q235/2022

Register of property occupation – Policy decision re tenants of government housing

Clerk: Question 235/2022. The Hon. the Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. K Azopardi: Mr Speaker, can the Government confirm that it has not changed the previously announced policy decision that tenants of government housing do not, themselves, need to take steps to register under the new Register of Property Occupation?

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Clerk: Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Health, Digital and Financial Services.

740 **Minister for Digital, Financial Services, Health Authority and Public Utilities (Hon. A J Isola):**
Mr Speaker, Government confirms that it has not changed the previously announced policy decision.

745 **Hon. K Azopardi:** Mr Speaker, that is helpful but there appears to be quite a lot of confusion on the issue because we keep being approached by people talking about the process and so on, and some of them will say they have been queuing up and that kind of ... The message that the Minister gave when we debated the principles of the Bill – and I asked him for an assurance and he gave it at that time – appears not to be out there, or at least not out there with sufficient clarity, so perhaps the Government would be minded to consider issuing a notice or providing some
750 further information on this, so that the public are aware that they do not need to worry themselves about this.

Hon. A J Isola: Mr Speaker, I understand that, and I think there are other live issues, too ... which is that we will transpose the data that we have from the housing records into the Property
755 Registry, but at the same time as we are doing it we are wanting to check its accuracy and therefore the team are engaging with people to check and verify who exactly is occupying different units within the public housing stock. Some of them are relatively straightforward and we exempted the senior citizens in the homes from those because it is quite straightforward, and so it is a single-dwelling flat with one or two occupiers, there are no children involved; in public
760 housing, of course, there are.

The policy has not changed. I am happy to look at putting some notices out, which may give clarity to people that they do not need to worry about it, but the team is engaging in a checking and double-checking of the information we are putting into the Property Register to make sure that it is what we want from it, the source of truth. We want to ensure that the data within that
765 system is accurate, so we are taking some time to go through it, but nobody in public housing has to comply with the legislation at this stage in terms of providing that information; it is being done for them by us.

Hon. K Azopardi: So, to be clear, Mr Speaker – and I am grateful for that answer – when he
770 says that the Department is checking – which, of course, is understandable and it is okay to check this information; they *should* check it – that is a proactive decision of the Department? They are presumably reaching out to check this information but they are not requiring tenants of public housing to go down to be in the queue and so on? Tenants of government housing are not in danger of penalties for non-compliance, because this is something that, as a matter of policy, the
775 Principal Housing Officer will register, but then the government officials may be checking the information once the registration has taken place. That is how I understand the answer.

Hon. A J Isola: Yes, Mr Speaker, that is absolutely right, we are simply verifying information that we already hold, to ensure it is accurate. And there is no penalty or sanction. They are not
780 obliged to do it; we are doing it for them. Some already have. There are a fair number of people in public housing who have registered online, and obviously that is very helpful to us in the process of getting there quicker.

Mr Speaker: Next question.

Q236-39/2022

COVID-19 –

**Boosters administered to residents and non-residents;
repeat positives and vaccination status**

785 **Clerk:** Question 236/2022. The Hon. the Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. K Azopardi: Mr Speaker, of the 39,854 COVID boosters administered to 9th June 2022, how many of those were first COVID boosters – that is a third dose of the COVID vaccine – broken down by residents and non-residents?

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Clerk: Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Health, Digital and Financial Services.

Minister for Digital, Financial Services, Health Authority and Public Utilities (Hon. A J Isola): Mr Speaker, I will answer this question together with Questions 237, 238 and 239.

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Clerk: Question 237/2022. The Hon. the Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. K Azopardi: Mr Speaker, of the 39,854 COVID boosters administered to 9th June 2022, how many of those were second COVID boosters – that is a fourth dose of the COVID vaccine – broken down by residents and non-residents?

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Clerk: Question 238/2022. The Hon. the Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. K Azopardi: Mr Speaker, of the 18,806 confirmed COVID cases detected in Gibraltar to 9th June 2022, how many people have contracted COVID once and how many have contracted COVID-19 more than once – repeat positives – with a breakdown of how many people have contracted it once, twice or three or more times?

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Clerk: Question 239/2022. The Hon. the Leader of the Opposition.

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Hon. K Azopardi: Mr Speaker, to the extent that of the 18,806 confirmed COVID cases detected in Gibraltar to 9th June 2022 there have been repeat positives – in other words, cases of people contracting COVID more than once – can Government provide a breakdown of these by vaccination status, namely how many of the repeat positives have been vaccinated or are/were unvaccinated against COVID-19 at the time of contracting COVID for a second time?

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Clerk: Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Health, Digital and Financial Services.

Hon. A J Isola: Mr Speaker, out of 39,854 booster doses administered up to 9th June 2022, 30,740 were third doses with 23,378 administered to residents and 7,362 administered to non-residents.

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Similarly, 9,114 booster doses were fourth doses with 8,227 administered to residents and 887 administered to non-residents.

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Of the 18,806 confirmed cases, a total of 16,728 persons have contracted COVID-19 once, 1,036 persons have contracted COVID-19 twice and two persons have contracted COVID-19 thrice. No one has contracted COVID-19 four times or more.

Out of 1,038 persons who were confirmed COVID-19 positive two or three times, 771 were vaccinated and 267 were unvaccinated at the time of testing positive.

830 **Hon. K Azopardi:** Mr Speaker, I just give the hon. Member an opportunity to confirm also that the booster remains available for anyone who wants to take it up. Is that correct?

Hon. A J Isola: Yes, indeed, Mr Speaker. As I said at the last sitting of Parliament, for as long as stocks are supplied and are available we will continue to administer them.

Q240-41/2022
Mental health in under-18s –
Number of referrals; anti-depressant and anti-psychotic prescriptions

835 **Clerk:** Question 240/2022. The Hon. the Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. K Azopardi: Mr Speaker, how many persons under the age of 18 have been seen by or been referred to Mental Health Services or practitioners at St Bernard’s Hospital or Ocean Views or the Community Mental Health Services team in the calendar years 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019, 840 2020, 2021 and 2022 up to 31st May 2022, broken down by each calendar year and GHA facility mentioned?

Clerk: Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Health, Digital and Financial Services.

845 **Minister for Digital, Financial Services, Health Authority and Public Utilities (Hon. A J Isola):** Mr Speaker, I will answer this question together with Question 241.

Clerk: Question 241/2022. The Hon. the Leader of the Opposition.

850 **Hon. K Azopardi:** Mr Speaker, how many persons under the age of 18 were prescribed medication for anti-depressants or anti-psychotic drugs by GHA personnel in each of the calendar years 2017, 2018, 2019, 2020, 2021 and 2022 up to 31st May 2022, broken down by each calendar year mentioned?

855 **Clerk:** Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Health, Digital and Financial Services.

Hon. A J Isola: Mr Speaker, I am now handing over a schedule with the information the hon. Gentlemen has requested. However, in connection to Question 56, I am informed that the service for children was established in 2019 and therefore there are no official statistics prior to that date. 860 The only way to retrieve this information would be from patient paper records, something which would be very difficult and challenging without knowing first-hand the individuals in question.

Moving forward, the Gibraltar National Mental Health Strategy will seek to improve mental health and care for the population of Gibraltar. This will include the strengthening of all the different institutions to implement positive change and progress on the four overarching 865 priorities, which are in alignment with the World Health Organization Global Mental Health Action Plan 2013-30, as mentioned in Press Release 574/2021.

Answer to Question 240/2022

Period	Number of Patients Referred
January 2019 to December 2019	110
January 2020 to December 2020	48
January 2021 to December 2021	113
January 2022 to May 2022	112

Answer to Question 241/2022

Years	Antidepressants	Antipsychotics
2017	2	2
2018	2	0
2019	8	3
2020	13	8
2021	17	9
2022	13	2

870 **Hon. K Azopardi:** While I look at the schedule, may I just ask briefly ...? He said that in relation to one of the questions – he gave a number that is neither of those numbers, so I am not sure which one he meant – there was not information before 2019. He said Question 46, but I am not really sure which one he meant because these are Questions 240 and 241. Is he saying that he does not have information about the drugs, or is it the referrals? I see now, from the schedule, that he meant the referrals.

875 Mr Speaker, if the hon. Member looks closely at my question he will see that I wanted to have a breakdown of the referrals but also broken down by each calendar year and GHA facility mentioned. He will see that the schedule he has handed me does not provide that information, so may I ask him, if he does not have that with him, to write to me, because this would not be a full answer to the question that I asked?

880 **Hon. A J Isola:** Yes, Mr Speaker, I will be happy to do that. It is not in my supplementary information either, so I will be happy to provide that information to the hon. Member.

Hon. K Azopardi: I am grateful, Mr Speaker.

885 Just looking at the schedule, we would have to do the totals but you can see that, in terms of referrals, in the year 2019 there are 110, in 2020 a smaller number, 48, then, in 2021, 113, and in 2022 so far, 112. Obviously, January to December 2020 was the COVID year, so I expect that must have had an impact, but looking at the other years and taking out the COVID year you are seeing annual referrals in 2019 and 2021 of over 100 under-18s to mental health facilities of a different type. We do not know whether it is St Bernard’s, Ocean Views or the Community Mental Health team because the hon. Member will have to write to me with that answer, and it would be helpful to receive it, but you have seen also in the first five months of this year a number which is as high as the annual numbers for 2021 and 2019. Does he agree that it is of some concern to see these numbers? Will he endeavour to speak to his advisers, those in the Mental Health Services, as to whether this is the norm and as to the causes that perhaps ... and what action could be taken in relation to these matters?

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Hon. A J Isola: Mr Speaker, two points. The first point is that yes, I acknowledge the numbers in the first half of this year are higher than they normally are, but the second point is that I believe much of that may be down to the implementation of the Mental Health Strategy carried out by my predecessor, which has led to an awful lot more awareness of the kind of issues that may arise

900 and consequently referring people more than they were previously. The Mental Health Strategy
2021-26 is designed precisely to do that. If that had not happened – and obviously it is still an area
that we need to keep looking at – then I would have been concerned if that number had grown
out of its own volition, so to say. The fact that there is much more awareness and the fact that the
clinical operation and leadership in the Mental Health Service has been refreshed and
905 strengthened are also contributing factors to the increase in numbers. I suspect in previous years
had we been doing this, we would have had more referrals also.

So, yes it is an area for concern, yes it is an area that has already been looked at by the Mental
Health team, and I have no doubt that their strategy will continue to bring forward cases that
require some support and attention.

Adjournment

910 **Clerk:** The Hon. the Chief Minister.

Chief Minister (Hon. F R Picardo): Mr Speaker, I move that the House should now adjourn to
Tuesday at 10.30 in the morning, when the House will consider the Appropriation Bill.

915 **Mr Speaker:** I now propose a question, which is that this House do now adjourn to Tuesday,
28th June at 10.30 a.m.

I now put the question, which is that this House do now adjourn to Tuesday, 28th June at
10.30 a.m. Those in favour?

920 **Members:** Aye.

Hon. E J Reyes: Mr Speaker, are we going to lay on the table the Answers to Written Questions?

Hon. Chief Minister: We have not finished Questions.

925

Mr Speaker: We have not finished Questions yet.

Hon. K Azopardi: Sorry, for clarity – I may have misunderstood; there were some discussions
with the Clerk about accepting certain questions in written form – we are not finishing Questions,
930 so there will be a suspension of Standing Orders for the purposes of the Budget. Is that what he
meant?

Hon. Chief Minister: Mr Speaker, I have consulted the provision on Questions about any
question which remains unanswered when the Assembly adjourns on the last day of a meeting.
935 That is not when we adjourn today, because the meeting continues until we have been through
the whole of the Order Paper. My mind was drawn to my memory of this, and that is why I have
not asked hon. Members to accept those questions, because we can come back to those questions
after we have finished dealing with Bills. That is when we will have to see which Ministers are here
or not here. Two of them are likely to be back and therefore able to deal with it, subject to other
940 commitments. One may or may not be back. As he knows, we have a Minister who is having a
difficulty with a relative and he may or may not be here, but he is going to do his best to be here
next week.

Mr Speaker: I am just going to go back to the procedure for the adjournment.

945 I now put the question, which is that this House do now adjourn to Tuesday, 28th June at 10.30 a.m. Those in favour? (**Members:** Aye.) Those against? Passed.

This House will now adjourn to Tuesday, 28th June at 10.30 a.m.

The House adjourned at 5.00 p.m.