



# PROCEEDINGS OF THE GIBRALTAR PARLIAMENT

**MORNING SESSION: 11.01 a.m. – 12.10 p.m.**

**Gibraltar, Friday, 14th July 2023**

## **Contents**

Appropriation Bill 2023 – Second Reading – Debate continued .....	2
<i>The House adjourned at 12.10 p.m.</i> .....	16

# The Gibraltar Parliament

*The Parliament met at 11.01 a.m.*

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

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

## **Appropriation Bill 2023 – Second Reading – Debate continued**

**Chief Minister (Hon. F R Picardo):** Mr Speaker, if I may, just for a moment, inform the House that I may have to step out for five or 10 minutes to take an important call. I mean no disrespect to the Minister in doing so. I try to listen to all speeches by all Members during the course of this debate, but I may just have to step out for five minutes during the course of this address.

**Clerk:** Meeting of Parliament – Friday, 14th July 2023. We continue with the Second Reading of the Appropriation Bill 2023.

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

**Minister for Justice, Equality and Public Standards and Regulations (Hon. Miss S J Sacramento):** Mr Speaker, you were with us in the summer of 2012 when I delivered my first Budget speech. Back then I was 35 years old, and today it is a great privilege and with deep responsibility that I deliver my 11th address. We were all reminded by the Chief Minister in his intervention on Tuesday that our time here is, indeed, a privilege and ought not to be taken for granted. We will soon contest a General Election once again, and it is with great respect that I say that tomorrow is never promised. It is on this basis that I wanted to take this opportunity to look back and recognise our achievements in our almost 12 years in government, because despite all the negativity of those opposite, try as they might, they cannot and will not rewrite history.

There is no denying that we have changed the landscape and the feel of Gibraltar for the better. Only two days ago I saw a post on social media where there was nothing but praise for our Commonwealth Park, the vision of my good friend Minister John Cortes, which he made a reality and something that is now very much part of our lives and easy to take for granted, in the same way that his implementation of the smoking ban is something that now, 11 years later, is so normal for everyone that it is inconceivable to think otherwise. I say this as but two examples to illustrate that over the course of the almost 12 years that we have been in government we have achieved many great things and these are all too easy to forget.

While I simply cannot list all our achievements and accomplishments over the last 12 years, as there are too many, it saddens me greatly that the Members opposite try to diminish and belittle our efforts, particularly when they try to paint COVID and Brexit as excuses, as if anyone would believe that. They make personal insults. The Leader of the Opposition called us jaded and spent. Mr Bossino called us jaded and tired. We *were* tired. During 2020 we were literally physically exhausted because of the battles that we were fighting, but we still persevered because we had no choice. I am glad that the Opposition supported us at the time, but they were not the ones steering the ship. They have absolutely no idea of how much work we had to do. When you are physically tired, you rest and carry on, and our dedication to continue to work for Gibraltar is what

spurs us on. I can assure the Members opposite that we have more dynamic and vibrant ideas and the drive and ambition to deliver them. The hours we worked were unimaginable, the Chief  
40 Minister and the Deputy Chief Minister in particular ensuring that Gibraltar was safeguarded in the Brexit negotiations, which coincided with COVID. Mr Clinton, in one of his outbursts, got it completely right when he said that Mr Picardo was ridiculous. Mr Picardo *is* ridiculous: ridiculously strong in fighting for Gibraltar, with our backing. It saddens me that the Members opposite stoop to such ridiculous levels, no wonder people do not want to engage with Parliament after such  
45 petty insults of the people who work tirelessly to put Gibraltar first. It really is not becoming of this place.

COVID was a serious global event and can be all too easily forgotten. For those of us leading on it, we were literally fighting a war in the trenches – though actually, in our case, we were in the bunker – for the majority of 2020 and part of 2021 to keep Gibraltar safe. I will never be able to  
50 properly express my gratitude to those who went over and above the call of duty during this time. Among the many things that COVID took from us, including our piece of mind, it stole from us the time to deliver our manifesto in four years, but that has just meant we have worked doubly hard to deliver as much as we can in two years.

Mr Speaker, before I turn to my responsibilities for individual departments, I would like to  
55 commence by making reference to two important overarching strategies that are multi-faceted and multi-agency. They have been many years in the making and I can confidently say that they have matured and come to fruition, and as a result they will make a meaningful difference. The first is domestic abuse, which hon. Members will be aware has been a flagship policy of mine, to work towards ending domestic abuse in Gibraltar.

Domestic abuse is a pervasive problem that affects many people in Gibraltar, including  
60 children. It is heinous crime that destroys lives and tears families apart. As such, it is a problem that requires meaningful and co-ordinated action. This Government has been committed to ensuring that all necessary steps to tackle this issue head on are taken. Our ambitious goal is to eradicate domestic abuse from Gibraltar by intervening at every level, with children to help them  
65 recover, with victims to offer support and empowerment, and with perpetrators to hold them to account for their actions and offer help to change their behaviour. Whereas this has been a focus for many years, the work was recalibrated last year, once the COVID demands permitted me to do so.

Over the past year I have spearheaded a new Domestic Abuse Strategy, which is aligned to the  
70 Domestic Abuse Act passed in this House in January this year. The strategy is titled *Breaking the Cycle* and its purpose is to do just that, break the cycle of abuse. At this juncture, I wish to thank the Hon. Mr Feetham for his political maturity, as he has commended my work on domestic abuse both in this House and on a *Viewpoint* programme, and for this recognition I am grateful. In order to make this goal a reality, the first step was to update our legislation through the new Domestic  
75 Abuse Act. This Act strengthens the legal framework surrounding domestic abuse, and in particular moves our legislation on to reflect modern understanding by creating a new offence around patterns of controlling or coercive behaviour as well as that of non-fatal strangulation. This new offence covers such behaviour when it occurs during a relationship between intimate  
80 partners, former partners or family members. This sends a clear message that this form of domestic abuse constitutes a serious offence and provides better protection to victims experiencing repeated or continuous abuse. We must all recognise the harm caused by coercion or control, the cumulative impact on the victim and that a repeated pattern of abuse can be more injurious and harmful than a single incident of violence. Updating our legislation is but the first step in this strategy and in many ways was the easiest step.

Tackling domestic abuse requires a multi-disciplinary approach, and as such, in October 2022 I  
85 set up a Strategic Domestic Abuse Partnership. This high-level partnership, our Gold partnership, consists of the most senior managers from all appropriate government departments and agencies, including the Royal Gibraltar Police, the Care Agency, the Department of Education, the Housing Department, the Government Law Offices, the GHA, Public Health, Human Resources, the Director

90 of Public Prosecutions, the Gibraltar Courts Service, the Ministry for Justice and the Ministry for  
Equality. The strategic lead for this working group is the Ministry for Justice. In order to support  
the Gold Partnership, I have also created three inter-agency sub-groups made up of operational  
staff. The sub-groups are Prevention, Support and Justice, and Protection. The sub-group  
95 members are very active in ensuring the action plan from the strategy becomes a reality. Through  
this holistic partnership I have ensured that all relevant agencies and departments have a  
domestic abuse policy in place.

On 25th November 2022, the United Nations International Day for the Elimination of Violence  
against Women and Girls, I held Gibraltar's first national conference on domestic abuse. This  
conference had internationally renowned keynote speakers and was attended by over 150 public  
100 servants. The feedback from the conference was overwhelmingly positive. This conference was  
inspirational and very much a catalyst for the change and progress that we have since seen. The  
cost of the conference itself was met by Peninsular and I am truly grateful for their generosity and  
support. The conference also marked the introduction of Operation Encompass to Gibraltar, as  
two of its founding members gave presentations on the scheme. Operation Encompass is a police  
105 and education early information sharing partnership that enables schools to offer immediate  
support for children and young people experiencing domestic abuse. Witnessing domestic abuse  
is really distressing for a child or young person who often sees the abuse, hears it from another  
room, sees a parent's injuries or distress afterwards or can be physically hurt by trying to stop the  
abuse. This programme will enable children to be offered early support, and the new Act includes  
110 provision to facilitate the necessary sharing of information in this respect. Training on this has  
been ongoing, with over 100 police officers and teachers receiving training last November from  
the scheme founders and further training has taken place in May and June of this year ahead of  
the legislation being commenced. In order to break the cycle, it is important for young people to  
understand what a healthy relationship looks like and also the consequences of abuse, either as  
115 victim or a perpetrator. The latest report suggests that, although the number of women affected  
by domestic abuse remains largely unchanged since 2013, violence now starts at a younger age.  
It is therefore imperative that we educate our young people on how to have healthy relationships.

Much more has been done setting the groundwork for the strategy ahead of the  
commencement of the new Act. I will set out some examples of this, as sometimes it is easy for  
120 us to think that passing an Act through this Parliament will solve a problem. As I have mentioned  
earlier on many occasions, this is but the beginning and much further groundwork and training is  
required to make the words and thoughts in our legislation a reality. This year, for example, I  
commissioned and funded Childline, in collaboration with the NSPCC and the Care Agency, to  
develop and deliver a therapeutic recovery programme for children who have lived experience of  
125 domestic abuse. I also commissioned the University of Gibraltar to develop a victim survey to  
inform our strategy and ensure that the victim's voice is central to everything we do. The training  
that has been rolled out since then can only be described as prolific and has been offered to all  
stakeholder departments, ranging from generic awareness to sector-specific training. I have  
engaged Safe Lives, a UK charity, to deliver training on the development of a multi-agency risk  
130 assessment conference. This is now operational and involves staff from the various agencies  
working together to develop a safety plan for victims of domestic abuse. Rachel Williams, a  
survivor of domestic abuse and attempted murder in the UK, deserves a special mention in our  
work. She has also been engaged to run a number of events, one of which was a recent public  
event, an event for young people and four workshops for public servants, including specifically a  
135 workshop for the GHA GPs. She has also led workshops with victims and survivors of domestic  
abuse. We are also working on developing our therapeutic pathways to empower victims of  
domestic abuse, and our therapeutic support also involves work with perpetrators.

The Government and Gibraltar as a whole should never be complacent when it comes to  
domestic abuse. While I am proud of what has been achieved by our Government in breaking the  
140 cycle, we cannot stop here. I reiterate our commitment to tackling domestic abuse and making a  
real difference to the lives of victims and survivors of it in Gibraltar.

On a final note, I was honoured to be invited to Buckingham Palace in November of last year for the first event hosted by the then Queen Consort in recognition of work done on domestic abuse. That was a real privilege and one of those moments that you know you will always remember.

145

Mr Speaker, an overlapping area as the Minister with responsibility for children and safeguarding is that of child protection. It may sometimes be seen as a cliché to say that children are our future, but that does not make it any less true. It is all of our responsibility to ensure that Gibraltar is a safe and secure environment for them to grow up in. Child protection is not just a legal obligation under the Children Act, but a moral one as well. It is our duty to protect children from all forms of abuse, neglect and exploitation. As a society, we cannot turn a blind eye. We must take proactive measures to prevent child abuse and protect our children. Much work has been done over the past year to ensure children are safe and protected. However, one cannot rely solely on the Government and its agencies to protect our children. It is the responsibility of everyone to be vigilant and report any suspected cases of child abuse. It is my vision to create a culture of awareness and education where parents, teachers and caregivers are trained to recognise the signs of abuse and take appropriate action.

150

155

Having agencies work together and communicate effectively is essential for good child protection practice. My friend Minister Linares spoke about this and work done by the GSLA in this respect. To that end, I have invested in development days for the multi-agency Child Protection Committee which took place in November 2022 and in March 2023. These were facilitated by a recently retired UK director of children services who has extensive experience in this area of work. As a result of these development days, the committee set three priorities for training and development during the next year. These are children impacted by domestic abuse, children with a disability, and safer recruitment. The Child Protection Committee has been very busy this year. There has been more child protection training than ever being delivered to government agencies and to charities and religious organisations. This training is well established for all who work with children and young people. The training programme has been reviewed and updated and will be further updated this year to take account of the Committee's priorities.

160

165

In order to ensure safer recruitment, I have commissioned the development of a framework to enable employers and agencies, including the voluntary sector, to manage allegations against persons in a position of trust. This framework will ensure a clear process in order to protect children, employees and organisations. I have also commissioned an updated inter-agency child protection policy and procedures for all agencies dealing with children, and these will be implemented throughout the coming year.

170

175

Mr Speaker, turning to the departments that I am responsible for, I will commence with my responsibility as Minister for Equality. During this administration's three terms of office, it has been an absolute privilege to hold a number of portfolios. Of all these portfolios, the Equality portfolio has been the one that I have held from the very first day. Equality is a cornerstone of our Government and it was a great honour to be Gibraltar's first Minister for Equality in 2011. It is a responsibility that I have always been, and continue to be, extremely proud of. While it is a sad reflection that equality matters were given little, if any, political or parliamentary consideration until 2011, I have to say that it has been hugely gratifying to lead a Ministry which is pioneering and groundbreaking in its philosophy, vision, policies and, of course, most significantly, legislation. I make this point proudly as I am concerned that this may not be the case should the Members opposite be in government. None of this was achieved until we embarked on the equality journey. Our legislation on such as gay marriage, abortion and surrogacy has not been supported by Mr Bossino. Worse still, he has indicated that abortion in particular could well be reversed. Well, let's hope not only that the GSD do not win the next election, but that Mr Bossino is not the leader, as his views, which are more akin to Vox and could risk us looking more like Uganda than Gibraltar, would do us no favours. These regressive views were one of the reasons given by the hon. Lady opposite in her press conference at her resignation as to why there could be no merger between Together Gibraltar and the GSD.

180

185

190

195 Mr Speaker, in the almost 12 years since its inception, the Ministry for Equality has made  
significant strides to ensure that gay rights are properly protected in legislation, and it is through  
our awareness campaigns and community engagement that these are understood and embraced.  
Given that June is Pride month and it has just come to an end, I think it is appropriate that we  
should begin with LGBTQ+ rights. The development of LGBTQ+ rights since we have been in office  
has been remarkable and the cultural shift these legislative changes have effected are supremely  
200 apparent from last year's and this year's successful Pride events, making it a total of three Pride  
events. Not only were events, by their very nature, diverse and inclusive, but they were also  
colourful and joyful celebrations. Pride is a pertinent reminder to everyone that members of the  
LGBTQ+ community have a right to visibility and the right to an equitable place and standing in  
our community. I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate the LGBTQ+ community, who  
205 have worked so hard to mark Pride so wonderfully.

When I look back now, it is hard to believe that the first time that LGBTQ+ rights were referred  
to was in my very first Budget speech in 2012 and that the first time that gay rights were properly  
achieved in this House was in 2014. The Civil Partnership Bill, which was the first Bill I ever moved  
in this Parliament, was a landmark piece of legislation. For the first time in Gibraltar's history, this  
210 Bill enabled the formal recognition of relationships between couples of the same sex. Two years  
later, in 2016, I brought the Civil Marriage (Amendment) Act to this House to allow for the civil  
marriage of gay couples. Additionally, we legislated to outlaw homophobic hate crime and hate  
speech in 2013. Such crimes are now, thanks to us, aggravated offences. In July 2015 and in  
recognition of our transgender community, we made provision to extend protection from  
215 discrimination for individuals who have undergone gender reassignment. The passing of all this  
legislation has demonstrated our resolute and steadfast commitment to equal rights for all  
members of our community, regardless of their sexual orientation or gender reassignment.

Whilst we have ensured the legislation protects members of the LGBTQ+ community, we will  
continue to mark Pride month because there is no place in Gibraltar for homophobia, biphobia or  
220 transphobia. We mark Pride in powerfully visual ways, as awareness is key. We do this by flying  
the rainbow flag in prominent places throughout Gibraltar, illuminating the Moorish Castle in  
rainbow colours and supporting the Pride parade. These visual reminders send a strong message  
to everyone that we will continue to mark and support Pride because it is the right thing to do.  
We will continue to mark Pride month because there is no room or place in Gibraltar for hate. We  
225 will continue to mark Pride month because in an equitable and inclusive Gibraltar we are all of  
equal value and worth and because we are all entitled to full respect at all times. We will continue  
to mark Pride month because it is imperative that everyone lives true and authentic lives free from  
the fear of negative or hostile reactions from those around them, and this is how it should be in  
Gibraltar.

230 Gender equality is another important strand of my equality portfolio. Gender equality is a  
necessary component of a modern and progressive society and it is imperative in our pursuit of  
social justice. A central strand of the Gender Equality Strategy is the economic empowerment of  
women. One of the key initiatives of the Gender Equality Strategy is the Women's Mentorship  
Programme. We recently completed the fourth cycle of this programme, and feedback from all  
235 participants, both mentors and mentees alike, was extremely positive once again. I am very proud  
of the continued success and impact of the Women's Mentorship Programme. Its aims are hugely  
ambitious and varied. The programme's *raison d'être* is, in the first instance, to help women to  
develop personal and professional skills which will help them overcome certain barriers they may  
face in the workplace. In the mid to long term, the programme aims to address the  
240 underrepresentation of women in positions of leadership and management. We know that a more  
gender-balanced workforce is a key to success for organisations and businesses but for national  
economies, too. Therefore, ensuring that we maximise the talents and skills of both women and  
men in equal measure is a legitimate and necessary objective that we can all support and, more  
importantly, we can all benefit from. The fourth cycle of the Women's Mentorship Programme  
245 came to a close at the end of May and I am very pleased to say that there was a very positive

uptake of the programme by diverse professionals across the sectors. In total, the number of participants since the pilot cycle in 2019 has been 205. This means that since its inception the Women's Mentorship Programme has been able to provide support and advice from established professionals to a total of 104 mentees. The Women's Mentorship Programme offers women an invaluable opportunity for personal and professional growth. I am delighted to announce that the next cycle of the programme will commence after the summer, and I would like to urge anyone interested in participating in it, either as a mentor or mentee, to contact my team at the Ministry for Equality and register for the next cycle. I would also like to take this opportunity to thank the mentors, many of whom are repeat mentors, for giving their time and expertise and for giving back to the community.

International Women's Day is another important strand of the Gender Equality Strategy in that it challenges restrictive socio-cultural norms that prevent individuals from leading full and rich lives. The Ministry for Equality's celebration of International Women's Day this year with the event 'Where are the women of Gibraltar?' generated a conversation around the representation of women both historically and in the present. The event, which was oversubscribed and generated an engaging discussion at the end, shows that there is a clear appetite for these kinds of events. The event was an opportunity to reflect on what more can be done to amplify the voices of women and raise further women's visibility to ensure that we continue working towards achieving gender parity. Perhaps the most satisfying aspect of International Women's Day this year is the demonstration of how far we have come. In addition to my own event, I was invited to a record 12 other events. Who would have thought, when we first started to mark International Women's Day in 2012, that it would be embraced so successfully across the sectors?

Mr Speaker, as you well know, nowhere is the underrepresentation of women starker than in politics and parliamentary life. The lack of gender parity in this House is an issue decried by all and one which we can all agree urgently needs to be addressed. As you are aware from my involvement in the Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians (CWP) of the CPA, I have been a member of our regional steering committee since its inception. In 2020, among everything else that was going on, I was elected the chair of our region. This led me to organise two regional CWP conferences. The one in 2021 was a virtual one, and in October 2022 the conference was in person and we welcomed some 30 women Parliamentarians from across our region, as well as the international chair, for a three-day event. Having the opportunity of having so many women Members of Parliaments in Gibraltar, I wanted women here to take the benefit, so through the Ministry for Equality I also organised an outreach session to enable women who may be interested in political life to meet parliamentarians from Gibraltar and other countries to learn first-hand from their experiences. It was well attended and attendees were able to hear from a number of MPs and also actively engage them in conversation during the question and answer session at the end of the event and the networking opportunity afterwards. I know that for many of the women, particularly the younger women present, it was an inspiring event which left a vivid impression on them.

Finally on the note of women in Parliament, I am saddened to hear that the lady opposite has chosen to leave this House. It is a pity that there will be one less woman in Parliament given the huge necessity for diversity and the need for empowered women who are willing to take a stand and make a change. I sincerely hope that more women will embrace the opportunity at the next election and that we see a greater representation of women in this House the next time.

Mr Speaker, I would now like to direct your attention to the work the Ministry for Equality has done on disability. The Ministry for Equality is the pivot in our Government for driving this important agenda and we oversee the progress and delivery of the Disability Act throughout the public sector. Like the other examples that I gave earlier, so much progress has been made on this front that it is easy to forget the tremendous investment since December 2011 and how things were before then. Though there is always more work to be done and we always want to do more, it has to be said that no Government has done more for people with disabilities in Gibraltar since this Government created the Ministry for Equality in 2011.

300 You may remember, Mr Speaker, in my last Budget speech I mentioned the work done by the  
Ministry for Equality and the Ministry for Justice in collating the necessary information and  
evidence in order to progress the extension of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with  
Disabilities in Gibraltar. This has been a long and arduous task, a tremendous piece of work, and I  
am happy to say that we are reaching the end of that process and will soon be able to submit our  
findings to the UK. The next step will be for the UK to review Gibraltar's position, and we hope  
that they will start the process of extending the Convention to us.

305 I spoke last year of our intention to enact sections 13 and 14 of the Disability Act. Since the  
commencement of the Disability Act, the Ministry for Equality has provided information and  
training to both the public and private sector and continues to do so in order to ensure that  
everyone understands why this change is important and why it is important to be as inclusive as  
we can as we move to this very shortly. Since his 2019 Budget speech, the Chief Minister has  
310 continued to provide tax relief for businesses that have spent money on adapting or modifying  
their premises to make them accessible. In January this year, I met with the Chamber of  
Commerce, the Gibraltar Federation of Small Businesses and the Gibraltar Catering Association in  
order to discuss the changes to the Disability Act that were coming. Two months later, the Ministry  
for Equality organised a seminar, open to the private sector, on how business premises can be  
315 made more accessible in light of the legislative changes that are about to be commenced.

One of the key projects undertaken by the Ministry for Equality was the introduction of the  
Disability Information Card. The main purpose of this card is as a communication tool that enables  
the holder to discretely communicate their disability or accessibility requirements to another  
person. There are currently over 200 active cards in circulation, so over 200 people are now more  
320 confident in communicating their needs outside their normal social circle.

Another project commenced by the Ministry for Equality in 2019 was the launch of the RADAR  
Key Scheme. The first RADAR lock was fitted in the accessible public toilet by Market Place. Since  
then, a number of RADAR locks have been fitted by the Ministry for the Environment in accessible  
toilets around Gibraltar. The same RADAR key issued by the Ministry for Equality can open any of  
325 these toilets, thus enabling any user to use an accessible toilet at any time during the day or night.  
Over a hundred residents have, to date, successfully applied for a RADAR key. I would like to thank  
the Ministry for the Environment for so readily embracing this project and for continuing to invest  
in this scheme by installing RADAR locks in other accessible public toilets. We started with one  
RADAR lock. There are currently five accessible toilets with RADAR locks installed and I have been  
330 advised that at least three further public toilets have been identified for the installation of this  
lock. I would like to add that these locks are the same as the ones in the UK, so not only are we  
investing in accessible tourism from the UK, we are also enabling anyone from Gibraltar travelling  
to the UK with the required tool to access accessible toilets there.

In order to further promote inclusion and accessibility, the Ministry for Equality has been  
335 engaged in a number of areas. One such strand is access to information for the deaf and hard of  
hearing. You may remember, Mr Speaker, the publication of the British Sign Language Act last  
year. One of my duties under this Act is to issue a report on British Sign Language (BSL) in Gibraltar  
and what public authorities have done to provide and promote BSL. At the end of the first  
reporting period on 30th April 2023, the Ministry for Equality prepared a questionnaire for this  
340 purpose and, with the help of our Human Resources Department, shared this with all heads of  
public authorities in Gibraltar. A report will be published as soon as the Ministry has been able to  
extract all the necessary information. Further work has been done to promote the inclusion of  
hearing loops at all public offices as part of the Government's drive to make their buildings and  
services more accessible and thereby provide a more inclusive service to the community. The  
345 Ministry for Equality has undertaken another exercise to ascertain the current needs of  
departments, agencies and authorities for fixed and portable hearing loop facilities. This exercise  
is currently ongoing. Once finalised, this Government will be able to take the necessary steps to  
ensure that hearing loops are widely available at all counter services and board rooms within the



public service. We heard yesterday from the Minister for Tourism in his intervention how this had  
350 been embraced by the Gibraltar Tourist Board.

Members of this House and the general public may already be well aware of my and this  
Government's support for the Special Olympics. Both Special Olympics International and this  
Government share the same ideals on disability and base what we do on the UN Convention on  
355 the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. As you know, Mr Speaker, this Government and Special  
Olympics made an announcement last year on the Global Leadership Coalition, designed to bring  
together governments and agencies from around the world to forge expanded models of inclusive  
education through sport for students of all abilities. I have had the absolute privilege of attending  
360 four Special Olympics World Games with the Gibraltar delegation, so ably led by Annie Risso, and  
I can genuinely say what excellent athletes and ambassadors they are for Gibraltar. At this year's  
World Games in Berlin, I had the opportunity to attend the first Global Forum organised by Special  
Olympics, culminating with the Berlin Declaration, which I supported on behalf of the  
Government. This involvement gives Gibraltar the possibility of tapping into a variety of  
knowledge and resources from around the world with the simple aim of enabling people with  
365 disabilities and educating society in general through educative, sporting and health programmes.  
We are now in the process of developing some of these programmes and I am excited at the  
potential this could have; in particular, with the health programme this could be instrumental in  
developing more advanced screening opportunities for people with learning disabilities or  
communication barriers.

There is also a need to ensure that processes are in place so that inclusion is encompassed  
370 even when it is not at the forefront of everyone's mind. We have to make sure that not only should  
buildings be accessible, but the approach to these too. Consideration should also be given to  
people with disabilities every time there are maintenance or road works, or any eventuality where  
a building or a route taken is no longer accessible. For this reason, I have established a working  
group with the aim of achieving a more accessible Gibraltar, and this will be a strategic priority of  
375 the new Gibraltar Development Plan. The working group is chaired by the Head of the Ministry for  
Equality, Jason Bellilo, where he meets with the heads from Technical Services, Town Planning and  
Building Control and the Ministry for Traffic and Transport in order to identify current processes  
and highlight any changes that may be required to develop or maintain accessible routes around  
Gibraltar.

380 Finally on disability, I am happy to announce that I have established a working group to develop  
a better disability register. This working group brings together the professionals in this field and  
the Head of the Ministry for Equality together with the Director of Public Health and the Chief  
Statistician and will advise me on how we can improve in the collection of data so that we can  
better inform policies and practices going forward. When it comes to disability, there are many  
385 stakeholders. Many of these stakeholders are represented by charities and their input is  
invaluable in what we do as we continue to progress our disability strategies, and I thank each and  
every one for their valuable input and assistance. The Ministry for Equality is a small team of four  
people. It is quite remarkable that such a small team have achieved so much progress and for that  
I thank them all.

390 Mr Speaker, I will turn to my responsibilities as the Minister for Justice. This has been a  
challenging year for the Royal Gibraltar Police for a number of reasons. Despite this, the force has  
always maintained its professionalism in protecting the public and Gibraltar throughout. The RGP  
continues to strive towards meeting the existing and emerging threats posed by terrorism. There  
has been significant investment in firearms equipment and ammunition, as well as considerable  
395 financing towards developing firearms commanders who specialise in commanding and co-  
ordinating responses to firearms incidents. Investment also continues to be made in Operation  
Servator, with training provided by the City of London Police to ensure that they deter, detect and  
disrupt a wide range of criminal activity while providing a reassuring presence for members of our  
community and visitors to Gibraltar.

400 Investment in body-worn cameras was a focus in the previous financial year with an uplift to  
the current cameras. Research has shown that the use of this technology will allow for improved  
transparency, a reduction in assaults on police, swifter resolution to criminal prosecutions and  
police complaints, and training opportunities. The forthcoming Budget will see further financing  
with a further uplift of approximately 40 more cameras.

405 Following the recommendations in the HMICFRS report, the RGP invested in specialised  
counter-corruption training for a number of officers. In the last financial year the organisation  
sought to build upon its counter-corruption capabilities by engaging consultants to assist in  
enhancing efficacy within this area of policing. The forthcoming year will see continued  
investment in software-based products aimed at ensuring improved governance over all digital  
410 devices utilised by officers of the RGP. The funding will help them to improve the RGP's  
capabilities, allowing them to identify areas of corruption, thereby safeguarding and building trust  
with members of the community. Dealing with high-tech crime is an increasingly demanding  
business area for the RGP and it has increased its resources, thereby enabling them to tackle more  
work. The RGP has invested in updated equipment and forensic software that will further enhance  
415 the unit's capabilities and will continue with this programme in the forthcoming year.

The new Penalty Notices for Disorder Scheme has now been implemented and this will provide  
officers a quick and effective alternative disposal method for dealing with low-level anti-social and  
nuisance offending. The scheme aims to reduce the time officers spend completing paperwork,  
allowing them to spend more time with the public dealing with more serious crime, while also  
420 reducing the burdens placed upon the courts.

Last year saw investment in an e-learning platform which is in the process of being rolled out  
across the organisation. The platform will assist in creating a culture of self-led learning and a  
focus on continuous development. It is envisaged that this will drive better performance  
throughout the force, and with the use of blended learning will release training resources to focus  
425 on the increasing number of organisational training needs. As part of the organisational  
commitment to learning and development, the RGP has continued to invest in accredited  
leadership training for officers in supervisory and management roles. The last year also saw  
training by the same provider on diversity, equality and inclusion across the organisation. Looking  
forward, the next financial year will realise accredited training in the areas of leadership and well-  
430 being for those officers who have recently been promoted in rank. I would like express my  
gratitude to the brave staff at the Royal Gibraltar Police for their dedication and support and to  
the Commissioner, Richard Ullger, for his leadership.

Mr Speaker, turning to the Financial and Intelligence Unit, which continues to make a  
significant contribution in Gibraltar's fight against money laundering, terrorist financing and  
435 proliferation financing, it has made remarkable progress and demonstrated its performance  
through its recently published Annual Report and Strategic Analysis. The GFIU director highlighted  
in his three-year strategic plan for 2023-2026 that the unit will build on current momentum,  
shaped by its experience during the Moneyval and FATF's process. The plan, which will be the  
backbone of the GFIU's digital transformation journey, promises to exploit the opportunities from  
440 technological advances and work with stakeholders to ensure that the GFIU has the best  
innovative solutions.

Through its sustainable outreach and engagement programme, Project Nexus, which this year  
was recognised through HMGOG's Project Achievement Award, the GFIU has provided training to  
hundreds of professionals both in the private and public sector, covering a broad range of topics  
445 related to money laundering, terrorist financing, sanctions and proliferation financing, not only in  
Gibraltar but also in other countries. For example, the GFIU delivered training in Egypt, through  
the United Nations Office of Drugs and Crime, to law enforcement agencies and FIUs from the  
Middle East and North African region. Additionally, the GFIU delivered training to the government  
of Kazakhstan on Gibraltar's efforts to counter proliferation financing. This further showcases the  
450 unit's commitment to sharing expertise and knowledge with international partners in the fight  
against financial crime.

455 Since the establishment of the Financial Liaison and Intelligence Network, Gibraltar's public-private partnership, the GFIU has signed a memorandum of understanding with the UK's Joint Money Laundering Intelligence Task Force, which increases co-operation, sharing information and intelligence, providing collective knowledge and experience to make Gibraltar and the UK a hostile environment for criminals involved in serious and organised crime. This has been made possible by the GFIU's membership of the Quad Island Forum of FIUs. I thank Mr Edgar Lopez, who is exceptional in discharging his role as director, and particularly for his innovation in this department.

460 Looking at probation, now, Mr Speaker, during the past year, the Probation Service has continued to meet its commitments of service delivery to the criminal justice system, working closely with a range of stakeholders, service users, the wider community and the voluntary sector. The Probation Service prioritises delivery of services to the courts and the Prison and plays a key role in sex offender risk management in the community. The team's commitment to evidence-based practice has remained integral to working with service users to address their complex needs, and in this respect they have undertaken further training in various risk assessment tools to enhance the quality of their reports and improve the management of offenders. This includes motivational interviewing, anger management, problem-solving skills, and interventions when working with perpetrators of domestic abuse. The community service aspect of the team's responsibilities has continued by delivering an alternative sentencing option to custody to the courts and providing a positive social and environmental impact in Gibraltar. The service continues to provide support in developing pro-social thinking and attitudes whilst promoting and developing some employment skills. From 1st June 2022 to 15th June 2023 the Probation Service has received 165 requests for pre-sentence reports. In total, 71 community rehabilitation orders and youth rehabilitation orders have been issued by the courts. With regard to parole matters, the Probation Service has prepared 25 reports. Again, I am extremely proud of the hard work and determination of this small team, who regularly go above and beyond in providing an important and valuable service to the criminal justice system.

480 Looking at our Prison Service, the average number of inmates at HMP Windmill Hill for the last financial year stood at 41 prisoners per month, down from 56 the previous year. There were a total of 130 admissions during this time. The Prison's facilities continue to be well used by those in custody, the most popular activities being the gymnasium followed by educational and vocational classes. Inmates also made good use of the counsellors and programmes available to them, these being substance rehabilitation programmes delivered by the Care Agency, therapeutic interventions for sex offenders and therapeutic counselling. The Prison's voluntary drug testing scheme is proving to continue to be a success and these initiatives will better place offenders on the road to rehabilitation and successful reintegration into society, and thus reduce the rate of reoffending. I am also pleased to report that the training of prison officers has recommenced following a hiatus due to COVID. Additionally, a number of upcoming UK specialist courses will be attended by officers soon.

485 Turning to the Gibraltar Courts Service, as reported in previous years, there continues to be no backlog at the Magistrates Court or Supreme Court in respect of dates being provided for criminal trials and civil and family applications waiting for first hearing dates. This year, all members of the judiciary, including Justices of the Peace, attended training on domestic abuse. This training was organised by my office and was delivered by two trainers from the Judicial College in England. The training was very well received by the judiciary, as communicated to me by the Chief Justice. The Government has invested in a new courts audio-visual and recording system. The works for this have now commenced. As Minister for Justice, I continue to work closely with the Chief Executive of the Gibraltar Courts Service to ensure that the courts' back-office administration is properly resourced to make certain that the level of performance and support to the judiciary, court users and the legal profession is maintained so as to continue delivering a timely and efficient justice system that is open to all. I am most grateful to Hazel Cumbo for her invaluable work and that of her team.

500

505 Now the Government Law Offices. Since the last Budget speech, the Government's team of lawyers has continued to play a crucial part in delivering legal advice to the Government, shaping legislation and providing legal representation to all our law enforcement agencies. During the course of 2022 to date, the GLO has published 36 Government Bills, 28 Acts and 341 Legal Notices, of which only 15 were COVID related. After a lot of planning, last month saw the OCPL and the RGP begin a trial of the use of digital dockets in Supreme Court matters. Moving forward, the  
510 intention is for the system to be used for all criminal matters at whatever stage of the criminal process. This will greatly improve information flow between OCPL and the RGP and reduces the need for physical criminal files and documents to move between locations. I thank the team for their hard work and advice.

515 I turn to my responsibility for the Fire Services. First to the Airport Fire and Rescue Service (AFRS), which continues to enhance its operational response capabilities by investing in developing its staff and resources. In this respect, a number of professional and other relevant courses have been undertaken throughout the past year. As core participant in any airfield aircraft emergency, the AFRS has an obvious primary operational response role. Beyond its continual training, it also participated in a number of multi-agency exercises, but more directly in the  
520 airfield's biennial aircraft emergency live exercise. This involved working on the ground with airfield stakeholders and various other responding partner agencies, participating collaboratively at all levels and learning from this to improve and enhance the effectiveness of the response plans. The training throughout the year has consisted of First Response Emergency Care Level 4 qualification, the whole of the AFRS team undertaking the Safeguarding Children and Young Adults  
525 Tier 1 training, and a senior officer attending a Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Nuclear Strategic Command course at the College of Policing in the UK jointly with a Gibraltar Fire and Rescue Service (GFRS) senior officer. Continual professional development and the maintenance of skills is central to the ethos of the AFRS, which is periodically scrutinised by inspectors from both the Defence Fire Safety Regulator and the Civil Aviation Authority. Such external reviews enable  
530 the organisation to gain assurance and verification that it is performing and delivering a service in accordance with UK and internationally mandated standards, as the aviation industry allows no room for complacency. Ensuring the organisation continues to develop and widen its skills base with adequate resources and facilities is fundamental.

535 Now turning to the GFRS, this has been a year of numerous challenges for the GFRS as an organisation that prides itself on setting high standards of performance in the community. The staff have faced circumstances that have taken them to the extreme in terms of risk exposure, with the aim of resolving incidents and keeping the impact on the community as low as possible. Let's not forget the heroic efforts of the firefighters this time last year when they were called upon when the fire broke out at Power's Drive. I was with the Chief Fire Officer as events were unfolding  
540 and we cannot underestimate how these firefighters run to danger to keep us safe. To this day, the GFRS is still trying to recover from the effects of the pandemic, in terms of training needs and the maintenance of their competences and frequencies in line with UK National Operational Guidance. With the ongoing growth of Gibraltar's landscape, amendments to fire safety standards and innovative fire engineering solutions, the GFRS Fire Safety team is constantly challenged and  
545 does a magnificent job in the anticipation of risks, subsequently contributing to our frontline operational preparedness. They continue with their primary objective of implementing and adopting any measures or procedures necessary to ensure they maintain competence and provide the best possible level of emergency response to safeguard Gibraltar. Works have commenced to develop and modernise the internal incident reporting, human resource management and  
550 dispatch/operational support systems. The main objective is to improve efficiency in emergency response and day-to-day working practices. As we work on the transfer of the ambulance dispatch from the GFRS to the GHA, there will come a number of changes in protocol; however, the GFRS fire control operators will maintain a level of knowledge in some overlapping areas in order provide resilience, if required. The GFRS continues to form a vital part of Gibraltar's ongoing  
555 development as a modern and, more importantly, safe community with significant involvement

in major projects, public events and residential developments. The aim of their involvement in these projects is not only to familiarise themselves with potential risks in order to adapt SOPs, but also to ensure that new-builds comply with fire protection safety standards aimed at saving lives and assisting Fire Service operations. For the work of those who work in both of these organisations we have to be extremely grateful.

I turn now to my portfolio as Minister with responsibility for regulation. I will start with Town Planning and Building Control. The department continues to deal with large volumes of applications, having received a total of 589 applications since 2022. The DPC held a total of 12 meetings in 2022 and the DPC's sub-committee that determines more minor and less contentious applications held 24 meetings during 2022. The tender process for a new Gibraltar Development Plan and the preparation of a new plan is under way with the tender having closed on 25th May. Bids are now being assessed and once the successful bidder has been selected, work on the new plan will commence. During the course of the year, the department has been actively recruiting professional town planning and building control staff to fill various vacancies that existed. As a result, in the next couple of months the department's professional staff complement will be back up to full strength. This will ensure that the department is appropriately staffed to deal with the volume of work. The department is currently undertaking an exercise to review the current building regulations and various building codes with a view to bringing them in line with the latest standards. This consists of updating all remaining parts to bring them in line with the UK and European standards. This will enable the Building Control staff to ensure that standards are maintained and best practices achieved and will ensure the health and safety of both the users and occupiers of the built environment. A simultaneous review of the relevant sections of the Public Health Act is also being undertaken in order to provide Gibraltar's first Building Act. The department will be working on the development of structural building codes for both seismic and wind that will take account of Gibraltar's unique geology and topography. It is important that new buildings are designed to an adequate standard to ensure that there are no catastrophic failures, such as those recently seen in the Syria/Turkey earthquakes. The Government will continue to ensure that the planning system is open and transparent and that we have an efficient and effective system of town planning and building control.

Turning to data protection, a complete holistic review of our GDPR structures and requirements was undertaken in August 2022. The review recommended that a restructure should be implemented to bring wholesale improvements and to allow for processes to be streamlined to create uniformity across all departments and authorities and remove dependency on a single individual. The restructure highlighted the need to prepare for future data challenges, especially as personal data and data in general are becoming a prominent feature in everyday life. In November 2022 I appointed a new data protection officer, Mr Michael Crome, to work independently as the public sector's data protection officer to implement these wholesale changes, having had this role embedded within the Gibraltar Law Office prior to that. Since this appointment, we have produced a new user-friendly data protection policy, together with mandatory training packages aimed at providing our employees with the right tools to be able to discharge their duties relating to the handling of personal data safely. We have introduced a number of other policies and procedures to assist data controllers to deal with the sharing of data, data breaches, subject access requests and data protection impact assessments. A full compliance programme has now been designed, and individual data controllers are being assessed by our data protection officers to ensure that they adhere to their legal obligations within the Data Protection Act and GDPR. The next phase of the restructure will be to appoint data protection champions embedded into departments to enhance the level of compliance. I thank Mr Crome for his innovation since taking over this responsibility. The Gibraltar Regulatory Authority continues to regulate their statutory areas of responsibility. These are data protection, broadcasting, cyber security compliance, higher education, electronic and radio communications, postal services and competition.

Turning now to the Office of Fair Trading, I will start with mention of work on the Fair Trading Bill, which is on the Agenda of this House. To ensure that the new legislation appropriately supports our business community, this has been done in consultation with the Gibraltar Federation of Small Businesses and the Chamber of Commerce, and I am grateful to my friend  
610 Minister Isola, who commenced this piece of legislation, for his assistance in this regard. The new legislation will create a better framework for the OFT, ease the establishment of new businesses by simplifying the licensing process, better protect Gibraltar consumers and allow the OFT to set trading standards.

615 I shall move on to each of the OFT's core responsibilities, starting with business licensing. The authority has now issued 386 new licences over the course of the last financial year. This is a positive indicator that Gibraltar continues to be an active and resilient business community despite Brexit-related uncertainties. A total of 846 business licence application notices were published over the same period. On average, the OFT therefore processed over 16 applications a  
620 week, with a maximum of 31 applications in a single week. The OFT is currently in the advanced stages of testing a new software package. Once fully developed, it will permit the licensing team to process these consistently high numbers of applications quicker and more efficiently and allow it to deliver an improved service to the business community.

Turning to consumer protection, the OFT's Consumer Protection team processed a substantial  
625 381 complaints from Gibraltar consumers during the past financial year. Of these, 60 led to investigations.

Finally, I refer to the OFT's anti-money laundering and counter-terrorism financing supervisory role. The AML team has dedicated significant efforts to contributing to Gibraltar's ongoing review by the FATF following the Moneyval Mutual Evaluation Report in 2019. This has involved face-to-  
630 face meetings in Paris with the FATF, where the OFT's supervisory role has been assessed for effectiveness. The OFT has continued with its onsite visit programme for real estate agents and high-value goods dealers, carrying out 18 visits on a risk-based basis. These have resulted in nine fines for breaches of AML/CFT legal obligations amounting to £11,400.

Now moving on to Civil Contingencies, after three years of battling through the COVID-19  
635 pandemic, 2023 feels to be the year that we have finally returned to normality. The World Health Organization's determination in May of this year that COVID-19 is now an established and ongoing health issue which no longer constitutes a public health emergency of international concern is very welcome news. That said, we have had a few potential scares in the last 12 months where we have seen new variants emerge, such as the Kraken variant, which was detected in Gibraltar  
640 in January 2023, and, more worryingly, China's decision to open its borders, with the inherent risk that unknown variants of concern could enter into circulation. In response, the Government, like most of the rest of Europe, promptly reintroduced travel restrictions as a preventative measure, but after closely monitoring developments we were delighted to be able to progressively scale back from a heightened posture. Certainly, doing away with the last of the COVID-19 emergency  
645 regulations on 17th March this year, after an uninterrupted period of 1,130 days of active emergency regulations, felt like a hugely significant milestone and the start of a new phase in our lives.

While the last 12 months has been largely positive – Mr Speaker, please excuse the pun – on the COVID-19 front, it has, however, reminded us of the importance of being fully prepared to  
650 deal with every eventuality. Indeed, the Office of Civil Contingencies, together with our emergency services and other responding agencies, has again been put to the test as Gibraltar has been required to respond to an unprecedented number of back-to-back emergencies, with some of these major incidents taking place concurrently. Separate strategic co-ordinating groups were activated to manage the response to incidents such as the escalating monkeypox global outbreak  
655 first detected in Gibraltar on 31st May 2022, the fire in Power's Drive Tunnel and the subsequent damage to our water's critical national infrastructure and very significant disruption to our water supplies, and then the collision at sea of the *OS35* and *Adam* LNG vessels that could have potentially resulted in a major environmental disaster for the region. I applaud the efforts and

660 professionalism of everyone involved in keeping Gibraltar safe through what has been a very difficult and challenging time.

665 Aside from the recent events that have directly impacted on our community, it is evidently clear that we live in an increasingly volatile world in which we have recently witnessed the devastating impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, the war in Ukraine, cybersecurity challenges and climate change. The threat picture continues to evolve and it is therefore increasingly important that Gibraltar continues to regularly monitor emerging risks and threats to ensure that we remain best prepared for any and every eventuality. In this respect, the Office of Civil Contingencies, through the construct of the Gibraltar Contingency Council, has continued to work very closely with the emergency services and other first responders. In the last few years we have seen at first hand that we are not cocooned from the potential of harm and, despite our best efforts, bad things can happen and will happen from time to time. It is for this reason that we will continue to develop our capabilities, build on our foundations and strengthen our resilience so that we can better prevent, mitigate, respond to and recover from the numerous risks we face. The work that the Office of Civil Contingencies co-ordinates in conjunction with other partners in the field of emergency preparedness, resilience and response is key to us as we strive to protect our national security and become more resilient through the optimised use of all our capabilities.

675 Except for the conduct of operations, training is a most important activity, as success is dependent on high-quality and realistic training. Being ready for response operations is what drives the training requirements, and our emergency services and other first responders must continue to train to attain the highest of standards at the individual, organisational and multi-agency levels. The ability of different organisations to work together is a must and it is for this reason that multi-agency interoperability training lies at the heart of what we do. Throughout the past year, the Office of Civil Contingencies has, through the establishment of exercise planning groups, led, planned, organised and conducted a series of complex multi-agency training events and exercises to practise and test a number of Gibraltar's major response plans. In the last nine months alone, such multi-agency live exercises have included the testing of response plans to a marauding terrorist attack, a radiation emergency, aircraft post-crash management and the new Kingsway Tunnel. Additionally, Civil Contingencies have co-ordinated and delivered a number of table-top exercises and multi-agency command training events. In the last month, the office has facilitated training on event safety for both event organisers and members of the Safety Advisory Group. It has also engaged with the UK's Counter Terrorism Policing National CBRN Centre to facilitate the delivery of operational and tactical command training for chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear incidents.

695 The Office of Civil Contingencies has played and continues to play an instrumental part in the preparedness and response to civil contingencies. The department's contribution in this field has been and continues to be hugely significant. The small team of three at the Office of Civil Contingencies is fiercely committed to its core role and works incredibly hard, in partnership with other stakeholders, to develop existing and future capabilities and ensure that Gibraltar is prepared to deal with any risk manifesting itself, however unpredictable it may be. I am grateful to the team at Civil Contingencies, and knowing their dedication as I do, I feel that Gibraltar is in safer hands if we have to call upon them.

700 Mr Speaker, while of course I have every confidence that we will win the next election, I will end my Budget intervention where I started, on the basis that tomorrow is never promised and being here is a privilege. I am proud of all our achievements, in particular making Gibraltar a more accepting and inclusive place and our work on LGBTQ+ rights – our work for women, surrogacy and abortion are all legacy projects that we should all be very proud of – but particularly how the Chief Minister and the Deputy Chief Minister have led on Brexit, how we led on COVID – and I thank Minister Isola for recognising my leadership in his intervention yesterday – and the GHA's Reset, Restart and Recover programme that I commenced. The list is endless and demonstrates that we are a Government that cares and a Government that gets things done, a Government for which social justice is important and a Government that has given everything it can to the people

of Gibraltar. I have to thank my ministerial colleagues. For the last 12 years we have been a great team, a team of hard workers and a team of good friends.

715 Finally, I thank the staff in my office for their continuous support and all the work they do because they realise how important what we have to deliver is. And of course, Mr Speaker, my thanks to you, the Clerk of the Parliament and the staff.

Mr Speaker, I commend this Bill to the House. *(Banging on desks)*

**Chief Minister (Hon. F R Picardo):** Mr Speaker, with thanks to the hon. Lady for that speech, I move that the House should now adjourn to 3.30 this afternoon.

720

**Mr Speaker:** The House will now adjourn to 3.30 this afternoon.

*The House adjourned at 12.10 p.m.*