



PROCEEDINGS OF THE GIBRALTAR PARLIAMENT

AFTERNOON SESSION: 3.37 p.m. – 6.28 p.m.

Gibraltar, Tuesday, 17th May 2022

Contents

Questions for Oral Answer	3
Procedural.....	3
Justice, Equality and Public Standards and Regulations.....	3
Q229/2021 Nitrous oxide – Criminalisation re possession and supply	3
Q230/2021 Support for the profoundly deaf – Provision of BSL trained interpreters.....	4
Q231/2021 Support for the profoundly deaf – Interactions with the public service.....	6
Q22/2022 British Sign Language – Qualified individuals engaged in public sector.....	10
Q23/2022 Mental Health Act 2016 – Leaves of absence requested since introduction.....	10
Q24/2022 Breathalyser tests – Number of convictions set aside due to unapproved tests..	12
Q25/2022 UN Convention on the Rights of the Disabled – Target date for full implementation	13
Q26/2022 Parental alienation – Plans following public consultation	16
Q27/2022 HM Prison – Mandatory drugs testing	18
Q28/2022 <i>Lishman</i> case – Review of outcome	19
Q29-30/2022 National Disability Strategy and Autism Pathway – Finalising and publication	20
Q31/2022 Development plans – Lack of cycle lanes and charging points	24
Deputy Chief Minister	25
Q90/2022 Civil aviation – Post-Brexit changes envisaged.....	25
Q91/2022 Former GBC premises site – Update re development options.....	26

Q92/2022 Gibraltar National Archives – Update re new premises	27
Q93/2022 St Andrew’s Church, Town Range – Developments.....	28
Q94/2022 Northern Defences – Refurbishment programme and future management plans	29
Q95/2022 Victualling Yard – Number of expressions of interest received.....	30
<i>The House recessed at 5.30 p.m. and resumed its sitting at 5.46 p.m.</i>	30
Procedural	31
Digital, Financial Services, Health Authority and Public Utilities	31
Q232/2021 PCC/GHA telephone appointment system – Plans for overhaul	31
Q233/2021 Cancelled operations – Categorised and reasons for cancellation.....	32
Q234/2021 Provision of MRI scanning services – Location re incorporation of commercial entity	32
Q235/2021 – Provision of MRI scanning services – Commercial rationale – Question withdrawn	33
Q246-47/2021 Suspended social workers – Number suspended, whether paid, duration of and reasons for suspension.....	34
Q248/2021 Bruce’s Farm – Replacement of drug-addiction specialist doctors	35
Q249/2021 Bruce’s Farm – Aftercare programme	36
Q96/2022 Special needs dental patients – Allotted days in operating theatre.....	38
Q97/2022 Schoolchildren referred to Mental Health and Child Protection Services – Numbers in current academic year.....	39
Q98/2022 Street lights – Why on in daytime.....	40
Q99/2022 Diesel skid generators – Whether operational	41
Q100/2022 Surgical and non-surgical backlogs – Details for all disciplines	42
<i>The House adjourned at 6.28 p.m.</i>	43

The Gibraltar Parliament

The Parliament met at 3.37 p.m.

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

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

Questions for Oral Answer

Clerk: Meeting of Parliament, Tuesday, 17th May 2022.
We continue with Answers to Questions.

Procedural

5 **Mr Speaker:** We are going to start off, first of all, with a number of unanswered questions from the September meeting. Some of these will be answered by Minister Sacramento and then it will be the turn of Minister Isola, who has some of these unanswered questions from September. We are going to start with Question 229.

JUSTICE, EQUALITY AND PUBLIC STANDARDS AND REGULATIONS

Q229/2021

Nitrous oxide –

Criminalisation re possession and supply

10 **Clerk:** Question 229/2021. The Hon. E J Phillips.

Hon. E J Phillips: Mr Speaker, can the Government confirm that it intends to criminalise the possession and supply of nitrous oxide?

15 **Clerk:** Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Justice, Equality and Standards.

Minister for Justice, Equality and Public Standards and Regulations (Hon. Miss S J Sacramento): Mr Speaker, I have already discussed this issue with the Commissioner of Police and I have commissioned draft legislation for the purpose of making nitrous oxide a controlled drug under the Crimes Act.

20 **Hon. E J Phillips:** I thank the hon. Lady for the answer to the question. I think that, of course, is a development from the legislation that the Government brought in 2020 in relation to the imports and exports amendment, making it a controlled import. Does the Minister know at this stage when she is likely to bring amending legislation to bring that within the scope of the misuse
25 of drugs legislation?

I only ask that because it is clear from the positive – actually, the very positive – engagement I had with the Chief Minister in relation to this issue that there are still a number of these cartridges seen in certain car parks in Gibraltar where a lot of young people are misusing this particular item, which is commonly known as ‘hippy crack’, and the photographs that I received yesterday from an individual who said they have now noticed a lot of these in a particular car park, which I can share with the Hon. Minister.

I would just like some more visibility on when she intends to promote legislation in this area.

Hon. Miss S J Sacramento: Mr Speaker, the draft legislation has been commissioned. There are quite a number of pieces of legislation that I have commissioned, so as soon as it is made ready by those who are drafting it for me it will be brought to this House.

Mr Speaker: Next question.

Q230/2021

Support for the profoundly deaf – Provision of BSL trained interpreters

Clerk: Question 230/2021. The Hon. E J Phillips.

Hon. E J Phillips: Mr Speaker, can the Government state whether the support for profoundly deaf people extends to the provision of BSL trained and experienced British Sign Language interpreters?

Clerk: Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Justice, Equality and Standards.

Minister for Justice, Equality and Public Standards and Regulations (Hon. Miss S J Sacramento): Mr Speaker, the hon. Gentleman will be aware that the Government recently published a Bill to recognise British Sign Language as a language of Gibraltar and requires the Minister for Equality to report on the promotion and facilitation of the use of BSL by public authorities and issue relevant guidance.

Hon. E J Phillips: Mr Speaker, of course there is a Bill before this House that is likely to be presented by a Minister of the Government in respect of the recognition of British Sign Language as a language of Gibraltar. The question really is pointed at the resource issue, because whilst the Bill will, I can state to the Minister, be welcomed by this side of the House, it is a first step in not only recognition but also provision more widely.

There is concern by GHITA, deaf members and hearing-loss members of our community about the lack of resource, particularly in healthcare, education and employment, and it would be helpful if the Minister could explain what level of interpreter will be provided, because there is clearly a CPD issue there as well, so it would be helpful if the Minister could expand on the answer.

Hon. Miss S J Sacramento: Mr Speaker, there will, of course, be a debate in this House as to the merits of the Bill that I have just referred to, but as the hon. Member will know, because he has seen this Bill, there is provision for the provision of BSL by public authorities if the Bill is passed.

However, first of all in relation to the point that the hon. Member makes in respect of GHITA, I was not aware that the hon. Member was a spokesman for GHITA in this House. In my capacity as Minister for Equality, my Department is in regular contact with GHITA and we have a very good relationship with them, as of course they have a relationship with the Chief Minister from the meetings that they have with him as well as with me.

Of course we would not, clearly, present a Bill to this House for the recognition of British Sign Language if there was no intention to provide it, but the hon. Gentleman does not understand that Gibraltar public authorities already facilitate the use of British Sign Language interpreters in the services that they provide. In fact, this is an arrangement that was initially introduced in Gibraltar, in the GHA, by this Government and it was the hon. Member Minister Cortes who introduced it when he was Minister for Health. So that is a landmark decision made by us in government and I recall very vividly working closely with Minister Cortes in this respect.

What we have is a contractual relationship. Initially it was a relationship between the Gibraltar Health Authority and a provider of BSL services. Subsequently, as we were learning more about the issue, that contract was extended for the whole of the Government. So, what we have is a contract where if someone requires the provision of BSL within a Government Department we have arrangements with a provider to provide those for us. Also, because that is not always available immediately, the Government has invested in an app where that is provided by digital means. I do not know the extent of the hon. Gentleman's knowledge in this field. In my capacity as Minister for Equality I am very fortunate that I have a very efficient team at the Ministry for Equality who, of course, are very up to date with these things and keep them up to date.

As a Government that is invested in and committed to equality, these things are, of course, provided, so the answer to the hon. Gentleman is yes.

Hon. E J Phillips: Mr Speaker, just one more question. I am not going to labour the point because there is a particular question on the Order Paper that deals with the number of interpreters and we can deal with that when we come to it.

I should say from the outset that I am not a spokesman for GHITA. I am a supporter of the work that they do and their cause. I am also a supporter of inclusivity and accessibility to interpreters for deaf people who really need them in healthcare in communicating their conditions to doctors and nurses. I think this whole House should support GHITA. I am not a spokesman for them, but I am a supporter of the work that they do and I will always support the work that they do within this community.

What I would say is that the BSL Bill that will be presented before this House is about recognition of BSL as a language and it imposes on the Minister an obligation to report to this House in relation to the work of public services and the Departments under the Government. My question was more about BSL trained and experienced sign language interpreters and the accessibility of that, because that is the real problem on the ground, that people are not getting ... The information I receive from those people who believe in inclusivity and accessibility is that they do not have that accessibility, and I think it is important that this House support those individuals who have a longstanding complaint about being discriminated against because of the lack of resource for the deaf and hearing-loss community. I would ask the Minister if she could expand on that.

Hon. Miss S J Sacramento: Mr Speaker, I am very glad and indeed I welcome the hon. Gentleman's support for the work that we have done in Government through the Ministry for Equality in the inclusion of people with disabilities, regardless of the disability they have, and the very significant progress that we have made in over 10 years since we have been in Government and work that I am very proud that we have done as a Government.

In this respect, the hon. Gentleman I think is confusing this question, which is an old question from a historic sitting of Parliament, with a different question that I think it is also the hon. Gentleman who has posed on the Order Paper in relation to the qualification of people who are trained in BSL. That is a completely separate question.

Insofar as what the Bill does and does not do, I did say in my first reply to a supplementary that the Bill is before this House and will be debated in this House. It is obviously clear from the content and the substance of the Bill what the Government intends to provide and I would not want, at

this stage, to usurp the debate that we intend to have in this House, because I feel it is improper to do it at this juncture.

125 **Mr Speaker:** Next question.

Q231/2021
Support for the profoundly deaf –
Interactions with the public service

Clerk: Question 231/2021. The Hon. E J Phillips.

130 **Hon. E J Phillips:** Mr Speaker, can the Government confirm what support the Government provides to assist profoundly deaf people within the community in their daily interactions with public services?

Clerk: Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Justice, Equality and Standards.

135 **Minister for Justice, Equality and Public Standards and Regulations (Hon. Miss S J Sacramento):** Mr Speaker, our Government has always been committed to equality. We were the first to introduce the provision of BSL and have now published a Bill for it to be recognised.

140 With the progress of e-Government services alone, this Government is ensuring that more services are available to those who find it difficult to communicate verbally, but this merely improves a system that already existed for any individual who may have found it difficult to communicate in person or by telephone. E-Gov services were also introduced and this offered alternative ways in which people with hearing impairments can communicate with Departments in order to complete and submit application forms or other information.

145 Notwithstanding this, hearing induction loop systems have also been actively introduced by us in many Government Departments and sites, and other measures have been taken to ensure that this service is provided when an individual needs to attend in person, if they are hard of hearing. For example, at the Primary Care Centre we have, for a long time, offered appointment services via the Smart Messaging Service (SMS) to those people who are deaf or hard of hearing and cannot phone in to ask for an appointment. At the clinics, pagers that vibrate are also being used to communicate that the GP or medical practitioner is available to see the patient. Also, since last year, the GHA 111 service was enhanced to allow people who are deaf or hard of hearing to communicate via WhatsApp if they require medical attention. This service will also allow the emergency 111 team to dispatch police or fire services if required by the user. As you know, Mr Speaker, 111 is also the mental health crisis line.

155 The Government has a longstanding contractual arrangement that was introduced by this administration that enables Government to book BSL interpreters to attend meetings where necessary. This has been further enhanced by adding the provision of online sign video service as well.

BSL interpreters have been used frequently in the past by Government, including at cultural events like the Literary Festival and also at the Gibraltar National Day Rally.

160 **Hon. E J Phillips:** Mr Speaker, I think we generally, as a community, have underestimated the need for wider BSL provision within our community. If we individually look back at our lives and what we do every single day of the week, it is difficult to imagine an example of an individual going to see a doctor, for instance, in a sensitive appointment with a doctor, and not being able to communicate with that doctor the symptomology of the complaint that they are experiencing. That is enormously difficult for someone who is deaf or has a hearing loss issue.

What I am receiving from constituents is the problem in communication, and whilst she is right in relation to the online exchange, it does assist in some way, but what I am receiving from people on the ground is that it is very difficult to communicate with a doctor. You must understand from the GHA's perspective as well that in terms of misdiagnosis and risk to the GHA in misdiagnosis it is also a problem.

There is another example as well, in relation to public broadcasting. That is a serious issue for the deaf and hearing-loss community, who wish to understand the news that is going on in our community. Indeed, the speech of the Chief Minister yesterday, in that contribution: isn't it right that the deaf and hearing-loss community understand what the Chief Minister is saying about a seminal moment in the history of Gibraltar and its engagement on Brexit?

I think that what I am asking the Minister ... Those are two or three examples of where the deaf and hearing-loss community do feel that they are being discriminated against insofar as access to public services and I think the answer to this problem – and I ask her whether she agrees or not – is the increased provision of British Sign Language across the public service so those individuals concerned can understand and communicate properly, as is their right, Mr Speaker.

Chief Minister (Hon. F R Picardo): Mr Speaker, the hon. Gentleman has referred to me during the course of the question and to my contribution yesterday in this House in relation to Brexit. He will have noticed that I read my speech. Other than during the course of interventions during the Budget debate or indeed when presenting a Bill which is technical, I try to avoid reading speeches because the Rules suggest that we should not and that we need your leave to read a speech. I gave you yesterday, Mr Speaker, a copy of my Statement ahead of my delivery of it, as is the custom also in circumstances where a Member seeks leaves to read.

There is a reason why when I make Statements in this House I read them, and there is a reason why every time I have made an intervention and one of the Members of the Government has made an intervention at four o'clock from No. 6 Convent Place in those horrible days when we were dealing with COVID, why we were reading our speeches, and that is because after we made our very first intervention, GHITA got in touch with us and said, 'These statements are hugely important and our members cannot understand what is being said on every occasion because they do not have the kit,' and we do not have subtitles, etc. And so we then ensured that instead of having notes when we made our addresses from No. 6 etc., we had a script, so the script could immediately be provided online and could be provided on our social media platforms, so that members of the hard-of-hearing community in Gibraltar were able to have that as expeditiously as possible. We subsequently also tried to provide online subtitles to the question and answer sessions and our teams transcribed those question and answer sessions so that members of GHITA could have that information.

We are absolutely of the view that those who are hard of hearing must have the information, insofar as possible, in real time, and what we are going to do, as a Government – and therefore I am surprised that the hon. Gentleman thinks he needs to urge us to do so – is make it a legal requirement that provision is available to those who are hard of hearing, so that BSL becomes an official language and we have to provide in the official language that alternative language to what is being said.

Mr Speaker, we have to understand it is going to be a sea change in the way that we do things in Gibraltar. We have already understood that these things can be manageable, because we have seen how it has been done in the United Kingdom, although England has been the last of the nations of the United Kingdom to adopt legislation, but Wales and Scotland have done so already. There is now a model for us to be able to follow and we are very confident that we will be able to make the provision that is necessary.

The credit for this should go not to anyone in this House. The credit for this should go to those who have been campaigning to make us all aware of this, not just in our time in government but even before, from the days of Joe Brugada writing to me about these issues, putting them on the agenda, our discussions on the subject.

Hon. Members will know that since the first moment the hon. Lady had the opportunity to do so, we were providing a BSL interpreter at Casemates on National Day and on other occasions when we were able to do so. So we have gone from being volunteers to this to accepting that we have to take a further step and bind ourselves by law to ensure that this provision is made.

I hope that the hon. Gentleman therefore now sees that he is pushing at a door that is no longer there, that opened a long time ago, that opened when we were elected, that opened as a result of the hard work of the men and women who make up GHITA and from the genesis of GHITA and the work that Joe Brugada used to do. He wrote me a very moving letter recently, where he said an old man's work is done and it really has been well done.

Hon. E J Phillips: Mr Speaker, I just have one question, a final question in relation to this. I know that Mr Bossino had a lot of leave yesterday to ask all sorts of questions, but I only have one in relation to this.

I thank the Chief Minister for his intervention, and of course he answers that question more broadly from the Government's perspective but also in relation to his responsibilities for broadcasting. I did direct a certain part of my question in relation to, for instance, those who are involved with doctors in sensitive medical investigations and how difficult it is for them to communicate with their doctors. I note that that might well remain unanswered.

I acknowledge the fact that the Government puts forward this sea change in approach, which we welcome on this side of the House, but I should not let that go without saying that it was the motion of this side of the House, in combination with the campaign by GHITA that has allowed the Government to bring this Bill in the time that it has. I think that is the overall context of how this has happened and I think it is right that we ... not make this political, Mr Speaker (*Interjections*) because this is not about them and us, this is about the deaf community, and people like Bobby and Ana Maria Gomez who are marching to the north of Spain in this heat, campaigning for the rights of deaf people. This is about systemic discrimination of deaf people in our community for generations and we are putting it right, and we should avoid at all costs a political battle on this because this is about deaf people. Does the Chief Minister agree with that assessment?

And I would appreciate an answer in relation to the medical question before.

Hon. Chief Minister: Mr Speaker, in relation to the medical issue, which is an operational issue, I will allow the Minister for Disabilities to reply.

I really do not understand what it is that the hon. Gentleman is trying to do, because I was attempting to ensure that we were reflecting on how things were being done in a constructive spirit.

The Government has never needed an Opposition motion on any subject in order to be able to legislate in respect of that subject. The Government, I must tell him, was not at all moved by his motion. We felt it was the usual attempt by hon. Members to try to curry favour with a particular section or interest group in our community. The reason for that, as I have been at pains to explain on a number of occasions to hon. Members – to this hon. Member in particular – is that I have always been clear with hon. Members that if they believe that something will improve our community and they wish to bring a motion to this House for the purpose of doing that, they have two ways of doing it. They can simply put a motion and then the Government will take the view it takes of the motion and we will ... This is the place to do politics in our community and therefore we will deal with it in the way that we consider is necessarily political. Or, if the hon. Members opposite want a motion to succeed and they therefore wish to have Government support for an Opposition motion, the only thing that they need to do is get in touch with me, or indeed with another Member of the Government, with their relevant shadow in that area, say that they think this is a thing which is constructive and that we should do together. We will agree, if it is constructive and if it is something that we can do together. They can then move the motion, so that they can have the party political brownie points which they might wish to garner from any particular issue – let's make no bones about the fact that politicians are in politics to do politics –

and we will support them, although they will have that party political gain because they will be the first movers on an issue which will enjoy our support.

The hon. Gentleman did not do that in this case. The hon. Gentleman simply went for the sure shot of the headline where he was the mover of the motion. He was not able to say that he had
275 Government support and I can tell him now he will not have Government support for his motion because the Government is doing that which the Government is empowered to do.

The Government has been in direct contact with the people who have the issues here, in GHITA. There was a confluence of opinion between those making representations to the Government and those inside the Government advising the Government – and GHITA have many
280 strong advocates inside the Government – and that is why the Government acted.

And so the first part of what the hon. Gentleman said in the context of asking a question in this last supplementary was entirely wrong and misleading. The Government did not need the Opposition motion in order to bring this legislation. Neither was the Government moved to act because of the Opposition motion. The motivation behind the Government's action was the
285 extraordinary campaign run by GHITA and the representations made internally by the hon. Lady and others who advise her also.

Just in relation to those who are continuing the exercise of fundraising – and I know that Robert Gomez is walking an extraordinary distance to raise awareness of these issues and raise funds for these issues – people like that are the people who deserve the respect of this community, people
290 who put themselves out when they could put their feet up. Those are the ones who really deserve our support and those are the ones who deserve the credit for keeping these issues at the top of the political agenda with so much going on – people like Edgar Triay, who gives every moment outside his professional life, if not some of them in his professional life, to keep this on the agenda to make the campaign. His committee, the people who support him, all deserve mention of the
295 great work that has been done to keep this in the headlines and to make it a priority.

Mr Speaker, I think it ill behoves us, in particular when we get up to say that something is not political, to be quite as party political as the hon. Gentleman transparently has.

Hon. Miss S J Sacramento: Mr Speaker, I will deal with the other points and that of medical
300 treatment, in particular the capacity to give consent to medical treatment, which is, in a nutshell and in a concise way of expressing it, what I think the hon. Gentleman wanted to say in his extremely long supplementary questions.

I am afraid that I think that the hon. Gentleman has not heard a word of what I said in my answers. It would be much better, I would advise the hon. Gentleman, if he could really hear with
305 the purpose of listening to what I have to say, instead of just listening for the sake of it and already having his pre-prepared supplementary questions, which do not take anything I have just said into account.

I said, I do not know how many supplementaries ago – we have already been here half an hour and we are still on the second question – when we came into government and I was Minister for
310 Equality and Minister Cortes was the Minister for Health, we introduced a system so that we could provide British Sign Language services to people who are profoundly deaf and speak British Sign Language. It was something that when they were in government did not exist. When we came into government we introduced it.

We introduced it initially in the GHA because the issue of informed consent and understanding
315 medical treatment is something that we felt very strongly about. As I explained in answer to my question, we have introduced a system whereby if you are deaf and are unable to use the telephone to make an appointment, an appointment can be made either using e-Gov or by using an SMS system, so you can get into the system. So, the first part of one of the supplementaries he asked I answered. When you use the system, the GHA system recognises you as deaf, and
320 arrangements are then made so that when you attend your appointment there is provision for there to be a BSL interpreter there, available for you. All that I have explained, but the hon. Gentleman did not seem to understand.

The arrangements that are made in government are not just for speakers of BSL. The hon. Gentleman is focusing these couple of questions he is asking here specifically on BSL – they relate to people who speak BSL – but when it comes to the Government, and as part of our ... Mr Speaker, that is the term that is used. You speak BSL. That is the terminology that one uses in this area. But the work that we have done is not limited to people who speak BSL. We provide support to all the people in Gibraltar who are also hard of hearing with lots of other alternatives to services that we provide for them, and we will be very shortly announcing a massive investment that Government has made in audiology services for Gibraltar.

Mr Speaker: Next question.

Q22/2022

**British Sign Language –
Qualified individuals engaged in public sector**

Clerk: Question 22/2022. The Hon. E J Phillips.

Hon. E J Phillips: Mr Speaker, can the Government state the number of British Sign Language qualified individuals currently engaged in the public sector?

Clerk: Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Justice, Equality and Standards.

Minister for Justice, Equality and Public Standards and Regulations (Hon. Miss S J Sacramento): Mr Speaker, in his question the hon. Gentleman specifically enquires as to the number of individuals qualified in British Sign Language (BSL). Since Government is not a provider of BSL training, it is not in a position to answer this question with absolute certainty.

What I can say is that the Ministry of Equality has in the past collaborated with GHITA in order to offer and pay for training for public servants in BSL Levels 1 and 2. Already this year, the Ministry of Equality has spoken to GHITA again to provide similar training and are waiting to hear from them as to when it will be delivered. The Government's Human Resources department has also undertaken a consultation with all public offices to determine the number of public servants who have any level of qualification in BSL and it has shown that 17 people are so qualified.

Mr Speaker, it is important to point out that HM Government of Gibraltar already engages with qualified BSL interpreters when necessary, both in person and via online video link.

Mr Speaker: Next question.

Q23/2022

**Mental Health Act 2016 –
Leaves of absence requested since introduction**

Clerk: Question 23/2022. The Hon. D A Feetham.

Hon. D A Feetham: Mr Speaker, may I ask the Minister to please look at the answer provided to Q702/2020? Is the Minister now able to answer the supplementary posed, namely how many reports and requests for leave of absence have been received since the Mental Health Act 2016 was introduced, updating the position to today's date?

Clerk: Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Justice, Equality and Standards.

Minister for Justice, Equality and Public Standards and Regulations (Hon. Miss S J Sacramento): Mr Speaker, the granting of leaves of absence to patients under section 16 of the Mental Health Act 2016 is within the remit of the responsible clinician. It is only relevant for the Minister for Justice to be involved if the individual has been admitted to Ocean Views subject to a hospital order. In those cases, section 16 of the Mental Health Act 2016 needs to be read in conjunction with section 117 of the same Act, which requires the Minister for Justice's consent.

Since the Mental Health Act 2016 was introduced, five applications for the granting of leaves of absence have been received by the Ministry for Justice. These relate to three individuals. All of the applications were agreed to.

Hon. D A Feetham: Mr Speaker, I understand that she has a role, in certain circumstances, in relation to leave of absence, but the information that I have received is that in fact reports were not being produced under section 16.

Just to recap so that people understand this, section 16 of the Mental Health Act essentially allows a responsible clinician to make a report that essentially will allow somebody out of Ocean Views where that person has been sectioned, but in order to do so it will consider the situation of that person – for example, whether it will allow that person to be rehabilitated, and that is why a short leave may be provided, but also the safety of the public. So that is one of the things that need to be considered in the report.

I would have thought that even though it may not involve a decision by her, a question from me as to how many of these reports have been produced ... The question arose out of a prior question about how many leaves of absence had actually been granted. I was asking how many reports had been produced because the information I was getting was that in fact these reports were not being produced. I would have thought that is something that the Hon. Minister would take seriously and would be keen to answer in this House, and therefore I am asking her again –

Hon. Miss S J Sacramento: I have answered.

Hon. D A Feetham: Well, no, you have not. Perhaps I have misunderstood. *(Interjection by Hon. Miss S J Sacramento)* Is the Minister saying that there are five that have involved her? But I am not asking about her only, I am actually asking how many reports have been produced more generally that do not involve her.

Hon. Miss S J Sacramento: Mr Speaker, as I recall – because this is a question that arises from the last time we were in Parliament and the hon. Gentleman will remember that there were a number of questions in relation to this and there was a lot of toing and froing between us as to the actual question the hon. Gentleman was asking, so I remember we were having this debate at length on the last occasion. In terms of this question, I have replied on the basis of my understanding of this question from the basis of the questions on the last occasion, because this question follows on from that one and I remember that we had a lot of debate across the floor in that respect.

As far as the ones that come to me as the Minister for Justice, of course, as the hon. Gentleman rightly says, it is my job to ensure that this process is triggered and that this process is done. Of course these are produced. I see them, I read them, I consult on them and I sign them, and in fact when these reports have come to me I have sent them back with questions because, as the hon. Gentleman says, I need to be satisfied in terms of the rights of the individuals concerned and the public protection responsibilities that we have.

Although this question has not been answered beyond this, I know for a fact – not in my capacity as Minister for Justice, which is how I am replying to this today, but in my previous capacity as Minister for Health I, of course, ensured that this happened ... I know for a fact that it

happens. It also forms part of the Gibraltar National Mental Health Strategy, so I know that these things happen.

415 I know that the hon. Gentleman triggered ... I said I was the previous Minister for Health, not the current. I do not know what the joke with the hon. Gentleman is at the moment. I am a bit confused. (*Interjection*) No, I am looking at you. In any event, Mr Speaker, I do not know why the hon. Gentleman finds this discussion funny, because it is very serious.

420 I know that when we had this debate in the last Parliament the hon. Gentleman raised this as a result of a conversation with someone from – (*Interjection by Hon. D A Feetham*) No, I think we did by the end of it. By the end of the debate we identified the source and I think when I met with ... We are going further to what we identified here last time. It is in relation to a group that meets in this umbrella and it was discussed in that context. The hon. Gentleman can rest assured that if there was any understanding or misunderstanding at the last meeting of Parliament, which
425 was last year and a long time ago and perhaps premised on something that was more of a rumour and not that accurate, then so that we do not have to go further into that debate I can guarantee to the hon. Gentleman that all procedures that need to be met in law are met.

Q24/2022

Breathalyser tests –

Number of convictions set aside due to unapproved tests

Clerk: Question 24/2022. The Hon. D A Feetham.

430 **Hon. D A Feetham:** Can the Minister please refer to the answers to Written Questions 51, 52, 53/2021, and will the Government state how many convictions, if any, have been set aside or overturned either on appeal, by agreement with the Crown Prosecution service or otherwise due to the use of an unapproved breathalyser as a *material* factor?

I have put the 'material' in italics so that the Minister can focus on that.

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Clerk: Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Justice, Equality and Standards.

Minister for Justice, Equality and Public Standards and Regulations (Hon. Miss S J Sacramento): Mr Speaker, one.

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Clerk: Question 25/2022.

Mr Speaker: Just a second, Mr Clerk. Does the hon. Member wish to ask a supplementary?

445 **Hon. D A Feetham:** So there is one that has been set aside because the use of the unapproved breathalyser was a material factor in the conviction – am I correct in relation to that?

Hon. Miss S J Sacramento: Yes, Mr Speaker, I did read the question as he intended me to read it, but in any event I am grateful for that clarification that he provided.

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As the hon. Gentleman will know, convictions of this nature are not usually premised on the roadside breathalyser. Usually it is on the basis of a second test that is undertaken, but the question was only relevant in relation to one particular case.

455 **Hon. D A Feetham:** And does she know whether there have been any attempts or any representations, for example, to the Crown Prosecution Service for the Crown Prosecution Service to review any other convictions on the basis that the unapproved breathalyser was also material in the conviction?

460 **Hon. Miss S J Sacramento:** Mr Speaker, yes, and indeed it was the other way round. It was as a result of this situation that the Director of Public Prosecutions advised the Police to identify if there were any other cases where this may be relevant, and I understand that the Royal Gibraltar Police wrote to individuals and invited them to make representations in that respect, but from the information that I have, no representations were received, so only one has been overturned.

Mr Speaker: Next question.

Q25/2022

**UN Convention on the Rights of the Disabled –
Target date for full implementation**

465 **Clerk:** Question 25/2022. The Hon. D A Feetham.

Hon. D A Feetham: Mr Speaker, I refer to the answer provided to Written Question 57/2021. Will the Government please state by when it intends to fully implement the UN Convention on the Rights of the Disabled?

470 **Clerk:** Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Justice, Equality and Standards.

Minister for Justice, Equality and Public Standards and Regulations (Hon. Miss S J Sacramento): Mr Speaker, Government continues to be committed to assuring the rights of people with disabilities are being met. As I said in my last reply to the hon. Gentleman in Written Question 57/2021, this continues to be an ongoing process that has been held back because of our focus on COVID-19, but which we are already refocussing on.

475 In essence, the UN Convention sets out a minimum standard for the protection and safeguarding of a full range of civil, political, social and economic rights for people with disabilities. The support for the rights already exists in legislation in the form of our Constitution, the Equal Opportunities Act, the Disability Act and other legislation. The ongoing progress I referred to relates to the practical matters that need to be looked at in order to better provide services so that these rights are enabled.

485 **Hon. D A Feetham:** Mr Speaker, I have in the past accepted that the Government has gone a long way in relation to the rights of the disabled, but this is an important issue in relation to the UN Convention, as the Minister nodding from a sedentary position appears to accept, and therefore can I ask her to provide some comfort to people who are concerned about this with at least an indication of by when she expects that exercise to be completed?

490 **Hon. Miss S J Sacramento:** Of course, Mr Speaker, equality is not more important to anyone than to those on this side of this House, so anything we need to do in terms of progressing any of the strands in relation to equality we will progress as much as we can.

495 Of course we know, and the hon. Gentleman will have heard me say in relation to disability and the provisions of the UN Convention, anything that needs to be done in order to further what we have already done will be done in the lifetime of this House.

500 **Hon. D A Feetham:** Mr Speaker, just one final question. 'As much as we can' obviously is an elastic concept. Can the Minister at least –? (*Interjection by Hon. Miss S J Sacramento*) I have said 'as much as we can'. Sorry, have you heard what I have said? 'As much as we can' is an elastic concept. Sorry, does she want to say something?

Hon. Miss S J Sacramento: Mr Speaker, I just do not understand where the supplementary is going, so hopefully we can – (*Interjection*) The hon. Gentleman just continues to repeat something, but I do not understand from his questions today or in previous questions what exactly it is that he is getting at, that he wants me to do. Is there anything in particular that he wants me to do? Can he please be clear, instead of being ...? I think, Mr Speaker, it is the hon. Gentleman who is being elastic and very wide in his description. I would ask the hon. Gentleman to be concise and pinpoint what it is that he is referring to.

Hon. D A Feetham: Mr Speaker, I know that after the next election we will be on that side and they will be sitting here (**Several Members:** Hear, hear) and therefore she can ask all the questions she wants and she will find us in government much more forthcoming than they are with answers that they provide – and far less elastic, I may add, as well.

What we want on this side of the House is the implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Disabled; that is what we want.

The question I was going to ask was: given that doing as much as we can is an elastic concept, can she at least say whether she has completed any kind of study that at least is going to guide her in the work in terms of the implementation? For example, is there a set of parameters that she has now landed upon where the Government essentially has made a decision that we are going to be implementing 90% of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Disabled, or we are going to be implementing this part that we left out last time round but not these other parts? That is essentially the supplementary question, so that at least we have more specificity in relation to what the Government's plan is in relation to the implementation of this particularly important Convention.

Chief Minister (Hon. F R Picardo): Mr Speaker, I am afraid that I agree with the hon. Gentleman about what is going to happen after the next election. I do believe he is right: there is likely to be a Feetham on this side of the House, but it is unlikely to be him (*Interjections*) because when it comes to elasticity there is no one more elastic than the hon. Gentleman. In fact, in praising him, as I always do since he has left the leadership of the Opposition, I would say that he is Gibraltar's political equivalent of the stretchy man on the *Fantastic Four* because he pretends to be as much on the left as he pretends on the right. He pretends to cover all parts of the political rainbow and to represent all ideologies and, of course, none, which is in the nature of the hon. Gentleman.

That is why the team he represents is very likely to be rejected at the next General Election by the people of Gibraltar. What I am not going to do is decide what is going to happen at the next General Election because I respect the judgement of the people of Gibraltar and they will decide who makes up the next Government of Gibraltar at the time when a General Election is called – which, by the way, is not three months after February when the hon. Gentleman thought it was going to be.

On this issue the hon. Gentleman has demonstrated that he does not understand the concept with which he is pressing us, and it is a concept on which he should press us. The Government is pressing itself in order to achieve the extension of the United Nations Convention on the issue of disabilities, not the implementation of the United Nations Convention on Disabilities. The hon. Gentleman has confused his apples and his pears. He has confused his directives of the European Union, which contain things which have to be implemented in the national law, and his conventions, which are UN conventions, which are extended, not implemented, into the national law.

And so, Mr Speaker, what the Government is doing is putting in place all of the things that need to be put in place in the national law for the extension of the Convention to Gibraltar, which must happen as soon as possible, to be done without Gibraltar then being in breach of the Convention when the extension becomes active. These are completely different legal concepts that he has confused, and in that context what the hon. Lady is saying is that we have done a lot already – and he has recognised that – to put ourselves in a position where extension, not implementation, of

the Convention to Gibraltar can happen without Gibraltar immediately being in breach of that Convention when it is extended to us.

Hon. Members will know, of course, that the extension of the Convention is sought by the United Kingdom. The United Kingdom acquires international legal obligations when the Convention is extended to Gibraltar and it would be the United Kingdom that would be found in breach of its international legal obligations if we had not put in place all those building blocks. The answer that we gave him before he started to spin his yarn about elasticity and forgot that we were not dealing with a concept called implementation, we are dealing with a concept called extension, is that we expect that that extension will be done in the lifetime of this Parliament, which is not just another week before the three months that Mr Clinton suggested would be the end of the lifetime of this Parliament when he was interviewed on GBC in February, it is in the lifetime of the Writ of this Parliament, which is four years from October 2019. And so we believe that we have fully answered with full particulars the issue as to the timetable and the issue as to the extension of the Convention, not implementation.

But on this, Mr Speaker, whilst he remains a Member of this Parliament I look forward to continuing to be pushed by him. This is the one area on which the GSD is welcome to clock-watch for us. He will recall that when he had abandoned the left and joined the right and then became a Member of this Parliament, his leader, Sir Peter Caruana, told us in Opposition, when we were asking them about whether one of the projects in their manifesto was going to be completed, that as far as the GSD – the colours that he still represents – were concerned, the Opposition were not elected in this House to clock-watch when they were implementing their obligations to the people of Gibraltar because they were the Government, they were elected by the people of Gibraltar, they were answerable to the people of Gibraltar. Well, Mr Speaker, on this I tell him he should clock-watch us. He should ask us at every session of the House between now and the next General Election, ‘Where are you on the extension’ – not implementation – ‘of the United Nations Convention in respect of disabilities?’ and we will happily answer that we are on target to complete extension during the lifetime of this Parliament.

I look forward to welcoming the other Feetham to this House, Mr Speaker.

Hon. D A Feetham: Mr Speaker, my belt must be particularly visible today because he really cannot resist punching below it. That is the reality. The hon. Gentleman’s style in politics is that every single time there is a question that hits the mark or potentially is going to hit the mark the hon. Gentleman rises and hits below the belt. That is his style. I will just leave it there.

The reality is that every single Government does its bit over the course of their term in office for different sectors of society. We did it, they have done it, I have recognised it. We have brought motions in relation to Disability Benefit, we have asked about this issue on a number of occasions, and that is what politics is about. It is about an Opposition of the day essentially holding the Government to account and asking questions, because that way issues then are at the forefront of a Government’s agenda, or more likely to be at the forefront of the Government’s agenda.

Mr Speaker, all I want from the answer to this question is for the Government not to split hairs in terms of extensions and implementation, but bearing in mind that in the past the Government has said they were not able to transpose – let’s use that wording – into Gibraltar law the UN Convention or the UN Convention on Human Rights because it would have involved, I think, from memory at the time, a disproportionate burden, for example, on private business – that is one of the arguments that were deployed at the time – and therefore the Government has seemed to accept that what we had in the legislation book is not a full transposition of the actual Convention ... Is the Government saying that, actually, before the end of this term in office all of the Convention is going to effectively be transposed and form part of the law of Gibraltar and that there are not going to be parts that are left out because they may be disproportionate either on business or on the Government? That is the question.

Hon. Chief Minister: Mr Speaker, the hon. Gentleman I think does neither of us any favours by suggesting that we are engaged in a pugilist exchange. I do not understand how it is that he goes on television and talks liberally about welcoming his brother to politics, and when I welcome his brother to politics I am accused of hitting below the belt. The hon. Gentleman really needs to belt up.

Look, there is nothing to transpose in the United Nations Convention. He needs to understand that, and he has not understood it. Although I have been at pains and I have spoken slowly, he has not understood that the Convention is not about implementation of things or transposition of things. He has still got his old European lawyer hat on. Directives contain things which are transposed or which are implemented. The Conventions are different, the Conventions are about rights, and the things one has to do in one's national law are to ensure that the rights are protected, so that when the Convention bites, the things that have to ensure the mechanisms of the state and third parties are available to the people who have the right to have them available are there. That is the process we have been undergoing at greater speed and alacrity until 2020 and then, like everything else, it hits the buffer of the pandemic and that slows us down.

In order to understand this better, perhaps, Mr Speaker, what I would say to the hon. Gentleman is that instead of when he comes to doing the clock-watching I have asked him to do and ask us in every session of the House – subject to your consent because you would have to agree to that and the hon. Gentleman might have to rephrase the question a little every time to not offend the rule against asking the same question every six months ... The concept is not about transposition or implementation, it is about extension, and the best way to describe the Convention is as once it is extended, and if you are not in breach of it, it gives you the kite mark, if you can call it that, that your laws are in compliance with the Convention. So he can ask us about compliance with the Convention but there is nothing in the Convention to implement or transpose.

I hope that is clear and that the blow he says I dealt him did not reach any of his intellectual nether regions in a way that has prevented him from understanding what I said.

Mr Speaker: Next question.

Clerk: Question 26/2022 –

Mr Speaker: I think, with respect to the Leader of the Opposition, we have covered this particular subject to quite an in-depth degree. I do not think we should continue with this one.

Next question, please.

Q26/2022
Parental alienation –
Plans following public consultation

Clerk: Question 26/2022. The Hon. D A Feetham.

Hon. D A Feetham: Mr Speaker, following its public consultation, what is the Government going to do in order to tackle parental alienation?

Clerk: Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Justice, Equality and Standards.

Minister for Justice, Equality and Public Standards and Regulations (Hon. Miss S J Sacramento): Mr Speaker, as explained the last time that this was asked in Parliament, this was, unfortunately, unavoidably delayed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Now that work has restarted,

it will be concluded in the coming months. Discussions have already been undertaken with the Care Agency, as social workers will deal with children and court welfare matters, as well as the court service as the principal stakeholders. It is also intended that guidance information will be prepared for court users and members of the public.

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Hon. D A Feetham: Mr Speaker, does the Government intend to change the law in order to deal with this issue of parental alienation?

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Hon. Miss S J Sacramento: Mr Speaker, at this stage I am advised that it is not necessarily a matter of legislation that needs to be changed but more in relation to guidance and advice and the way that people work with families. If at any point I feel that that changes and it requires a legislative amendment, then of course I will consider that, but at the moment that is not the advice that I am receiving.

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Hon. D A Feetham: Mr Speaker, as somebody who has sat in her chair and has attempted to deal with this issue, as indeed I did between 2007 and 2011, through guidance and through education, I am sceptical, I have to say. It is not a criticism of the Government, it is just an observation on the policy because that is what we did. I am sceptical about whether in fact education and information are going to solve this particular issue.

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Has she seriously considered changes of the law along the lines of other jurisdictions that have come to the same conclusion – in other words, that parental alienation needs to be dealt with through positive legislation change, rather than simply education and information?

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Hon. Miss S J Sacramento: Mr Speaker, I recently, beyond this consultation exercise of parental alienation as a specific area of concern in family legislation, commissioned a wholesale review of family law, family legislation and all proceedings. Under the new review there may be changes to the way we do things by operation, i.e. by way of order, by way of guidance, and the guidance can be statutory in terms of possibly either by way of court rules, which is of course a matter for the courts but not for us, or by way of secondary legislation as opposed to legislating in the way I think the hon. Gentleman is referring to. But I am, of course, open to it in the context of the way that things have to change.

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I understand what the hon. Gentleman did when he was Minister for Justice and it was something that was necessary at the time. In particular when it comes to family law, the dynamic of the world is changing, the way we have to deal with cases is changing and that is a reflection of the way that society is changing. This is something that we have to be alive to and this is something that we very much have under review.

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The position I have in terms of the representations that have been given to me and the advice that has been given to me is that it does not require legislative change, but it may well be that when we are looking at other potential legislative changes this may fall into that in a different way. It will be clearer when we issue the consultation on the broader consultation of the family law reform that I have recently embarked on – so it is not something that has been formally announced yet, Mr Speaker.

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Hon. E J Phillips: Mr Speaker, if I may, and I am grateful for your leave on this particular question, I have a strong interest in this area; the hon. Lady and I have discussed this on numerous occasions insofar as parental alienation syndrome.

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The hon. Lady will know, of course, that five years ago I was interviewed by the *Chronicle* in relation to this specific area and was calling on the Government at the time to deal with targeted training of the judiciary, lawyers and those involved in this issue so that we can provide better understanding. And whilst I support what my hon. and learned Friend on this side of the House says about legislation, has the Government ...? It was five years ago that we called for this and it was in response to Lady Justice Parker in the United Kingdom, when she said there needs to be a

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greater understanding of parental alienation. What has the Government done in the last five years to increase training for the judiciary, lawyers and those who are in family practice, so that we can better understand this phenomenon and the damage it does to families across the board?

Hon. Miss S J Sacramento: Mr Speaker, the hon. Gentleman will forgive me, I am not aware of ... whether it was a press release or an interview that he gave five years ago. Please forgive me, I am not aware of that, but in any event I was not the Minister –

Chief Minister (Hon. F R Picardo): [inaudible] assiduously read everything you say in the media.

Hon. Miss S J Sacramento: Exactly. Mr Speaker, I was not the Minister for Justice at the time but the general principle that if there are issues that arise that formal training may need to be required ... is very much part and parcel of the review that is being conducted in this regard, so while I am not familiar with that press interview that he is referring to, it is a recommendation but it is not a recommendation as a result of what the hon. Gentleman has said, not a recommendation in this respect but a recommendation generally.

Mr Speaker: Next question.

Q27/2022
HM Prison –
Mandatory drugs testing

Clerk: Question 27/2022. The Hon. D A Feetham.

Hon. D A Feetham: Mr Speaker, what progress has the Government made in relation to mandatory drugs testing at HM Prison?

Clerk: Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Justice, Equality and Standards.

Minister for Justice, Equality and Public Standards and Regulations (Hon. Miss S J Sacramento): Mr Speaker, you will recall that when this matter was previously raised in this Parliament I explained that it was an unfortunate side effect of the COVID-19 pandemic that our ability to progress this matter was limited. I am pleased to be able to state now that, since then, progress has been made to ensure that mandatory drugs testing of prisoners will be able to commence before the end of 2022.

The hon. Gentleman will recall from his last question that such testing was being undertaken in the UK. Since then, arrangements have been made for testing to now be undertaken at the GHA lab instead and that HM Prison Service has completed its review of the relevant policies and practices.

The final training for the MDT Co-ordinator/Trainer is due to be completed within the month and this will commence thereafter.

Q28/2022
***Lishman* case –**
Review of outcome

740 **Clerk:** Question 28/2022. The Hon. D A Feetham.

Hon. D A Feetham: Mr Speaker, does the Government consider that any laws need changing following its review of the *Lishman* case outcome?

745 **Clerk:** Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Justice, Equality and Standards.

Minister for Justice, Equality and Public Standards and Regulations (Hon. Miss S J Sacramento): Mr Speaker, this review is ongoing.

750 **Hon. D A Feetham:** Mr Speaker, can the Minister give an estimate as to how long she expects this review to continue?

755 **Hon. Miss S J Sacramento:** Mr Speaker, this review into very sad and regrettable circumstances is part of a wider piece of work that we are undertaking in relation to domestic abuse and there is a lot of work that is being undertaken in that respect with an insight into this particular case as part of that. As soon as that work is concluded – and it is incredibly advanced – I would be happy to inform the hon. Gentleman.

760 **Hon. D A Feetham:** Mr Speaker, can the Minister say who is conducting the review?

Hon. Miss S J Sacramento: Mr Speaker, it is a multi-agency review generally that we are doing, but it is led by the Ministry of Justice in their capacity, where the people who are dealing with it are neutral from the people who were involved in the details of this particular case.

765 **Hon. D A Feetham:** And is anybody with any legislative expertise involved in that review as part of that team?

Hon. Miss S J Sacramento: Mr Speaker, yes.

770 **Hon. K Azopardi:** Mr Speaker, can I just ask, following on from that, what is the scope of the review? Is the review looking at the criminal law or some aspects of the criminal law? Is it looking at sentencing issues? Is it looking at other aspects? Is it looking at departmental processes? Can the Minister perhaps give us an idea of precisely what is being looked at and perhaps the composition, if there is a committee dealing with it to discuss ...? If it is a wide remit and it is a committee, can she give us some idea of who is on the committee in terms of not specific names but perhaps which Departments they are drawn from?

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785 **Hon. S J Sacramento:** Mr Speaker, yes, all that the hon. Gentleman has mentioned are issues that are being looked at in this case and in the wider way in which we work, because of course fundamentally the objective of the exercise we are doing is to protect victims of abuse, victims of violence and victims of domestic abuse, so it is part of a wider group. It is led by the team within the Ministry for Justice and it is a fluid arrangement as opposed to a committee looking at these particular circumstances. There will be consultation with stakeholders internally and externally as well. By stakeholders I mean the normal stakeholders that one would expect, in terms of the Police and prosecution and the process.

Hon. K Azopardi: Would the Minister keep in mind that obviously there was a big degree of public concern evidenced not least by the demonstration that was held just shortly after the outcome of that matter? And would the Minister keep in mind that degree of public debate that there was in terms of ensuring that ...? I am sure the Minister does realise that it is important for the review committee and that process to carry on its work to reach a comprehensive outcome, obviously, in terms of the results of its recommendations and to do its work properly, but of course to do so also in a way that is not too extended and that the outcomes of the investigation and review are done as quickly as possible so that if there are going to be improvements to processes or legislation that are the results of the inquiry, then clearly it should be done as soon as possible to deal with those matters.

Hon. Miss S J Sacramento: Mr Speaker, of course I am alive to representations that have been made.

What I can say in terms of comfort, if there can be some, is that the incident is historic in that it took place a number of years ago and there has been a lot of progress in that field and there has been a lot of development in that field since then.

Q29-30/2022

National Disability Strategy and Autism Pathway – Finalising and publication

Clerk: Question 29/2022. The Hon. K Azopardi.

Hon. K Azopardi: Mr Speaker, can the Government confirm when the National Disability Strategy will be finalised and whether this will be published?

Clerk: Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Justice, Equality and Standards.

Minister for Justice, Equality and Public Standards and Regulations (Hon. Miss S J Sacramento): Mr Speaker, I will answer this question together with Question 30.

Clerk: Question 30/2022. The Hon. K Azopardi.

Hon. K Azopardi: Mr Speaker, can the Government confirm when the Autism Pathway will be finalised and whether this will be published?

Clerk: Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Justice, Equality and Standards.

Hon. Miss S J Sacramento: Mr Speaker, significant work has already been undertaken on progressing disability, and within that autism, at a strategic level. The strategy is delivered at operational level by the key stakeholder Departments. Learning disability and autism pathways have already been further developed under the National Mental Health strategy that was published last year. Work is also being undertaken to have documented strategies and these will be published when ready.

Hon. K Azopardi: Mr Speaker, so I am understanding the answer, is the Minister saying that there is going to be a National Disability Strategy under which there are different elements, one of which is the Autism 'Pathway', for want of a better word? That Autism Pathway – there is going to be an improved, republished version – is that what she is saying?

Hon. Miss S J Sacramento: Mr Speaker, when we talk about issues such as learning disabilities and autism, there is an overlap between the strategic way we deal with things and the operational way we deal with things, and there is a massive overlap with mental health.

835 The hon. Gentleman will be aware that last year I published a document which was the National Mental Health Strategy for Gibraltar. It looks something like this. If it helps the hon. Gentleman, I am happy to furnish him with a copy if he does not have one. Obviously, before this document we have had strategic documents and strategic working groups as we work on these things, but now we have this document. I am working on a document for disability which will be very similar to
840 this one, but of course it will have an overlap with health and with mental health, and for that reason a lot of this work is already undertaken under the auspices of this document and a lot of the workstreams and working groups are already formally established as part of the Gibraltar Mental Health Strategy because of the overlap, and then those are groups that already existed, some more informally than others, before this document was published.

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Hon. K Azopardi: I am grateful for that. The hon. Lady did give me a copy of the Mental Health Strategy last year, so she does not need to ... But I am not sure she answered my question. Maybe I should just put it again. My question was whether the Autism Pathway is going to be republished. That was my specific question.

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While I am on my feet, can she perhaps give us an indication of when she would expect the National Disability Strategy to be published, bearing in mind that, as I understand it, the Government first started work on this back in maybe 2014? There is a reference to an Autism Pathway in the 2014-15 Health Report, when the Hon. Prof. Cortes was the Minister involved, and so it has been, I suppose, a while in brewing, and my question is: assuming this is dovetailed with
855 the work on the National Disability Strategy, which again presumably is not an easy document to draft but has been worked on for some time, can she give us an idea of when it is likely that she thinks she will publish such a document?

Hon. Miss S J Sacramento: Mr Speaker, let me clarify. The hon. Gentleman has made reference
860 to a statement I made in 2014. I can assure him that the work on the strategic development when it comes to disability started very much in 2011, because that was obviously the ambition when we started, and a lot of work has gone into that already and strategies exist. The majority of the strategies that we have are, of course, internal, but they have always been applied. Strategies in this field obviously are very live, and as things develop and progress and we learn more, then we
865 work on what we have.

He is right that some years ago there was a specific focus on autism. The intention of that was because of the number of people who were affected by autism, and because it was such a large number it would have been part of the wider Disability Strategy. But things like introducing the Disability Act as part of the Disability Strategy, the improvements that we make in Departments,
870 in service delivery, in training, all that is part of the Disability Strategy.

What I want to do now is, having been very alive, I think, to the success of having a written National Mental Health Strategy in this document ... I am very happy with this document and the outcomes that we have had in the work that we have undertaken here since we published it. I want to do something very similar for disability.

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The Autism Pathway that he refers to will be developed under that strategy, but a lot of work when it comes to autism, particularly the mental health and the health aspects of autism, are captured by this. But not all the needs of people who are on the autism spectrum are health needs, there are also social needs, and that will be clearer in the new document. The document, of course, is multi-agency, and whereas the Disability Strategy will be centralised in the Ministry for
880 Equality – because that is the pivot for the Government, so that is where all disability roads lead to on a strategic basis and a policy development basis – obviously we will have a lot of interagency work in relation to that because we have to involve the Director of Public Health as well as the Health and Social Services providers of the strategy.

Mr Speaker: The Hon. Damon Bossino.

Hon. D J Bossino: I am grateful, Mr Speaker.

May I ask the Minister on an issue in terms of the administration of this strategy? (*Interjection by Hon. Miss S M Sacramento*) Sorry, how this is going to be administered. The basic question is: is it her office or is it – I want to get the name right – the National Special Needs and Disability ... No, sorry, excuse me, that is not the one ... the Special Needs Co-ordination and Liaison Office. As I understand it, that office – and I know the individual who leads it – works from No. 6, and in fact it was going to be done from No. 6. So is it No. 6 and that particular office, or is it her Department that is going to be leading on the Disability Strategy?

Hon. Miss S J Sacramento: Mr Speaker, I am, of course, the Minister with the constitutional responsibility for disability. When I undertake these functions, obviously I will consult with clinical professionals and there are also public servants who are engaged as part of the whole umbrella.

As the Minister for Disability, when it comes to this, it is my responsibility to discharge these functions and of course I will involve different people within the public sector as well as the private sector and the voluntary sector along the way. But as this is my responsibility as Minister for Equality, it will be delivered by the Ministry for Equality in the same way that when we delivered the Mental Health Strategy it was delivered at the time by the Minister for Health because it is a national strategy for the Government. The Government will, of course, consult anyone we need to consult as part of that, and different individuals will report to me along the way.

Hon. D J Bossino: With respect to that – maybe there has been a change, and if there has been a change I would ask her to confirm that position – the position in Government press releases was ... This was, I think, the first press release on the subject; there have been two, as far as I know. The first one was dated 6th September and it very clearly states ‘The Special Needs Co-ordination and Liaison Office is responsible for ...’ There are three bullet points and the first one says ‘developing and implementing a National Special Needs and Disability Strategy for Gibraltar’. Is she now saying that that has changed and it is her office that is now leading on this issue?

Chief Minister (Hon. F R Picardo): Mr Speaker, under the Constitution, when I have designated Ministers, all of the Ministers have the ability to run national programmes. National programmes are not just run by the Chief Minister, they are run by each Minister in their respective Departments. If the hon. Gentleman thinks that national programmes can only be run by the Chief Minister from No. 6 Convent Place, he has a misunderstanding of how the delegation of powers after the election happens in the way that Ministers take their powers from the Governor.

Mr Speaker: I think we need to move on.

Hon. D J Bossino: This is a very important point.

Mr Speaker: What point are you trying to make, please?

Hon. D J Bossino: It is simply whether there has been a change in the approach. It is very clearly stated that it is nothing to do with the Chief Minister and No. 6. It actually says there is a special office that has been set up. It so happens that it works from No. 6 Convent Place. It has a hifalutin name. It was said in the press release that this office, the Special Needs and Disability Co-ordination and Liaison Office, which operates from No. 6, was going to be leading on this strategy. We are now being told that it is now being led by the Minister and her office. All I am trying to establish is whether she admits and agrees that there has been a change in tack and policy.

935 A further question to that is: what is the remit of this office, which was set up in September, according to her press release? What is it going to be doing from now on? Is it now no longer going to be responsible for the launching, seeing-to and conclusion of this particular strategy?

I think it is an important issue of public ... and nothing to do with what the Hon. Chief Minister, with all due respect to him, has replied in answer to my point.

940 **Hon. Chief Minister:** Well, Mr Speaker, I think the hon. Gentleman has completely misunderstood that point, because it goes exactly to what he has asked.

No. 6 Convent Place is not my office, it is the place in which I am based. No. 6 Convent Place is a Government office. It is also the office of the Deputy Chief Minister. The Minister with responsibility for financial stability has officers there who work to him and work to me, and so the fact that an office is based in No. 6 does not mean that it is not answerable to the other Minister who is also based in No. 6, because the Hon. Miss Sacramento has responsibility for civil contingencies and Civil Contingencies occupy all of the bottom right hand floor, as you go in, of No. 6 Convent Place.

950 I really do not understand what it is that the hon. Gentleman is saying, because the fact that somebody is at No. 6 and running a national plan does not mean they are running it for me; they could be running it for him, for the Deputy Chief Minister, or they could be running it for her because she is the Minister for Civil Contingencies and is at No. 6.

Mr Speaker, the hon. Gentleman has asked a question and we have given him the answer. He has now asked it again: has there, therefore been a change of tack? Answer: no, this is the same tack in the same office in the same direction. I genuinely believe that he is really pressing us and splitting hairs on an issue on which we should all be agreed, which is that we have set up an office which is doing the right thing. It is doing it from the heart of Government, answerable to the Minister with responsibility for these things, who has offices there in that office as well. On the substance of the issue, where we should be spending time, he is not asking us anything; he is just asking us where is it based. (*Interjection*) It beggars belief, Mr Speaker.

965 **Hon. Miss S J Sacramento:** Mr Speaker, as the Chief Minister has just said, I do not understand the splitting of hairs because of one individual. As I think I said earlier, when it comes to disability, because of my ... Mr Speaker, if the hon. Gentleman wants to listen to what I am saying (*Interjection*) he may be able to get to the bottom of the question he is asking.

Hon. D J Bossino: [inaudible] to ask.

970 **Hon. Miss S J Sacramento:** Mr Speaker, I will answer to you, and if the hon. Gentleman wants to listen to my answer then I welcome that he does. As I said earlier, constitutionally – (*Interjection*) Mr Speaker, constitutionally the Chief Minister has appointed me as the Minister with responsibility for disability. In that respect, anything in relation to policy or strategy of disability will have to report to me. There are different people within the Government and within the public sector who report to me on disability and they will report to me through the Ministry for Equality. I hope that answers the hon. Gentleman's question.

Mr Speaker: Next question.

Q31/2022

**Development plans –
Lack of cycle lanes and charging points**

Clerk: Question 31/2022. The Hon. Ms M D Hassan Nahon.

980 **Hon. Ms M D Hassan Nahon:** Why are we continuing to develop without cycling lanes and charging points being embedded in our development plans?

Clerk: Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Justice, Equality and Standards.

985 **Minister for Justice, Equality and Public Standards and Regulations (Hon. Miss S J Sacramento):** Mr Speaker, the Gibraltar Development Plan contains a policy on cycling routes, which aims to encourage cycling as a means of transport in Gibraltar by encouraging the provision of safe routes and facilities and requiring that new developments take account of the requirements of cyclists.

990 Furthermore, both cycling and the use of electric vehicles as environmentally friendly modes of transport are very much the policy of this Government and widely encouraged in various ways. The Town Planning (Development Control) Regulations 2019 include requirements for applications for planning permission to include scheduled numbers of both active and passive electric vehicle charging points. These policies and provisions are continuously being applied in all
995 planning applications where redevelopment is proposed either through pre-submission consultations and included in the submitted plans and planning statement for approval, or as planning conditions.

Hon. Ms M D Hassan Nahon: Mr Speaker, I thank the Minister for her answer but this question
1000 is one that I have myself observed has not been adhered to – in terms of when the Minister says that these are embedded in the plans, it does not appear to be. Can I ask if we saw this in the new schools or in the schools that are being built? Can I ask if we are seeing it in the new projects? I myself and representatives of the cycling community are not seeing it, so I would just like an affirmation from her that these are being implemented in the future developments, and I want to
1005 ask why I am not seeing them in the schools that have been built recently.

Hon. Miss S J Sacramento: Mr Speaker, there are questions specifically relating to cycling and schools on the Order Paper later on and, with your leave, I would suggest that it may be better placed for the hon. Gentleman the Minister for Education to deal with those.

1010 On the generic question, in terms of cycling and electric charging points, I do not know but I have never seen more provision being made for cycling in Gibraltar than I have seen in recent years. Never have I seen more people on bicycles in Gibraltar. It is as simple as that, Mr Speaker. It is just that –

1015 **Hon. Miss S J Sacramento:** Mr Speaker, we have never had a Minister with that responsibility who is more active (*Interjections*) or committed to promoting that himself. That sends a message which is visible and which speaks volumes. You just have to look around. When there is a cycle lane, people complain that there is a cycle lane. But now we are being asked that there are no cycling lanes.

1020 The general thrust of the supplementary is whether we are going to do more. Well, of course we are going to do more because it is clear that everybody on this side of the House is very committed to an environmentally friendly Gibraltar, a green Gibraltar and a healthier Gibraltar, and encouraging the use of cycling ticks all those boxes so the answer to that is yes.

DEPUTY CHIEF MINISTER

Q90/2022

Civil aviation –
Post-Brexit changes envisaged

Clerk: Question 90/2022. The Hon. E J Phillips.

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Hon. E J Phillips: Mr Speaker, can the Government state what changes, if any, are envisaged in relation to civil aviation in a post-Brexit world?

Clerk: Answer, the Hon. the Deputy Chief Minister.

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Deputy Chief Minister (Hon. Dr J J Garcia): Mr Speaker, any changes to civil aviation in a post-Brexit world will depend on whether a treaty is concluded on Gibraltar's relations with the EU and, assuming a treaty is agreed, on the terms specific to civil aviation.

In essence, the information contained in Press Release 687/2020 and the supporting Technical Notice (4) 'Getting ready for the end of the Transition Period – Aviation' remains current today.

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Hon. E J Phillips: I am grateful for the answer from the Deputy Chief Minister. I just want to explore that slightly more because obviously yesterday we had ... I am not encouraging further debate on the subject, but yesterday we heard much about the work being done by the Tourism Minister in relation to encouraging European airlines at least to use Gibraltar as a potential place to land passengers. Therefore, if on one hand the Government is encouraging that throughput to our jurisdiction it must, of course, be reviewing what the position might be from a civil aviation perspective, and whilst I appreciate everything the Deputy Chief Minister has said about the post-Brexit work and where the treaty will end up, has the Government looked at that whilst planning its Tourism Strategy?

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Hon. Deputy Chief Minister: Mr Speaker, obviously I understand the two are connected because without the ability to have a legal framework to allow the flights to happen, the flights cannot happen, but as the hon. Member heard yesterday, the Government is relatively optimistic about looking at a treaty between the UK and the EU on the future relationship of Gibraltar.

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As we already said, for there to be a change, aviation needs to be a part of the treaty, presumably in the transport section, and that then would trigger flights being able to operate between Gibraltar and the European Union.

The position at present is that, as the hon. Member knows, Gibraltar operates under the framework provided by the Chicago Convention. That allows flights to and from Gibraltar to overfly other signatory countries – in our case, Belgium, France and Spain – and it also allows for diversions to those countries in the event of bad weather or emergencies. That is the position today.

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The position in the EU was obviously the EU legal framework, from which I have to say we were suspended on different occasions for different periods of time from different parts of that *acquis*. What applies today is the Convention on International Civil Aviation – the Chicago Convention – and that may change if there is a treaty. We have the Convention, but there would be a specific treaty regulating flights to and from the European Union.

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Q91/2022

**Former GBC premises site –
Update re development options**

Clerk: Question 91/2022. The Hon. D J Bossino.

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Hon. D J Bossino: Further to Written Question 46/2021, can the Government state whether it is any closer to requesting expressions of interest in the former GBC premises site and what its own preferred options are for development in that area?

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Clerk: Answer, the Hon. the Deputy Chief Minister.

Deputy Chief Minister (Hon. Dr J J Garcia): Mr Speaker, requests for expressions of interest in the site were published in February of this year after the answer to Written Question 46 but before this question was tabled. The Government is currently reviewing the four applications received.

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Proposed schemes must allow for a low-rise development and for a use compatible with the area, and include the provision for a minimum of 40 public car parking spaces and a green area.

Hon. D J Bossino: Mr Speaker, I am grateful for that answer. Is he able to advise of any progress since that expressions of interest was published?

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I do not know whether my hon. Friend here has a question in relation to the parking in the South Barrack Ramp areas and South Barracks, but is it the intention for those parking spaces that are going to be built – I know it is an issue for residents in the area – to replace those that are along that hill opposite GBC, if he knows what I mean? At the moment, there are seven parking spaces that have been lost as a result of, in effect, the pedestrianisation of South Barrack Ramp, and – this is my own calculation and my own counting, as I live in the area – there would be another loss of, depending how far it goes, between 24 and 31 car parking spaces. So are those 40 I think he mentioned meant to be replacing those, or will they be in addition to those parking spaces?

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I appreciate it is two questions I have asked him in this supplementary.

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Hon. Deputy Chief Minister: Mr Speaker, these are issues that I know my colleague the Minister for Transport, the Hon. Mr Balban, is looking at. They are not issues that I am directly concerned with in terms of the expression of interest and the use of the land. It is fair to say that no policy decision has been taken in that respect at the moment.

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Hon. D J Bossino: And in relation to the first supplementary I asked in that exchange, does he have an update as to how the expressions of interest are going and when he expects to be able to alight on a decision in relation to that?

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Hon. Deputy Chief Minister: Mr Speaker, there is not an immediate urgency. Let me explain why. First of all, because my understanding is that GBC still has some equipment in the area which they still use to relay the signal to different parts of Gibraltar; and secondly because there is also a Government tenant in one of the flats in that area who will move to one of the affordable homes when those homes are ready. So there is not an immediate urgency, but that aside, the Government has not had a chance yet to sit down and look at the different proposals that have been made.

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Hon. D J Bossino: He may not be in a position to tell me across the floor of the House, but do those proposals include, for example ...? I think one of the buildings – the brick building, as I call it – is listed, so it has to be protected, but I am not sure that the others are, so my question is... I know there is a 19th-century or perhaps early 20th-century building there. Is it proposed to

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sacrifice that building – the Minister for Heritage is shaking his head – as part of the construction and development of that area?

1115 **Hon. Deputy Chief Minister:** Mr Speaker, I think it is fair to say that these would be planning questions for the Development and Planning Commission to address from their own perspective. From the point of view of the Government, the advert makes it clear that planning and heritage considerations would need to be respected.

1120 In terms of the areas used for clubs and associations at the moment, which I think includes the area that he refers to, there is the option for developers to be able to relocate the entities that are there at the moment and fund their relocation, or to temporarily relocate them somewhere else and then bring them back to the area when the development is complete. So, in answer to the question, in short, it really would be a heritage and a planning issue [inaudible] in terms of what they seek to preserve or not preserve from that area.

1125 **Hon. D J Bossino:** By way of assistance, Mr Speaker, we may not be focusing on the same building. I am thinking more about ... If I can explain it better, it may actually be attached to what is currently the GBC building, so if you are on the road and looking ... Do hon. Members know which one I mean? It is stated on the archway. If you are looking at it, you have La Morna on the left and then the next one up is this one. I am not going to mention names of the neighbours I know who used to and I think still live there, but I think the hon. Member knows which building I am talking about. Is it the Government's policy to protect that building, or not? I know it is not protected by way of legislation.

1135 **Hon. Deputy Chief Minister:** Mr Speaker, my colleague the Minister for Heritage helpfully tells me those are known as recreation rooms.

Minister for the Environment, Sustainability, Climate Change and Education (Hon. Prof. J E Cortes): That is on the other side. I think he means up the hill from [inaudible].

1140 **Hon. Deputy Chief Minister:** Okay, above the [inaudible] In terms of what we preserve or do not preserve, I think fundamentally that would be a planning issue and really would be a matter for the Development and Planning Commission and the experts in the different areas that sit on that body.

1145 **Mr Speaker:** Next question.

Q92/2022
Gibraltar National Archives –
Update re new premises

Clerk: Question 92/2022. The Hon. D J Bossino.

1150 **Hon. D J Bossino:** Further to Written Question 47/2021, please provide an update with regard to the new premises for the housing of the Gibraltar National Archives.

Clerk: Answer, the Hon. the Deputy Chief Minister.

1155 **Deputy Chief Minister (Hon. Dr J J Garcia):** Mr Speaker, the Government has earmarked Duke of Kent House as the new premises for the Gibraltar National Archives.

Hon. D J Bossino: Yes, Mr Speaker, in fact that was identified in their manifesto at the time as a possibility, so I am glad to hear that that has now been decided upon. I am sure the staff at the National Archives will be very happy with that announcement.

1160 When does he expect those premises are going to be kitted out, and when does he expect that the National Archives will be able to move in? I think in his answer he was talking about 'soon' as to an announcement. He is now making an announcement, but I would ask him, if I may, to state when he expects it will become a reality.

1165 **Hon. Deputy Chief Minister:** Mr Speaker, a preliminary feasibility study has already been carried out and concept designs have been produced. The next step will be to produce the detailed costings. Obviously, as with everything else, this will need to be fitted into the Government's budgets in any financial year. We will need to determine how to spread the cost of the funding of the project, but there is a feasibility study already produced, concept designs are produced and
1170 we are waiting for the detailed costings.

Hon. D J Bossino: Am I able to take from that reply that it is unlikely to be in this financial year or, indeed, on this side of a general election? Are we looking more into the future as to when he thinks that is going to materialise?

1175 **Hon. Deputy Chief Minister:** Mr Speaker, it is not possible, really, to say at this moment, but the hon. Member has an advance secret copy of the Estimates of Government Expenditure which may throw some light on that question.

1180 **Mr Speaker:** Next question.

Hon. K Azopardi: May I ask, please, just a quick supplementary on this? The Government is satisfied, I assume from the indication the Deputy Chief Minister has given us, that the building is big enough for the archives and that it will be secure enough. Obviously, at the moment they are
1185 within the courtyard of the Convent, therefore secure. Can he give us an insight on the kind of security the archives would have at Duke of Kent House, given the importance of the National Archives?

Hon. Deputy Chief Minister: Mr Speaker, the Government does not intend to move all the storage that the Archives have to the new premises. It would be a front-facing area for research, students, visitors and exhibitions, that kind of facility. Also, there is now a considerable amount of information that the Archives does put online automatically, which means that the original files
1190 no longer need to be on display for researchers to access – they can do so online.

1195 **Mr Speaker:** Next question.

Q93/2022
St Andrew's Church, Town Range –
Developments

Clerk: Question 93/2022. The Hon. D J Bossino.

Hon. D J Bossino: Please state whether the Government is aware of any developments with regard to St Andrew's Church at Town Range; and, if so, what these are.

1200 **Clerk:** Answer, the Hon. the Deputy Chief Minister.

Deputy Chief Minister (Hon. Dr J J Garcia): Mr Speaker, no, neither the Office of the Deputy Chief Minister or the Lands Office are not aware of any developments with regard to St Andrew's Church at Town Range.

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Hon. D J Bossino: Mr Speaker, if it is of assistance, I am happy to speak to him later on, but I have heard ... I do not know whether he has – perhaps that is a formal answer – but I have heard that the Church of Scotland may be leaving that church. I think there is a formal process that would need to be undergone if that were to be case. I have that on relatively good authority, but he has answered the question.

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There is a relevant point that arises. As I understand it, but I stand to be corrected, that particular building is not a listed building in the ... It is? Okay, it is a listed building so that's the answer from my hon. Friend Mr Clinton. I had a quick look at the schedule and I did not see it, but at least it is going to be protected, so I have no questions, Mr Speaker, on that point. *(Interjection)* Well, he has heard what I have heard, that is all, but is it just his formal position or has he heard whether there is any intention to do away or deal with that building?

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Hon. Deputy Chief Minister: Mr Speaker, the hon. Member will know that we do not operate on rumours, certainly neither the Government nor myself do, so I really cannot answer the question except to say that my office is not aware of it. I do not know whether they have engaged with other parts of the Government, but after receiving the question and drafting the answer I also made a point of asking Land Property Services to see whether they had heard anything about it as the Government's land and property agents, and they too had not heard anything.

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Hon. K Azopardi: To the extent that it transpires that the presence of those people operating St Andrew's Church and administering it is diminished, does the Government accept that it is an important heritage asset and it would take an interest in ensuring that the property is preserved?

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Hon. Deputy Chief Minister: Mr Speaker, as the hon. Member will know, the question is hypothetical and there is really nothing more that we can say on this particular subject until something more concrete materialises.

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Q94/2022
Northern Defences –
Refurbishment programme and future management plans

Clerk: Question 94/2022. The Hon. D J Bossino.

Hon. D J Bossino: Please provide an update with regard to the Northern Defences refurbishment programme, especially in regard to future management plans and likely private sector parties involved.

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Clerk: Answer, the Hon. the Deputy Chief Minister.

Deputy Chief Minister (Hon. Dr J J Garcia): Mr Speaker, works at the Northern Defences have continued unabated with significant improvements to infrastructure by AquaGib being the focus this last year.

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With regard to future private sector management, Government has engaged with one of various companies that expressed an interest in providing and managing activities in the area and those discussions are now ongoing.

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Hon. D J Bossino: Mr Speaker, is this one of the three I think he mentioned in reply to my question on 30th October on the same subject? I ask him to confirm that. He is nodding his head. And can he give more detail in relation to that particular project and what it is likely to entail, and more particulars than he has just given us across the floor of the House?

Hon. Deputy Chief Minister: Mr Speaker, on the activities being looked at I will probably give more details at the time of the Budget debate, but at the moment it is things like rock climbing, abseiling, zip-lining and also historical heritage tours as a separate activity for those who are interested in undertaking it.

Q95/2022
Victualling Yard –
Number of expressions of interest received

Clerk: Question 95/2022. The Hon. K Azopardi.

Hon. K Azopardi: Mr Speaker, how many expressions of interest have been received in respect of the Victualling Yard?

Clerk: Answer, the Hon. the Deputy Chief Minister.

Deputy Chief Minister (Hon. Dr J J Garcia): Mr Speaker, there have been five expressions of interest received in respect of the Victualling Yard.

Hon. K Azopardi: Can the Minister give us an idea of the breadth of options that form part of the expression of interest process, the current consideration process and the likely timescale for the conclusion of that process?

Hon. Deputy Chief Minister: Mr Speaker, I am reluctant to give too much detail because Government has not yet considered the proposals in detail, but I can confirm that they are for different types of storage, and there are other more altruistically inclined uses proposed as well. The Government really has not had time to consider this in depth as yet.

Hon. K Azopardi: And the question I asked about the likely timescale for consideration?

Hon. Deputy Chief Minister: I think, Mr Speaker, we would be looking probably at some time after the summer. We expect that if there is a treaty between the UK and the EU on the future relationship with Gibraltar it would release a huge amount of time on the part of Government Ministers and officials, who will then have time to deal with other issues of this nature. We are trying to combine the two, but I would expect realistically it would be after the summer.

Mr Speaker: Mr Isola will commence with some –

Chief Minister (Hon. F R Picardo): Mr Speaker, I thought it might be a convenient moment, just before Mr Isola starts, to offer the whole House a short comfort break of 15 minutes, so that we could start at quarter to six.

Mr Speaker: The House will recess for 15 minutes and return at quarter to six.

The House recessed at 5.30 p.m. and resumed its sitting at 5.46 p.m.

Procedural

1290 **Mr Speaker:** Minister Isola will commence with some of his unanswered questions from the September meeting, starting with Question 232.

Whilst I say these few words, I would like to remind everybody that if any hon. Member wishes to speak he should signal this to the Speaker and we can go ahead and allow Ministers to speak or I will ask Members to speak.

DIGITAL, FINANCIAL SERVICES, HEALTH AUTHORITY AND PUBLIC UTILITIES

Q232/2021

**PCC/GHA telephone appointment system –
Plans for overhaul**

1295 **Clerk:** Question 232/2021. The Hon. E J Phillips.

Hon. E J Phillips: Mr Speaker, can the Government state what plans it has to overhaul the PCC/GHA telephone appointment system?

1300 **Clerk:** Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Health, Digital and Financial Services.

Minister for Digital, Financial Services, Health Authority and Public Utilities (Hon. A J Isola): Mr Speaker, the GHA is in the process of updating its telephone system by implementing an improved call flow process that will redirect callers to the exact service they require. This will cover not only appointments but also other publicly available services.

In addition to this, I am pleased to announce that we will shortly be introducing an online doctor appointment system, available through the Government's gov.gi portal. This new service will introduce various online GP consultations, including online repeat prescriptions. Access to the existing MyGHA automated telephone booking service will continue.

Hon. E J Phillips: Mr Speaker, I am grateful for the answer. It is the one question, in my respectful view, the one issue in this community that has blocked every single one of my social media feeds. People in this community are deeply frustrated with it and I am sure the Minister understands that – he must receive numerous complaints about the system and how it works.

Can he assure this House, and members of the public – who, on a daily basis, are either thrown of the line, cut off the line or have to wait for hours upon hours for appointments and contact just to see a doctor – that this new system that he speaks about today will solve the systemic problem with our appointment system?

Hon. A J Isola: Mr Speaker, I agree and I think that one of the first things I did upon being given responsibility for the GHA was to engage with the Director General in considering options, although I had previously been instructed by the Chief Minister to begin work on an online booking system – which we are ready to go with – which would also provide some support to improving generally the appointment system, which I hope to deliver very shortly.

I accept the hon. Member's comments and I agree with them, and I am doing as much as I possibly can to get it fixed as quickly as I possibly can.

Q233/2021

**Cancelled operations –
Categorised and reasons for cancellation**

Clerk: Question 233/2021. The Hon. E J Phillips.

1330 **Hon. E J Phillips:** Mr Speaker, can the Government state how many GHA and non-GHA operations have been cancelled over the last three months, broken into category and reasons for cancellation?

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

1335 **Minister for Digital, Financial Services, Health Authority and Public Utilities (Hon. A J Isola):** Mr Speaker, at the time, the GHA had cancelled 27 operations in the previous three full months. The reasons for the cancellations included emergency surgeries taking priority and critical care beds not being available post operations due to COVID patients being admitted. Additionally, 27 have been cancelled as a result of patients not attending, patients being unwell on the day of the
1340 procedure, surgeon's clinical decision on the day, or as a result of having contracted or isolating due to COVID.

Hon. E J Phillips: I am grateful, Mr Speaker. I should say, and this is not a question but there are numerous questions that follow this for this session or this particular year that will update
1345 them. These figures relate from the date when I asked the question, so I do not think there is any purpose in me continuing to ask this line of question when there are other questions on the Order Paper that address these issues as well.

Mr Speaker: I am grateful for that.

Q234/2021

**Provision of MRI scanning services –
Location re incorporation of commercial entity**

1350 **Clerk:** Question 234/2021. The Hon. E J Phillips.

Hon. E J Phillips: Mr Speaker, can the Government state that the commercial entity that applied to use premises at Europort for the purposes of providing MRI scanning services to the GHA is incorporated in Belize?
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Clerk: Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Health, Digital and Financial Services.

Minister for Digital, Financial Services, Health Authority and Public Utilities (Hon. A J Isola): Mr Speaker, there is no further information other than as provided in answer to
1360 Question 43/2021.

Hon. E J Phillips: Mr Speaker, as the Hon. Minister knows, the name of the commercial entity is, I believe, AC Ltd, which has applied for planning consent to use particular premises in the Europort complex and which might actually extend to Atlantic Suites, as far as I understand. It is understood that that application relates to the provision of MRI scanning services and we have
1365 debated in this House the extent to which the Government will either provide those services itself

through the GHA or whether this will be dealt with by someone with a commercial interest in providing those services.

1370 Does the Government know who this company is, given the fact that it will be offering a significant medical service to our community? And has the Government done the necessary due diligence to establish the status of this company and its experience in providing specialist MRI services?

1375 **Hon. A J Isola:** Mr Speaker, there are two other questions on the Order Paper today – this is actually one from last September – which deal with the same application.

The position is the same as the last time we discussed it because there is no discussion, no engagement, no agreement, no talk, not even a negotiation with this company in respect of MRI between the GHA and that firm.

1380 If there has been an application for planning, that is one thing. I can make an application to the DPC for planning to build a house on top of his house; it does not mean I have permission to do it from the landlord or the owner. This is exactly the same. If somebody submits a planning application ... They can submit a planning application for whatever they like, but they have not engaged with the GHA, there is no discussion, and I can tell the hon. Member that we are not talking to anyone about providing MRI services in Europort or Atlantic Suites. Does that help?

1385 **Hon. E J Phillips:** I am grateful for that answer and that is clear. So it does appear – and the first part of the question is – that this is purely a speculative application by a commercial entity that suggests that it might offer MRI services to the community at large, but what is clear from the answer is the GHA have not been engaged in discussions.

1390 Just one question I think the community committee would benefit from further learning on is whether or not the Government continues to be committed to providing that MRI service to our community, given the fact that over 3,000 scans are ordered through Spanish providers currently, and whether the Government is considering providing that service domestically rather than sending our patients over to Spain to have that service dealt with.

1395 **Hon. A J Isola:** Mr Speaker, anything that enables us to provide better services here for less money is absolutely on our list, as you will be hearing from answers to other questions later on in this session. You will hear about the GHA review to be conducted by the Director General, which is in process, and I certainly expect to see this as one of the key priorities in respect of having provision for that in Gibraltar, ideally with a private contractor providing it for us.

1400

Mr Speaker: Next question.

**Q235/2021 –
Provision of MRI scanning services –
Commercial rationale –
Question withdrawn**

1405 **Hon. E J Phillips:** Mr Speaker, I will withdraw that question because I think it has clearly been answered by the previous answer by the Minister. It explains the commercial rationale, so there is no point in asking it.

Q246-47/2021

**Suspended social workers –
Number suspended, whether paid, duration of and reasons for suspension**

Clerk: Question 246/2021. The Hon. Ms M D Hassan Nahon.

Hon. Ms M D Hassan Nahon: Of the social workers currently suspended, how many of them are on full pay?

1410

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

Minister for Digital, Financial Services, Health Authority and Public Utilities (Hon. A J Isola): Mr Speaker, I will answer this question together with Question 247.

1415

Clerk: Question 247/2021. The Hon. Ms M D Hassan Nahon.

Hon. Ms M D Hassan Nahon: Can the Government provide a list of how many social workers are currently suspended, giving details of how long they have been suspended for and what the reason for their suspension is?

1420

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

Hon. A J Isola: Mr Speaker, there is currently one senior social worker suspended on full pay since 14th May 2020, interdicted on allegations of malpractice.

1425

Hon. Ms M D Hassan Nahon: Mr Speaker, I am glad to hear that there is only one, from his information, currently suspended, but should there be more? And even in the case of that one candidate who is suspended, how does the service act to mitigate the void they leave in terms of the continuity and effect it might have on the vulnerable and children? Does the service immediately employ a substitute, or are there gaps that then perhaps leave the service a little weaker?

1430

Hon. A J Isola: Mr Speaker, the managers obviously will cater for the person who is not there – with some difficulty, but they do – as they would if somebody is on leave or away from being able to carry out the work through illness or whatever. The service will certainly not suffer. There will be people covering, getting overtime and things like that, but the service will continue to be provided.

1435

Hon. Ms M D Hassan Nahon: Thank you, Mr Speaker.

Can I just ask ...? It seems from the Minister's information that there is somebody who has been suspended for two years now on a senior scale. Obviously this is costing the taxpayer, and therefore I would like to ask what the prognosis is in terms of the suspension. Are we waiting for a tribunal or some kind of conflict resolution? How much more will it cost the taxpayer and for how long?

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1445

Hon. A J Isola: Mr Speaker, the disciplinary procedure is being managed by the central Human Resources department. I do not have details of by when they will be finished. I understand there are lawyers involved and legal advice is being sought in respect of a particular matter, which may delay things, but I do not have any information other than that.

1450

Mr Speaker: The Hon. Elliott Phillips.

1455 **Hon. E J Phillips:** Mr Speaker, I am grateful for the ability to ask just one question on the hon. Lady's question. Just so that we are clear, this relates to suspension of this particular individual as of September 2021 when the question was put before the Minister. Does the Minister have any information relating to any ...? 2020, (*Interjection*) apologies. Insofar as the suspension as it currently stood, as of 2021 – I should probably correct that – does the Minister have any information as to whether that has moved on insofar as the number of social workers who might be currently suspended?

1460 **Hon. A J Isola:** No, Mr Speaker, the information will be accurate as at today, so it is the same person from 14th May 2020 who is still interdicted now.

Mr Speaker: Next question.

Q248/2021
Bruce's Farm –
Replacement of drug-addiction specialist doctors

1465 **Clerk:** Question 248/2021. The Hon. Ms M D Hassan Nahon.

Hon. Ms M D Hassan Nahon: When will the Care Agency be replacing the two doctors with drug addiction speciality who left Bruce's Farm in the last year?

1470 **Clerk:** Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Health, Digital and Financial Services.

1475 **Minister for Digital, Financial Services, Health Authority and Public Utilities (Hon. A J Isola):** Mr Speaker, the Care Agency does not have, and never has had, doctors at Bruce's Farm. A doctor previously employed at the GHA as a GP took on a different role as the Head of Drugs Service, a policy role, so no longer a GP for the purposes of that job. Another GP was seconded from the GHA to Bruce's Farm.

Bruce's Farm is a therapeutic recovery facility and it does not require an onsite doctor. Medical and nursing support continues to be provided by the GHA in the same way as has been done previously.

1480 **Hon. Ms M D Hassan Nahon:** Mr Speaker, I thank the Minister for his answer and I apologise for my mistake in terms of deeming them from the Care Agency when they are from the GHA, as indeed is correct, but I have to ask him why he believes that a drug rehabilitation centre does not need a specialist doctor to deal with the patients when it did until they left. I understand there were two. Why would they have been required then but they are not required now, when clearly I think any objective onlooker would think that a doctor with a speciality in this field would be very much needed and welcome in a rehab centre?

1490 **Hon. A J Isola:** Mr Speaker, if that is what the professionals tell us, then that would happen, but obviously it is not. The individual who was there, to be clear, was a doctor but went there to work not as a doctor but as a policy boss. That is what my answer says: 'A doctor previously employed at the GHA as a GP took on a different role as the Head of Drugs Service,' – so he was a doctor as the Head of Drugs Service – 'a policy role, so no longer a GP for the purposes of that job.' So he was not carrying out a job as a doctor at Bruce's Farm, even though he was a doctor.
1495 Does that make sense to you?

Hon. E J Phillips: Just to confirm, I believe this was Dr Taylor. Is that correct? My understanding was that the Government ... I see the hon. Gentleman is nodding his head. I just wondered because I think there was a doctor dedicated for a period of time at Bruce's Farm, as far as I understand.

Chief Minister (Hon. F R Picardo): Don't give his name.

Hon. E J Phillips: Oh, right, okay. Mr Speaker, I believe that there was a doctor at the time who was dedicated at least one day a week to Bruce's Farm for medical care, not in relation to policy. I think it was the decision of the Government at the time, to engage with a specialist addiction qualified GP to provide medical services one day a week at Bruce's Farm. Is it right, then, that that policy decision to engage a specialist addiction doctor for one day a week has now changed or reversed?

Hon. A J Isola: Mr Speaker, from the information I have in front of me there has been no change of policy, but there is nobody based there, which is what the question was asking. The GHA provides medical care at Bruce's Farm on a regular basis, yes, but there is nobody based there, which is where the original question came from. In fact, I said in my answer another GP was seconded from the GHA to provide that to Bruce's Farm.

Mr Speaker: Next question.

Q249/2021
Bruce's Farm –
Aftercare programme

Clerk: Question 249/2021. The Hon. Ms M D Hassan Nahon.

Hon. Ms M D Hassan Nahon: What aftercare programme is available when patients leave Bruce's Farm?

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

Minister for Digital, Financial Services, Health Authority and Public Utilities (Hon. A J Isola): Mr Speaker, all service users leaving Bruce's Farm residential services enter a community support based programme that is provided by the Care Agency to continue to assist them in maintaining sobriety. All service users are offered and subsequently provided with one-to-one individual appointments with the Care Agency's in-house Therapeutic Team counsellors. Community support sessions are then clinically monitored, based on each individual client assessment as per specific client needs, and continue to be offered until necessary. In addition, the Care Agency team also provides two weekly evening group support sessions, also held in the community, which clients are furthermore invited to attend as part of their continued support.

Hon. Ms M D Hassan Nahon: Mr Speaker, I thank the Minister for his answer. I would just like to let him know that I get a lot of representations from ex-patients of Bruce's Farm who come telling me that they really do not feel like there is a system that cares for them or rehabilitates them after Bruce's Farm, so I would like to ask him whether perhaps he would value this point and maybe improve communications, or even the effort, to ensure that patients have a pathway to go on after Bruce's Farm. I can assure him that there are many who do not know where to go, so there must be some kind of gap in the system once they leave.

Hon. A J Isola: Mr Speaker, I would be happy to have that information, which I can pass on to ensure that there is no break in communication. The services are there, are being offered and are available and I would urge them to approach the Agency and ensure that they have access to them, as they should.

Hon. Ms M D Hassan Nahon: Mr Speaker, if I may, I have just been made aware of a *Gibraltar Chronicle* article from 31st May 2018 which advertises the doctor with specialism in addiction who had been recruited to help with recovery from substance and alcohol addiction, at Bruce's Farm. So I ask the Minister again whether we have, as he says, not lost a doctor as such in medical care but only in policy, when this article clearly states that a doctor was engaged in order to help with the medical side of rehabilitation at Bruce's Farm.

Hon. A J Isola: Mr Speaker, I have not seen that article of 2018. I do not even know if that job was filled – whether it was filled or not would be interesting – but also, of course, whether it was permanently based at Bruce's Farm or not, which is where the question was aimed. I am telling the hon. Lady that of course the services are provided to Bruce's Farm, even if they are not permanently there.

Hon. Ms M D Hassan Nahon: Mr Speaker, I never implied that any doctor was based, residing or engaged at Bruce's Farm. I was asking about an employee at Bruce's Farm dealing with the medical side of rehabilitating patients, for which, if I may correct him, I think I heard him say that I said there was an advert. It is not an advert, it is an article, a press conference by the GHA revealing the doctor who was engaged to be medically helping patients at Bruce's Farm as from 2018, so this is my question.

Hon. A J Isola: Mr Speaker, I think what the hon. Lady is saying and reporting from that article is precisely the answer I have given in my very first answer, which is that Bruce's Farm is cared for by the GHA and provided with all the medical services that Bruce's Farm needs from the GHA. That is precisely what my answer said and what she has confirmed through that article from 2018.

Hon. Ms M D Hassan Nahon: Mr Speaker, in the article it says:

Of course, as a community medical service we really need to concentrate on some perhaps in those sectors of our community that struggle to access our services more easily, or perhaps sections of our community who may just not seek the care of a GP, so this is where Dr [X] comes in.

Obviously the Government is hailing the speciality of a doctor who is not just a GP, which is why I questioned the Minister on having an expert with a speciality and not just a GP. I reiterate the question: are we going to replace the gap that we have now without this specialist doctor?

Hon. A J Isola: Mr Speaker, I think we are talking at cross-purposes, because we are both saying the same thing. What I have explained to the hon. Lady is that that specialist was engaged by the GHA with the skills set that he requires to be able to work at Bruce's Farm and provide the residents of Bruce's Farm with the care they need. That was the position then and it is the position today; there is no change.

Mr Speaker: Next question.

Q96/2022

**Special needs dental patients –
Allotted days in operating theatre**

Clerk: Question 96/2022. The Hon. E J Reyes.

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Hon. E J Reyes: Mr Speaker, is it Government's intention to set aside allotted days for dental interventions at an operating theatre for individuals with special needs who, for a variety of reasons, may require this to be done under general anaesthetic?

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

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Minister for Digital, Financial Services, Health Authority and Public Utilities (Hon. A J Isola): Mr Speaker, there is no regular date/time allocated to special needs dental theatre sessions. The waiting list of 20 patients is the shortest of all patients requiring general anaesthetic. Theatre sessions are allocated according to workload. Since the end of March 2022, eight theatre sessions have been offered for this specific cohort of patients.

1600

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

So, if, since March, eight have been attended to, how many are still waiting and for what length of time have they been waiting? Does the Minister have that data?

1605

Hon. A J Isola: Mr Speaker, I have the numbers that he has asked me for and not the numbers he has not asked me for, but I can tell him that it is the intention of the GHA to prioritise the allocation of these lists and create a waiting list – I cannot tell him the numbers on them – within the next three months.

1610

Hon. E J Reyes: And, if I am interpreting the Minister correctly, this will be done as they are able to slot them in according to demands on the theatre, rather than setting aside a particular day in the week or month, or whatever, just to tackle exclusively those with special needs?

1615

Hon. A J Isola: Mr Speaker, as I said in my answer, theatre sessions are allocated according to workload, so it is not that they set aside a morning every Wednesday or every Tuesday, it is dependent on workload whether they can fit them in and then make the arrangements, and then the theatre is made available with all the support.

1620

Hon. D J Bossino: Mr Speaker, he has explained what the current state of play is. Could I ask him to consider what my hon. Friend was suggesting, to do what currently is not done and have a dedicated window where special needs children in particular can be attended to? Some of them require fillings, for example. You and I can go without a problem and we do not need to go under a general anaesthetic, but these children need to go under a general anaesthetic and it becomes an issue and a problem if you have to wait two or three months for that particular molar to be attended to because obviously it is going to cause pain and discomfort for the child. For example, if you are within the spectrum and non-verbal, you cannot express what is wrong with you, you cannot even point out where you have pain, so if something like that could be looked at ... I would appreciate it if the Minister could attend to that and give a special window for these special needs children to be attended to.

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1630

Minister for Justice, Equality and Public Standards and Regulations (Hon. Miss S J Sacramento): Mr Speaker, if I may, this is precisely the kind of thing we are looking at as part of the Disability Strategy. Dentistry, which is something that affects children with learning disabilities, particularly if they are non-verbal, is something we are very alive to. In my capacity as

Minister for Equality these are discussions I have already had with the GHA and it is something we are actively working on already, so the hon. Gentleman can rest assured that this is being looked at.

1635

Mr Speaker: Next question.

Q97/2022

**Schoolchildren referred to Mental Health and Child Protection Services –
Numbers in current academic year**

Clerk: Question 97/2022. The Hon. E J Reyes.

1640 **Hon. E J Reyes:** Can Government provide statistics in respect of the number of schoolchildren, broken down by ages, who have been referred to (a) Mental Health Services and (b) Child Protection Services since the start of the present academic year?

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

1645 **Minister for Digital, Financial Services, Health Authority and Public Utilities (Hon. A J Isola):** Mr Speaker, GHA records show that referrals to the Mental Health Services since the start of the present academic year are as follows: four to 12 years, 37 referrals; 13 to 18 years, 75 referrals.

Care Agency records show that referrals to Child Protection Services since the start of the present academic year are as follows: four to 12 years, 196 referrals; 13 to 18 years, 110 referrals.

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1655 **Hon. K Azopardi:** Mr Speaker, can the Minister help us by giving us a broad idea of the nature of the referrals, both in terms of Mental Health Services and Child Protection Services? For example, for mental health does he have a breakdown of things like depression or anxiety, or other issues that perhaps ... social media bullying, things like that? Is there some kind of similar breakdown in terms of Child Protection Services, in terms of generic type of referral; and, if not, could he obtain it perhaps?

1660 **Hon. A J Isola:** Mr Speaker, I do not, and I think, from looking at supplementary information being handed to me, it would be dangerous to seek to assimilate where the majorities are, because they are all very different and I would not be inclined to try to put them together and generalise in terms of what the main cause or the main reason is.

1665 **Hon. K Azopardi:** In terms of the numbers, can I just ask: has the Government been collating similar statistics going back a few years? If so, how does it compare? If not, at first sight of the numbers does the Minister agree that it looks like a significant number of referrals either before Mental Health or Child Protection? Is this something that perhaps the Government would want to take specialist advice on, to see whether there are issues in terms of dealing with it not just in terms of referral, because by the time there has been a referral for mental health or child protection there has been a consequence?

1670 There may be things that cannot be dealt with because they are the product of issues which cannot be prevented, but to the extent that there may be things on this list where the children might benefit from having more counselling services or more child psychology services or other expertise, would the Government, and the Minister in particular, want to discuss that, given the statistics he has talked about just now?

1675

Hon. A J Isola: Mr Speaker, in respect of the child protection, the average numbers in previous years are between 350 and 380 per academic year. I think we are up to 306 with a couple of months to go before the end of the year, so I do not think they are as high as they look at first blush – because I had the same inkling when I saw the numbers. In terms of the referrals from the GHA Mental Health Services, similarly I do not actually have the detail but they have mentioned that they are similar.

With respect to how we deal with this moving forward, as my hon. Friend has told me, this does form part of the Disability and Mental Health Strategy, which we will be focusing on as well to look at the numbers to see if there is any underlying cause or reason that should be addressed.

Hon. E J Phillips: Mr Speaker, I am grateful for the answer. I share the Leader of the Opposition's concern and I note that at first blush the concern was shared by the Minister as to the numbers, but we are talking about one child for every day of the school term who is referred for either child protection or mental health issues. I can understand that he says this is a similar pattern to previous years, but given the size of our population, doesn't that give him cause for concern as to the underlying issues and how we should be solving them? For me, the figure ... despite whether it has been the same in 2022 as 2019, there is clearly a serious issue that one child for every day of the academic year is referred for child protection or mental health issues. Would the Minister care to comment on that further?

Hon. A J Isola: Mr Speaker, yes, of course, whatever the number it would merit consideration and thought, and that is why I think the work of the Mental Health Strategy is important, because it does need to be looked at.

I did look at the numbers and I thought my gosh, those are high. I cannot compare it with any other jurisdiction or country because I have not seen the numbers broken down proportionally to the size of population, so I do not know if they are higher or lower than any other country or jurisdiction – but frankly, who cares? We need to look after our own and look at our own numbers. I am confident that that is happening and we will get to it to find what it is, and if we can do anything better to reduce that number, the more the better, obviously.

Mr Speaker: Next question.

Q98/2022
Street lights –
Why on in daytime

Clerk: Question 98/2022. The Hon. E J Phillips.

Hon. E J Phillips: Mr Speaker, now for something completely different. Can the Government state why street lamps appear to remain on throughout the day?

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

Minister for Digital, Financial Services, Health Authority and Public Utilities (Hon. A J Isola): Mr Speaker, GEA street lighting circuits are controlled by photocells. These photocells switch the street lighting circuits on as natural light starts to fade and turn them off during the day when natural light levels increase. If there are circuits which remain on, this is generally because there could be a failure of such photocells. Once the Electricity Authority is aware of such faults, these are actioned and the fault is duly rectified.

Q99/2022
Diesel skid generators –
Whether operational

1720 **Clerk:** Question 99/2022. The Hon. E J Phillips.

Hon. E J Phillips: Mr Speaker, can the Government state whether the diesel skid generators are still operational?

1725 **Clerk:** Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Health, Digital and Financial Services.

Minister for Digital, Financial Services, Health Authority and Public Utilities (Hon. A J Isola):
Mr Speaker, the diesel skid generators are still providing operational support while the fine-tuning of the new power station continues. New power stations are complex projects and not off the shelf. They need to be adapted to the grid systems in which they operate. The GEA is, however,
1730 actively pursuing the reduction of these operations in the near future as the fine-tuning of the new engines progresses positively.

Hon. E J Phillips: Mr Speaker, obviously I ask this question because of the statements that have
1735 been made in this House previously about dirty, grimy stations and I think it is right to point out that we are still using an element of that for support, as the Minister has said. Is there a view by him as to when we will rely entirely on that post the operational support that is required by the dirty diesel?

1740 **Hon. A J Isola:** Mr Speaker, the hon. Member's supplementary is ... if I were to call it cheeky it would be very generous. These are generators that are on standby – not all of them, some of them – so they are not pumping out greasy –

Minister for Justice, Equality and Public Standards and Regulations (Hon. Miss S J Sacramento): Grimy, smelly diesel.
1745

Hon. A J Isola: – grimy, smelly diesel, which is what the hon. Members opposite sought to put just opposite the mosque [inaudible] where now much more beautiful facilities are available for use by our community.

1750 These skid generators have a purpose. They are on standby if we have an issue. In most villages in every other part of the world they draw power from different stations, and so if one power station fails it automatically locks into power from another station. In Gibraltar we do not have that luxury; we have one power station and we require it to provide us with power all of the time. Consequently, when you get a completely new set of clean engines, as we have, it is cautious and
1755 appropriate to ensure that we have cover just in case it is needed. I am delighted to say it has not been needed very often, but it has been used, let's be clear.

Hon. E J Phillips: Just one supplementary. Whilst I do not associate myself with the comment of 'village' because I know the Chief Minister is very fond of describing our country as a nation,
1760 what I would say to him is that ... My question is: is it the case that these are on permanent standby for that purpose, rather than a future temporary measure? I just want to know about the permanency of these particular skid generators.

Hon. A J Isola: No, Mr Speaker, they are absolutely temporary and I am very hopeful of being
1765 able to terminate the arrangements for them shortly. They are literally on standby – some of them, not all of them – because of the lead time it takes to get them going in the event of a failure, but yes, absolutely temporary.

Q100/2022
Surgical and non-surgical backlogs –
Details for all disciplines

Clerk: Question 100/2022. The Hon. E J Phillips.

1770 **Hon. E J Phillips:** Mr Speaker, can the Government state the backlog for surgical and non-surgical interventions in respect to each and every discipline within the GHA?

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

1775 **Minister for Digital, Financial Services, Health Authority and Public Utilities (Hon. A J Isola):** Yes, Mr Speaker, the information requested by the hon. Member is set out in the schedule that I now hand to him.

Answer to Q100/2022

Clinician/Speciality	Patients Awaiting Interventions
Cardiology	4
Dental Special Needs	20
Special Line Insertion	0
ENT (Chiti Batelli)	6
ENT (Danino)	38
ENT Spinou	33
ENT (Otology)	26
General Surgery (Colorectal)	11
General Surgery (Antequera)	47
General Surgery (Kovacs)	45
General Surgery (Salman)	136
General Surgery (Macano)	18
Urology	181
Gynaecology	98
Ophthalmology (main Theatres)	13
Ophthalmology (squints)	6
Ophthalmology (cataracts)	74
Maxfax	190
Orthopaedics (Baczynski)	69
Orthopaedics (Boerger)	77
Orthopaedics (Negru)	123
Orthopaedics (Chami)	144
Pain Clinic	50
Plastics (visiting)	91
Endoscopy	29
Dermatology (Dr Ferrera)	60

Answer to Q100/2022 cont.

Surgical

Clinician/Speciality	Patients Awaiting Interventions
Cardiology	4
Dental Special Needs	20
ENT	103
General Surgery (Colorectal)	11
General Surgery	228
General Surgery (Breast)	18
Urology	181
Gynaecology	98
Ophthalmology (main Theatres)	19
Ophthalmology (cataracts)	74
Maxfax	190
Orthopaedics - Hips & Knees	77
Orthopaedics - Upper Limb	123
Orthopaedics - Lower Limb	144
Orthopaedics - Spinal	69
Pain Clinic	50
Plastic Surgery	91
Dermatology	60

Non-Surgical

Endoscopy	29
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Mr Speaker: I believe the Chief Minister would like to adjourn the House.

1780

Chief Minister (Hon. F R Picardo): Mr Speaker, yes, sir. The Annual General Meeting of the Gibraltar Socialist Labour Party is happening at seven o'clock this afternoon at the John Mackintosh Hall, and apart from the hiatus that we have suffered as a result of COVID here a demonstration once again in its 45th year of the best operating and real political party in Gibraltar.

1785

For that purpose – as it is my honour not just to be Chief Minister but to be Chief Minister because I am the leader of the Gibraltar Socialist Labour Party – it is my honour to now move the adjournment of the House until tomorrow at 3.30 p.m.

Mr Speaker: I now propose the question, which is that this House do now adjourn to Wednesday, 18th May at 3.30.

1790

I now put the question, which is that this House do now adjourn to Wednesday, 18th May at 3.30. Those in favour? **(Members: Aye.)** Those against? Passed.

This House will now adjourn to Wednesday, 18th May at 3.30 p.m.

The House adjourned at 6.28 p.m.