



PROCEEDINGS OF THE GIBRALTAR PARLIAMENT

AFTERNOON SESSION: 3 p.m. – 6.25 p.m.

Gibraltar, Thursday, 24th November 2022

Contents

Questions for Oral Answer	3
Chief Minister	3
Q509/2022 Company Tax – Amount collected in September 2022	3
Q510-11/2022 Treasury rent and service charges – Breakdown of estimated costs for 2022-23; rationale and how rental income used by Government-owned companies	4
Q512/2022 Company COVID charge – Whether abandoned	11
Q513/2022 Legal claims settled at over £50,000 against Government, its agencies or companies – Number settled in last six years	13
Q514/2022 Housing estates – Whether instruction given to clean in advance of Chief Minister's visits	14
Q515 and Q519/2022 Hassan Centenary Terraces, Bob Peliza Mews and Chatham Views – Number of units unallocated; estimated construction cost	17
Q516-18/2022 Bob Peliza Mews and Chatham Views – Number of purchasers wishing to discontinue purchases; reason for purchase agreements not yet being signed; whether advertised purchase price to increase;	17
Q520-21/2022 Public counter services – List of Government providers, including opening hours; list of those not providing	23
Q522/22 Extension of reciprocal healthcare arrangements with Spain and the EU – Progress	31
Environment, Sustainability, Climate Change and Education	34
Q471-72/2022 Gibraltar College of Further Education – Students registered as Year 12 and Year 13 equivalent	34

Q473/2022 Special Educational Needs and Disabilities – Reconciliation of totals given in answer to W30/2022	35
Q474/2022 Pearson BTEC Level 3 in Music Performance – Reason why not delivered on school or College premises	37
Q475/2022 Dropping off and collecting children from non-school premises – Alternatives offered to parents	39
Q476/2022 Vandalism on school premises – Updates re efforts to curtail.....	40
Q477/2022 Speech therapy facilities – Availability in Government schools	41
Q478/2022 Repayment of scholarships for uncompleted courses – Updated details	42
Q479/2022 Vacant teaching posts – Details	49
Q480/2022 Greenhouse Gas City Inventory 2020 – Expected date of publication	51
Q481/2022 Renewable energy – Gibraltar’s share	51
Q482/2022 Commonwealth and Campion Parks – Smoke-free designation	53
Q483/2022 Walk the Wall project – Progress.....	53
Q484/2022 Upper Rock – Measures to protect against fire	54
Q485-86/2022 COP27 – Government attendance; implementation of recommendations ..	55
Q487/2022 St Mary’s School – Signing of underlease and financial terms	56
Adjournment	60
<i>The House adjourned at 6.25 p.m.</i>	60

The Gibraltar Parliament

The Parliament met at 3 p.m.

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

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

Questions for Oral Answer

CHIEF MINISTER

Q509/2022

Company Tax –

Amount collected in September 2022

Clerk: Meeting of Parliament, Thursday, 24th November 2022.

We continue with Answers to Questions. Question 509/2022. The Hon. R M Clinton.

- 5 **Hon. R M Clinton:** Mr Speaker, can the Government advise the amount of Company Tax collected in the month of September 2022?

Clerk: Answer, the Hon. the Chief Minister.

- 10 **Chief Minister (Hon. F R Picardo):** Mr Speaker, a total of £42.5 million was collected in Company Tax in the month of September 2022. This information is now available on the Government website.

- 15 **Hon. R M Clinton:** Mr Speaker, I am grateful to the Chief Minister for that answer. Does he have any concerns about the level of Corporate Tax paid in September of this year, compared to the prior year?

- 20 **Hon. Chief Minister:** Mr Speaker, in the prior year the figure was £42.3 million in that same collection period, in September 2020 it had been £69 million, which was a high figure, but in September 2019 it had been £27.3 million.

- 25 **Hon. R M Clinton:** Sorry, Mr Speaker, I seem to have a different number for last year. I have a number of about £63.3 million. Is there something I am missing? Or perhaps this number has been amalgamated with the following month ... I cannot see. I do identify the £27.3 million for 1920. I see £69 million for 2021 and £63.3 million for 2021-22.

- 30 **Hon. Chief Minister:** Mr Speaker, the figure that I have is £27.3 million for 2019, which is the figure I gave him – and I am going back to the numbers – the £69 million that I gave him for 2020 and the £42.3 million that I gave him for 2022. I do not know whether the figure he has for 2021 is the full-year figure or an amalgamated figure for that year, or the February figure, which is sometimes higher.

The question he asked me was whether I had concerns. I am told by the Commissioner of Income Tax that we expect to be on target for the amount estimated. That is his concern and, as he knows, the figures tend to come in ... Principally February and September are important months in terms of how the spread usually happens, but in the context of how the whole year is likely to develop I am still being advised that we expect to be on target.

The question he has asked me is for September 2022. I have actually been given a figure also for October 2022 – if he is interested in having that, I can let him have it – which is £36.37 million. For example, Mr Speaker, the number I gave for 2020 was £69 million for September, but that was followed by £4 million in October and nothing in November – just £¼ million in November – so, as he can see, the figures ebb and flow depending on the end of year. In 2019, the figure had been £27 million in September, £34 million in October and £1 million in November. So the indication is that the annual collection is expected not to deviate materially from the estimates we set out in the Estimates Book.

Q510-11/2022

**Treasury rent and service charges –
Breakdown of estimated costs for 2022-23;
rationale and how rental income used by Government-owned companies**

Clerk: Question 510/2022. The Hon. R M Clinton.

Hon. R M Clinton: Mr Speaker, further to Q392/2022 can the Government provide a similar schedule giving the breakdown of £10,700,000 of the estimated office rent and service charges for the Treasury Department for the year 2022-23, detailing the same information but identifying the lessor and grouping the information into (a) Government-owned lessors with a subtotal and (b) private sector lessors with a subtotal?

Clerk: Answer, the Hon. the Chief Minister.

Chief Minister (Hon. F R Picardo): I will answer this question together with Question 511.

Clerk: Question 511/2022. The Hon. R M Clinton.

Hon. R M Clinton: Mr Speaker, can the Government advise what is the economic rationale for previously public buildings to be rented from Government-owned companies – for example, GAR Ltd – by the Treasury Department at a built-increase of 3% per annum for 20 years; and what are these companies doing with the money, estimated at around £9 million per annum?

Clerk: Answer, the Hon. the Chief Minister.

Hon. Chief Minister: Mr Speaker, in relation to Question 510, I now hand over a schedule with the information requested by the hon. Gentleman.

Answer to Q510/2022

ANSWER TO QUESTION 511

ANSWER TO QUESTION 510

Private Sector Lessors	Rent	Ground Rent	Service Charges	Lessor
323 Main Street	£ 109,584.80	-	-	Southport Properties Ltd
Blake House	£ 67,424.12	£ 432.26	£ 1,896.40	Barnsbury Properties Limited
Leanse Place	£ 223,780.00	-	£ 59,214.96	Ryhall Limited
Unit 35, 71 & 72 New Harbours	-	-	£ 11,683.44	Land Property Services Ltd
World Trade Centre	£ 193,709.20	£ 939.60	£ 22,837.28	World Trade Center Services Ltd
Suite 6, 57/63 Line Wall Road	£ 123,858.00	-	£ 19,004.00	Gibcorp Limited
Suite E, Regal House	£ 87,696.00	-	£ 7,018.00	MB Development Company Ltd.
Eurotowers, Europort Road	£ 28,647.36	-	£ 2,239.68	Bentley Eurosuites Limited
John Mackintosh Hall	£ 125,000.00	-	-	Pyrmont Ltd
ICC Units 9.7, 9.8 & 9.3a	£ 79,798.52	-	£ 11,637.28	Bari Properties Limited

Government Owned Lessors	Rent	Ground Rent	Service Charges	Lessor
206-210 Main Street (Gibraltar Savings Bank)	£ 430,669.41	-	-	GSBA LTD
14 Governor's Parade & Library Street (DSS)	£ 63,861.97	-	-	GCP INVESTMENTS LTD
37 Town Range (Environmental Agency)	£ 125,965.29	-	-	GCP INVESTMENTS LTD
331 Main Street (Income Tax)	£ 173,029.26	-	-	GCP INVESTMENTS LTD
Unit 35 Harbours Deck (Treasury)	£ 26,300.45	-	-	GCP INVESTMENTS LTD
Unit 61 Harbours Deck (Technical Services)	£ 13,842.32	-	-	GCP INVESTMENTS LTD
Unit 69 Harbours Deck (Health Authority)	£ 17,995.03	-	-	GCP INVESTMENTS LTD
Unit 71 & 72 Harbours Walk (Treasury)	£ 47,063.97	-	-	GCP INVESTMENTS LTD
Unit 75 - 79 Harbours Walk (Employment)	£ 171,644.99	-	-	GCP INVESTMENTS LTD
Unit 83 - 86 Harbours Walk (Human Resources)	£ 119,044.13	-	-	GCP INVESTMENTS LTD
Unit 87 & 90 Harbours Walk (Technical Services)	£ 54,677.22	-	-	GCP INVESTMENTS LTD
Unit 91 Harbours Walk (Department of Environment)	£ 16,610.52	-	-	GCP INVESTMENTS LTD
Unit 93 Harbours Walk (Procurement)	£ 40,142.77	-	-	GCP INVESTMENTS LTD
Unit 99 Harbours Walk (Car Parks)	£ 33,221.61	-	-	GCP INVESTMENTS LTD
32 John Mackintosh Square (City Hall)	£ 377,365.97	-	-	GCP INVESTMENTS LTD
23 Queensway (Education)	£ 214,556.25	-	-	GCP INVESTMENTS LTD
16 Governors Parade (Social Agency)	£ 173,029.26	-	-	GCP INVESTMENTS LTD
31 Town Range (Buildings and Works Department)	£ 89,975.18	-	-	GCP INVESTMENTS LTD
16 Europa Flats (Bleak House)	£ 228,398.61	-	-	GCP INVESTMENTS LTD
12-14 Library Street (ITLD)	£ 141,827.21	-	-	GCP INVESTMENTS LTD
40 Town Range (Ex Department of Education)	£ 163,339.61	-	-	GCP INVESTMENTS LTD
1 Johnstones Passage (Care Agency)	£ 91,238.98	-	-	GCP INVESTMENTS LTD
11 Cathedral Square (Duke of Kent House)	£ 129,527.23	-	-	GAR LTD
19 Cemetery Road (Offices - Stores & Mess Room)	£ 10,491.71	-	-	GAR LTD
6 Convent Place (Government Offices)	£ 313,694.26	-	-	GAR LTD
10 Governor's Lane (Ombudsman)	£ 113,336.33	-	-	GAR LTD
104 Main Street (Post Office)	£ 224,082.15	-	-	GAR LTD
4 North Mole Road (Port)	£ 97,514.55	-	-	GAR LTD
31 Rosia Road (Police Headquarters)	£ 563,536.75	-	-	GAR LTD
32B Rosia Road (Offices & Store - Nelsons Anchorage)	£ 53,588.00	-	-	GAR LTD
2 Secretary's Lane (Joshua Hassans House)	£ 272,007.21	-	-	GAR LTD
2 Winston Churchill Avenue (Customs Office)	£ 135,589.10	-	-	GAR LTD
21 Hospital Ramp (Ex-St Bernards Hospital)	£ 2,249,176.59	-	-	GAR LTD
Winston Churchill Avenue (Old Airport Terminal)	£ 176,714.15	-	-	GAR LTD
32 - 36 Town Range (Law Courts)	£ 1,344,008.67	-	-	GAR LTD
18 Windmill Hill House (H.M. Prison)	£ 1,019,111.60	-	-	GAR LTD

The rationale that the hon. Gentleman asked about was established by Members opposite when in government. The current Government has continued the practice, which was established from 2010, of reflecting public buildings in Government-owned companies, as this allows the Government to keep a record of properties, as these are not otherwise reflected in the annual accounts of the Government. This practice, which the GSD established and we continued, allows the companies to charge rent for the premises and therefore generate income for the companies to repay the costs of building or purchasing any assets. The 3% increase set into the rates is to combat annual inflation, although obviously this year the rate of inflation is higher.

Hon. R M Clinton: Mr Speaker, I am grateful, first of all, for the schedule requested under Question 510, but unfortunately there does not seem to be a subtotal. Obviously, I can add up myself, but it means I cannot really talk intelligently about the total amount under Government-owned lessors as opposed to private sector lessors. I think, just glancing at the schedule, we can see that the bulk of the £10.7 million rent and service charges seems to be going to Government-owned lessors. Most of these agreements which have been signed, and in fact continue to be signed by the Government have the 3% inbuilt but compounded for 20 years. If, as the Government is saying, the money is going to the companies to be used for ... I cannot remember the exact word he used, but something to do with capital ... Yes.

Hon. Chief Minister: To help him, just to read that bit of the sentence again: to generate income for the companies to repay the costs of building or purchasing any assets.

Hon. R M Clinton: Right, so we pay the cost of building or purchasing. Again, from my own calculations, all I did was look at those properties that had had a 3% compounded increase between 2018-19 and 2022-23. Of course, in the private sector I think we would find it extremely rare that any lessee would agree to those terms – 3% compounded for 20 years. I think any lessor would be lucky to get those kinds of terms.

I guess what I am trying to get at is nine million quid a year – on a general estimate, when I can eventually arrive and the right number when the schedule is added up – is a lot of money, and looking at the actual ... at least one example of registered deeds, one deed that is registered, the Government is responsible for maintenance of the buildings anyway, so what you have is an outflow of money for rent going to these various Government companies – GAR, GCP etc. – increasing by 3% every year. Unfortunately, I do not have sight as to what GAR or GCP are doing with this money. If we had published accounts, I would not be bothering the House with this type of question.

I have one question which might perhaps answer as to the purpose, or where this money is going, in terms of what it is being used for in practice. The annual housing allowances paid to Gibraltar Capital Assets Ltd. – which in 2018 was £10.4 million, in 2019 was £10.7 million and in 2020 was £11 million – seem to increase by 3% every year, each time. My question is: is the relationship between the money that is being paid on the rental of Government properties to Government companies being used towards the annual housing allowances paid to Gibraltar Capital Assets Ltd?

Hon. Chief Minister: Mr Speaker, let me start by saying that the hon. Member's question talks about previously public buildings. To the extent that the buildings are in companies owned by the Government, they remain public. They are not alienated to a private landlord, they remain public ownership through Government companies, so I would not accept the hon. Gentleman seeking to characterise the buildings as being anything other than still held for the public, although through a company structure.

The hon. Gentleman has to remember that there are different types of contract in the private sector. He said you would never get, in the private sector, this type of contract. Well, you might not get a contract with a 3% compounded interest rate, but you might get increases in rent which exceed 3%. What the hon. Gentleman will know is that in the private sector, many clauses on rent are upwards-only rent reviews, and the rent reviews operate on the basis of reviews every three years or every seven years and the increase can amount to an increase which would be more than, for example, 21% over seven years, or it can increase by more than 9% if it is over three years. That is to say if you check your rental agreement and you review the rent after three years, in many instances it may go up by more than 9% after three years. I am surprised that the hon. Gentleman thinks that is not the case. I have acted for many landlords where the rent has increased by more than 10% over three years, and therefore that is not unusual.

The hon. Gentleman is right to say that the 3% increase is the same increase as was provided for in the investment by a number of entities that invested into the public housing estates, because we told him. He came to my office and we gave him a presentation and told him that was how we had fixed the increases on an annual basis. But why was that fixed in that way? Well, looking at the amount that had to be repaid and looking at inflation over periods where sometimes it can spike, sometimes it can be low, the average agreed, which would be agreeable to all parties, was 3%. That is why it was agreed at 3% there. For that reason, when we have started to look at these arrangements, which they put in place and we are formalising, we have provided for the same increases per annum.

The hon. Members will know that one of the issues between us has been the amount of cost in the company structure of the Government and how you get cash into the company structure of

the Government – in particular, where the Government companies do not produce income in their interface with the public, with third parties. The Bus Company is one that we have discussed before. The Bus Company is part of the company structure. The Bus Company has expenses, but the income which the Bus Company has is very low compared to its expenses. From memory, I seem to recall we discussed, during the course of the Budget debate, costs in the region of £9 million to £10 million a year to run the Government Bus Company and income of less than ... I was going to say less than £1 million, but about £350,000. So, the wider Government structure requires an injection of capital from the Government from the taxpayers' pool in some way. Insofar as the Government company structure requires that injection of capital in an unmitigated fashion, then at the end of the year there has to be an adjustment to provide that income to the Government structure of companies, which we inherited from them, as the hon. Members may recall, in 2011 with what I called a black hole of £100 million. That is to say there were liabilities in the Government company structure of £100 million, which were unfunded. So what we are doing through these structures, which they established and we are continuing to put in place, is to ensure that there is income into the Government company structure – in particular, in respect of those Government companies that relate to companies where we have had cost.

I want to be clear that when we have transferred assets into the Government company structure we have done it in the way that we have been advised is the proper way to do it – and I think the hon. Member would agree. That is to transfer assets at value on to the Government corporate structure, whilst at the time that they did it ... the one thing we have not pursued which they did was that they transferred Government property into the Government corporate structure at nil value. So we have enhanced the structure and we have ensured that the costs that the Government companies have – in particular the cost of building and the cost of acquiring assets etc. – is being provided for by creating this injection of capital on a regular basis through the payment of rent, which rent increases by 3% a year.

Mr Speaker, I hope that is helpful to the hon. Gentleman and that it helps to further elucidate these issues. He said he does not have the accounts of GAR and GCP investments, but he will. They are in the process of being finalised and as soon as they are finalised he will be able to obtain them from Companies House in the usual way.

Hon. R M Clinton: Mr Speaker, I am grateful to the Chief Minister for his answer. I will reserve comment about what is a normal rental clause since I am not a lawyer and I have no real expertise in negotiating leases. But it is a curious trait of all of these leases with Government companies that they all go up by 3% and for a period of 20 years. I do not know why 20 years.

Hon. Chief Minister: Will you give way?

Hon. R M Clinton: Yes, of course.

Hon. Chief Minister: Mr Speaker, there is a reason for that. It would be a curious trait perhaps, if you were dealing with different landlords and different lessors in the private sector, to find that pattern, but here you are dealing with one landlord, who is also the owner of all of the lessor companies, and therefore it would be fictitious to have one at 2.5%, one at 3.5% and another one at 3% when what you want to achieve is that you are growing the income into the Government company structure through the rents by an average of 3% a year, so that you are getting the rent and the increases and you are creating that cash in the company structure. There is no magic to the pattern, other than you are dealing always with the same party and counterparty.

Hon. R M Clinton: Mr Speaker, I think we can take that as read. A trait is a trait. They all have the same 3% increase. That is all I was saying.

I have not heard yet whether this money is going towards the annual housing allowance that is paid to Gibraltar Capital Assets Ltd, which is being used to pay what I call a mortgage, what he

190 calls an investment of £300 million the housing estates. I would be grateful if the Chief Minister could advise whether any element of this is going towards that.

I would remind the Chief Minister, when he talks about the Bus Company, that when we had that conversation in this place we were talking about the contribution from the Consolidated Fund to Government-owned companies in the region of, in the past, £25 million, now in the region of
195 £30 million. So it is in the context of that.

I did not expect to find, looking in the expenditure of the Treasury Department, under a head called 'Rents and Service Charges' what he is now describing to us as a contribution to the running costs of Government companies across the board. I would have expected, in all honesty, although we disagree as to the contribution element in the Consolidated Fund, that that is where the money
200 should have appeared. If an extra £10 million was needed to fund Government-owned companies, it should have come from there, but not described as rent and service charges under the Treasury Department.

I would ask the Chief Minister another question, and that is what would happen if these rental agreements were terminated? What would happen if these companies did not get the cash? What
205 would be the consequence? Is there something at the end that is sucking up this kind of money, which is contractually required? If a future government came in and said, 'This is not actually achieving anything because all you are doing is moving money out of the Consolidated Fund into Government companies. Why don't we just do it directly from the Consolidated Fund and describe it as such?' ...

210 **Hon. Chief Minister:** Mr Speaker, these contracts will not be terminated unless the Government decides that they should be, because we are both sides here. As I said, we are the landlord and we are the lessor, and the only way that this could happen is if a future Government makes a decision to pursue a different structure. But let's be clear, it would be a little remarkable
215 if the future Government that were to change the structure were the Government that we inherited it from. In other words, we inherit this from the GSD, we continue it and we enhance it because we do not believe that it is right to have a continually growing black hole in the Government companies and we want to do something about addressing that. If what he is saying is that he would go back to a situation where he would either reduce this or he would undo it
220 completely and he would completely fund the companies in a one-off payment from the Consolidated Fund ... It is another way of doing it, there is no difficulty, but it is a very large amount of money to pay in one swoop. In other words, by doing it in this way we are further structuring the amounts that are provided by the companies and we are providing it in a measured monthly way, so that that kitty builds and you do not have to do the adjustment at the end of the year. I
225 think it is just different ways of doing the same thing. Let's just use some random figures. If the liability in the companies is £50 million, you either, at the end of the financial year, give the companies £50 million, or, through the year, give the companies enough money through the rental that we are discussing and reduce the amount that they need to have – sorry, rather you grow the amount that the Government has to give them.

230 So it is, in our view, two ways of achieving the same thing. I do not think that much should turn on it. There is not a third party that can come in here and terminate these arrangements; it is the Government on both sides. The hon. Gentleman's question was is this being used to fund the £300 million investment, which he calls a mortgage. The answer is no, that is not funded from here. If it is helpful to him, there is a clear answer there. The question was yes or no: the answer
235 is no. I hope that that is helpful to him and I hope that he can further consider what his policy position is, now that he has the information.

Hon. R M Clinton: Mr Speaker, I am grateful to the Chief Minister, but if I could just say that his rationale for funding Government companies in this way is, from an accounting point of view,
240 somewhat simplistic, in that he seems to suggest that the £30 million that is funded to the Government-owned companies goes in one lump sum at the end of the year. I would find it hard

to believe that that is the case. And to suggest that putting some money aside every month or every year is easier, again I find that to be trying to stretch my imagination somewhat.

But anyway, if I can ask the Chief Minister to recognise one point: when he says, 'I inherited this,' he may remember that some time back, when I asked about a large property transaction with GAR Ltd where some properties to the value of about £40.2 million were transferred into it by this Government, I asked him where did the money come from and he said, 'I do not really know.' But if we were to look at the schedules to these properties, apart from any new property transferred into GCP, there was actually a second schedule which showed that there were existing leases created dating back to 1st March 2013, which is fairly squarely in the term of this Government. So to say that he has inherited this picture is to somewhat, perhaps, exaggerate it, because if we were to do the exercise of going through every single property on this list, I would venture to suggest that the vast majority are during the term of his Government.

I think we are going to have to agree to disagree as to (1) is this a logical way to fund the companies, and (2) I still do not know where the money is going. Perhaps, Mr Speaker, I could ask the Chief Minister when the accounts of GAR and GCP – and especially GSBA I am very interested in – are produced, if he could give us the full accounts and not just the balance sheet, because he knows, as I know, the important thing for me is the P&L. I would like to know how the money is spent. The balance sheet would not tell me that. Would he at least commit to giving Members of this House the full accounts and not just the balance sheet?

Hon. Chief Minister: Mr Speaker, I did not pretend that they had put all of these properties into these companies. I told him that we had continued the practice that we had inherited from them and we had added more. I was very clear about that in what I have said. If he does not believe me, he should look at what GCP did. GCP, in December 2010 – when we were not in government, we were in opposition – took a loan of £20 million and transferred a considerable number of properties into GCP. The Government then transferred a considerable number of properties into GCP at no consideration, which I believe was not the correct way to do it. That is why I have told him that when we have done it, we have done it at real value. I believe he will agree with me that it makes sense, when you are transferring property into a company, to transfer it at real value, not at nil value. That is what I said we were doing differently to what they were doing, but they established the principle of putting property into companies and paying rent to that company for the property that otherwise belongs to the Government, to pay the liabilities that that company had incurred to develop property. That was Gibraltar Car Parks Ltd. We have had this debate a number of times in this House.

What the Government wants to do as we further develop this structure is to ensure that we match liabilities to the income of the company so that we better provide for the income that the company receives as rent from the Government against the liabilities of those companies, something that I am sure he will also think is prudent in the context of pursuing the way that the GSD set up this company structure for the Government to pay rent to itself through a Government structure and in that way provide for the liabilities of the Government companies.

Mr Speaker, the hon. Gentleman says that I am stretching his imagination. Well, there must be many more things in life than are alive in his imagination, as was said to Horatio in one of the great Shakespeare plays, because the reality is that this is not a structure that Ministers or I have devilishly one morning come up with. It is the advice from Government accountants that this is a good way of ensuring that we are providing for the liabilities of the companies. Indeed, it must have been the advice that they had – I do not know whether he was advising then Government – because other than the transfer of the properties at nil value, which we do not do and we are told was not the right way to do it, and the transfer at full value, I think we are continuing exactly the same thing that we inherited, and that is clear.

As for the accounts, this Government will continue to publish the accounts of the companies. We are now in the process of, I think, having published many of them with very few still left to go, and we will ensure that we comply with the law in this respect, something which the previous

administration did not do. In case people have forgotten this part of the debate, hon. Members, when they were in opposition, used to say that it was terrible, first of all, that there was a Government company structure, and second, that the Government companies did not publish accounts. True to their word, in 1997, a year after they were elected, they published the Government company accounts for some of the companies but not all of them, and after 1997 they put their money where their mouth was and they legislated to make it a legal requirement that every company in Gibraltar should publish their accounts. But what they did not do was publish the accounts of the Government companies, ever, after 1997. That is to say they went to an election saying they were going to undo the company structure, and in fact they grew the company structure. They went to an election saying they would publish the Government company accounts and they published them in some instances once and in some instances never. They then required by law that this should be done by everyone in our economy and the trades in this jurisdiction using a company, and then promptly failed to comply with their own law.

We will comply with the law and we will file the company accounts, and those that are left will be finished – and I hope they will all be finished very soon, Mr Speaker.

Hon. R M Clinton: Mr Speaker, with your indulgence – I appreciate it may be getting a bit tedious – I do not want to go into a debate about filing of accounts, but when he says, ‘I will do what is required by the law,’ he knows that some of these companies probably have no employees, or very low turnover, and will file, as required by law, an abbreviated sets of accounts, which may be just a balance sheet. I am asking him to produce the full accounts. Would he commit to this House to provide the full accounts, not to Companies House but to this House?

And finally, he says, ‘We are paying money to the companies so they can pay the liabilities.’ Perhaps he could give us an idea of what are the liabilities of GAR Ltd?

Hon. Chief Minister: Mr Speaker, I think the hon. Gentleman either does not want to understand what I am saying to him or simply wants to ask me again. I have given him an answer about what accounts we are going to publish. We are going to publish the accounts that are filed with Companies House and required by law. That is what we are going to publish. Full stop. We are not going to publish anything else. *(Interjection)* They did not publish anything. We will take a huge step forward for this community in transparency and accountability, in complying with the law and ensuring that everything that the companies have to file by law will be published.

He says, ‘Now give me everything – give me the guts of the company, give me every single part of the P&L,’ and when they were in government they did not even publish the parts that the law requires that they publish. The hon. Gentleman will forgive me for saying that there is something that smells of political hypocrisy about the position the GSD take. That is why I explained to him that when they were in opposition they said they would undo the company structure; when they were in government they grew the company structure. When they were in opposition, as they are now, they said they would publish the company accounts; when they were in government they failed to publish the company accounts. Then they made it a legal requirement to publish company accounts **(Hon. R M Clinton: Repetition.)** and they promptly failed to comply with their own rules.

Mr Speaker, if the hon. Gentleman is going to get up and say ‘repetition’, before we have any adverse effect on his health can I just remind him this is not *Just a Minute*, this is Parliament, and if the hon. Gentleman has not understood what I have told him, then I am going to repeat it.

Hon. R M Clinton: Mr Speaker, finally – *(Interjection by Hon. Chief Minister)* Yes, but I asked a simple question – ‘Are you going to give me the full accounts?’ – and I have had my answer. The answer is no. My second question was what are the liabilities of GAR.

Hon. Chief Minister: Mr Speaker, to give him an answer which I can assure the House is accurate, I would need notice of that question. The question that we are dealing with does not, for one moment, lead to what the liabilities of GAR are, and in this moment I do not have the

350 details. I can tell him the amounts that I do know GAR is paying, but that would not be a complete list. For example, the cost of building HM Prison and the Law Courts was put through GAR and the rent is used to pay for the costs of the building and renovation of the Prison and the Law Courts. GAR was also used to purchase a number of properties from third party entities, including the Queen's Cinema, the Queen's Hotel, Britannia House and No. 1 Jetty, so the rent on non-vacant properties is used to repay the cost of those purchases, but I am not confident that those are all the liabilities of GAR and I would not want it to be said that I have inadvertently misled the House by suggesting that those are all of the liabilities of GAR. Those are the liabilities of GAR that I have with me today.

355 **Mr Speaker:** Next question.

Hon. R M Clinton: Do I have [inaudible]

360 **Mr Speaker:** The question must flow from what –

Hon. R M Clinton: – he has just said.

Mr Speaker: Okay, but just a very short question, and we will require a very short answer to it.

365 **Hon. R M Clinton:** Mr Speaker, I am grateful to the Chief Minister for what he has just said, but the implication is that there are capital transactions going through these entities which obviously – and I am happy to be corrected – have never appeared through the Improvement and Development Fund. Is that correct?

370 **Hon. Chief Minister:** Mr Speaker, I do not think that the hon. Gentleman has discovered America. If something goes through the company structure, it does not go through the Improvement and Development Fund. That is how they used to do it; that is how we have continued to do it. Gibraltar Car Parks, for example, did not go through the Improvement and Development Fund because they put it in a company in 2010. They put assets of the Government, government buildings, into Gibraltar Car Parks Ltd at no value in 2010. They took a loan from Barclays Bank, I think at 6%, in 2010 and they funded it through there; it did not go through the Improvement and Development Fund. So the hon. Gentleman is really asking me a question that is clearly established by the structure that we inherited from them.

380 **Mr Speaker:** Next question.

Q512/2022
Company COVID charge –
Whether abandoned

Clerk: Question 512/2022. The Hon. R M Clinton.

385 **Hon. R M Clinton:** Mr Speaker, can the Government confirm that it has abandoned the introduction of the £25 per week company COVID charge announced in the Chief Minister's 2022 Budget speech?

Clerk: Answer, the Hon. the Chief Minister.

390 **Chief Minister (Hon. F R Picardo):** Mr Speaker, this continues on hold whilst the Government meets with various representatives of the business sector.

Hon. R M Clinton: Mr Speaker, if I can ask the Chief Minister: can he give the House an indication of how much he had hoped to raise with this tax at the time he announced it at the
395 Budget session?

Hon. Chief Minister: Mr Speaker, I could give him that indication, but it would not necessarily be rocket science because you are just multiplying the number of companies on the register by the amount of the weekly charge.
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Hon. K Azopardi: Can I just ask the Chief Minister ...? I think he said in his original answer that it was still subject to the discussions he was having. How many meetings has he held with representative organisations, and who is he consulting specifically on the issue?

405 **Hon. Chief Minister:** I have held a handful of meetings already. Mr Isola has held a number of meetings as well. We are consulting with those who represent trust and company managers in particular, and we are consulting with the wider business community.

Hon. K Azopardi: The Chief Minister will know that there was some concern voiced quite soon after the measure was announced, which caused the Minister for Financial Services to come to this House and, in his own Budget contribution, make the announcement that indeed the measure would be – I am not taking a word from his speech, but for want of a better word – ‘suspended’ until there was representation, and the Chief Minister will be aware there is concern in the industry out there at the significant effect that such a charge would have. Will the Chief Minister
410 bear in mind that concern? In particular, I am sure he shares the view that it is important to give clarity to the industry going forward, so that the Government lands on the issue, one way or the other, relatively soon. Does he agree with that?
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Hon. Chief Minister: Mr Speaker, I obviously agree with that. I do not know whether he is just getting up to make the statement so that people hear him saying it, because although he is saying it, I am the one doing it. I am the one who has not given effect to the measure because of the concerns that have been expressed to us. I am the one who has listened to the concerns and does not want to push people over the edge. I am the one who wants to make sure that we continue to help businesses in Gibraltar. I am the one who is doing what we can do in not proceeding with the measure at this stage to give the clarity that people need, and we are looking to try to ensure
420 that we do not have to go down this route if it has a materially adverse effect on business in Gibraltar, as some suggest to us that it does.
425

We are working to help the business community to get out of COVID, as we helped the business community in COVID, and what we are trying to do is avoid the business community being used as a political football and deal with this issue under the radar in a proper way and in a way that delivers the result that will ensure the greater prosperity of all sectors that rely on the corporate register in Gibraltar, in particular the trust and company managers.
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Hon. K Azopardi: Yes, Mr Speaker, he is the one who is consulting the industry, he is the one who is sitting down with them and he is the one who can take the credit for rowing back on the measure, but he is also the one who came up with the brilliant idea and announced it, and all I am saying ...
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On this side of the House we are elected to also express concerns, so that the Government is aware of those issues. I am sure the Government is also aware. He says he is aware. It is four months after the Budget. It is appropriate and in the public interest for us to raise the issue with the hon. Member because the industry also speaks to us and wants clarity. That is the issue that
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we are bringing to his attention. That is why we ask him again to consider the issue and give clarity, and I am glad he agrees with that in his remarks.

445 **Hon. Chief Minister:** Mr Speaker, the hon. Gentleman has just got up and given a speech at Question Time, which is really, frankly, unacceptable, and what he is going to get from me is to say it is all very good that he gets up now and says that, but in his Budget reply to me he did not express concerns. (**Hon. K Azopardi:** I did.) No, Mr Speaker, I will check again, but I cannot recall him expressing concerns. They were asking us to raise money to deal with the cost of COVID
450 because that had affected the public finances. That is what they were asking us to do. Then we bring measures and the measures cause an issue.

I am always going to be the one to take responsibility for my actions. I am not going to say I did not come up with the measure, whether I did or whether I did not. I announce the measure, it is my responsibility, but if genuine concerns are expressed to me which I believe have a reason, in
455 fact, to persuade us not to proceed with the measure, we will not proceed with the measure, because we are listening and because all of the measures that we take are designed to deliver prosperity, are designed to make Gibraltar a better business environment, which also, of course, requires us to have our public finances back to where they were pre pandemic, and when we agreed that we should spend the money during the course of the pandemic across the floor of the
460 House – although again it appears that I am the only one still prepared to accept the responsibility for that spending.

Given that there was no question, Mr Speaker, he must not assume this is an answer which would lead to a supplementary.

465 **Mr Speaker:** We are now going to continue with the next question.

Q513/2022

Legal claims settled at over £50,000 against Government, its agencies or companies – Number settled in last six years

Clerk: Question 513/2022. The Hon. E J Reyes on behalf of the Hon. DA Feetham.

Hon. E J Reyes: Mr Speaker, how many legal claims or threatened legal claims against the Government, Government agencies or Government companies have been settled in the last six
470 years where the claimant has been eventually paid more than £50,000?

Clerk: Answer, the Hon. the Chief Minister.

Chief Minister (Hon. F R Picardo): Mr Speaker, a total of 42 legal claims or threatened legal
475 claims of over £50,000 have been settled.

Hon. K Azopardi: Mr Speaker, I do not know if the hon. Member has the total of what those 42 claims would come to. Obviously the question asks for payments over £50,000, so they might vary from £50,000 to bigger sums. Does he have a total of the sums that have been settled?
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Hon. Chief Minister: Mr Speaker, I do not have a total, but I have some subtotals. Without adding anything other than the millions and hundreds of thousands so that I do not get into any difficulty, it is £5.4 million – over, because I am not adding the tens of thousands. I am only adding the millions and the hundreds of thousands, so £5.4 million.

485 **Hon. K Azopardi:** Again, I do not know if he does have it, but among his subtotals – the question asks for Government, Government agencies and Government companies – is there a split between Government, Government agencies and Government companies?

490 **Hon. Chief Minister:** There is, Mr Speaker, but I am not sure that it is accurate because I have only been given it in respect of supplementary information. I can tell him that I can see the Gibraltar Health Authority obviously is one entity on its own and that accounts for 17 of the claims. Eighteen of the claims are GHA and Care Agency. Fourteen are Government companies, from what I can see here. I hope that is helpful. Then the breakdown is other agencies and Departments.

Q514/2022

Housing estates –

Whether instruction given to clean in advance of Chief Minister's visits

Clerk: Question 514/2022. The Hon. D J Bossino.

495 **Hon. D J Bossino:** Did the Chief Minister, Ministers or any public servant give instructions for the cleaning of the housing estates ahead of the Chief Minister's recent visits?

Clerk: Answer, the Hon. the Chief Minister.

500 **Chief Minister (Hon. F R Picardo):** Mr Speaker, no, sir.

Hon. D J Bossino: Mr Speaker, that was a predictable reply. *(Interjection by Hon. Chief Minister)* Yes, it was. The reality is – and we have, as a party, shown to the press evidence – that there was substantive cleaning to one particular estate, in this case Mid Harbours, the day before the hon. Member visited. We have also been told, directly on the ground by residents, that there has been cleaning in advance of the Chief Minister's visits with a retinue of press and him giving him interviews and all the rest of it. Does he not agree with me that if that is the case – and I put to him that it is the case – this is cheap electioneering on his part?

510 **Hon. Chief Minister:** Mr Speaker, the hon. Gentleman does not seem to know what comes out of his mouth or what flows out of his pen. The question the hon. Gentleman has asked me has nothing to do with his supplementary contribution. The question was did the Chief Minister, Ministers or any public servant give instructions for the cleaning of the housing estates ahead of the Chief Minister's recent visits? The answer – the truth – is no. If he knew the answer to that question, his question is out of order because he should not ask a question which he knows the answer to. If he knew the answer to that question, I wonder why he asked it.

515 The reality is that the things he has said happen do not flow from the things that he asked us. When I go to a housing estate on location, I ask that the people who should be with me are the people who represent the Department of the Environment, the cleaning subcontractor to the Department of the Environment, the people who represent the Housing Works Agency and the people who represent GJBS. I also have people from my staff present. We also have members of the Royal Gibraltar Police present. If he had asked me did the people who run the cleaning company that has the contract for the cleaning of the estates know that you were going to the estates, the answer would be yes, sir. If the people who run the cleaning company know that I am going to the estate and decide to clean the estate before I go to it ...

525 The hon. Gentleman can accuse me of many things but he cannot accuse me of cheap electioneering when an election is not due for another 11 months. Somebody might accuse them of waking up, Rumpelstiltskin-style, to the needs of the Government's tenants and our

530 constituents only once every four years, but you cannot accuse the Government and this Chief Minister, who has been going on location since 2015 to do his clinics on location, who has been going to visit housing estates since we were elected, to ensure that the refurbishments were done – the very same refurbishments that they did not want, the very same refurbishments the cost of which they would not have incurred and they criticised – of cheap electioneering.

535 I did not need him to put video evidence of somebody cleaning an estate to be told that the estate had been cleaned before I arrived. It was, in the French vernacular, bleeding obvious because the guys who were doing the cleaning were still there when I turned up, the floor was wet and they were still sweeping, and the people from the estate were saying to me, 'You know, this does not happen every day. Maybe this is just because you are here.' My answer to them was,
540 'Don't worry, I am going to keep coming. If it is just because I am here, I am going to keep coming.' In fact, I am going to keep going to the estates to ensure that the standard of cleanliness that I have seen in the estates is the standard of cleanliness maintained and, indeed, given the things I have seen for myself which are not up to standard, that the standard is exceeded, because, in the way that the Hon. the Minister for Housing said, we expect the performance of our subcontractors
545 and we expect the compliance of our tenants and people who reside in the estates. That is what I am elected to deliver, that is what the Hon. the Minister for Housing is elected to deliver, and if the hon. Gentleman thinks that we are not going to deliver it so that they can ride a wave of misery, anti-social behaviour and lack of cleanliness into No. 6 Convent Place, they have something else coming because, first of all, there will be no such misery, there will be no such
550 anti-social behaviour, there will be no such lack of cleanliness and it will take more than a wave to get them into No. 6 Convent Place.

Hon. D J Bossino: Mr Speaker, so long as the estates are going to get cleaned, quite frankly I am very happy. I am very happy that that should be the case, (*Interjection*) but the evidence clearly
555 suggests that what I said in my original supplementary is absolutely correct. He is being very technical in his reply. All I say is it is not that I knew the answer, I am not suggesting that I knew the answer; it is the answer that I expected from him, which was a simple no. What he is telling me is that he did not give any instructions for the cleaning of the estates – or any other Member of his Government – in advance of his visit. What he is, in effect, telling me – and I would ask him
560 to confirm this by way of the question, whether he agrees with the way that I am putting it to him – is that the cleaning companies were aware that he and his Ministers and colleagues were going to be visiting, and then, out of a frolic of their own, on their own initiative, waving the magic wand, indirectly, they cleaned the estates before the arrival. Does he agree with that proposition I am putting to him?

565 Can I suggest he has taken (*Interjection*) a long time in his response and come up with, in effect, a party political broadcast? And then he says he is not electioneering, he is doing it 24/7 and the elections are not for another 11 months. But can I suggest to him that he keeps his visits absolutely secret, that he keeps his visits away from the cleaning companies, so that he sees the reality on the ground, so that he sees the endemic problem that these estates suffer day in, day out – despite
570 what they are wishing to tell us here and the Minister for Housing getting all excited (*Interjection*) – and the reality of what they live day in, day out?

Hon. Chief Minister: Mr Speaker, it is remarkable. Hell hath no fury like a leadership candidate caught out, obviously. The hon. Gentleman asks a question and is then disappointed when he gets
575 the answer that he expects, which is the answer that of course he should expect – that is to say the truth. Now he is dancing on a pinhead to try to get himself off the hook that he has created for himself. I have never seen anything quite like it in this Parliament. I must say the GSD really does need to stick with Mr Azopardi because perish the thought that they fall into the trap of a Bossino leadership.

580 The evidence suggests, he says, that what I have put to him is the truth. Didn't I just get up and say to him that I did not need to see a video from him to be told or see that the estates were being

cleaned before I arrived? I did not, because I told him – (*Interjection by Hon. D J Bossino*)
Mr Speaker, the hon. Gentleman is –

585 **Hon. D J Bossino:** This point of order arises from your suggestion and ruling, I think it was, in
relation to political discourse and discourse in this Chamber. The hon. Member has come up
already, as it is, within an hour, with three or four gems. The last one was ‘into the trap of a Bossino
leadership’. He talks about ‘hell hath no fury like a leadership candidate ...’ I did not take a full
590 note. He says, in relation to answers given to my hon. Friend Mr Clinton, ‘it smells of political
hypocrisy’. He even, dare I say, talks about the deficits in relation to the company as ‘a black hole’.
All of those things ... it depends on what standard we are expected to reach. Just to repeat the
point that I made yesterday, I am fine with them, but I simply raise it as a point of order to seek
the Chair’s guidance in relation to this, because then we can do the same.

595 **Mr Speaker:** The Chief Minister.

Hon. Chief Minister: In reply to that point of order, Mr Speaker, it is quite something to see
somebody who is taking his nascent steps into an attempt to lead this community and his political
party, seem so afraid of the political debate. The hon. Gentleman needs to understand there is a
600 difference between political discourse and taking the Parliament down the road of the invective
and starting to create an ambience which means that tempers flare. That is what he was doing
yesterday. All I am doing today is reflecting the political reality as I see it. For example, Mr Speaker,
I will accept whatever ruling you make today. I did not hear the Hon. Mr Bossino yesterday
apologise to you, as you suggested that he should when you made your ruling. I believe Mr Bossino
605 needs to understand that there is a difference between a lack of temperance and being political
and dealing with matters in a normal parliamentary manner. That is what he is failing to
understand, and today he is raising a shield, I assume to avoid me giving the answer I am going to
give to the latest supplementary, which will once again demonstrate how wrong he is in the
approach that he is taking to these things and how foiled he feels in respect of the campaign that
610 he was obviously seeking to launch.

Mr Speaker: I think both sides are guilty, in many ways, of bringing politics into play – both
sides. I have read a lot about judgments made in other jurisdictions, and one thing which comes
to mind I think is quite appropriate to be used now. It says here:

 The whole idea of supplementary questions is not to make a range of political statements about an issue but to dig
into an issue to test a Minister’s answer.

615 I have to say with all due respect to the Opposition that they fall foul of this quite often. I also
have to say that the Government falls foul because it also, when it replies, makes political
statements.

 Another explanatory note that I have here, which again I have picked up from my looking at
other administrations, says:

 Ministers should not commence an answer to a question with a political attack on the person asking the question.
That is totally outside Standing Orders, but where Members asking questions make a political statement, they are
likely to get a political statement back.

620 Again, this is what is happening. It happened yesterday, it is happening today. My answer is
stop bringing in political issues. But it is very difficult; everybody wants to do that. It is part and
parcel of what transpires in Parliament because that is the nature of the beast. You understand
that? Okay. So that is my ruling.

Hon. D J Bossino: Mr Speaker, it is a massive tension, but at the end of the day – I think I mentioned it yesterday – this is a political Chamber and it would be odd that, for example ... But both sides can ... In fact, in relation to this issue, I think we exchanged press releases and we talked about ... I said things like ‘electioneering’ and then they said whatever it was that they said, but you can have that type of discourse out there ... It is the type of discourse that those who elect us are having and yet somehow that should be muted here.

As far as I am concerned, I repeat the point that I am fine with the things that he has said today because I think those are political issues, but then I need to be able to make political comment in the questions, and ultimately, whilst it may be that technically we are the ones who start this because we are the ones who pose the questions, sometimes they start it because sometimes we file a question, a very –

Mr Speaker: Please resume your seat. I know that the Opposition’s role here is to hold the Government to account; of course this is allowed and this is part and parcel of the process. But yesterday – and I am going to bring this up because the hon. Member brought it up – everything that came from your good self was tinged with ... not aggression, but unhelpful comments as a preamble to a supplementary. That is the way I interpreted the matter yesterday, and it is beginning to creep in again. I do not think Parliament is set up for that kind of behaviour.

People in the street comment about the way we do our business here. Do you know what they say? Not everybody, but some say it is like trying to keep children in a classroom under control. And it is true. To a certain degree, it is true.

I think we are going to move on from this question and this answer, but I am going to ask all Members to hold back and let’s make this a meaningful Parliament, a Parliament where legitimate questions are made and truthful answers are given. We are going to move on from here, and I am going to ask all Members to pipe down.

Hon. Chief Minister: Thank you, Mr Speaker. As I told you yesterday, I think that is excellent advice.

The hon. Gentleman asked me a question. He extended himself over that question with very partisan remarks – some of which I am sure they will now seek to extract in the video and portray to the world, to try to extract support – and then interrupted me when I was starting to reply. You have ruled that you want us to move on. I do not know, Mr Speaker, whether you want me not to answer the question that he put, or whether you simply want me to answer it without falling into the trap of the partisan invective which the hon. Gentleman was laying.

Mr Speaker: We just need to move on to the next question.

Q515 and Q519/2022

Hassan Centenary Terraces, Bob Peliza Mews and Chatham Views –

Number of units unallocated; estimated construction cost

Q516-18/2022

Bob Peliza Mews and Chatham Views –

Number of purchasers wishing to discontinue purchases; reason for purchase agreements not yet being signed; whether advertised purchase price to increase;

Clerk: Question 515/2022. The Hon. D J Bossino.

Hon. D J Bossino: How many units in the Hassan Centenary, Bob Peliza Mews and Chatham Views developments remain unallocated and why is this the case, considering the continuing and high demand for housing?

Clerk: Answer, the Hon. the Chief Minister.

Chief Minister (Hon. F R Picardo): Mr Speaker, I will answer with Questions 516 to 519.

670 **Clerk:** Question 516/2022. The Hon. D J Bossino.

Hon. D J Bossino: How many people of those initially allocated homes at Bob Peliza Mews and Chatham Views have now requested to discontinue their purchase?

675 **Clerk:** Question 517/2022. The Hon. D J Bossino.

Hon. D J Bossino: Why have prospective purchasers of Bob Peliza Mews and Chatham Views not yet signed any purchase agreements, given they were allocated homes some years ago?

680 **Clerk:** Question 518/2022. The Hon. D J Bossino.

Hon. D J Bossino: Is the Government considering increasing the selling price to purchasers of Bob Peliza Mews and/or Chatham Views from that originally advertised?

685 **Clerk:** Question 519/2022. The Hon. the Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. K Azopardi: Mr Speaker, what is the current estimated projected construction cost of each of Hassan Centenary Terraces, Bob Peliza Mews and Chatham Views, and how does the current projected construction cost compare with the original contracted construction cost and the original tendered construction cost, if different?

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Clerk: Answer, the Hon. the Chief Minister.

Hon. Chief Minister: Mr Speaker, all units for all three estates are now allocated.
695 The requested figures are as follows: Bob Peliza Mews – 18 flats have been handed back; Chatham Views – nine flats have been handed back.

Construction contracts have not yet been finalised with the contractor for Chatham Views and Bob Peliza Mews. Once these contracts are signed, the Government will be in a position to start entering into purchase agreements with prospective purchasers.

700 The Government is not considering increasing the selling prices of properties already sold at either Bob Peliza Mews or Chatham Views.

As for projected construction costs, can I ask the hon. Gentlemen to ask me again February, to avoid disclosing information that is currently commercially sensitive but I hope to be able to answer by then without any concern?

705 **Hon. K Azopardi:** Mr Speaker, can I just take my supplementaries on Question 519 first, if I may? And can I just say, before I do that, that if I have any supplementaries on the other questions, with Mr Speaker's leave, in accordance with your usual ruling that I can sweep in at the end, if I have any comments I will, but I am not going to take those first, in deference to my colleague who put those questions?

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On Question 519, as I understood the Chief Minister's answer, on Bob Peliza Mews and Chatham Views he is saying they have not got to a contracted situation as yet – that is how I have understood that – and towards the end he said, 'Ask me in February.' That is fine, we will, and there is no issue with that. I understand the reasons behind the comment and we will do that. But insofar as Hassan Centenary Terraces is concerned, presumably that is a different position because – (*Interjection*) Well, I will finish the question, then you can answer. Presumably – I was going to say – it is a different position because the project is well under way and the blocks are

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rising, and therefore I would have assumed it is a different situation. But I can see him shaking his head, so I will give him the opportunity to answer.

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Hon. Chief Minister: Mr Speaker, the Hassan Centenary Terraces agreements have been concluded both for phase 1 and phase 2, but if I disclose what we have agreed there, then that potentially affects the contracts that we are hoping to conclude in respect of Bob Peliza and Chatham Views. That is why I do not want to give the information at this stage. That is why they are linked. I am happy to give the hon. Gentleman the figure in respect of Hassan Centenary Terraces confidentially at this stage, and I am happy to give it publicly in February, but I do not want to give it publicly now because it could affect our negotiations in respect, I think, of one of the contracts.

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Hon. K Azopardi: Mr Speaker, February is around the corner, so – as the hon. Member has said several times now, the election is not for a while – we can easily wait till February and I can put that question, with Mr Speaker's leave, of course, so that it does not infringe the six-months rule, given the invitation of the Chief Minister.

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Can I ask, though, before I sit down, the magic of February is what? That they have some kind of understanding with the contractors that they are going to land on this issue by then?

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Hon. Chief Minister: Mr Speaker, the timetable I have given to the House is I expect the demolitions to be finished by December in respect of Chatham, and at the very latest by March, in respect, I think, of Bob Peliza, and therefore the expectation I have is that the contractual negotiations for the start of works will be finished by December/January in respect of each of those projects respectively. Therefore, by February I expect we should be in a position to disclose the information because I expect we will have concluded the negotiations and signed the agreements, or at least concluded the price, and be in the process of finalising the JCT or whatever other elements of the construction contract will have to be in place. That is why I think that February is the prudent period at which to pitch it, because although we expect to finish the construction contracts in respect of Chatham earlier, there could also be linkage which would make it disadvantageous to disclose that publicly until we have nailed the Bob Peliza building contract. I believe it will be done by then because we will want to be commencing construction at the end of the following month. That is why I think February is relevant. In February I might say to him I need another 30 days, but again, he needs to rest assured that the election is not going to be in March either, so there is no problem there.

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Hon. K Azopardi: Okay. Maybe I should just ask him point blank when the election will be. It would be very helpful for us to understand that.

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Hon. D J Bossino: March 2023. *(Interjection)*

Hon. Chief Minister: I am happy to tell him if he will give way. Next year, Mr Speaker.

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Hon. K Azopardi: All right, well –

Hon. D J Bossino: It will be March, then.

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Hon. K Azopardi: I think I could have worked that one out, but anyway, I will ask him behind the Speaker's Chair. I think I will be as unsuccessful, though.

My final question, Mr Speaker, on this issue: is the contractor of those developments – Hassan Centenary, Bob Peliza and Chatham – the same one, or are they different contractors? And can he name them?

770 **Hon. Chief Minister:** Mr Speaker, we are in negotiation. I think there are two different contractors involved in the negotiation. At this stage, I do not want to name them because we are just in negotiation and that negotiation could still come to nought. In any negotiation one has to be willing to walk away in order to do a good deal. That applies in the international arena as it applies in the construction arena.

775 **Hon. D J Bossino:** Mr Speaker, in terms of my questions, the underlying thread, if I can be helpful to the hon. Member, is this. We have the economic situation that we are in – Ukraine, rising inflation. This is not my area of expertise by far, but that, I am told, and we know from news reports, is having an effect on construction prices to the tune, I am told, of 30% to 35%. The information I was getting was that there was a resistance on the part of the Government to allocate flats which had been returned because it would then have an impact on the purchase price – in respect of the question I have raised, which includes Hassan Centenary and the other two projects. In relation to the other two projects I have specific questions about the disturbing of the purchase prices. Given that the Hon. the Chief Minister is not willing to divulge information in relation to the construction costs in connection with the Hassan Centenary project, and given also the fact that he has already committed himself not to disturb the purchase prices down the line with the purchasers, is it fair at this stage to assume that, given the background I have just set out by way of preamble to this question, ultimately there will be a cost which the Government will need to assume as a result of the increased construction costs?

790 I have information which has come to me from out there in relation to Hassan Centenary, where I am told that because the price was not locked in, there has been an increase. I understand the domino effect that that could have in relation to the two other projects, why the Hon. Chief Minister may be circumspect in terms of answering any questions in relation to that, but can I ask him to comment in relation to the point that I have just raised?

795 **Hon. Chief Minister:** Mr Speaker, the hon. Gentleman has said a lot, so you will forgive me if I try to deal with everything that he has said.

I am going to start at the end. The price for Hassan Centenary Terraces phase 1 was fixed before the pandemic. The price for Hassan Centenary Terraces phase 2 was fixed before the war in Ukraine. How can it be anything other than fixed? I do not know where he gets his information from and I do not know what filter he distils his information through, but a construction contract is for a price. It cannot be anything other than fixed. I do not know what it is that the hon. Gentleman has been told that he has believed.

805 **Hon. D J Bossino:** I will tell you now.

Hon. Chief Minister: Mr Speaker, in the context of the estates, he needs to listen very carefully to what I have said because I have said it for a reason. I will read it for him again: the Government is not considering increasing the selling prices of properties already sold at either Bob Peliza Mews or Chatham Views. That is to say any property that has come back to the Government is not a property already sold. Anybody who has bought from the Government, whether or not they have signed the agreement is not relevant. The agreement is not yet signed because we have not got a date when we can say we are starting construction and we can go for it, but the purchase price is agreed. But if you pulled out of the purchase, then the Government holds that property now to sell again, and those sales will be done on 50/50 terms, but they will be done on what the cost will be to the Government at the time we execute the contracts in respect of those properties. That will affect only, in respect of the numbers I have given him, 27 flats. The Government is going to absorb the increased cost that those who are purchasing are going to benefit from, but those who have relinquished the purchase and where the Government is going to sell, there we must, in the interest of the taxpayer, say, 'Now the project is going to be so much. This is so many square metres. Fifty per cent of this cost, now this amount.' That will affect 27 purchasers, but that is a

fraction of the number of properties available and that increased cost that we are talking about, such as it may be – the hon. Gentleman has come up with a figure, but such as it may be – would still make these properties *massively* affordable because the prices that are in the private sector compared to the prices at which we are going to be selling are going to make these properties sold, let me be clear, almost at a 75% discount against the market. I think hon. Members will agree that we should, in respect of these properties to new purchasers, put the actual price that it is going to cost the taxpayer to produce as to the fraction that the party buys. Somebody might want to buy 100%, so they buy at the cost of 100% of the cost per square metre for that flat, or at 50% of the cost per square metre for that flat.

I think that deals with the issue of the purchase price, it deals with the issue of the fixed contracts in respect of Hassan Centenary Terraces, and I do not know what else it was that he said in his very long introduction but I just want to be very clear that the contracts that have been entered into – or the agreements that have been entered into, even if they have not been contractually signed yet because we have not offered the contracts, because we have not entered into the building contract – will be honoured at the price at which they were agreed.

Hon. D J Bossino: Mr Speaker, yes, and I think he mentioned, perhaps in the context of a reply that he gave to the Hon. the Leader of the Opposition, a fixed price. I do not want to go into absolute numbers, but the information that I have received, if it is helpful – not to him, necessarily – in terms of this question and answer session, is that there has been an increase to the tune of, I am told, about £40 million. He is telling us that that will only have an impact – despite the things he has said about 75% of the market value – on 27 of those apartments, which he has said have been allocated and which have been reallocated. *(Interjection by Hon. Chief Minister)* There may be other things that I am getting wrong, and then he can answer them all together. *(Interjection by Hon. Chief Minister)* No.

Hon. Chief Minister: Mr Speaker, if the hon. Gentleman will give way – because he is going to continue to get things wrong – there are none in respect of Hassan Centenary Terraces, so he is talking about a price increase in respect of Hassan Centenary Terraces and there are none pending allocation at Hassan Centenary Terraces. All of those have been sold and we are honouring the price. The ones I have told him – in fact it was him, it was his question – which have come back are Bob Peliza and Chatham Views, so the £40 million has nothing to do with these two.

Hon. D J Bossino: I do find that helpful, but this question which I was going to go on to is still relevant despite his explanation. In relation to those 27 – I think the number is right – when he talks about allocation, how far down the line has it gone? Are they fully allocated in the sense that those individuals have signed, not necessarily even a reservation agreement, but have those individuals signed a deposit based on a price that the Government has set for those 27 prices, and is that price an increased price in relation to the ones which have previously been allocated, if he understands the point I am making?

Hon. Chief Minister: Mr Speaker, in trying to pursue your ruling I must tell the hon. Gentleman, with affection and respect, that I think what he is talking is nonsense. I do not understand what 27 prices he is talking about in the context of his question, and the £40 million that he referred to earlier is a figure that I do not recognise in any event. Let me try to explain it to him so that he has a better understanding.

In respect of Hassan Centenary Terraces, all of the properties are sold. If any come back now – *if* any come back now, and it is possible that they come back before completion – there will be a recalculation of the cost per square metre of producing Hassan Centenary Terraces, and whoever is able to purchase that flat which might become available will purchase on affordable housing terms at a square-metre fixed cost which will be higher because of the increased cost of

construction, but at the moment that affects zero people (**Hon. D J Bossino:** For Hassans.) for Hassans.

875 In respect of Bob Peliza Mews and Chatham Views, we have a number of flats returned. The people who have not returned flats have their price and it will be honoured. People who come to purchase these flats which have become available will have a new price given to them, which will be based on the cost, such as it may be, of completing these flats and on affordable terms. So you calculate the cost per square metre now with the increased cost, and you either sell 50%, 60% or 880 100% on the basis of that eligibility requirement. That is what we are talking about doing. The figures that represent the other flats at Bob Peliza Mews and Chatham views are the ones that are considered to be sold subject to executing the purchase contract and subject subsequently to completion of the agreement of the conveyance at the end, and those have their price honoured.

885 **Hon. D J Bossino:** So that I stop thinking nonsense and rubbish, as he has suggested, can he put me out of my misery and explain this point, then? This is what I was driving at, actually. When he talks about allocation of the 27 flats in relation to Bob Peliza and Chatham, which presumably have been returned or for whatever reason have not been allocated, in respect of the first question he said that all the flats have been allocated. Ergo, the 27, the 18 and the nine have now 890 been allocated. I think he then said, 'When the purchasers of those flats come to purchase, then we will agree.' How does that work? I thought that the moment that you allocate to Mr and Mrs X, you allocate at a price. (**Hon. Chief Minister:** Yes.) Is that –?

Hon. Chief Minister: We allocate at a price and we respect the price, but when the person to 895 whom that property has been allocated withdraws, the Government is the only party left to the contract. The purchaser says '*No lo quiero*, I do not want it,' and so (*Interjections*) those 27 have come back to the Government and the Government has not yet allocated those 27 because we are waiting, before allocating those 27, to get the new price. (*Interjection by Hon. D J Bossino*)

900 **Mr Speaker:** Now can we allow the Hon. Edwin Reyes ...? He might clarify the position. (*Interjections*)

Hon. E J Reyes: Thank you, Chief Minister. Our understanding is – you have now made it clear – 27 have been returned, still to be allocated. Can I simply ask: given that we now have a figure of 905 27, which could end up being more, will those be offered to people who are, at the moment, on a reserve list, or will a new tender notice be issued? Can the Chief Minister confirm what I think we all now finally understand? The actual price will not be determined until that offer is made, because it is subject to fluctuation of the cost, which they still have to finalise, hopefully by February.

910 **Hon. Chief Minister:** Can I thank the hon. Gentleman for helping us. That is exactly the position, and the moment of being able to proceed to allocation at the new price is only now safely once we have done the construction contracts – as I said to the Hon. the Leader of the Opposition, one hopefully before the end of the year, the other one by February, so that we can start one by the 915 beginning of the new year and the other one by April, which is the first month of the next quarter of the year, in 2023. Those 27 properties will potentially increase. There may be more that come back and we can handle in that way as well. I am grateful he has understood it and he has paraphrased it in a way that I think is helpful.

920 **Mr Speaker:** The hon. Member completed his supplementaries because I believe the Leader of the Opposition wants to ask something. (**Hon. K Azopardi:** No.) (*Interjection, laughter and banging on desks*)

Next question, please.

Q520-21/2022

Public counter services –

List of Government providers, including opening hours; list of those not providing

Clerk: Question 520/2022. The Hon. the Leader of the Opposition.

925

Hon. K Azopardi: Further to Questions 203 and 204/2022, can the Government provide an updated list of all Departments, public authorities and agencies which are providing public counter services and the times of operation?

930

Clerk: Answer, the Hon. the Chief Minister.

Chief Minister (Hon. F R Picardo): Mr Speaker, I will answer with Question 521.

Clerk: Question 521/2022. The Hon. the Leader of the Opposition.

935

Hon. K Azopardi: Mr Speaker, can the Government provide an updated list of all Departments, public authorities and agencies which are not currently providing public counter services?

Clerk: Answer, the Hon. the Chief Minister.

940

Hon. Chief Minister: Mr Speaker, I now hand over a schedule with the information requested.

Answer to Q520/2022

Department Name	Opening Hours
Aquagib Ltd	Monday to Thursday: 08:30 to 15:00 Friday: 08:30 to 14:30
Civil Status & Registration Office	Monday to Friday: 08:00 to 14:30
Department Of Social Security	Monday to Friday: 08:00 to 14:30 Cash Payments: 10:00 to 13:00
Department Of The Environment Upper Rock & Beaches	Monday to Friday: 08:00 to 15:00
Driver And Vehicle Licensing Department	Monday to Friday: 08:30 to 12:30
Economic Development Employment Company	Monday to Friday: 08:00 to 15:30
Environmental Agency Limited	Winter Hours Monday to Thursday: 09:00 to 16:15 Friday: 09:00 to 16:00 Summer Hours Monday to Friday: 08:15 to 14:15
Gibraltar Air Terminal Ltd	Air Terminal Operating Hours
Gibraltar Bus Company	Monday to Friday: 09:00 to 13:00
Gibraltar Courts Service	Both public counters share the same opening hours. Winter Hours Monday to Thursday: 09:30 to 16:00 Friday: 09:30 to 15:45 Summer Hours Monday to Friday: 09:00 to 13:00
Gibraltar Electricity Authority	Monday to Thursday: 08:30 to 15:00 Friday: 08:30 to 14:30

Answer to Q520/2022 cont.

GIBRALTAR HEALTH AUTHORITY - ST BERNARD'S HOSPITAL	
ACCIDENT & EMERGENCY	24hrs
MAIN RECEPTION	24hrs
MEDICAL RECORDS / RELEASE OF RECORDS	Monday to Friday: 08:00 to 15:00
SPONSORED PATIENTS	Monday to Thursday: 08:00 to 16:30 Friday: 08:00 to 16:15
PHARMACY	Winter Hours Monday to Friday: 09:00 to 16:30
	Summer Hours Monday to Friday: 08:00 to 15:00
REHABILITATION (PHYSIO)	Monday to Friday: 08:00 to 16:30
PPAU	Monday to Friday: 09:00 to 11:45 & 13:00 to 14:45
ACCOUNTS	Monday to Friday: 08:00 to 15:30
GENERAL STORES	Monday to Thursday: 08:00 to 14:30 Friday: 08:30 to 14:00
INCONTINENCE DISPENSARY	Tuesday and Thursday: 09:00 to 14:00
PATHOLOGY	Monday to Sunday: 08:00 to 20:30
RADIOLOGY	Monday to Friday: 08:45 to 16:30
OPHTHALMIC UNIT	Monday to Thursday: 08:00 to 15:30 Friday: 08:00 to 15:00
ENT	Monday and Thursday: 08:00 to 15:30 Friday: 08:00 to 15:00
ORTHOPEADICS	Monday to Thursday: 08:00 to 15:30 Friday: 08:00 to 15:00
MEDICAL INVESTIGATION UNIT	Monday to Thursday: 08:00 to 15:30 Friday: 08:00 to 15:00
SURGICAL OUTPATIENT DEPARTMENT	Monday to Thursday: 08:00 to 15:30 Friday: 08:00 to 15:00
ONCOLOGY	Monday to Thursday: 08:00 to 15:30 Friday: 08:00 to 15:00

Answer to Q520/2022 cont.

GIBRALTAR HEALTH AUTHORITY - PRIMARY CARE CENTRE	
REGISTRATION APPLICATIONS BY APPOINTMENT	Monday to Friday: 09:00 to 13:00
REGISTRATION QUERIES	Monday to Friday: 09:00 to 12:00
GROUND FLOOR	Monday to Friday: 08:00 to 18:30 Saturday: 09:00 to 13:00 and 17:00 to 20:00 Sunday and Public Holidays: 10:00 to 13:00 and 17:00 to 20:00
FIRST FLOOR	Monday to Friday: 08:00 to 15:30
SECOND FLOOR	Monday to Friday: 08:00 to 14:00
GHA CHILDRENS HEALTH CENTRE	Monday to Friday: 08:00 to 18:30 Weekends and Public Holidays: 08:00 to 11:00
Gibraltar Joinery & Building Services Limited	Monday to Thursday: 08:00 to 15:30 Friday: 08:00 to 15:00
Gibraltar Maritime Administration	Monday to Friday: 08:00 to 15:00
Gibraltar Port Authority	Monday to Thursday: 08:30 to 15:00 Friday: 09:30 to 14:30
Gibraltar Regulatory Authority	Monday to Friday: 08:00 to 17:00
Gibraltar Sports And Leisure Authority	Monday to Sunday: 08:00 to 23:00 NB: It becomes a reception area after 16:00
GIBRALTAR TOURIST BOARD	
The Main Guard	Monday to Friday: 09:00 to 16:30 Saturday: 10:00 to 14:30
Frontier	Monday to Friday: 09:00 to 16:30
Coach Terminal	Monday to Saturday: 09:00 to 16:30 Sunday: 09:00 to 13:00
Gov.Gi Eservices The Hub 323 Main Street	Monday to Thursday: 09:00 to 15:00 Friday: 09:00 to 14:30

Answer to Q520/2022 cont.

HM CUSTOMS	
Customs House and Cashier	Monday to Thursday: 08:30 to 15:00 Friday: 08:30 to 14:30
Entry Processing Unit (Commercial and Private Importations)	Monday to Friday: 08:30 to 15:00 1. We then have a 24 hour service entering Gibraltar for Commercial importation on a on-call service after hours. Private importation via land border/airport in which people are attended have also a 24 hours officer presence in which import duty can be paid. 2. Lastly Control Unit is open from 8am to 9pm to attend the commercial exportation of vehicles into Spain collecting export licenses on the counter.
HM Prison	Monday and Wednesday to Friday: 09:00 to 16:30 Tuesday 09:00 to 16:30 and 17:30 to 19:00
Housing Department	Monday to Friday: 08:30 to 14:00 (appointments only)
Income Tax Office	Monday to Friday: 09:00 to 13:00
6 CONVENT PLACE	
Reception	Monday to Friday: 08:00 to 21:00
Sale of Publications	Monday to Friday: 08:00 to 16:30
Office Of Fair Trading	Monday to Friday: 08:30 to 15:00
Procurement Office	Monday to Thursday: 08:30 to 15:00 Friday: 08:00 to 15:00
Royal Gibraltar Police	24hrs Manned by staff Monday to Thursday 08:30 to 15:00 Friday: 08:30 to 14:30
ROYAL GIBRALTAR POST OFFICE	
Main Street	Monday to Thursday: 09:00 to 16:15 Friday: 09:00 to 16:00
Parcel Post	Monday to Thursday: 08:30 to 15:15 Friday: 08:30 to 15:00
Irish Town	Monday to Thursday: 08:30 to 15:15 Friday: 08:30 to 15:00
Town Planning And Building Control	Monday to Thursday: 08:00 to 16:30 Friday: 08:00 to 16:15
TREASURY DEPARTMENT / GIBRALTAR SAVINGS BANK	
Treasury / GSB	Monday, Tuesday and Thursday 08:30 to 15:00 Wednesday 09:00 to 15:00 Friday 08:30 to 14:00
Payroll	Monday to Friday: 08:00 to 15:30
Human Resources Department	Monday to Friday: 08:30 to 15:00
CARE AGENCY	
Johnstones Passage	Monday to Friday: 09:00 TO 16:30 NB: Shortly to move to Suite 7, Floor 3 Europort
16 Governors Parade	Monday to Friday: 09:00 to 16:30

Answer to Question 521/2022

Department	How a Service User Can Access These Services.
Department of Education	Telephone, emails, online forms, through appointment and without appointment on a daily basis when customers ring the 'staff bell'.
Government Law Offices Gazettes	Notices for the Gibraltar Gazette are sent to us via email.
Housing Works Agency	The public can access these services via phone or email. If for any reason they need to attend the department, they would be provided with an appointment. An intercom system is also available for any deliveries, messenger drop offs etc.
Technical Services Department	These services can be accessed via email or telephone.

Hon. K Azopardi: Mr Speaker, I am grateful for the schedules. I asked this question some months ago. As the hon. Member knows, at the time I asked it cast in pretty much the same terms, but in supplementaries we had a discussion because some Departments, agencies or authorities had been left out. I am just glancing through and I can see that this list is more comprehensive and it does include the Gibraltar Health Authority, which was a glaring omission last time.

Obviously we will need to study the schedule compared to the last one, so I am not going to put the Chief Minister to a test of telling me whether the hours have changed in any particular Department, but can I ask him are there plans to change the hours beyond this schedule, the opening hours of the counters?

Hon. Chief Minister: Mr Speaker, that is very much a Department-driven issue. In other words, some Departments may suggest that they should open at different hours and we will, of course, listen to the rationale of that and assess whether it is in the public interest that they should change the hours. To be fair to civil servants, when they propose a change in hours it is usually not designed to suit them, it is usually designed to suit the public that they serve, so there would probably be good reason for that.

What is not here is that we have added, as the hon. Gentleman knows, a hub service – the counter down at the area which is known as the Hub, opposite John Mack Hall – and that tries to assist people generally.

The hon. Gentleman will see that there are four Departments that are not operating a counter, but they are providing the service to the public simply because they now have a bell on a door, rather than a counter, and the door is opened and they give the appointment.

Mr Speaker, I think the hon. Gentleman and I have been able to deal quite collegially with this question when he has put it. The answer to this question may be an interesting guide for people to see, when it is up on the Government website or on *Hansard*, what the opening hours are for all the Government counters. There are no Departments of the Government now not operating a service to the public. All of the counters are open and the counters that are not open have been replaced with appointment services so people can attend and see a person – which is what a counter usually does in a different form – instead of at a counter, in an office where they can sit down with someone and have the issues that they have dealt with. I thank him, therefore, for having put the question in a way that we have been able to answer, as we agreed last time that we would.

975 **Hon. K Azopardi:** Can I just ask, on the hub service that he mentions, what the opening hours of the hub service are – if he has that information? I do not know if he has that information.

Can I also perhaps say to him, in response to what he has just said, clearly there continues to be quite a lot of chatter on the issue of the public counters, and concerns. The hon. Member says this will be uploaded on their website as an answer, but I would ask him probably to go further and try to take measures to give some publicity to the fact of the counter service, because otherwise people will continue to feel that they cannot speak to physical civil servants.

980 Can I just pick up an example, just to test the point that he has mentioned? For some time, if you wanted to apply for a passport ... I have not applied for a passport in the last couple of years, but certainly I know that the last time I did that – it might have been during COVID – we had to fill in a form and deposit the application form and so on. Have those processes changed? Put better, those processes might still be there for you to follow that procedure, but can someone who has difficulty in filling in a form now speak to a civil servant about that issue?

990 **Hon. Chief Minister:** Mr Speaker, I am enormously grateful to the hon. Gentleman for his question in this respect, because it enables me to say that people should not believe chatter, people should not believe rumour and innuendo. I will take him up on his suggestion that we should go further and that we should give publicity to this schedule, and I will do so with alacrity in the local press and, working with the Office of the Deputy Chief Minister, I will ensure that we publish an advertisement that reflects this.

995 Physical civil servants – and I know of no other type – are, therefore, available at all of the times set out in this schedule. In the Civil Status and Registration Office, which happens to be the second one on his list, he will see that from 8 a.m. to 2.30 p.m. they are available. The question of putting the passport application in a box is just the modern way in which it is done. That is the way it is done in the United Kingdom as well. If you need to ask a question about the form, you can now attend at the counter; you can ask a physical civil servant to assist you. This is a representation that we are back to normal. Certainly, people should not believe or come here or in any way act in keeping with, as the hon. Gentleman said yesterday, which I found amusing ... on the basis of ‘something that somebody in Main Street is said to have heard and they have said to me that they think the person said’, because very often that is what – (*Interjection*) It was, absolutely, but very often in Gibraltar – (*Interjection*) no, not you – third-hand hearsay is what people rely on – forget about counters – in order to tarnish people’s reputations irreparably with the worst sorts of allegations.

1000 So I entirely agree with the hon. Gentleman: the chatter is wrong, the chatter should be ignored, the physical civil servants are available, the counters are open and we shall give that a lot of publicity. Gibraltar is open for business and back to normal. (*Interjection*)

Clerk: Question 522.

Mr Speaker: The Hon. Edwin Reyes would like to ask a supplementary.

1015 **Hon. E J Reyes:** Thank you, Mr Speaker. I was originally going to raise a concern with you, but my colleague the Hon. Roy Clinton has saved the day. The handout that I first received had a page missing, so just for the record, when we come to *Hansard*, we have to make sure it is five and not four pages.

1020 I have a question. Can I ask two simple things of the Chief Minister? One is on the third page, on the Gibraltar Health Authority. Right at the top it says ‘Registration Applications by Appointment’ and gives from 0900 hrs to 1300 hrs, and then ‘Registration Queries’. The first one, by saying ‘by appointment’, does it mean you have to make an appointment in order to be able to attend during those times, or can one simply turn up? That is where I know some confusion has arisen amongst some members of the public I have met. They have said, ‘I have come here at the

allocated time and I have been told no, that I need an appointment. Does he want to deal with that one first, and then I will come to the second, very short question?

Hon. Chief Minister: Mr Speaker, the hon. Gentleman reminds me of a fantastic *Monty Python* sketch where somebody knocks on the door that says 'Arguments', and when the door is opened and he asks, 'Is this Arguments?' the person the other side of the door says, 'No, it isn't,' to which he replies, 'Yes, it is,' and the argument ensues.

As the name implies, 'Registration Applications by Appointment' is an office that takes appointments to help people through the process of registration, but you need an appointment. You can turn up there and get an appointment for the same day, if possible, or you seek an appointment and then the time is given to you to take you through the process. These are usually registrations that are unusual or are first registrations of people registering for GHA services etc. Registration Queries is where you would go initially, and if your query cannot be dealt with there, then you can have an appointment for a full registration application by appointment.

Hon. E J Reyes: Thank you, Mr Speaker. For the other one I am looking at the very front page. Civil Status and Registration Office is an entity that one takes for granted is manned wholly by public servants, and so is the Department of Social Security, and they have the same opening hours, but a comment that goes a lot around town is another Department that should be manned, or we think is manned wholly by public servants – the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Department. They have a half-hour-later-starting day and they close by 12.30, which does not even give chance to some employees to attend during the lunch break, like those who need to pop in quickly to hand in a passport application to the Department of Social Security. There seems to be a great discrepancy in the hours of availability, certainly not catering for those who have to be at a place of work and cannot make use of the lunch hour, because lunch hours are normally round about the one o'clock mark, and here, by 12.30 they seem to be closed. Perhaps it is an issue that can be reviewed, if the Chief Minister agrees he will just look into it and, if possible, make life as easy as possible for the poor working people who have to turn up to this Department.

Hon. Chief Minister: Mr Speaker, I am all for helping poor working people who have to turn up at Departments, as the hon. Gentleman said. One of the best things about the DVLA now is the electronic system: the digital system for booking appointments, which I am told works very well; the digital system for renewal of licences, which I am told works extraordinarily well, which you are told online will take x number of days but actually you tend to receive the document in a much shorter period of time. But if you do have to turn up, you already know that when the hon. Member was a Minister, that Department used to open at 9.30 and close at 12.30. Today, it opens an hour earlier for poor working people, the sort of people I care about and he has expressed concern for. It already opens an hour earlier, but I am happy to look with the Hon. Minister to see whether we can extend the closing time even further. Although we have already added an hour to the period of operation from when he had ministerial responsibility, we will look to see whether we can make it even more accessible, but it would be the first complaint we have had since the reopening of that counter given the excellent digital system that is in place for this Department, which was one of the guinea-pig Departments. Lots of teething problems in the beginning, but now, actually people are very pleased with how the DVLA works.

I have had my own experience of doing stuff online, and once the teething problems are dealt with and once one has cursed the name of Minister Albert Isola a thousand times and got through that, one is very happy with how the system works thereafter.

Mr Speaker: Next question.

Q522/22

**Extension of reciprocal healthcare arrangements with Spain and the EU –
Progress**

1075 **Clerk:** Question 522/2022. The Hon. the Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. K Azopardi: Mr Speaker, what progress has there been in securing the extension of reciprocal healthcare arrangements to people resident in Gibraltar when they visit the EU or Spain under the existing European Health Insurance Card or Global Health Insurance Card schemes, or
1080 any other arrangements?

Clerk: Answer, the Hon. the Chief Minister.

Chief Minister (Hon. F R Picardo): Mr Speaker, reciprocal healthcare arrangements between
1085 Gibraltar and Spain came to an end as from 1st July 2022 on the termination of a Spanish bridging measure. The Government is in discussions with the United Kingdom and Spanish governments in relation to the potential renewal of these reciprocal healthcare arrangements.

Hon. K Azopardi: Mr Speaker, yes, we know that. The purpose of the question was not that,
1090 although that is, of course, included and I will ask him a supplementary on that. But if I step back from the Spanish bridging measure issue, I first asked about this in March 2021 and the answer that I got then again jumped straight into the bridging measure issue, when I was making a much broader point. So I just remind the hon. Member of the question that I asked. I asked about the Global Health Insurance Card and I asked about the entitlement of Gibraltarians and British
1095 residents of Gibraltar in respect of the Global Health Insurance Card. I filed this question in January 2021, and the purpose of it was ... I pointed out to the Government ... and the Hon. the Minister for Health, Miss Sacramento, who was then the Minister for Health, answered the question, but the Deputy Chief Minister then assisted with supplementaries. The point that I made then was that there was NHS information about people being entitled to use a Global Health Insurance Card
1100 or UK-issued European Health Insurance Cards. What I said then was that there was information that said, and I quoted it then:

UK-issued European Health Insurance Cards (EHICs) are still valid and offer the same cover as GHICs

– in other words, Global Health Insurance Cards –

in the EU. Once your EHIC has expired, you'll be able to replace it with a GHIC.

That information is still the information being put out by the NHS. In other words, you may
1105 have an EHIC, an original one under the scheme as it was then under the relevant decision of the European Union, and when it expires, if you fall within a certain category you might be entitled to a renewal, but in any event you are entitled to get a Global Health Insurance Card under the UK scheme.

The purpose of my question originally was will the Government make enquiries about
1110 extending that regime to Gibraltar or claiming that the British citizens of Gibraltar are entitled to access that regime within the European Union for healthcare purposes. At the time when I put that question I think the Government was arguing that while the agreement that had been reached with the UK was territorial and therefore did not extend to Gibraltar, there might be personal rights in it that extended to British citizens in Gibraltar – Gibraltarians – and as I said and
1115 is reflected in *Hansard* of March 2021, I was asking the Government to examine whether that issue could be looked at. I am reading now from that *Hansard*. What I said was:

If there are benefits in the current UK-EU agreement that are in respect of health rights across the EU, can I ask the Government perhaps to [...] investigate the possibility that we may already be able to claim those personal rights in relation to healthcare ...

The Deputy Chief Minister at the time said that the matter would be under consideration. I am sorry for the long preamble, but the purpose of my question was to ask about the progress of that macro issue, not about the Spanish bridging measures, although I would like to ask a supplementary in respect of that.

Hon. Chief Minister: Thank you, Mr Speaker.

I fully understand the point the hon. Gentleman is making. This is not a right that attaches to British citizens. This is a right that attaches to contributors to the United Kingdom National Insurance Scheme.

Hon. K Azopardi: Mr Speaker, all right, so if that is the conclusion of the consideration of – *(Interjection by Hon. Chief Minister)* It is not the conclusion?

Hon. Chief Minister: The point I am making, Mr Speaker, is the hon. Gentleman asked me ... The upshot of his question was about rights which the TCA might give to British citizens *simpliciter*, absent a geographic somehow categorisation of residence of that British citizen. This is not such a right. This is a right based on being a contributor to the United Kingdom's National Insurance Scheme, regardless of nationality. Gibraltar has its own Social Insurance Scheme, which entitles us to care by the Gibraltar Health Authority but not to care under the NHS, other than through the NHS GHA arrangements that there are. What we are pursuing is that GHA Social Insurance contributors – those entitled persons under our Group Practice Medical Scheme etc. – should have rights in Europe in some way, as part of the negotiation.

Hon. K Azopardi: That is helpful, and of course that is dependent on a treaty being possible and emerging as a result of that. Is there, without affecting the delicate discussions that are happening ...? Two aspects, if I may. Is the Government considering the alternative, which is in the scenario of perhaps a no-deal being done there might be alternative arrangements being reached so that our citizens – who are, in European terms, a drop in the ocean, really – can access those healthcare arrangements in Europe beyond Spain? Spain is the obvious first port of call for a lot of people accessing healthcare, because most people will be going to Spain more frequently than they would be going to France or Denmark, so that is an important aspect, but are there active considerations of those issues?

As the Chief Minister will appreciate, the fact that Spain ceased the bridging measure – and that announcement came in July – gave quite a lot of concern to people; general concern, but also, in particular, concern voiced to me by perhaps more elderly citizens of Gibraltar who cannot get insurance arrangements. It is an issue of concern for people, and I think that is an important issue to resolve – I am sure he would agree with me – so it would be important to understand what the Government is doing in respect of that.

Hon. Chief Minister: Mr Speaker, this is certainly an important issue and it is an issue that we are pursuing. It is an issue which is in the negotiation. I do not want to comment about the detail of the negotiation, but there are some things which are obvious and therefore those things which are obvious and which are in the public domain I am, of course, happy to further put on the table for discussion.

It is very clear that the widest interest is in reciprocal healthcare arrangements between Gibraltar and the United Kingdom and Gibraltar and Spain. That is where the majority of our people travel to at any time. Some of our people holiday in Portugal and some of our people go wider afield in Europe – not as often as the numbers of our people go to Spain.

1165 This is not an easy issue and it may be that we find that other member states – ironically, not
Spain – do not have an interest in having Gibraltarians as a field of people they also provide care
to, and we will then have to deal with that. This is not an issue where what we are experiencing
comes from a desire not to reach an understanding that assists Gibraltarians in Spain, Gibraltar
residents in Spain and Spaniards in Gibraltar or Spanish residents in Gibraltar, but Poland may not
1170 want to go through the administrative arrangements of extending to 30,000 Gibraltarians
healthcare in Poland, because there will be very few instances of Gibraltarians in Poland. That
might cause a difficulty for Gibraltarians travelling in Poland, but mathematically Poland might
have to deal with 30,000 of our people and deal with the administrative costs of sending us a bill
once in a while if one of our 30,000 was ever in Poland and was ill, but there are many millions of
1175 Poles, so we are more likely to have to deal with a Polish person who requires care and we are
more likely, then, to have to invoice them through the European system, which is laborious, rather
than invoice them directly, as we would be able to do.

The hon. Member will be aware of Bentham's concept of the felicific calculus, and here the
felicific calculus may mean that actually not having a European-wide deal is in our interests, but
1180 we do recognise the importance of having a deal with our nearest neighbours and with the United
Kingdom. With the United Kingdom it is already dealt with, with Spain and Portugal I think it is
something that we will be dealing with, but it may not be a European-wide issue. Health is
European but in some instances can also be delegated to the member states for arrangements. I
do not want to say more than that, but I am just highlighting what the issues could be
1185 mathematically, given the geographic distance of some places from Gibraltar, the population
issues that we are dealing with and where our economic interests may lie in the context of such
arrangements.

Of course, in the concept of European travel, going to Spain is likely to be something that can
happen on a day basis, a non-overnight basis. Even going to Portugal could potentially happen on
1190 a day basis. It is unlikely to be happening in respect of France or further afield, and their insurance
is easily provided for most people at all ages because it is overnight insurance, it is not just day
insurance.

I hope that is helpful, Mr Speaker.

1195 **Hon. K Azopardi:** Yes, Mr Speaker, and of course I take the mathematical point – 30 or 40
million poles and our small population. I get that, but that is no different to the situation when we
were in the EU because that was the case then, so it should not necessarily be a daunting thing;
we have survived all these years.

I think people would appreciate the widest health protection that could be negotiated in any
1200 future treaty. I will leave the point at that. He will understand that issue and I take from the
comments he is making that it is an issue that is actively being negotiated by the Government as
part of the arrangements that are being negotiated, and that in the event that there was not going
to be an agreement, then the Government would have to seek, I suppose, piecemeal
arrangements with individual states.

1205 Can I ask, though, on the issue of the UK and Gibraltar – because I am making the assumption
that in the treaty, UK-EU in respect of Gibraltar, the arrangements between the UK and Gibraltar
will not be taken into account – what arrangements are being envisaged in relation to reciprocal
healthcare arrangements between the UK and Gibraltar?

1210 Can the Chief Minister also comment, in respect of the Spanish bridging measures, whether he
thinks he can persuade Spain to reinstate those Spanish bridging measures pending the treaty
negotiations concluding?

Hon. Chief Minister: Mr Speaker, of course we are trying to achieve the widest possible
coverage for people, but like everything – that is a benefit that we are seeking for our people –
1215 we would have to assess what the price on the table would be, and that is the process that we are
undertaking generally.

The issue of the arrangements between the United Kingdom and Gibraltar have long been settled. They have not changed. We continue as we were when we were Members of the European Union.

1220 In the context of what I may or may not be able to persuade Spain of, I do not want to venture anything into the public domain because anything I venture into the public domain will be used by those who are negotiating with us. If I say I think I can achieve it, then they will up the price because I have said publicly I think I can achieve it, so now I have to achieve it. If I say I do not believe we can achieve it, they might withdraw it from the table, if it were on the table, because I
1225 have already said publicly I think I am not going to achieve it, so they will try to extract prices for whatever it is they are trying to extract somewhere else. I am not saying that because that is the reality of what is happening in the negotiation, but that is how negotiations work. That is why I do not want to be drawn on public comment, not because I do not want to inform the people of Gibraltar – I cannot wait to tell the people of Gibraltar the conclusion of the negotiation, one way
1230 or the other, and give them all of the detail – but in the middle of the negotiation I create hostages to fortune for Gibraltar as a negotiating entity if I give indications of what I think I can and cannot achieve, because it ups the price if I say I can achieve it.

Hon. K Azopardi: Mr Speaker, finally, can I just ask ...? He says the UK-Gibraltar arrangements have not changed. It is some time since I was on that side, and a much longer time since I was
1235 Health Minister. I certainly remember that we had UK-Gibraltar reciprocal arrangements in respect of healthcare for pensioners. I cannot remember wider arrangements, but if there are he will jog my memory. I just wanted to get an assurance from him that there were wider arrangements that have kicked in. Certainly when we were both in the EU, that was less relevant,
1240 but there may be historic ones.

Hon. Chief Minister: Mr Speaker, there have historically been such since 1972. When he was Minister for Health the arrangements were not just for pensioners, and they continue. Anyone in Gibraltar who is a Gibraltar resident and is a contributor to our Social Insurance Scheme is entitled,
1245 if they are in the United Kingdom and they have an accident, to emergency care; anyone who is a contributor to the UK scheme, if they are in Gibraltar, is entitled to emergency care; and Gibraltar has the right to send elective or other surgeries to the United Kingdom and at no cost. Those arrangements have been announced more recently after we left the European Union. I think if the hon. Gentleman goes back, he will see that there was a Government Press Release, a Government
1250 Statement, and we debated it in this House – perhaps before he was a Member.

Mr Speaker: Next question.

ENVIRONMENT, SUSTAINABILITY, CLIMATE CHANGE AND EDUCATION

Q471-72/2022

Gibraltar College of Further Education – Students registered as Year 12 and Year 13 equivalent

Clerk: Question 471/2022. The Hon. E J Reyes.

1255 **Hon. E J Reyes:** Mr Speaker, further to the answer given through Written Question W29/2022, can the Minister for Education explain why there are no students as Year 12 equivalents at the Gibraltar College of Further Education for the academic year 2022-23?

Clerk: Answer, the Hon. the Minister for the Environment and Education.

1260 **Minister for the Environment, Sustainability, Climate Change and Education (Hon. Prof. J E Cortes):** Mr Speaker, I will answer this question together with Question 472.

Clerk: Question 472/2022. The Hon. E J Reyes.

1265 **Hon. E J Reyes:** Further to the answer given through Written Question W29/2022, can the Minister for Education explain the high number of students registered as Year 13 equivalents at the Gibraltar College of Further Education when compared to students attending Bayside and Westside Schools?

1270 **Clerk:** Answer, the Hon. the Minister for the Environment and Education.

Hon. Prof. J E Cortes: Yes, Mr Speaker, there was an element of double counting and pooling with the figures with which I was provided, for which I apologise. The correct figures are: Year 12 College, 36; Year 12 Westside, 149; Year 12 Bayside, 144; Year 13 College, 30; Year 13 Westside, 145; Year 13 Bayside, 139. To assist further, I can say that 102 students from Westside access courses from the College, as do 58 from Bayside, across these two years.

1275 Potentially – if I may add, Mr Speaker – one of the things that happened was the Westside and Bayside students who were in consortium and were also going to the College had been double counted.

1280 **Hon. E J Reyes:** I think the Minister gave a low figure of 20-odd students who are solely attending the College therefore registered there, *[inaudible]* for what is Year 12. In other words, it must be the intake for this year. Can he repeat that number, so I have an idea, please?

1285 **Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** Yes, Mr Speaker – Year 12, 36.

Q473/2022
Special Educational Needs and Disabilities –
Reconciliation of totals given in answer to W30/2022

Clerk: Question 473/2022. The Hon. E J Reyes.

1290 **Hon. E J Reyes:** Further to the answer given through Written Question W30/2022, can the Minister for Education explain why the total number of pupils listed under the heading ‘Main Area of Need’ does not coincide with the total number of pupils then further listed under the subheadings of needs? This non-reconciliation of totals equally applies to statistics given for all the four academic years requested in the original question.

1295 **Clerk:** Answer, the Hon. the Minister for the Environment and Education.

Minister for the Environment, Sustainability, Climate Change and Education (Hon. Prof. J E Cortes): Mr Speaker, children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities – SEND, as we call them – who require extra help and support to learn are placed on the school’s SEN register. The UK SEND Code of Practice sets out four broad areas of SEN, and those are the four which the table subdivides into: communication and interaction; cognition and learning; social, emotional and mental health difficulties; and sensory and/or physical needs.

1300 When a child is placed on the SEN register, their main need is listed under one of these four broad areas of SEN. In reality, many children and young people do not solely have needs in one of these areas and they may present with co-occurring conditions, which can also be described as

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comorbidities. For example, a child may present with both autism and ADHD, or may have dyslexia and fine motor difficulties. This is why the number of pupils listed under the heading 'Main Area of Need' does not coincide with the total number of pupils listed further under the subheadings of needs. This is the same across all academic years.

1310 Even when two pupils have the same medical diagnosis, like autism spectrum disorder (ASD),
their profile and presenting needs can be very different. For example, one child may be overly
sensitive to sounds and textures, whereas another child may be sensory seeking. One child may
have expressive language difficulties, whereas another may have anxiety and mental health
needs. When you meet one child with autism, you have met one child with autism. The same can
1315 be said for any SEN need or diagnosis. Therefore, adding up the columns will result in a greater
total number of conditions than the total number of children.

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

1320 Following on from that, the Minister clarified that the figures given in the first four columns
under the main areas of need ... those four subtotals, if we call them that, end up ... If I take the
academic year 2022-23, they end up coming to a grand total of 1,929. Can the Minister, first of all,
confirm that these 1,129 are different individual pupils and that none are double counted?

1325 **Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** Mr Speaker, the figure I have been given today is 1,930, but because
there could be another one added since the question was asked, our figures are, we can say,
identical. That is the total number of children, but obviously if you add the different conditions –
because each child can have more than one condition – the total column is not correct. There
should not be a total column, because that is confusing.

1330 **Hon. E J Reyes:** Thank you. That does help to clarify a bit.

Now let me take you to the other half of the table, the subheadings of needs. If I take the
academic year 2022-23, my total there of all those sub-columns is 1,470 – the Minister may differ
by one. Can the Minister, first of all, confirm that those 1,470 are already accounted for within the
1,929 – I see the Minister kindly nodding yes – and therefore the number missing in between are
1335 people who fall under the main area but not necessarily then falling into that bracket, so those
are just those with some other condition?

Hon. Prof. J E Cortes: Yes, Mr Speaker, that is correct. The total number of children on the
register is 1,930 – 1,929, perhaps a week or two ago when those figures were compiled. As you
1340 will know, we do get children who are added after being assessed by a panel, which was another
of the questions I answered last time in writing because the hon. Member was not here because
of COVID, I believe.

Hon. E J Reyes: Thank you, Mr Speaker, statistically that has cleared a lot of the air.

1345 With your leave, sir, can I invite the Minister ...? He may have some information that perhaps
he wishes to share or shed some sort of light on. If I take the total for the year 2022-23, we have
identified 1,929 children, which is an increase from the previous year, when there were 1,881, but
then the figures start to become more alarming. If one looks back two years, in the academic year
2020-21 there were only 1,647 and the year before that 1,600. So we seem to be from the mid-
1350 1,000s, now just about starting to touch upon 2,000. Is the Minister receiving any feedback? Is
this because there is a greater analysis and that has led to better identification of people's needs?
Or is it because it is a tendency that unfortunately more people with special needs are coming
into our main school or into our education system?

1355 **Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** Mr Speaker, we have dealt with this before when we have mentioned
the unprecedented increase in children in St Martins, for example. Now we have children with
special needs, obviously, in all the schools, we have learning support facilities in some of the

schools; there has been a tremendous increase. Whether we are better at identifying conditions ... I think there is something there. I think there is some of that, but I do believe that genuinely, for whatever reason – and we cannot be sure – there are more children with special needs now in our schools. We are having to provide more learning support assistance, we are having to expand our LSFs. I think this is a reality and it is not an artefact of statistics.

Q474/2022

**Pearson BTEC Level 3 in Music Performance –
Reason why not delivered on school or College premises**

Clerk: Question 474/2022. The Hon. E J Reyes.

Hon. E J Reyes: Further to the answer given through Written Question W43/2022, can the Minister for Education explain why the Pearson BTEC Level 3 National Extended Certificate in Music Performance is not being delivered within our secondary schools or the Gibraltar College premises?

Clerk: Answer, the Hon. the Minister for the Environment and Education.

Minister for the Environment, Sustainability, Climate Change and Education (Hon. Prof. J E Cortes): Mr Speaker, because it is being delivered on the premises of the body delivering the course. This multi-campus approach is common practice in further education establishments. This is in much the same way that the Technical Certificate in Hairdressing City and Guilds course makes the most of professional offsite premises available in close proximity to the College. This arrangement allows the College to offer a wider range of courses in a manner not limited to their physical footprint.

Hon. E J Reyes: Mr Speaker, I can understand the logic behind what the Minister has given me in the example of hairdressing because the student is offsite due to the facilities available in a particular location, but here the subject in question is music performance, and given that they are brand new schools which I think have been well thought out and planned to cater for the existing and immediate future needs, I do not quite understand why a pupil needs to ... 'commute' is too strong a word ... why pupils need to go out of the school environment, not within the consortium arrangement of Westside, Bayside and the College, but to an entity that does not come under the control of the Director of Education because it is an independent body. One would have thought that, if need be, because the teacher resources may not be available in Bayside, Westside or the College, the qualified individual could be brought in as an instructor and the lesson delivered within school premises, which is where parents would rather their children be, rather than having to go to an outside location which has totally no need to account for anything to the Director of Education.

Hon. Prof. J E Cortes: Mr Speaker, I do not subscribe to that at all. The course provided by the accredited provider for Gibraltar, which is the Gibraltar Academy of Music and Performing Arts, is delivered by GAMPa on behalf of the College, so it is part of the consortium. There are hundreds of children and young people who make use of GAMPa premises after hours. In fact, I believe one of the private schools uses them during school hours. Their facilities are suitable for what they are used for, for this course.

Gibraltar is smaller than certainly some university campuses, and we have had no feedback of any complaints from the students themselves about having some of their lessons at the GAMPa premises, so I do not think this is an area of concern any more than it is for the hairdressing

students to go to a hairdressing salon, despite the fact that we do in fact have hairdressing facilities in Bayside School.

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Hon. E J Reyes: Mr Speaker, for the record, I disagree with the Minister. I would rather the lessons were done there. But can I ask: in the past, through other questions the Minister has told us that when we have a subject like music, when we have an instructor coming to, for example, Bayside or Westside School, that instructor is instructing but under the overall supervision and under the overall care and observation of a qualified teacher. Are those delivering the Pearson BTEC Level 3 qualified teachers, or are they simply classified as instructors? And if that is the case, is there someone with QTS status also there, under whose ultimate responsibility the pupil comes?

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Hon. Prof. J E Cortes: Mr Speaker, I do not know whether this is some kind of veiled attack on the reputation of the Gibraltar Academy of Music and Performing Arts – because it looks like that is what it is becoming – which is highly regarded, is producing excellent results and excellent qualifications throughout all the age ranges. I think that we have to be careful how we question their ability.

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Let me just say that the BTEC was not possible in Bayside and Westside at the time we initiated it, just over a year ago. It was not possible for them to give this course. GAMPA was able to do the Pearson BTEC and was accredited by Pearson, and therefore is accepted to be qualified in order to deliver it. There are no concerns whatsoever, nor have there been any concerns that I am aware of, about the level and the standard that is being achieved. So I am completely satisfied that this is all done *bona fide*. In fact, we have been able to bring back into education some young people who had given up on education. They did not feel they could do the more academic A-Level music. They have come back and now they will be able to achieve a Level 3 qualification.

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I think this is a wonderful initiative and having to walk a little bit of a way up the hill to GAMPA premises I think is not a disadvantage at all. I know the hon. Member and those who are briefing him will not agree, but we beg to differ.

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Hon. E J Reyes: Mr Speaker, I must begin by denying completely any insinuations that could be interpreted that I have no trust or confidence in the ability or the professionalism of those within GAMPA. I am proud to say that I have seen them in many public performances and I have been quite impressed with what they deliver. So, if that thought did momentarily cross the Minister's mind, it was certainly not what I was aiming for.

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I am basically getting down to what the Minister has partly answered. He said that when this course began ... I think he was careful in his words by saying at the time it could not be delivered within our secondary schools. That situation may have changed for the academic year 2022-23. It may or may not have changed. I still have to disagree. If we have spent millions of pounds in building new secondary schools, why can the students not remain within the school premises? And if needs be for human resources purposes, we can bring someone – who may be part of GAMPA, may be part of whatever other organisation – into a school, but it remains under the immediate juridical control in the school building that comes from the head teacher delegated down to teacher and so on, all those who act in what is known in educational terms as *in loco parentis*. That is why we insist on having qualified teachers. The Minister has not answered whether – although I have no doubt of their ability – the person delivering within the GAMPA premises has qualified teacher status or is just a highly reputable, well-vetted person. But still it begs the question: do they act *in loco parentis* when push comes to shove?

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Hon. Prof. J E Cortes: Mr Speaker, the millions of pounds that this Government has spent on the schools is money extremely well spent and I am glad that by implication the hon. Member opposite has recognised that. Those facilities are being used. There are music courses being delivered in Bayside and Westside, but these students do not have to be there; they are perfectly well accommodated at the GAMPA premises. Remember that the course is being delivered by

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1455 GAMPAs for the Gibraltar College and therefore the professional supervision and the overseeing
of the course is done by the teaching professionals at the Gibraltar College. They are not left out
in the wilderness. It is a course which has the total support of the Gibraltar College, which is being
extremely well delivered and which will open and has opened opportunities for young people, and
I really have no problem at all in stating that I am very comfortable with the way it is being
1460 delivered. I know we disagree, but so be it.

Mr Speaker: Next question.

Q475/2022

**Dropping off and collecting children from non-school premises –
Alternatives offered to parents**

Clerk: Question 475/2022. The Hon. E J Reyes.

1465 **Hon. E J Reyes:** Further to the answer given through Written Question W44/2022, can the
Minister for Education explain what alternatives the Department of Education offers to any parent
who, for a variety of reasons, finds it extremely difficult to drop off or collect children for
educational activities at a location other than the school premises where they are enrolled?

1470 **Clerk:** Answer, the Hon. the Minister for the Environment and Education.

**Minister for the Environment, Sustainability, Climate Change and Education (Hon. Prof. J E
Cortes):** Mr Speaker, schools try to be as flexible as possible when it comes to making alternative
arrangements. One of the arrangements they put into place is a staggered drop-off and dismissal
1475 which allows parents a half-hour window to enable them to take or collect other children to school
and then have time to manage a drop-off or collection for a trip.

Parents within the school communities also know that the Gibraltar Bus Company offers a
fantastic service, and many parents rely on this.

1480 Schools do their best to limit trips which require parents' input, and where this is necessary
they limit the parental input to drop-off or collection. Schools take a considered approach and
when they feel the value of the trip warrants the parental inconvenience and cannot be replaced
with a trip closer to the school setting, they go ahead.

1485 Some schools also appeal to parents in their letters about a trip, encouraging parents to
consider supporting other families via a car-pooling approach. For example, school letters might
include a phrase such as, 'We thank parents who offer lifts to other children who may struggle
with the drop-off required for this trip. It is testament to the strong and collaborative school
community we have here at [such and such a school].'

1490 As far as the Department of Education is aware, schools have reported very few concerns with
reference to this issue. As previously mentioned, as far as is humanly possible, schools try to walk
to a trip from school and return to school for collection. However, schools recognise the
immensely powerful impact of educational visits and sometimes they feel they need to ask
parents to support schools with either a drop-off or collection. On many occasions, teachers walk
pupils there and back from the school setting so children get dropped off and picked up from
school, whenever possible, as per the normal routine. In summary, schools do the best they can
1495 but are extremely mindful of the inconvenience to parents.

Distances in Gibraltar are much smaller than those in other communities, so we are lucky that
children and young people can gain the benefit of access to a wide range of locations with minimal
inconvenience to parents.

1500 **Hon. E J Reyes:** Mr Speaker, the Minister in his reply has repeated a fair amount of what was given through the original written answer, but my question here was what alternatives does the Department of Education offer? If I use an example, if you have a single parent who has a child in lower primary and another one in upper primary, that person already has certain daily adjustments to make to their personal lives and unavailability of working hours to be able to drop off and collect the children at the appointed times, and even if one gives notice or whatever, it is highly inconvenient. The Minister admits that there have been very few concerns, but even one concern is one too many, and we cannot pick and choose when we do concerns, in the same way as in a previous answer the Minister wanted to throw in the example that certain private schools use the GAMPA facilities and says all we are doing is following suit in what has been available for private schools.

1510 Is the Minister aware of and has he considered doing something similar to what private schools do? The children report to school as normal and then transport is provided by the school – and here it would come under the wider umbrella of Education – to actually take and return from the school premises the children for those activities. That would make life a lot easier. It would even contribute to the lesser need to bring out vehicles where some parents have to then bring out a car. Despite the bus service being there and suitable for many things, you are subject to the bus timetable in what time you get there and so on. So it would actually even curtail traffic if children were just put on one bus – like the Minister for Transport said yesterday, use a bus instead of having to bring out all these private vehicles.

1520 **Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** Mr Speaker, my good friend Mr Reyes – and I say that most sincerely, we are good friends, but for this conversation he seems to have lost touch with reality. Private schools are individual schools that might want to hire a bus for one particular occasion. The Department of Education is responsible for 15 schools with thousands of children. How many buses would we have to own or hire on every occasion when we want to take children back and forth? Or is he suggesting that we provide a taxi service, which would make our already large estimates – because education is expensive in Gibraltar – even larger, in order to provide this? Unfortunately, that is not realistic and I would love to ... In fact, it is interesting because, as I said earlier, children are often walked to or walked back, and one complaint I get from people very close to me – I have two grandchildren in school – is ‘*angelito*’ they have to walk all the way. Why couldn’t we pick them up from there?’ So there is to-ing and fro-ing.

1530 I think that if any particular parent ... and clearly there will be parents who cannot do it. I would have thought that if they make contact with the school, they would be very happy to talk to other parents to provide some kind of car-pooling arrangement. I know for a fact that some phone, and because they are all in this SeeSaw group, they can contact each other. So I think the problem is not as big. I realise that it will be a problem for some. We will do our best to help, but certainly we cannot provide a bus or taxi service for seven or eight thousand children – it is just not realistic – and I do not think we should deprive them of the possibility of these school trips, which educationally and socially are very beneficial to them.

1540 **Mr Speaker:** Next question.

Q476/2022
Vandalism on school premises –
Updates re efforts to curtail

Clerk: Question 476/2022. The Hon. EJ Reyes.

1545 **Hon. E J Reyes:** Further to the answer given through Written Question W45/2022, can the Minister for Education provide updates in respect of the success or otherwise of their efforts to curtail vandalism within our school premises?

Clerk: Answer, the Hon. Minister for the Environment and Education.

1550 **Minister for the Environment, Sustainability, Climate Change and Education (Hon. Prof. J E Cortes):** Mr Speaker, the schools have seen a marked improvement since the installation of the additional CCTV cameras in more circulation spaces. This, together with increased monitoring and more strategic supervision, seems to have deterred many would-be perpetrators as the school is able to identify those who vandalise and follow up appropriately with consequences, as relevant.
1555 The additional CCTV helps school staff to respond to any supervisory issues that arise within what are very large buildings.

Schools feel further work can be done in this regard and will continue working with young people and their parents or carers in order to enhance young people's sense of belonging and their feelings of school pride, as well as to ensure the continuing development of civic pride.

1560

Hon. E J Reyes: May I start by saying I am glad that the Minister started by saying that there has been marked improvement. I hope we are successful in getting a full or much more improved curtailment of vandalism.

1565 The Minister has gone on to mention this co-operation between parents and students and so on. Can I ask, have the Royal Gibraltar Police, as an example of an entity that could provide good professional advice, been engaged, and are they engaged with the schools and helping with those provisions? And has there been any case where a particular pupil has been identified as being one of those unfortunate vandals, and what course of action does the school then take from there?

1570 **Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** Mr Speaker, I cannot speak for individual cases, I am not aware of the detail, but as I have said, the schools do identify them and they take appropriate measures. This might involve talking to the child – depending on the age of the child, of course – bringing in the parents, discussing, and in some cases they will have to take some action with the child in whatever manner they see fit. They are the ones who have to judge that in situ.

1575 In relation to the Royal Gibraltar Police, yes, indeed, whenever there are any major incidents, there is involvement of the Police. I, myself, met personally with the Commissioner of Police on this very matter probably around three weeks ago to discuss co-operation, so yes, we are engaging with them. Obviously, we want to keep the Police away, if we can. We do not want to involve the Police directly within our school premises if we can avoid it and if it is something that is nowhere
1580 near the criminal, but obviously we are in communication and should that be necessary, well, then it is necessary.

Q477/2022
Speech therapy facilities –
Availability in Government schools

Clerk: Question number 477/2022. The Hon. E J Reyes.

1585 **Hon. E J Reyes:** Can Government provide details of the speech therapy facilities currently in place and available for students of all Government schools?

Clerk: Answer, the Hon. the Minister for the Environment and Education.

Minister for the Environment, Sustainability, Climate Change and Education (Hon. Prof. J E Cortes): Mr Speaker, with regard to facilities from a schools perspective, some schools, like St Martins, have a designated therapy room which can be used by speech and language therapists to see pupils. Other schools make a room available if a therapist is going to visit to see a child within the school environment. This room would not solely be for speech and language therapy; it may be used by the occupational therapists, the physiotherapists, the BEST team, a school counsellor or social worker if they need to see a child on a one-to-one or small-group basis within the school environment.

Hon. E J Reyes: Thank you, Mr Speaker, I am glad to hear that.

In respect of the human resources ... Let's talk about speech therapists and such. Are they housed within the school or are they brought in as an when requested by the school from a Department like the Health Authority?

Hon. Prof. J E Cortes: Mr Speaker, speech therapy is a GHA service, so Education do not decide which pupils will be seen by speech and language therapists. Some pupils are seen by the therapist within the school environment when therapist requests to see a pupil. Other pupils see the speech therapist in an alternative setting, like the Children's Health Centre or other setting as identified by therapist.

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

A little bit of confusion arises from something the Minister has just said. Can he confirm, can the schools' teaching staff raise a concern and therefore make a request for a speech therapist to come in, or is it just an outside body that can identify them?

Hon. Prof. J E Cortes: Yes, Mr Speaker, clearly. Usually, children who need this therapy are identified in the assessment process for special educational need, which I explained in one of the written questions, so it would be picked up by the school. If it has not been picked up and the child is not technically registered but the teachers feel that there may be some advantage, then obviously they will refer this to the speech and language therapy team and then they will do the assessment and come in, or call the child to the clinic, as may be necessary.

Q478/2022

Repayment of scholarships for uncompleted courses – Updated details

Clerk: Question 478/2022. The Hon. E J Reyes.

Hon. E J Reyes: Can Government provide updated details of repayments outstanding from pupils who have not completed any courses for which they were granted scholarships, indicating the dates from which such repayments were due, frequency and amounts to be paid, together with the date by when individuals' repayments are expected to be completed?

Clerk: Answer, the Hon. the Minister for the Environment and Education.

Minister for the Environment, Sustainability, Climate Change and Education (Hon. Prof. J E Cortes): Mr Speaker, I am handing over a schedule with the information requested.

Answer to Q478/2022

AS AT 30TH SEPT 2022

DATE OF AWARD	GIBRALTAR GOVERNMENT SCHOLARSHIP FUND		OUTSTANDING AS AT 30 SEP 2022	CURRENTLY PAYING	HELD IN AGREEMENT	FREQUENCY OF PAYMENT	PROJECTED COMPLETION DATE
1989/90	STUDENT	1	£788.99	No	No		
1990/91	STUDENT	2	£164.00	No	No		
1996/97	STUDENT	3	£546.59	Yes	Yes	Monthly	Jan-25
1997/98	STUDENT	4	£1,614.80	No	No		
1997/98	STUDENT	5	£81.60	Yes	Yes	Monthly	Feb-23
1998/99	STUDENT	6	£71.50	Yes	Yes	Monthly	
1999/00	STUDENT	7	£356.61	Yes	Yes	Monthly	
2000/01	STUDENT	8	£5,790.20	No	No		
2000/01	STUDENT	9	£4,947.81	Yes	Yes	Monthly	Mar-29
2000/01	STUDENT	10	£1,374.60	Yes	Yes	Monthly	Jul-30
2000/01	STUDENT	11	£1,012.59	Yes	Yes	Monthly	Jun-24
2000/01	STUDENT	12	£3,587.03	Yes	Yes	Monthly	Oct-52
2000/01	STUDENT	13	£6,007.40	No	No		
2000/01	STUDENT	14	£9,568.19	No	No		
2000/01	STUDENT	15	£532.80	No	No		
2002/03	STUDENT	16	£2,592.81	Yes	Yes	Monthly	Dec-25
2002/03	STUDENT	17	£823.80	No	No		
2002/03	STUDENT	18	£1,782.41	No	No		
2002/03	STUDENT	19	£2,873.69	No	No		
2002/03	STUDENT	20	£1,573.80	No	No		
2002/03	STUDENT	21	£1,260.19	No	No		
2003/04	STUDENT	22	£11,540.82	No	No		
2004/05	STUDENT	23	£4,211.41	No	No		
2004/05	STUDENT	24	£70.00	No	No		
2004/05	STUDENT	25	£4,472.41	No	Yes	Monthly	
2005/06	STUDENT	26	£1,547.41	No	Yes	Monthly	
2005/06	STUDENT	27	£8,411.33	No	No		
2005/06	STUDENT	28	£5,149.40	No	No		
2005/06	STUDENT	29	£4,937.41	No	No		
2005/06	STUDENT	30	£1,304.41	Yes	Yes	Monthly	Jan-25
2006/07	STUDENT	31	£2,130.73	No	No		
2006/07	STUDENT	32	£247.40	No	Yes	Monthly	
2006/07	STUDENT	33	£5,526.60	No	Yes	Monthly	
2006/07	STUDENT	34	£4,097.40	No	No		
2006/07	STUDENT	35	£2,100.48	No	No		
2007/08	STUDENT	36	£92.65	Yes	Yes	Monthly	
2007/08	STUDENT	37	£1,715.99	No	No		
2007/08	STUDENT	38	£1,335.37	No	Yes	Monthly	

GIBRALTAR PARLIAMENT, THURSDAY, 24th NOVEMBER 2022

2008/09	STUDENT	39	£3,072.26	Yes	No		Feb-33
2008/09	STUDENT	40	£7,113.81	No	No		
2008/09	STUDENT	41	£208.57	No	Yes	Monthly	
2008/09	STUDENT	42	£2,845.19	No	Yes	Monthly	
2008/09	STUDENT	43	£1,193.60	Yes	Yes	Monthly	Nov-24
2009/10	STUDENT	44	£916.80	Yes	Yes	Monthly	Oct-23
2009/10	STUDENT	45	£2,482.46	Yes	Yes	Monthly	Mar-33
2009/10	STUDENT	46	£2,032.06	No	Yes	Monthly	
2009/10	STUDENT	47	£916.00	No	Yes	Monthly	
2010/11	STUDENT	48	£3,936.86	Yes	Yes	Monthly	Jan-31
2010/11	STUDENT	49	£3,181.20	Yes	Yes		
2010/11	STUDENT	50	£3,052.81	Yes	Yes	Monthly	Jun-25
2010/11	STUDENT	51	£1,239.79	Yes	Yes	Monthly	Oct-25
2010/11	STUDENT	52	£84.27	No	Yes	Monthly	
2010/11	STUDENT	53	£620.06	No	No		
2010/11	STUDENT	54	£1,014.26	Yes	No		Feb-27
2010/11	STUDENT	55	£3,333.41	Yes	Yes	Monthly	Oct-36
2010/11	STUDENT	56	£2,600.00	Yes	Yes	Monthly	Apr-24
2011/12	STUDENT	57	£4,410.81	Yes	No		Feb-35
2011/12	STUDENT	58	£1,812.13	Yes	No		May-30
2011/12	STUDENT	59	£5,430.80	No	Yes	Monthly	
2011/12	STUDENT	60	£5,136.41	Yes	No		Jun-31
2011/12	STUDENT	61	£3,110.81	Yes	Yes	Monthly	Jul-31
2011/12	STUDENT	62	£3,901.80	Yes	No		May-29
2011/12	STUDENT	63	£7,569.80	Yes	Yes	Monthly	
2011/12	STUDENT	64	£2,479.79	Yes	Yes	Monthly	Jan-27
2011/12	STUDENT	65	£4,292.10	Yes	Yes	Monthly	Oct-40
2011/12	STUDENT	66	£8,699.66	No	Yes	Monthly	
2012/13	STUDENT	67	£2,362.00	Yes	Yes	Monthly	
2012/13	STUDENT	68	£750.00	No	Yes	Monthly	
2012/13	STUDENT	69	£5,725.50	Yes	Yes	Monthly	Jan-26
2012/13	STUDENT	70	£1,162.15	No	Yes	Monthly	
2013/14	STUDENT	71	£4,928.93	Yes	Yes	Monthly	Feb-31
2013/14	STUDENT	72	£6,925.29	Yes	Yes	Monthly	
2013/14	STUDENT	73	£90.00	Yes	Yes	Monthly	
2013/14	STUDENT	74	£9,719.30	No	Yes	Monthly	
2013/14	STUDENT	75	£200.00	Yes	Yes	Monthly	
2013/14	STUDENT	76	£1,120.00	Yes	Yes	Monthly	
2013/14	STUDENT	77	£3,585.00	No	No		
2014/15	STUDENT	78	£4,468.81	Yes	Yes	Monthly	Jan-29
2014/15	STUDENT	79	£2,848.55	Yes	Yes	Monthly	Aug-34
2014/15	STUDENT	80	£8,093.64	No	Yes	Monthly	
2014/15	STUDENT	81	£635.80	Yes	No		Dec-23
2014/15	STUDENT	82	£5,197.82	Yes	Yes	Monthly	Mar-27
2015/16	STUDENT	83	£259.80	Yes	Yes	Monthly	Apr-23

GIBRALTAR PARLIAMENT, THURSDAY, 24th NOVEMBER 2022

2015/16	STUDENT	84	£7,955.80	Yes	Yes	Monthly	May-35
2015/16	STUDENT	85	£133.20	No	Yes	Monthly	
2015/16	STUDENT	86	£5,915.81	No	Yes	Monthly	
2015/16	STUDENT	87	£10,392.80	Yes	Yes	Monthly	Jul-57
2015/16	STUDENT	88	£12,655.40	No	Yes	Weekly	
2015/16	STUDENT	89	£1,611.68	No	Yes	Monthly	
2015/16	STUDENT	90	£6,458.13	Yes	Yes	Monthly	Apr-28
2015/16	STUDENT	91	£11,651.05	Yes	Yes	Monthly	Aug-28
2015/16	STUDENT	92	£19,924.80	No	Yes	Monthly	
2015/16	STUDENT	93	£15,849.00	No	No		
2015/16	STUDENT	94	£18,000.00	No	No		
2016/17	STUDENT	95	£11,270.20	Yes	Yes	Monthly	Aug-34
2016/17	STUDENT	96	£1,772.16	Yes	Yes	Monthly	
2016/17	STUDENT	97	£313.00	No	Yes	Monthly	
2016/17	STUDENT	98	£4,176.60	Yes	Yes	Monthly	May-26
2016/17	STUDENT	99	£1,225.00	Yes	Yes	Monthly	
2016/17	STUDENT	100	£9,739.80	Yes	Yes	Monthly	Feb-39
2016/17	STUDENT	101	£11,290.00	Yes	Yes	Monthly	Sep-41
2016/17	STUDENT	102	£5,325.41	Yes	Yes	Monthly	Nov-25
2016/17	STUDENT	103	£1,398.00	Yes	Yes	Monthly	
2016/17	STUDENT	104	£3.00	No	Yes	Monthly	
2016/17	STUDENT	105	£1,865.80	Yes	Yes	Monthly	Nov-25
2016/17	STUDENT	106	£8,027.60	No	Yes	Monthly	
2016/17	STUDENT	107	£1,165.00	Yes	Yes	Monthly	Feb-26
2016/17	STUDENT	108	£13,896.80	No	Yes	Monthly	
2016/17	STUDENT	109	£1,180.00	No	Yes	Monthly	
2016/17	STUDENT	110	£11,364.80	Yes	Yes		
2016/17	STUDENT	111	£2,194.00	Yes	Yes	Monthly	Sep-24
2016/17	STUDENT	112	£9,538.55	No	No		
2017/18	STUDENT	113	£11,685.80	Yes	Yes	Monthly	Aug-32
2017/18	STUDENT	114	£12,281.80	No	Yes	Monthly	
2017/18	STUDENT	115	£5,295.60	No	Yes	Monthly	
2017/18	STUDENT	116	£3,454.80	Yes	Yes	Monthly	Aug-28
2017/18	STUDENT	117	£1,093.00	Yes	Yes	Monthly	Sep-24
2017/18	STUDENT	118	£16,159.80	No	Yes	Monthly	
2017/18	STUDENT	119	£9,625.80	Yes	Yes	Weekly	Apr-30
2017/18	STUDENT	120	£1,590.00	Yes	Yes	Monthly	Apr-27
2017/18	STUDENT	121	£5,200.00	Yes	Yes	Monthly	
2017/18	STUDENT	122	£1,662.80	Yes	Yes	Monthly	
2017/18	STUDENT	123	£9,149.80	No	Yes	Monthly	
2017/18	STUDENT	124	£4,014.00	Yes	Yes	Monthly	Aug-39
2017/18	STUDENT	125	£10,358.00	Yes	Yes	Monthly	Jul-31
2017/18	STUDENT	126	£4,066.40	Yes	Yes	Monthly	
2017/18	STUDENT	127	£2,576.30	Yes	Yes	Monthly	Feb-27
2017/18	STUDENT	128	£50.00	Yes	Yes	Monthly	

GIBRALTAR PARLIAMENT, THURSDAY, 24th NOVEMBER 2022

2017/18	STUDENT	129	£10,379.40	Yes	Yes	Monthly	
2017/18	STUDENT	130	£15,765.80	No	No		
2017/18	STUDENT	131	£12,894.80	Yes	Yes	Monthly	Mar-38
2017/18	STUDENT	132	£550.00	No	No		
2017/18	STUDENT	133	£16,025.60	No	Yes	Monthly	
2017/18	STUDENT	134	£9,460.00	No	No		
2017/18	STUDENT	135	£2,928.00	No	Yes	Monthly	
2018/19	STUDENT	136	£7,284.80	Yes	Yes	Monthly	Jan-35
2018/19	STUDENT	137	£31.55	Yes	Yes	Monthly	
2018/19	STUDENT	138	£982.00	Yes	Yes	Monthly	Jun-24
2018/19	STUDENT	139	£418.80	Yes	Yes	Weekly	May-24
2018/19	STUDENT	140	£12,184.80	No	Yes	Monthly	
2018/19	STUDENT	141	£15,897.80	No	Yes	Monthly	
2018/19	STUDENT	142	£1,621.30	Yes	Yes	Monthly	
2018/19	STUDENT	143	£11,925.60	Yes	Yes	Monthly	Oct-23
2018/19	STUDENT	144	£15,004.80	No	Yes	Monthly	
2018/19	STUDENT	145	£16,688.20	No	Yes	Monthly	
2018/19	STUDENT	146	£8,918.80	No	Yes	Monthly	
2018/19	STUDENT	147	£15,964.80	No	Yes	Monthly	
2018/19	STUDENT	148	£5,425.00	Yes	Yes	Monthly	May-27
2018/19	STUDENT	149	£15,452.80	Yes	Yes	Monthly	Oct-35
2018/19	STUDENT	150	£1,159.40	Yes	Yes	Monthly	Mar-23
2018/19	STUDENT	151	£5,990.00	Yes	Yes	Monthly	Nov-27
2018/19	STUDENT	152	£17,275.20	No	No		
2018/19	STUDENT	153	£16,729.60	No	Yes	Monthly	
2018/19	STUDENT	154	£600.00	No	Yes	Monthly	
2018/19	STUDENT	155	£6,704.80	No	No		
2019/20	STUDENT	156	£11,975.80	Yes	Yes	Monthly	Nov-32
2019/20	STUDENT	157	£20,819.60	No	Yes	Monthly	
2019/20	STUDENT	158	£14,714.80	No	Yes	Monthly	
2019/20	STUDENT	159	£15,754.80	No	Yes	Monthly	
2019/20	STUDENT	160	£15,148.80	No	No		
2019/20	STUDENT	161	£9,400.40	No	No		
2019/20	STUDENT	162	£1,326.46	Yes	Yes	Monthly	Dec-23
2019/20	STUDENT	163	£2,081.43	Yes	Yes	Monthly	Jul-24
2019/20	STUDENT	164	£3,164.80	Yes	Yes	Monthly	Jun-25
2019/20	STUDENT	165	£2,305.00	Yes	Yes	Monthly	Jan-24
2019/20	STUDENT	166	£11,115.80	Yes	Yes	Monthly	Feb-32
2019/20	STUDENT	167	£13,464.80	Yes	Yes	Monthly	Feb-34
2019/20	STUDENT	168	£6,616.80	yes	Yes	Monthly	May-28
2019/20	STUDENT	169	£161.71	Yes	Yes	Monthly	Jan-21
2019/20	STUDENT	170	£15,664.80	No	Yes	Monthly	
2019/20	STUDENT	171	£6,568.00	No	Yes	Monthly	
2019/20	STUDENT	172	£3,520.60	Yes	Yes	Monthly	Oct-24
2019/20	STUDENT	173	£6,001.30	No	Yes	Monthly	

GIBRALTAR PARLIAMENT, THURSDAY, 24th NOVEMBER 2022

2019/20	STUDENT	174	£15,289.80	Yes	Yes	Monthly	May-31
2019/20	STUDENT	175	£6,631.80	Yes	Yes	Monthly	May-28
2019/20	STUDENT	176	£6,844.46	Yes	Yes	Monthly	Jul-28
2019/20	STUDENT	177	£80.00	No	Yes	Monthly	
2019/20	STUDENT	178	£13,349.80	Yes	Yes	Monthly	Dec-33
2019/20	STUDENT	179	£10,775.80	Yes	Yes	Monthly	Nov-28
2019/20	STUDENT	180	£16,924.80	No	Yes	Monthly	
2019/20	STUDENT	181	£888.00	No	No		
2019/20	STUDENT	182	£1,660.00	No	No		
2019/20	STUDENT	183	£3,120.00	No	No		
2019/20	STUDENT	184	£4,590.25	Yes	Yes	Monthly	Oct-40
2019/20	STUDENT	185	£16,298.80	Yes	Yes	Monthly	Jun-36
2019/20	STUDENT	186	£9,959.15	Yes	Yes	Monthly	Jun-27
2019/20	STUDENT	187	£15,762.80	Yes	Yes	Monthly	Jul-36
2019/20	STUDENT	188	£15,251.65	Yes	Yes	Monthly	Jun-28
2019/20	STUDENT	189	£16,472.40	No	Yes	Monthly	
2019/20	STUDENT	190	£15,678.00	No	Yes	Monthly	
2019/20	STUDENT	191	£7,397.13	Yes	Yes	Monthly	Dec-26
2019/20	STUDENT	192	£5,271.46	No	Yes	Monthly	
2020/21	STUDENT	193	£2,080.80	Yes	Yes	Monthly	Jul-24
2020/21	STUDENT	194	£3,878.63	Yes	Yes	Monthly	Feb-26
2020/21	STUDENT	195	£17,786.20	No	Yes	Monthly	
2020/21	STUDENT	196	£9,959.15	Yes	Yes	Monthly	May-28
2020/21	STUDENT	197	£15,807.80	Yes	Yes	Monthly	Jan-36
2020/21	STUDENT	198	£9,250.00	No	Yes	Monthly	
2020/21	STUDENT	199	£9,462.80	No	Yes	Monthly	
2020/21	STUDENT	200	£11,772.00	Yes	Yes	Monthly	
2020/21	STUDENT	201	£15,790.40	Yes	Yes	Monthly	Jan-36
2020/21	STUDENT	202	£6,700.00	Yes	Yes	Monthly	
2020/21	STUDENT	203	£9,719.30	Yes	Yes	Monthly	
2020/21	STUDENT	204	£16,550.00	No	Yes	Monthly	
2020/21	STUDENT	205	£16,100.00	Yes	Yes	Monthly	Oct-31
2020/21	STUDENT	206	£16,350.00	Yes	Yes	Monthly	Jul-36
2020/21	STUDENT	207	£11,618.20	Yes	Yes	Monthly	Sep-28
2020/21	STUDENT	208	£16,496.00	Yes	Yes	Monthly	
2020/21	STUDENT	209	£16,635.80	No	Yes	Monthly	
2020/21	STUDENT	210	£10,802.90	Yes	Yes	Monthly	
2020/21	STUDENT	211	£8,390.40	Yes	Yes	Monthly	Nov-29
2020/21	STUDENT	212	£11,835.80	No	Yes	Monthly	
2020/21	STUDENT	213	£3,319.13	No	No		
2020/21	STUDENT	214	£17,830.80	No	No		
2021/22	STUDENT	215	£6,665.46	Yes	Yes	Monthly	Jun-28
2021/22	STUDENT	216	£5,289.46	No	Yes	Monthly	
2021/22	STUDENT	217	£14,202.46	Yes	Yes	Monthly	
2021/22	STUDENT	218	£4,696.65	Yes	Yes	Monthly	

2021/22	STUDENT	219	£5,303.63	No	Yes	Monthly	
2021/22	STUDENT	220	£1,283.33	Yes	Yes	Monthly	
2021/22	STUDENT	221	£5,208.13	Yes	Yes	Monthly	
2021/22	STUDENT	222	£5,253.63	Yes	Yes	Monthly	Apr-27
2021/22	STUDENT	223	£12,867.80	Yes	Yes		Jan-30
2021/22	STUDENT	224	£14,623.46	No	Yes	Monthly	
2021/22	STUDENT	225	£5,403.63	Yes	Yes	Monthly	
2021/22	STUDENT	226	£1,478.32	Yes	Yes	Monthly	
2021/22	STUDENT	227	£16,635.80	No	No		
2021/22	STUDENT	228	£17,690.40	Yes	Yes	Monthly	Sep-32
2021/22	STUDENT	229	£16,635.80	No	Yes	Monthly	
2021/22	STUDENT	230	£17,840.40	No	Yes	Monthly	
2021/22	STUDENT	231	£17,830.80	No	Yes	Monthly	
2021/22	STUDENT	232	£16,635.80	No	No		
2021/22	STUDENT	233	£14,476.46	No	No		

Hon. E J Reyes: Mr Speaker, I have the schedule. Unfortunately, it is rather smallish printed. I think in the past we have made the request ... Because, as the Minister divulged before, we have been very good friends – actually pupils in the same school, in the same class – for well over half a century, one is honest. If he does have it in an Excel format or whatever, if I can have that link then I can enlarge it.

On my very first quick look, on the projected completion date in some cases there are no dates at all. That is something that the accounts clerks would have to do from the amount outstanding, but I do not have a column that says how much has been paid. What it brings to mind is, towards the top, one of the projected completion dates is October 2052. There are still 30 more years to go before that date. If the debtor is a 20-year-old, he will probably be knocking on the door of retirement and cashing in his pension and still have outstanding debt from a scholarship. It could be a typographical error. It could be something that the Minister is aware of and he may have a simple explanation for why that odd date of 2052 ... I know 2040 comes further down the line, later, but if one owes £4,000 and still has 20 years to pay, it means you are only paying, what, £500? I do not know – mathematics is not my forte – but it seems to be a very slow payback rate.

Hon. Prof. J E Cortes: Mr Speaker, I would have to find the information. I can say that I will certainly send the information in Excel. If the hon. Member does not receive it tomorrow, I would appreciate it if he just sends me a WhatsApp or an email to remind me and I will send it to him.

These are contracts entered into by the Department with the student and/or the student's parents, and therefore no two cases will be the same. I will certainly check whether that date is typographical or real, and if it is real, then I am sure there is a reason for it, which I will be very happy to share with the hon. Member behind your Chair, Mr Speaker. There could be sensitive personal details that I do not think we should share, because in Gibraltar people could be identified. But this is not secret at all, and I would be very happy to do that with the hon. Member.

Hon. E J Reyes: That is acceptable to me, Mr Speaker, and I look forward to that information.

Q479/2022
Vacant teaching posts –
Details

Clerk: Question 479/2022. The Hon. E J Reyes.

1660 **Hon. E J Reyes:** Can the Minister for Education provide this House with updated details in respect of all vacant teaching posts, identifying the school/establishment where these may exist, together with the grade they pertain to, and further indicating how many are being covered in an acting capacity and by when it is expected these posts will be allocated on a substantive basis?

1665 **Clerk:** Answer, the Hon. the Minister for the Environment and Education.

Minister for the Environment, Sustainability, Climate Change and Education (Hon. Prof. J E Cortes): Yes, Mr Speaker, once again with apologies for the small print but likewise I am happy to share the digital file. The information is provided in the schedule being handed over. I can assure the hon. Member that I find it as difficult to read as he does, so he is at no disadvantage in that respect.

Answer to Q479/2022

ANSWER TO QUESTION 479

SCHOOL:	TYPE OF VACANCY	TIERING	TITLE OF VACANCY	CURRENTLY BEING ACTED	PRIORITY FOR VACANCY RELEASE	TIMEFRAME
BFUP	TLR	TLR 2B	Year Coordinator & Foundation Subject Leader	Y	Currently being recruited	We intend recruitment process to have been completed by the end of Term 2
BS	TLR	TLR 1B	Pastoral Lead	Y	Currently being recruited	We intend recruitment process to have been completed by the end of Term 2
BS	DHT	N/A	Deputy Headteacher at Bayside School	Y	Currently being recruited	We intend recruitment process to have been completed by the end of Term 2
BS	TLR	TLR 1B	Subject Leader English	Y	Currently being recruited	We intend recruitment process to have been completed by the end of Term 2
BS	TLR	TLR 1A	Senior Teacher	Y	Currently being recruited	We intend recruitment process to have been completed by the end of Term 2
BS	TLR	TLR 1A	Senior Teacher	Y	Currently being recruited	We intend recruitment process to have been completed by the end of Term 2
GC	TLR	TLR 2A	Coordinator for Continuing Education & Professional Courses	Y	Currently being recruited	We intend recruitment process to have been completed by the end of Term 2
SBUP	TLR	TLR 2B	Year Coordinator & Foundation Subject Leader	Y	Currently being recruited	We intend recruitment process to have been completed by the end of Term 2
SJUP	DHT	N/A	Deputy Headteacher at St Joseph's Upper Primary School	Y	Currently being recruited	We intend recruitment process to have been completed by the end of Term 2
SPLP	TLR	TLR 2C	IT Coordinator	Y	Currently being recruited	We intend recruitment process to have been completed by the end of Term 2
SPLP	TLR	TLR 2C	Music and Expressive Arts Coordinator	Y	Currently being recruited	We intend recruitment process to have been completed by the end of Term 2
WS	TLR	TLR 2A	Subject Leader Textiles	Y	Currently being recruited	We intend recruitment process to have been completed by the end of Term 2
WS	TLR	TLR 2A	Subject Leader Music	Y	Currently being recruited	We intend recruitment process to have been completed by the end of Term 2
WS	TLR	TLR 2A	Subject Leader IT	Y	Currently being recruited	We intend recruitment process to have been completed by the end of Term 2
BS	TLR	TLR 2A	Admin and Resource Coordinator	Y	Under review	Decision on way forward to be determined by the end of this academic year
BS	TLR	TLR 2A	Assisant to Post 16 Coordinator	Y	Under review	Decision on way forward to be determined by the end of this academic year
BS	TLR	TLR 2A	DT Coordinator	Y	Under review	Decision on way forward to be determined by the end of this academic year
BS	TLR	TLR 1B	Science Coordinator	Y	Under review	Decision on way forward to be determined by the end of this academic year
BS	TLR	TLR 2D	Assistant to Head of Department Art	Y	Under review	Decision on way forward to be determined by the end of this academic year
BS	TLR	TLR 2D	Teacher in charge of the Library	N	Under review	Decision on way forward to be determined by the end of this academic year
GC	TLR	TLR 1B	IT Coordinator	Y	Under review	Decision on way forward to be determined by the end of this academic year
GMLP	TLR	TLR 2B	Year Coordinator and Foundation Subject Leader	Y	Under review	Decision on way forward to be determined by the end of this academic year
HPS	TLR	TLR 2B	ICT and Foundation Subject Leader	Y	Under review	Decision on way forward to be determined by the end of this academic year
SJLP	TLR	TLR 2B	Year Coordinator and Foundation Subject Leader	Y	Under review	Decision on way forward to be determined by the end of this academic year
SJLP	TLR	TLR 2B	Year Coordinator and Foundation Subject Leader	Y	Under review	Decision on way forward to be determined by the end of this academic year
SPLP	TLR	TLR 2D	Early Years Coordinator	Y	Under review	Decision on way forward to be determined by the end of this academic year
SPLP	TLR	TLR 2B	Year Coordinator and Foundation Subject Leader	Y	Under review	Decision on way forward to be determined by the end of this academic year
SPLP	TLR	TLR 2B	Year Coordinator and Foundation Subject Leader	Y	Under review	Decision on way forward to be determined by the end of this academic year
WS	TLR	TLR 1B	DT Coordinator	Y	Under review	Decision on way forward to be determined by the end of this academic year
WS	TLR	TLR 2A	Subject Leader Drama	Y	Under review	Decision on way forward to be determined by the end of this academic year
WS	TLR	TLR 1B	Science Coordinator	Y	Under review	Decision on way forward to be determined by the end of this academic year
WS	TLR	TLR 2B	Assistant to Year Coordinator (KS3)	Y	Under review	Decision on way forward to be determined by the end of this academic year
WS	TLR	TLR 2B	Assistant to Year Coordinator (KS4)	Y	Under review	Decision on way forward to be determined by the end of this academic year
WS	TLR	TLR 2B	Assistant to Post 16 Coordinator	Y	Under review	Decision on way forward to be determined by the end of this academic year
WS	TLR	TLR 1A	Key Stage Coordinator (KS4)	Y	Under review	Decision on way forward to be determined by the end of this academic year

Hon. E J Reyes: Mr Speaker, thank you, and of course I can look at it further at another stage. I am glad to note in the column under the heading 'Currently Being Acted', they all indicate yes except for one particular post, which is 'Teacher in charge of the Library'. Is there a specific reason why they have decided not to allocate this post, even in an acting capacity?

Hon. Prof. J E Cortes: Mr Speaker, this is one of the posts that we are reviewing, but it is not acted upon because it is teacher in charge of the library in the secondary schools, where we have now employed a librarian and the discussion is whether we need a specific teacher in charge of the library or whether that role is adequately filled by the post of librarian. That is a discussion we are having both internally with Human Resources and, obviously, with the staff side.

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

Because of the Minister's answer it is now clarified that it is just a teacher of library as opposed to ... Just over 20 years ago, when I personally had a post within Bayside School, part of the duties was the library, but it actually encompassed more things and encompassed all learning facilities.

May I move on to the last column here? The Minister is being honest, saying 'We intend the recruitment process to have been completed by the end of Term 2,' so your recruitment process will have been completed by then. One could safely say, despite delays, by term 3. Then the incumbent would have been settled. However, a bit further down is 'Decision on way forward to be determined by the end of this academic year.' That could take us anywhere to June or July, and you determine a way forward but then the whole selection process does not commence until September. Can the Minister allay any fears that although it is work in progress, it seems in a year's time we could be talking about the same thing and still have a vacant position?

Hon. Prof. J E Cortes: Mr Speaker, I think that is unlikely. We are advancing in discussions on whether some of these need to be reviewed. Because the schools are larger, we had to give a bit of time to see whether responsibilities were adequate. I could go case by case, but obviously it would take too much time. The intention is that we finalise and agree with the teaching side what those posts should be, whether they need a change in title, whether they need a change in TLR, so that we would then advertise next term with a view to recruiting the following term, so that the teachers could be in place by the beginning of the next academic year. That is realistic because these things cannot be done overnight and the selection process normally – in many cases there are a lot of candidates – takes a long time, but that is the intention. I hope and I certainly undertake that we will not be in the position next year that these are pending. He will note, Mr Speaker, that a number of them are actually advertised and are currently in the process of being recruited – just under half of the total.

Hon. E J Reyes: Mr Speaker, thank you.

One small thing: because those towards the bottom say decision on way forward to be decided, are we talking about a decision that mainly, if anything, would affect the column 'Tiering', whether it be a TLR 1B or 2B and so on? Is that what the Minister is saying could be the main area to be decided on a way forward?

Hon. Prof. J E Cortes: Yes, Mr Speaker, that is a possibility. If the responsibilities have been increased because of the changes in the school, then the TLR may have to be a higher one; if they decrease, it may have to be a lower one. I suspect that if that happens they will more or less balance out, but this is a discussion that has to be considered very carefully and has to be done including the teachers' union.

Q480/2022

**Greenhouse Gas City Inventory 2020 –
Expected date of publication**

1720 **Clerk:** Question 480/2022. The Hon. the Leader of the Opposition on behalf of the Hon. E J Phillips.

Hon. K Azopardi: Mr Speaker, can the Government state when it is to publish its next greenhouse gas emissions declaration?

1725

Clerk: Answer, the Hon. the Minister for the Environment and Education.

Minister for the Environment, Sustainability, Climate Change and Education (Hon. Prof. J E Cortes): Mr Speaker, the 2020 Greenhouse Gas City Inventory will be published in mid-December this year, in a couple of weeks' time.

1730

Hon. K Azopardi: I am grateful for that. As it is imminent, has the hon. Member seen a draft of that, and how would that compare with the previous ...?

1735 **Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** Yes, Mr Speaker. May I also add that the requirement for producing these inventories is every two years, so we will publish the 2020 now and then we have to publish the other within two years' time; it takes time to develop the inventory.

From what I remember, the greenhouse gas emissions have dropped from the previous term. Clearly, there is a little bit of an artefact there because the 2020 figures will be expected to be lower because of lockdown. I think the indication is that even without lockdown the figures would have been smaller, but that will all be explained when the report is published. I believe the news is good, but obviously with the caveat that lockdown will have had an effect.

1740

Hon. K Azopardi: This is going to cover what specific period, just to remind us?

1745

Hon. Prof. J E Cortes: Mr Speaker, from memory I think it is the preceding two years. I have not got my supplementary notes with me, for some reason, but I believe it is two years. I stand to be corrected and I will certainly inform the hon. Member if I find that I am mistaken.

1750 **Hon. K Azopardi:** Just finally, so that I understand the point of 'the preceding two years' – meaning the period 2020-22 or the period 2018-20?

1755

Hon. Prof. J E Cortes: Mr Speaker, again, my notes seem to be missing from the file. The 2020 inventory will have covered, I believe, the two years up to 2020, so the previous one would have been the two years up to 2018. Again, I stand to be corrected.

Q481/2022

**Renewable energy –
Gibraltar's share**

Clerk: Question 481/2022. The Hon. the Leader of the Opposition on behalf of the Hon. E J Philips.

1760 **Hon. K Azopardi:** Mr Speaker, can the Government state what Gibraltar's share of renewable energy is?

Clerk: Answer, the Hon. the Minister for the Environment and Education.

Minister for the Environment, Sustainability, Climate Change and Education (Hon. Prof. J E Cortes): Mr Speaker, the installed capacity of renewable energy projects is about 3 megawatts. This constitutes about 10% of Gibraltar's daily average peak power demand, which is about 30 megawatts.

Hon. K Azopardi: Mr Speaker, what is the aim, in terms of the percentage that the Minister would like to achieve in terms of renewable energy?

Hon. Prof. J E Cortes: Mr Speaker, our published aim was 20% by 2021. That was delayed because of the inability of contractors to carry out projects during the COVID period. There are a number of other projects in hand which I believe within the next 12 months should take us very close to 20%. I would like to have much more than that, and we are working on ways of achieving it, but I am fairly confident that we will be very close to 20% in about 12 months' time. I am very pleased that we are now at 10%, which is obviously a lot more than it was 11 years ago when we were at not just zero but probably minus something because there was not a lot of interest.

Hon. K Azopardi: And when the hon. Member says they are working on projects to make it rise from 10% to 20% ... Obviously it was 20% by 2021, so clearly we have not got there and that could be due to other factors, but what is the kind of project that he is talking about that will make us get to that percentage?

Hon. Prof. J E Cortes: There are a number of projects that were planned and already have planning permission. In fact, there are one or two projects and I believe that one of the new stadiums is one which is producing energy, but we need to tweak the recording facility, so we may actually be producing a little bit more. There is already planning permission for a number of projects, and from memory I know that the University is one. I know that the solar panels were delivered there this week or last week. There is another plan for St Joseph's School and there are one or two others that were already part of a tender process, were allocated, went to planning but had to be halted and they are now taking off again. There are discussions with other, private, entities for themselves to install solar panels on their own roofs and there are discussions between the Department of the Environment, the Gibraltar Electricity Authority and these entities looking into the possibility of expanding further. This is why I believe that we can be close to 20% in a year's time.

Hon. K Azopardi: And so am I right in understanding from his explanation that the way we are achieving that jump in renewable energy is focused primarily, if not exclusively, on the solar panel route? Is that right?

Hon. Prof. J E Cortes: Yes, indeed, Mr Speaker, this is actually the cheapest and it is getting cheaper all the time, and, for Gibraltar, the most effective. Clearly we do not have land area for sizeable wind generators. Offshore is a possibility that is not being discarded and there are various studies looking into that. I think I have mentioned in here before we had an assessment of current speed to look at marine currents, which was done by the University of Highlands and Islands, and the preliminary studies suggested that our currents, surprisingly enough, within BGTW were not strong enough using present technology to make the marine current generators viable. In other words, it would take too long to give us the investment back. However, we are on their radar and they are leading in research on this, and as the technology improves it may well be possible for us to harness the power of the sea in our waters. But at the moment it is solar that is clearly well in the lead. There are still plenty of spaces where we can put them, and they are getting more efficient all the time.

Q482/2022

**Commonwealth and Campion Parks –
Smoke-free designation**

Clerk: Question 482/2022. The Hon. the Leader of the Opposition on behalf of the Hon. E J Phillips.

1815

Hon. K Azopardi: Mr Speaker, can the Government state whether or not Commonwealth Park and Campion Park are designated as smoke-free zones; and if not, why not?

Clerk: Answer, the Hon. the Minister for the Environment and Education.

1820

Minister for the Environment, Sustainability, Climate Change and Education (Hon. Prof. J E Cortes): No, Mr Speaker, Commonwealth Park and Campion Park are not currently designated as smoke-free zones. The original legislation for playgrounds and parks was designed for children's play parks specifically. However, new regulations designating these two parks as smoke-free zones are being drafted. I have seen a very advanced draft only this week, so it may be that we are able to publish as early as next week. I am not committing 100%, but I am quite hopeful that we will see it before Christmas.

1825

Q483/2022

**Walk the Wall project –
Progress**

Clerk: Question 483/2022. The Hon. the Leader of the Opposition on behalf of the Hon. E J Philips.

1830

Hon. K Azopardi: Mr Speaker, can the Government state what progress it has made with its 2020 proposed Walk the Wall project?

Clerk: Answer, the Hon. the Minister for the Environment and Education.

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Minister for the Environment, Sustainability, Climate Change and Education (Hon. Prof. J E Cortes): Mr Speaker, the Government has produced a detailed design and costing of the Walk the Wall project which divides it into phases. This project will not be proceeded with until it is financially prudent to do so, or private sector funding has been identified.

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Hon. K Azopardi: Can the Minister give us a bit more information about the phases? For example, when he says it will not be proceeded with because of the financial aspects, how many phases, what is the implementation timescale of the phases and what is the cost?

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Hon. Prof. J E Cortes: Mr Speaker, the Deputy Chief Minister is working on this with me and he may have more information. I think it is at least four phases. My hon. Friend suggests it is more. I think, from our last discussion, which is some months ago, we would start in the north and work our way southwards, heading from the American War Memorial towards the Catholic Community Centre as a first phase and taking it from there.

1850

I have no indication as to costs, but I think whatever costs we will have had by the time the phases are rolled out would obviously have to be reviewed, so I cannot assess that one.

Hon. K Azopardi: Just to understand that 'no indication of costs', is it that you have no indication of costs with you today?

1855 **Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** Yes.

Hon. K Azopardi: All right, so it is not that you have no indication of costs?

Hon. Prof. J E Cortes: I have no indication of costs with me today.

Q484/2022
Upper Rock –
Measures to protect against fire

1860 **Clerk:** Question 484/2022. The Hon. E J Reyes on behalf of the Hon. D A Feetham.

Hon. E J Reyes: Is the Government taking any extra measures to protect against fire in the Upper Rock?

1865 **Clerk:** Answer, the Hon. the Minister for the Environment and Education.

Minister for the Environment, Sustainability, Climate Change and Education (Hon. Prof. J E Cortes): Yes, the Department of the Environment works with colleagues in the GRS and Civil Contingencies to protect the Upper Rock against fire. Recently we have stepped up preparedness and have carried out a series of desktop exercises in order to be ready for such an eventuality. A live exercise is being planned for the near future involving all stakeholders. Practical steps, such as widening of firebreaks and repairs to water tanks, have also been carried out and more is planned.

1875 **Hon. E J Reyes:** It is amazing how nature interfered with this question. We did have a little bit of rain yesterday, but obviously by the time this question had been posed it had not rained for a very substantial time. If one brings to mind what used to happen years ago, when we had what seemed to be annual occurrences of fires in the Upper Rock ...

1880 The Minister has, in his answer, explained that the fire breaks and so on will be kept. Is there a scheduled programme, now that we are at this time of the year and more so, so that when spring comes we do not start to get, again, new growth in areas that have traditionally served as firebreaks? I am thinking of those that come to mind like behind the Bruce's Farm area and so on.

1885 **Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** Mr Speaker, the firebreaks are cleared before the summer. The new growth between now and the end of spring will be green, and because the woody vegetation is all removed it will all be herbaceous and not a danger to fire, so it is unlikely that fire would spread across firebreaks. It clearly depends on wind conditions and all that sort of thing, but the programme, I think, works well and the firebreaks are being extended. The plan is that every year they will be extended by a little bit more, obviously within limits, in order to increase the gap should fires arise.

1890 We are reviewing water supplies to the Reserve. You will be aware that there are works ongoing by AquaGib to take water up to Jews Gate to improve on the MoD supply there. All these things are happening and there are now a series of meetings being held with stakeholders to discuss and carry out desktop exercises as to how we will respond in different wind conditions and so on. So I think we are really upping the ante, hoping always that it will be a waste of time because we will not have to deal with a fire.

Hon. E J Reyes: Mr Speaker, I am glad to hear the Minister confirming that AquaGib is working on the extra provision, or improved provision of water and so on. Things may have changed. I know at one time the only supply of water in the Upper Rock was actually fresh water; there was a total lack of brackish water. Are these works being undertaken by AquaGib exclusively fresh water, or brackish or non-potable water, because that influences the demand on the town, as unfortunately we had a few months ago when we had to be careful and ration our use of water?

Hon. Prof. J E Cortes: Mr Speaker, I cannot answer that question. I know fresh water is involved. Whether they are putting in saltwater mains as well, I am not certain. I am glad to say, on behalf of my hon. Friend the Minister for Public Utilities, that water stocks at the moment are very healthy. I do not think that having the ability to have more pressure on our water supply on the Upper Rock is necessarily going to increase the consumption there. We are not going to suddenly provide more people with water, for instance; it is just that the water will be more reliable for those who live there.

Mr Speaker: Next question.

Q485-86/2022

COP27 –

Government attendance; implementation of recommendations

Clerk: Question 485/2022. The Hon. the Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. K Azopardi: Mr Speaker, did the Government attend COP27?

Clerk: Answer, the Hon. the Minister for the Environment and Education.

Minister for the Environment, Sustainability, Climate Change and Education (Hon. Prof. J E Cortes): I will answer this question together with Question 486.

Clerk: Question 486/2022. The Hon. the Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. K Azopardi: Mr Speaker, how will Government respond or envisage implementing the recommendations emerging from COP27, and what impact will this have on its own Climate Change Strategy issued in 2021?

Clerk: Answer, the Hon. the Minister for the Environment and Education.

Hon. Prof. J E Cortes: Mr Speaker, the Government did not attend COP27 in person, although Government officials did attend a number of sessions virtually.

The main outcome is the setting up of funding for developing nations, which I wholeheartedly welcome, but the need for stronger commitment for the reduction of the use of fossil fuels was not met. This is both disappointing and worrying. The Government will discuss the outcome with the Net Zero Delivery Body tasked with achieving our targets and will also take advice from the independent Climate Change Committee on if and how the Climate Change Strategy should be reviewed, although it is unlikely that this will be necessary.

Hon. K Azopardi: Mr Speaker, the part that it is unlikely to be necessary I suppose is added by the Minister because he has preceded that by the statement also that he is going to consult the

Net Zero Body and the Climate Change Committee. So I guess he is adding that from his own personal view – is that right?

1945 **Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** Yes, Mr Speaker, the Net Zero Body, chaired by the Deputy Chief Minister, will consider, as will the totally independent Climate Change Committee, whether our strategy has to be changed. My view is that nothing significant has happened at COP27 that will need our Climate Change Strategy to be changed because I think it is a good strategy, challenging as it is, but I do not believe ... I may be wrong, and if the delivery body or the Climate Change Committee
1950 advise that we need to change it, then obviously that will be considered. My personal opinion is that COP27 was so disappointing that we were well ahead. Let's hope that COP28 is better, because we are running out of time.

Hon. K Azopardi: Mr Speaker, I certainly agree that we are running out of time, meaning the globe is running out of time. *(Interjection)* Yes, indeed.
1955 The Climate Change Strategy is a chunky document, and while it may not be impacted by COP27 in his view, although that is subject to those discussions that the Minister has pointed out, does he have a view on when the Government would want to amend that strategy? Clearly it is a chunky document, so it is not something that will be done immediately, but is there an aim to replace it with a further document in the future? And if so, would it be at the five-year point or a
1960 shorter period?

Hon. Prof. J E Cortes: It has to be a dynamic document, and I think when we launched it we said it was a dynamic document which will be reviewed. We have the ideal body to review it, or to recommend changes, because that is what the independent Climate Change Committee was
1965 set up to do, made up of experts from Gibraltar and the majority, I believe, from outside Gibraltar, so it is totally independent and they are experts in the field. They report to me on a regular basis and as and when they recommend changes we will consider them, but I do not think we need a new document; I think this document has to be flexible and amendable, and so it should be.

1970 **Hon. K Azopardi:** And then just my final question. The Minister mentioned that at COP27 there had been some kind of agreement on the accessing of funding for developing nations. Is there any possibility of accessing funding for us to make any environmental changes, or is this very targeted to poorer countries?

1975 **Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** Yes, Mr Speaker, I would say there is no possibility. This is aimed at poorer countries who are large emitters, who feel, as we see from news reports, that the developed nations were able to do it as they were developing and contaminated the world, and now we in the developed world are asking them not to and they feel there should be some redress. Fortunately, COP decided that there should be, but it is not something that we would be able to
1980 lay our hands on, and probably nor should we because there are bigger problems elsewhere when we are talking specifically about emissions from developing countries, which have their own social and other problems.

Mr Speaker: Next question.

Q487/2022
St Mary's School –
Signing of underlease and financial terms

1985 **Clerk:** Question number 487/2022. The Hon. the Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. K Azopardi: Mr Speaker, can the Government confirm when it would expect to sign the underlease in respect of the future St Mary's School and what the financial terms of the agreement entered into with the developers dated 30th September 2021 in relation to that school are, and in particular what the annual rent or fee payable in relation to the school will be and what amount has been fixed in respect of the option to purchase?

Clerk: Answer, the Hon. the Minister for the Environment and Education.

Minister for the Environment, Sustainability, Climate Change and Education (Hon. Prof. J E Cortes): My apologies, Mr Speaker, I almost left – I thought we had finished – as I have been invited to attend the Gibraltar Heritage Trust Annual General Meeting, but I have told them I will be a little bit late.

I refer the hon. Gentleman to Question 245/2019. The Government expects to sign the underlease only upon completion of the works and the handing over of the site and post-snagging. Completion is presently anticipated for late spring/early summer 2023.

The financial terms are a rent of £29.75 per sq. foot internal, plus a fit-out rent of £4 per sq. ft internal and £2 per sq. ft external. The exact square footage will be set out in the lease once signed.

The Government has also secured a right to buy the property at defined intervals. The buyout valuation is based on a 4% yield at year 14 and a 6% yield at year 21 and every seventh anniversary thereafter. Assuming RPI at 2.5%, LPS calculated the valuations to be £28.9 million and £20.25 million respectively.

Hon. K Azopardi: Thank you for that, although I think the Minister went a bit fast on some of these stats – (*Interjection*) yes – and I may have to go over some of that ground. So let me be clear on what he is saying. That square footage had, in fact, come from a previous answer, although I had asked ... The hon. Member knows that I had put a similar question last time and we had a discussion between us as to whether the information had been received by us, or not. I went back to look at the 2019 question that I had asked the then Minister, Mr Licudi, who was dealing with it, and he had mentioned that once there was an agreement, it would be clearer to have the appropriate view of actual costs.

As I understand the figures he is giving us, the assessment is that the buyout price is £28.9 million – is that right? – at year 14, but then he gave a different figure at 21, and that was (£20.25 million.) £20.25 million. That would be a buyout price. Before the buyout, there is rental paid at the figure of £29.75 per square foot – is that right? – and obviously there is a fit-out. But is the hon. Member in a position to tell us what the rental charge would be? The last time I asked this, in 2019, Mr Licudi said at that stage that what they had were conceptual drawings of the plan, so it was difficult at that very early stage of the building works to calculate the square footage, so really it could not be one, but that that would emerge. Now that there has been an agreement with the developers, is there clarity of the square footage and therefore there can be a precise calculation of what the rental will be per year?

Hon. Prof. J E Cortes: I do not have that available. Until the lease is drawn up we will not have certainty. I believe there is some adjacent property also involved in parallel works. But I think that if we consider the cost per square foot of £29.75 ... Buildings built perhaps 25 years ago would have attracted a rent of £28 to £31. New-build now is attracting between £35 and £40 per square foot, so I do think, considering that, it is not a bad deal for the Government at all.

Hon. K Azopardi: I am reminded by my hon. Friend, who is, of course, much more on top of the figures, that ... I think it is in the public domain and would he agree that the rental cost is in the region of £1.1 million per year? Can he agree that?

Hon. Prof. J E Cortes: Mr Speaker, if it is in the public domain, it is in the public domain, but I could not comment because I do not have that figure in my head or in my notes. But if it is in the public domain, there it is.

Hon. K Azopardi: And then, Mr Speaker, he has mentioned a fitting-out cost, which I assume is over and above the rental cost. So does he have a figure for the fitting-out cost?

Hon. Prof. J E Cortes: No, Mr Speaker, I do not. The actual fit-out is being finalised now. These are for the loose items and other fixtures and fittings and we do not have that available at the moment.

Hon. K Azopardi: Does the hon. Member know how much the works are costing to refurbish the building?

Hon. Prof. J E Cortes: No, Mr Speaker, the hon. Member does not know. This is being run by a developer. We are keeping a close eye on the development to ensure that it is being built to our specifications. The schools are very closely involved, and have been, in the design and in keeping an eye on works. It is important for us that it be finished on time. We are confident it will be, but I do not have those figures.

Hon. K Azopardi: Obviously we need to look at those figures, but assuming that calculation of the rental cost, which is in the public domain, appears to be ... and you then add it to the figures he has given, if the Government were to opt to purchase at year 14 and waits 14 years to do it, and you are paying a rental cost of £1.1 million to £1.2 million per year, I have not done the maths but it looks to me as a figure well in excess of maybe even £45 million. That seems like a very large figure for a relatively small school.

Hon. Prof. J E Cortes: Mr Speaker, I am not going to speculate on figures that I do not have at hand, so I cannot comment any further on that. We are speculating on a calculation on the back of an envelope without any substantive figures to go on, and I do not think that is correct. Certainly I cannot comment on figures that I do not have available.

Hon. K Azopardi: With respect to the hon. Member, I am using his figures to a very large extent because he said at year 14 it is going to cost £28.9 million to buy the building. So you have at least to pay £28.9 million and then you have to pay whatever the rent has been for 14 years. Assuming it is at least £1 million, then it is £14 million plus £29 million, so you are looking at £43 million or £44 million, maybe 45 million. It seems like a very high figure. They are not figures that he does not have to hand, they are largely to hand; most of those figures are there.

Chief Minister (Hon. F R Picardo): Mr Speaker, as the hon. Gentleman is saying, we do not accept those figures. That is his calculation of what the figures are, but let's just assume that they are right. That is what he is saying. He is saying, 'Assuming that I am right, this is what you would be paying and that would seem like a lot of money for a school.' Well, Mr Speaker, not necessarily, because if the hon. Gentleman thinks of what the costs of developing schools are today ... Let me just give him the figure for the two schools down by Europort, the cost of development of which, on a brownfield site – that is to say on an empty site – is in the region of £15 million for each school. On a heritage site and building in the centre of the city the cost is always going to be higher. The rental which he is adding to the purchase price is in 20 years, so in 20 years ... Let me just see, given the numbers that he has used ... In 20 years, that school for £40 million is probably a steal because you would not be able to build for £40 million in 20 years and obtain that building at that price. You just need to see the argument that we were having with the hon. Gentleman before, when he was telling us that the cost of construction of Hassan Centenary Terraces, he had been

told, had gone up in the region of £40 million to £50 million in three years. So calculating the increase – which I did not confirm – in the cost of construction, the increase in the cost of money and the value, in that we are going to have a new school as from today, if in 20 years we acquire it for £20 million and we have paid another £20 million in rent, that means a total of £40 million. In 20 years that will seem like the bargain of the century. Inflation just in this period has been 10%, so inflation in 20 years – assuming not 10% inflation, assuming, to go back to Mr Clinton’s first question this afternoon, compound inflation of an average of 2.5% ... Let’s say we go back to the Bank of England target, which is to 2.5%, over 20 years that is 40%, plus this year’s 20%. That is 50% inflation.

If he is Chief Minister in 20 years’ time – I certainly will not be, Mr Speaker – I only ask that on the day he exercises the option to purchase that property for £20 million, having paid a total of £20 million more, when that property will seem like a steal and dirt cheap, he invites me only for a coffee, a chat, to pat me on the back and say, ‘I said everything you did was wrong, but on reflection this one was not bad.’

Hon. K Azopardi: Mr Speaker, I will tell him one thing – (*Interjection and laughter*) in 20 years’ time ... at least I can say that I will have stood down as GSD leader by then. (*Laughter and interjections*) There may be a leadership election in 20 years’ time.

Mr Speaker, I am not sure I see how the hon. Member is putting it, because I just do not think you can use the example that he has. He is saying this is a really good deal because you could not build a school like this in 20 years’ time, you could not build this school for £45 million in 20 years’ time. Well, of course that is right. You could not build this school in 20 years’ time for £45 million, but nor would this school, built today, be in the same state as it would be brand new in 20 years’ time. So you cannot say the school that I have in 20 years’ time is a bargain because you are comparing a 20-year-old school with a school that is brand new.

Hon. Chief Minister: Will the hon. Member give way?

Hon. K Azopardi: Yes, I will give way.

Hon. Chief Minister: I think what he is failing to consider in that context, in the analysis that he is making, leading to a question, is that that does not consider the acquisition cost of property. There is no title at the moment; there is tenancy. In 20 years’ time, if you exercise the option, you get title to the land. That plot, then, with that building on it is what I am saying would be the bargain. You then also have the school developed and you have had the benefit of it, but you do not have title of it today. What you are acquiring when you exercise the option is title, and what I am saying is given where we are ... Just look back 20 years to the value of property in Gibraltar, and look at where you are today. I will tell him for nothing I bought my home 20 or 30 years ago, in 1997, from the GSD for a half of a fraction of what it is worth today. If you extrapolate from the property values that we all know, what each of us bought a home for 20 years ago and what you sell it for 20 years later, in the context of property value of course there is going to be a huge appreciation in capital value of property, and therefore the option will seem like the deal of the century. That is what I am saying to him.

Hon. K Azopardi: Well, I am glad that he can at least thank the GSD for something. (*Interjection by Hon. Chief Minister*) Mr Speaker, what I am saying is this, in essence. You have a rental deal, which seems like a high rental deal, leading to an option to purchase, which is quite significant – £20 million at year 21, but of course at year 21 you have paid 21 years of that £1 million, so it is £40 million, and at year 14 it is £45 million.

I asked the Minister does he have the costs of the fit-out. Doesn’t it make sense to understand what those costs of fit-out are, so that it might be that the Government wants to accelerate the option to purchase? And if that is something that the Government thinks is cost expedient for the

taxpayer, is there a mechanism to accelerate the option to purchase? He has given me the year 14 and year 21 ones, but is there something in the agreement that allows the Government to accelerate the option to purchase – to, say, do it in seven or eight years?

2145 **Hon. Chief Minister:** Mr Speaker, every option to purchase gives a landlord and a tenant a defined point at which they have agreed a price, which does not prevent them from agreeing other prices at different times. So you can agree to purchase the property at any other time, as long as you can agree the price – (*Interjection*) as a mutual agreement at any time. What this does is set out the parameters on which we have done deals now. We have done a number of these
2150 deals, as the hon. Gentleman knows, and what you are doing when you negotiate an option is negotiate property prices for the future based around the property prices that you know today. Therein lies the opportunity to make a lot of money for the taxpayer in a way that is going to produce what we believe is a very advantageous situation for the taxpayer in 20 years' time, even though you have paid the rent for 20 years and had the benefit of the building for 20 years –
2155 because, of course, as he knows, in a tenancy you have exclusive possession for a rent for the period and the benefit of that for the children who are going to go to the new St Mary's School, and the opportunity of acquiring the property at what we think will be a dirt-cheap price in 20 years, which will make the whole thing, when you add the rent paid and the option price, a *great* deal, cheap for the people of Gibraltar.

2160 These are large numbers and I fully get it that when you look at these numbers it is very easy to inflame people to think '*que poca verguensa* £40 million', when actually, in the context of the property world – which may not be the world in which most people operate, which may not be the sorts of figures that most people bandy about, but which are the figures the Government has to deal with because Government is in the property market – this will likely be one of the best
2165 deals that the Government of Gibraltar has done for Gibraltar taxpayers.

Adjournment

Mr Speaker: The Hon. the Chief Minister.

Chief Minister Hon. F R Picardo: Mr Speaker, I now have the honour to move that the House should recess to tomorrow at 4.30 in the afternoon.

2170 **Mr Speaker:** I now propose the question, which is that this House do now adjourn to Friday, 25th November at 4.30 p.m.

I now put the question, which is that this House do now adjourn to Friday, 25th November at 4.30 p.m. Those in favour? (**Members:** Aye.) Those against? Passed. This House will now adjourn
2175 to Friday, 25th November at 4.30 p.m.

The House adjourned at 6.25 p.m.