



PROCEEDINGS OF THE GIBRALTAR PARLIAMENT

AFTERNOON SESSION: 3.10 p.m. – 7.32 p.m.

Gibraltar, Thursday, 23rd November 2023

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The Gibraltar Parliament

The Parliament met at 3.10 p.m.

[MADAM SPEAKER: Hon. Judge K Ramagge GMH *in the Chair*]

[CLERK TO THE PARLIAMENT: J B Reyes Esq *in attendance*]

Questions for Oral Answer

EDUCATION, THE ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE CHANGE

Q555/2023

**School cleaner vacancies –
Supplementary information**

Clerk: Meeting of Parliament, Thursday, 23rd November 2023.
Order of Proceedings: Answers to Oral Questions continued.

5 **Madam Speaker:** Before we begin with Oral Questions, I understand that the Hon. Minister Cortes has some information that was promised to the hon. Member yesterday, so perhaps we could deal with that.

10 **Minister for Education, the Environment and Climate Change (Hon. Prof. J E Cortes):** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Yes, I undertook to provide the breakdown of cleaner vacancies per school. There is flexibility between them, but, in order to assist, I can confirm that the figures that he had for Bishop Fitzgerald are not correct. The breakdown of the 21 vacancies is West Side, six; Bayside, two; St Joseph's Upper, two; Bishop Fitzgerald, two; St Anne's, one; Governor's Meadow, one; St Joseph's Lower, two; St Mary's, one; St Bernard's, one; and St Martin's, three.

15 **Madam Speaker:** All right. We can proceed.

CHIEF MINISTER

Q660/2023

**Adoption Act –
Date of coming into force**

Clerk: Questions to the Hon. the Chief Minister.
Question 660. The Hon. Mrs A Sanchez.

20 **Hon. Mrs A Sanchez:** Madam Speaker, could the Government state when the new Adoption Act is expected to come into force?

Clerk: Answer, the Hon. the Chief Minister.

25 **Chief Minister (Hon. F R Picardo):** Madam Speaker, the new Adoption Act is a major overhaul of the 1951 legislation making the process of assisting families to have children simpler and better. An Act as sensitive as the Adoption Act requires essential pieces of secondary legislation which are drafted and are currently being reviewed. The Act will come into force once we are satisfied with these regulations.

30 **Madam Speaker:** Next question.

Hon. Dr K Azopardi: May I just ask the Chief Minister ...? We supported that legislation, as he knows, and on both sides of the House I think we are keen to see that overhaul of legislation, as he points out. Does he have a timescale in mind? We appreciate, of course, that there needs to be secondary legislation also underpinning that principal Act.

Hon. Chief Minister: Madam Speaker, there are six pieces of legislation – the Adoption (Care Agency) Regulations, the Adoption (Suitability of Adopters) Regulations, the Adoption (Disclosure of Information) Regulations, the Adoption (Foreign Element) Regulations, the Adoption (Independent Review of Determinations) Regulations and the Family Procedure (Adoption) Rules – which have to be prepared alongside the Act. I understand that a lot of that work has already been completed. The Supreme Court has been involved as well, the Chief Justice being involved. I understand that the reviews are almost complete, so I would hope that we would see this legislation in place and commenced in the next 90 days or so.

45 **Hon. Dr K Azopardi:** May I ask if there is going to be some degree of consultation on that subsidiary legislation, or if the Government is content, having given that expectation of 90 days, that it is unnecessary to do so because it has done the work internally with the bodies that the Chief Minister has pointed out?

50 **Hon. Chief Minister:** Madam Speaker, the consultation, as I understand it, has already taken place. There has been considerable consultation with the Care Agency and all of the relevant agencies of His Majesty's Government of Gibraltar. The Chief Justice, I understand, has reviewed and approved the Family Procedure (Adoption) Rules because those relate to Rules of Court. So I understand that a lot of that has already happened, and it is now a question, I assume, of dotting i's and crossing t's and ensuring that there is not anything in there which needs to be reviewed before actual implementation and bringing into effect the Act.

Madam Speaker: Next question.

Q661/2023
Disability benefit –
Publication of eligibility criteria

60 **Clerk:** Question 661. The Hon. Mrs A Sanchez.

Hon. Mrs A Sanchez: Madam Speaker, can the Government state whether it intends to make the eligibility criteria for disability benefit widely accessible by publishing them, ensuring they are readily available for those in need of applying?

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

Chief Minister (Hon. F R Picardo): Madam Speaker, no, ma'am, not at this stage. The Government's view is that the eligibility criteria for this benefit must be reviewed. The Supported Needs and Disability Office has begun preliminary work analysing our local disability landscape in order to be able to ascertain the appropriate criteria to ensure that those who need it get it. They are also in consultation with similar offices in other countries to learn about how they manage their version of this allowance.

Hon. Mrs A Sanchez: I am grateful for that answer. Once it is reviewed, would he agree that it would be beneficial for the criteria to be published, not only to inform those in need of the criteria but also to provide transparency in the application process?

Hon. Chief Minister: Madam Speaker, in principle, yes, but not necessarily.

Hon. Mrs A Sanchez: Would you care to elaborate further?

Hon. Chief Minister: Well, Madam Speaker, because, as hon. Members should know given that they are a party that has been in government, there is a lot of abuse of this disability benefit. In some instances, there are attempts to come within its eligibility criteria. The assessments that are made suggest that a lot of time is spent having to determine whether people are entitled to this disability benefit or not – people who should not even have applied in the first place, but try to squeeze themselves into the eligibility criteria. We can make the criteria widely available and we can make the criteria such that lots of people can apply for this benefit, and then what we will have is unnecessary expense. One of the key things I said when I was making the statement was that we want to ensure that those who need it get it. The corollary of that is those who do not need it should not get it.

Hon. Mrs A Sanchez: Madam Speaker, wouldn't the hon. Member agree that by publishing the criteria, he might, in fact, find that it might reduce the backlog of applications that we sometimes find? People would understand whether they are eligible to apply for the disability benefit because the criteria would be published and they would have the information before applying. Right now, there is no information available and people do not know what they can reasonably expect and if they are actually entitled to apply, or not. I would also direct the hon. Member to the UK government website, which provides the criteria online, readily accessible to the public. I would just like clarification on why the Government is so reluctant to do the same locally.

Hon. Chief Minister: Madam Speaker, the hon. Lady started with a question that required a yes or no answer, to which the answer was no. She ended with a question which requested clarification, in respect of which I refer her to the answer I gave a few moments ago.

Madam Speaker: Next question.

Q662 and 677-79/2023

St Bernadette's Centre; Land frontier entrance; Netball Association premises; Rental houses – Further details re manifesto commitments

Clerk: Question 662. The Hon. Mrs Sanchez.

Hon. Mrs A Sanchez: Madam Speaker, could the Government furnish additional details regarding the proposed location and timeline for the development of the new St Bernadette's Centre, as depicted in the GSLP Liberals' Manifesto 2023?

Clerk: Answer, the Hon. the Chief Minister.

115 **Chief Minister (Hon. F R Picardo):** Madam Speaker, I will answer this question with Questions 677 to 679.

Clerk: Question 677. The Hon. G Origo.

120 **Hon. G Origo:** Madam Speaker, major beautification projects are promised in the recent manifesto in respect of the land frontier entrance, could the hon. Member please indicate whether there is a timeline in place for when these refurbishments are to take place and the estimated timeframe to complete?

125 **Madam Speaker:** Having a short discussion with the learned Clerk, it seems to me that the questions on the sheet do not necessarily follow on the same topic that one would expect. I just want to check whether they are in the right order, so that the hon. Member knows what he has to answer. I am going to propose a very short recess, so that the learned Clerk can confer with the back office staff, to make sure that the questions follow.

130 **Hon. Chief Minister:** The ones I think I am dealing with, Madam Speaker, are St Bernadette's major beautification, a chosen site for netball, and the site of rental houses. Those are the ones I am dealing with together.

135 **Madam Speaker:** If that is correct, then they are correct.

Hon. Chief Minister: Yes. There is a common theme running through them.

Madam Speaker: All right.

140 **Clerk:** Question 678. The Hon. E J Reyes.

Hon. E J Reyes: Madam Speaker, can Government provide details of the chosen site, cost and expected completion date in respect of its commitment to provide the Gibraltar Netball Association with its own home?

145 **Clerk:** Question 679. The Hon. D J Bossino.

Hon. D J Bossino: When and where will the first set of rental houses be built?

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

155 **Hon. Chief Minister:** Madam Speaker, as I indicated yesterday, in respect of GSLP Liberal commitments which are set out in our manifesto, which is now government policy, for which a timeline is not provided in the manifesto or otherwise in a statement of the Government, we will deliver these during the lifetime of this Parliament. When we are ready, we will provide more detail.

160 **Hon. E J Reyes:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I understand what the Chief Minister is saying; I accept that. My Question 678, in respect of the Gibraltar Netball Association – if I may pull from my own side – carries perhaps a little bit more urgency because I know there is an ongoing commitment for Gibraltar to host a major international netball tournament in 2025. Just calculating the average length of time it takes to construct any premises, I do not think my question is necessarily too early on in this term of office for the Government, because either the

165 facilities are going to be ready for 2025 or ... I would be grateful if the Chief Minister can confirm that at least that is a possible target date.

170 **Hon. Chief Minister:** Madam Speaker, I am surprised by the hon. Gentleman's question. The netball event in 2025 was announced some time ago, as far as I understand, and yet in *their* manifesto they do not have any project to deliver a home for netball, so he cannot have been so concerned that the home for netball should be delivered in time for this international event, if it was not something which he told the people of Gibraltar he would deliver in time at the last General Election. So he will forgive me for sticking to the answer that I have given and allow the Hon. Minister for Sport and me to be in touch with the Netball Association about how we deal with the issues that arise for them in the context of that, and how we are going to ensure that they will deliver a very successful international netball tournament from Gibraltar.

180 **Hon. E J Reyes:** Madam Speaker, the Chief Minister is entitled to give whatever personal opinion he may hold about the GSD's manifesto, but that is an internal matter for the GSD. My question was relating to whether it is Government's target to hopefully have these new facilities in place for the 2025 international tournament. That is what my supplementary consists of.

Madam Speaker: Well, that was just an explanation of why he put the question. Does the hon. Member wish to put a question?

185 **Hon. E J Reyes:** Yes. Perhaps I did not understand the answer properly. My question was: is it the Government's commitment to have these facilities ready in time for the 2025 international netball tournament?

190 **Hon. Chief Minister:** Madam Speaker, in that preamble the hon. Gentleman said I had expressed my personal opinion as to the GSD manifesto. I have given no such thing. I do not think you would tolerate that I should get up to give my personal opinion on the GSD manifesto, not least because I would not be able to do it without offending the rule against excessive length that you are going to insist that I stick to in providing my answer.

195 I refer the hon. Gentleman to the answer I gave a few moments ago: we will make an announcement as to the timelines of these projects when we are ready to do so, and in the context of the international event that is going to be held here, we do not see the two as necessarily being linked.

Madam Speaker: Next question.

200 **Hon. D J Bossino:** Madam Speaker, I have a supplementary. Can the Hon. the Chief Minister assist me in relation to this? He did say yesterday – in, I think, a rare admission on his part – that there was, basically, a U-turn as far as the GSLP Liberals' policy, a complete and utter 180° turn from its original position in relation to the building of rental housing, a complete volte-face. I was simply interested in asking the question because it arises on page 100 of his manifesto. He dismisses the question on the basis that it will be done during the course of the four years, but there is a particular timing here, and I would ask him to elucidate the House as to what he meant when his party said:

we estimate that building affordable housing stock at an approximate rate of 200 units per year ...

210 Is it the case that his Government's policy, intention and commitment is to have built, during the course of the four years, if one multiplies 200 by four, 800 units? Is that the case?

Hon. Chief Minister: Madam Speaker, I am going to ignore all the things the hon. Gentleman has said which are deprecatory, which are designed to be partisan. I do recognise, of course, that he is in the middle of an election campaign – we are not, we finished ours – and he has to try to garner support, so I am going to ignore all of that and just go straight to the reference to the numbers, which is not a timeline.

The hon. Gentleman knows, because he has been in this House for long enough, that we have been saying for some time – I think, since 2007 – that in order to keep pace with demand, the average number of homes that one has to deliver a year is 200, not that we are going to build 800 homes in the next four years. The hon. Gentleman knows we have given a different figure in respect of the homes that we will build. I do not know whether he was just trying to find a way to identify what might look like a timeline in our manifesto, in order to try to ask a supplementary, but that is totally irrelevant to the context of chronology and how we will build during the next four years.

Hon. D J Bossino: If I can pursue the point further, Madam Speaker, can the Hon. the Chief Minister assist this House by stating whether the Government has an idea as to location? The question was not just in relation to when – which is how he has dealt with this question by saying, ‘I am not committed to when, because it is a timing issue’ – but where, and I would ask him to expand upon whether the Government has any intentions as to locations for building these government rental houses.

Hon. Chief Minister: Madam Speaker, I do not think that we have ignored that part of his question. I refer the hon. Gentleman to the last sentence of what I said, which was that when we are ready, we will provide more detail. That is not just as to time; that is also, of course, as to location.

Madam Speaker: A question? Yes.

Hon. Mrs A Sanchez: Madam Speaker, appreciating the fact that the Government has the full four years to complete the projects, may I ask the hon. Member, appreciating the fact that there is a need for a new, more modern and bigger centre to cater for the needs of those in St Bernadette’s Centre, if it is something that will be given priority and done as soon as possible; if he has, more or less, a timeframe; and if it will be given the urgency that it requires?

Hon. Chief Minister: Madam Speaker, the hon. Lady has just asked me, by way of supplementary, her first question again. The answer remains the same.

Madam Speaker: Next question.

Q663/2023
eGov platform for businesses –
Timeframe for delivery

Clerk: Question 663. The Hon. C Sacarello.

Hon. C Sacarello: Is it the Government’s intention to establish a fully functional, actual eGov platform for businesses? In the event that it is, when will this be delivered?

Clerk: Answer, the Hon. the Chief Minister.

Chief Minister (Hon. F R Picardo): Madam Speaker, yes, the intention is to create a comprehensive electronic platform for business operations. Currently, the Office of Fair Trading provides eServices for new business licence registration and this will be expanded further. The Digital Services Team is actively identifying additional business services, in particular the creation of a digital employment service, and is working to establish a timeline for this delivery.

The Government has taken significant steps to expand local businesses' ability to engage with government departments on the eGovernment platform ... which are already available. Notably, with the introduction of the Fair Trading Act 2023 in October of this year, businesses are now able to apply for business licences on the eGovernment platform once they have registered themselves as a corporate user. The system introduced is significantly simpler than the one it replaces, doing away with the need for Gazette notices and notices in a local newspaper. While there have been some teething issues with this system, as is to be expected with the introduction of such a service, it is, nevertheless, fully operational and will allow businesses to apply for licences in a simple manner without having to attend the OFT's public counters. Furthermore, aside from the eGovernment platform, businesses and the general public can now inspect the OFT's business licence register and see notifications for new licence applications, for free, on the OFT's website, which is oft.gov.gi.

The Government continues to explore further opportunities for businesses to engage with its Departments online in a modern, transparent and efficient manner.

Hon. C Sacarello: Madam Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. Member for his reply and remind the House that the Government has been in power for 12 years and has boasted a one-stop shop for pretty much most of that term, certainly for the last four years. The hon. Member went on about the ability to register a trade licence – or business licence, as it is now – online. However, there are many more facets that are worrisome for business owners that could be facilitated by this.

You might think that their approach is perhaps tokenism from an eGov perspective in the business sense. For example, there is no business tab available on the eGov platform, and there is certainly no online one-stop shop where businesses can centrally conduct their administrative obligations in a wholly simplified manner. This is what the GSD promised the electorate and would have delivered on behalf of –

Madam Speaker: I am going to ask you not to make a political statement. Just get to the question.

Hon. C Sacarello: *[Inaudible]* back our promise and deliver a truly beneficial, modern solution for business in this term of government?

Hon. Chief Minister: Madam Speaker, I am fascinated by the thought that the hon. Gentleman believes it is credible to say that they would have delivered this from day one. Just to remind the hon. Gentleman of the importance of not misleading the House, whether it is in answers or in questions, day one was 13th October. I found it difficult to get myself through the day to 5.30 because we had not slept, and yet the hon. Gentleman is saying that he would have delivered a digital transformation – that is what he has said in his question – on day one.

He then refers us back to our day one. He said we have been in government for 12 years. We were elected in 2011. The iPad was launched in 2010. Digital services of the sort that we are talking about were not even dreamt of in 2011. Indeed, the hon. Gentleman might care to reflect on the fact that an email address did not exist for the Chief Minister on the day that I was elected. It is remarkable to think that they believe that it is reasonable to suggest that we have not digitised Government. I have just read him all of the things that we are already doing in the context of business engagement with Government and said that we are going to do more and told him what we are going to do more.

310 The hon. Gentleman has referred to the GSD's manifesto, and, of course, in response, I have to remind him that if he has found that golden nugget which might be an actual policy in that manifesto, other than to do review or audit, well, I am very pleased that he has found one, and it may be that, for once, there is agreement across the floor of the House on what should happen. I am very pleased that he is going to be here to watch us deliver it in the next four years.

315 **Hon. C Sacarello:** Thank you. I would just like to clarify what the hon. Member said there. When I said from day one, it is starting to make the change and starting to implement. Obviously no one expects a digital revolution within the first day of office, so that is a nonsense.

320 What is not a nonsense, however, is the understanding of the difficulties that businesses face in just maintaining their business, which his own supporters have relayed to us, particularly in the campaign, in that there is far too much red tape. So, again, I ask the question: when will they tackle the eGov platform, so that businesses can deal with all elements of government red tape, not just the business licence which you have alluded to and which currently exists, and provide proper value for money for the taxpayer?

325 **Hon. Chief Minister:** Madam Speaker, perhaps the reason for the result of the past elections has been disclosed now: they have been spending too much time with our supporters rather than trying to find some of their own.

330 It is very clear to me that when he talks about delivering value to the taxpayer, the taxpayer has just decided, barely five weeks ago, that this side of the House is the one that they want to continue to see deliver. So we are going to deliver on the basis of what we promised in our manifesto we are going to deliver in this space, expanding on what we have already said we are going to deliver, which already has cut out what the hon. Gentleman likes to refer to as red tape in some respects, and will cut further red tape – although, let's be clear, what we do not want to do is replace physical red tape with digital red tape. At the end of the day, it is about making
335 business easier for business. That is what we believe we have delivered already, and that is what the majority have decided must have been the case, because that is why we are sitting here and they are sitting there.

Madam Speaker: I think the subject has been explored sufficiently. Next question.

Q664/2023

Roaming charges – Maintaining alignment with the EU

340 **Clerk:** Question 664. The Hon. C Sacarello.

Hon. C Sacarello: In the event of a negotiated deal with the EU, is the Government's intention to keep our roaming charges aligned with the EU, maintaining obvious advantages to travelling
345 Gibraltarians, as well as visitors to Gibraltar?

Clerk: Answer, the Hon. the Chief Minister.

Chief Minister (Hon. F R Picardo): Madam Speaker, yes. We have done so despite Brexit, which was the issue.
350

Madam Speaker: Next question.

Q665-68/2023

**AquaGib and Gibtelecom shared ownership schemes –
Gifting of shares to employees; added value for taxpayer**

Clerk: Question 665. The Hon. C Sacarello.

Hon. C Sacarello: How many and what type of shares will AquaGib employees be given, and
355 how will they operate?

Clerk: Answer, the Hon. the Chief Minister.

Chief Minister (Hon. F R Picardo): Madam Speaker, I will answer with Questions 666 to 668.
360

Clerk: Question 666. The Hon. C Sacarello.

Hon. C Sacarello: What added value will gifting these shares to the AquaGib employees bring
365 to the taxpayer?

Clerk: Question 667. The Hon. C Sacarello.

Hon. C Sacarello: How many and what types of shares will Gibtelecom employees be given,
370 and how will they operate?

Clerk: Question 668. The Hon. C Sacarello.

Hon. C Sacarello: What added value will gifting these shares to the Gibtelecom employees
375 bring to the taxpayer?

Clerk: Answer, the Hon. the Chief Minister.

Hon. Chief Minister: Madam Speaker, the exact manner in which this share ownership scheme
380 will be set up has not yet been determined and an announcement will be made when decisions
have been made. Nonetheless, as we set out in our 2023 manifesto, which is now government
policy, HM Government of Gibraltar is committed to exploring a shared Government/employee
ownership model inspired by the successful John Lewis employee ownership structure. This
innovative approach aims to generate a sense of shared responsibility that we believe will lead to
385 increased productivity and commitment, building a resilient and interconnected local economy
and promoting job creation. This groundbreaking model will contribute to more sustainable and
equitable practices, ensuring the longevity and profitability of these companies, in our view.

Hon. C Sacarello: Thank you, Madam Speaker, and I thank the hon. Gentleman for his reply.

The John Lewis Partnership, to which he refers by way of comparison, is a private partnership
390 and not a partnership belonging to a ruling government. It is our view that the Government cannot
have its cake and eat it. Either the company is owned by the people of Gibraltar, i.e. nationalised,
or it is partly or wholly privatised. Is the Government planning on privatising AquaGib now or at
any point in the future?

Hon. Chief Minister: Madam Speaker, I do not think the hon. Gentleman has focused
395 accurately on what AquaGib is today. AquaGib, today, is owned only one third by the Government
of Gibraltar. It is owned two thirds by Northumberland Water. I made an announcement that we
are in the process of buying back the interest that Northumberland Water had in AquaGib,
because this was part of the deal that we did originally with Lyonnaise des Eaux some 30 years

400 ago, which has now, in effect, run its course. The position of the Government is that once AquaGib
is back in public ownership completely, it will continue in public ownership.

I do believe, Madam Speaker, that it is not for the hon. Gentleman to tell the Government
whether we can have our cake and eat it, in the frivolous manner that he has, in respect of a policy
which has been chosen by the people to become the Government's policy. This is not something
405 that we are saying we are going to do. This is something we have proposed to the people that we
should do, and the people have returned us to government to do it.

Hon. C Sacarello: Madam Speaker, as the hon. Member will agree, shareholders are primarily
interested in company profits. The UK water supply, for example, is facing issues with
410 maintenance, with private companies cutting corners by dumping their waste into the UK rivers.
How does the Government propose, should they proceed with this scheme, to navigate the
complexities arising from this strange setup whereby a national gem is also owned by its
employees, who may have a vested interest in generating profits rather than in properly
maintaining the network?

415 **Hon. Chief Minister:** Successfully, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Next question.

Q669/2023

Principal Auditor's reports – Tabling of 2017 and 2018 documents

Clerk: Question 669/2023. The Hon. R M Clinton.

420 **Hon. R M Clinton:** Madam Speaker, can the Government advise when it expects the reports of
the Principal Auditor for the years ended 31st March, 2017 and 2018 to be tabled?

Clerk: Answer, the Hon. the Chief Minister.

425 **Chief Minister (Hon. F R Picardo):** Madam Speaker, the Principal Auditor has informed me that
there are still a very small number of amendments to carry out in the Financial Statements for the
years ended 31st March 2017 and 31st March 2018, in addition to some amendments to the
Accountant General's reports on these accounts. The Principal Auditor is confident that his reports
430 on the Public Accounts of Gibraltar for the financial years 2016-17 and 2017-18 will be submitted
to the Clerk of the Parliament before the end of December 2023.

Hon. R M Clinton: Madam Speaker, I am grateful to the Chief Minister for his answer, but he
will recall that the question of minor amendments and certain adjustments was a similar answer
435 to what we received last time we asked this question.

Will the Chief Minister agree with me that if this House does not receive the reports at the next
session of Parliament, which I presume will be in December, next month, the position of this House
to be able to scrutinise the financial activities of the government accounts is somewhat
compromised, in that these reports are extremely overdue?

440 Would the Chief Minister, if these reports are not forthcoming next month, support a motion
in this House for the creation of a committee across the House to call the Principal Auditor to
attend this place, to explain what the problems are?

445 **Hon. Chief Minister:** Madam Speaker, I detect two questions in what the hon. Gentleman has said, and the answer to both is no.

450 **Hon. R M Clinton:** Madam Speaker, so I understand, then: the Government does not consider it to be a great issue that these reports are overdue, and I further understand that the Government will not support a motion to seek explanation from the Principal Auditor? May I ask the Chief Minister, does he believe that is the way to conduct the financial affairs of Government, when the Principal Auditor's reports have not been submitted for the year 2016? Does he find that acceptable?

455 **Hon. Chief Minister:** Madam Speaker, I now identify four questions that the hon. Gentleman put in the course of his supplementary, the answer to all four of which is yes.

Madam Speaker: Next question.

Q670/2023
Consolidated Fund –
Analysis of expenditure for six months ended 30th September 2023

Clerk: Question 670/2023. The Hon. R M Clinton.

460 **Hon. R M Clinton:** Madam Speaker, can the Government provide a detailed analysis of Consolidated Fund expenditure for the six months ended 30th September 2023 as per the presentation in the draft Estimates for 2023-24 at pages 13 and 14?

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

Chief Minister (Hon. F R Picardo): Madam Speaker, the analysis of total Consolidated Fund expenditure outturn for the six months ended 30th September 2023 is, subject to the usual caveats, in the schedule I now hand over.

Answer to Question 670/2023

CONSOLIDATED FUND CHARGES		Estimated Expenditure as at 30/09/2023
HEAD		
01	Statutory Offices	£352,863.09
02	Judicature	£1,048,044.71
03	Pensions	£28,505,595.95
04	Employer's Contributions	£3,353,858.91
05	Public Debt Charges	£24,665,934.81
06	Public Service Ombudsman	£226,632.76
07	Revenue Payments	£5,472,535.73
08	Charities Act	£305.40
		£63,625,771.36
09	Public Debt	£0.00
	Total Consolidated Fund Charges	£63,625,771.36

CONSOLIDATED FUND - DEPARTMENTAL EXPENDITURE		Estimated Expenditure as at 30/09/2023
HEAD		
1	Treasury	£13,389,797.35
2	No 6. Convent Place	£4,079,968.09
3	Office of Chief Technical Officer	£177,047.22
4	Customs	£5,237,489.49
5	Income Tax	£1,366,293.67
6	Parliament	£811,856.62
7	Human Resources	£4,109,611.07
8	Immigration and Civil Status	£4,756,008.09
9	Financial Secretary's Office	£397,769.12
10	Government Law Offices	£4,338,427.22
11	Office of the Deputy Chief Minister	£927,485.57
12	Civil Aviation	£895,025.50
13	Environment	£8,374,769.19
14	Collection and Disposal of Refuse	£6,331,627.67
15	Upper Rock Tourist Sites and Beaches	£3,835,162.33
16	Education	£28,062,221.69
17	Gibraltar University	£386,363.63
18	Heritage	£882,784.35
19	Culture	£1,793,094.09
20	Driver and Vehicle Licensing	£921,843.27
21	Technical Services	£1,839,659.75
22	Social Security	£9,794,788.95
23	Statistics Office	£203,627.89
24	Economic Development	£7,529,678.62
25	Procurement Office	£168,927.72
26	Justice	£1,142,947.42
27	Gibraltar Law Courts	£958,850.02
28	Policing	£8,479,355.84
29	Prison	£2,068,055.25
30	Equality	£585,499.52
31	Civil Contingency	£192,295.65
32	Gibraltar Regulatory Authority	£1,200,000.00
33	Town Planning and Building Control	£552,290.79
34	Office of Fair Trading	£327,484.61
35	Fire and Rescue Service	£2,980,714.95
36	Airport Fire and Rescue Service	£1,988,050.64
37	Housing	£5,436,284.16
38	Employment	£972,083.89
39	Youth	£334,663.66
40	Sports and Leisure	£4,082,934.30
41	Digital Services	£857,274.05
42	Information Technology and Logistics Department	£5,171,772.29
43	Broadcasting	£2,775,000.00
44	Financial Services	£1,416,373.15
45	Gambling Division	£491,149.21
46	Health and Social Care	£83,207,713.62
47	GHA - Elderly Residential Services Section	£12,982,711.17
48	Care Agency	£14,391,051.72
49	Drugs & Alcohol Awareness & Rehabilitation Services	£549,588.50
50	Utilities	£37,539,608.29
51	Business	£262,717.98
52	Tourism	£819,344.87
53	Postal Services	£2,036,577.79
54	Port	£3,357,054.84
55	Maritime Services	£654,985.34
56	Gibraltar Audit Office	£623,471.41
	Total Expenditure	£309,049,233.09
57	Supplementary Provision	£0.00
58	Contribution to Government-Owned Companies	£0.00
59	Transfer from Government Surplus	£0.00
60	Contribution to Improvement and Development Fund	£0.00
61	Exceptional Expenditure	£0.00
	Total Consolidated Fund Expenditure	£309,049,233.09

* Includes Agency and Authority expenditure to date.

470 **Madam Speaker:** Are you happy if we continue and come back to this when you have had a chance to look at it?

Q671/2023

**Victoria Keys land reclamation –
Area reclaimed as at 31st March 2023**

Clerk: Question 671. The Hon. R M Clinton.

Hon. R M Clinton: Madam Speaker, can the Government advise the area, in square metres, of
475 the land reclaimed at Victoria Keys as at 31st March 2023?

Clerk: Answer, the Hon. the Chief Minister.

Chief Minister (Hon. F R Picardo): Madam Speaker, as at 30th March 2023, an area of
480 11,000 m² had been reclaimed.

Madam Speaker: Next question.

Hon. R M Clinton: Sorry, Madam Speaker, just give me a second. Eleven thousand square
485 metres ... Can the Chief Minister advise, given the press announcement on 8th April 2019 – being
Government Press Release 261/2019 – that it had been envisaged to be, I quote, '60,000 sqm of
new land', is 11,000 m² going to be the limit of the reclamation, as the Government understands
it?

Hon. Chief Minister: No, ma'am.
490

Hon. R M Clinton: Does the Government have a view as to what it expects the final amount of
reclamation to be?

Hon. Chief Minister: Yes, ma'am.
495

Hon. R M Clinton: Madam Speaker, would he be willing to share with the House what number
that would be?

Hon. Chief Minister: Not at this stage, ma'am.
500

Madam Speaker: Next question.

Q672/2023

**Gibraltar Business Loan Disruption Guarantee Scheme –
Value of loans outstanding and Government's exposure**

Clerk: Question 672. The Hon. R M Clinton.

Hon. R M Clinton: Madam Speaker, can the Government advise the total value of loans
505 outstanding as at 31st March 2023 and the Government's exposure under the Gibraltar Business
Loan Disruption Guarantee Scheme approved by Parliament on 28th May 2020?

Clerk: Answer, the Hon. the Chief Minister.

510 **Hon. Chief Minister:** Madam Speaker, the total value of loans outstanding as at 31st March 2023 was £888,310.30. The Government's guarantee reliance as at 31st March 2023 was £710,648.25.

Madam Speaker: Next question.

Q673/2023
Nudge Factory –
Fees paid and nature of services

515 **Clerk:** Question 673. The Hon. R M Clinton.

Hon. R M Clinton: Madam Speaker, can the Government advise what fees have been paid to Nudge Factory or its principal director over the last five years to 30th September 2023 and what has been the nature of any services provided?

520

Clerk: Answer, the Hon. the Chief Minister.

Chief Minister (Hon. F R Picardo): Madam Speaker, a total of £9,250 has been paid to Nudge Factory over the past five years, up to 30th September 2023. The payments are related to lobbying in the UK, organising high-level visits and attracting foreign investments to Gibraltar.

525

Madam Speaker: Next question.

Q674-76/2023
Former Financial Secretary –
Details of directorships and remuneration/retainer/fees received from Government

Clerk: Question 674. The Hon. R M Clinton.

530 **Madam Speaker:** Before the hon. Member puts this next question, the hon. Member will be aware that I flagged with him the fact that there was reference to a name in the question, and that if it was not necessary, to make the question intelligible, the name ought not to be mentioned. The hon. Member replied to me that he felt it was necessary, because there may be some confusion as to who the former Financial Secretary might be.

535

I am reluctant to have names mentioned, so I would ask the Hon. the Chief Minister whether it is necessary to mention that name, or whether it is possible to have some certainty as to who the Financial Secretary may be. It occurs to me that the Hon. R M Clinton could make reference to the year of the Financial Secretary, and that might solve the problem without having to mention him by name.

540

Chief Minister (Hon. F R Picardo): Madam Speaker, if it assists, we both know who we are talking about; he just needs to say 'the former Financial Secretary'.

Madam Speaker: All right.

545 **Hon. Chief Minister:** At this stage, there is only one former Financial Secretary and there is only one former Chief Minister, because that is interpreted as being the immediate former, and that is how we have interpreted it.

Madam Speaker: All right. In that case, I will ask the hon. Member to put the question without reference to the name.
550

Hon. R M Clinton: Thank you, Madam Speaker.
Can the Government advise of which Government, Gibraltar Development Corporation or Savings Bank wholly or partly owned companies is the former Financial Secretary still a director;
555 and what is his remuneration for each?

Clerk: Answer, the Hon. the Chief Minister.

Hon. Chief Minister: Madam Speaker, I will answer this question with Questions 675 and 676.
560

Clerk: Question 675. The Hon. R M Clinton.

Hon. R M Clinton: Madam Speaker, can the Government advise whether the former Financial Secretary is being paid a retainer; and, if so, in what amount and on what terms?
565

Clerk: Question 676. The Hon. R M Clinton.

Hon. R M Clinton: Madam Speaker, can the Government advise what fees have or are to be charged by the former Financial Secretary for his services in acting as the Government's agent in negotiating the Eastside Development Agreement with TNG Global?
570

Clerk: Answer, the Hon. the Chief Minister.

Hon. Chief Minister: Madam Speaker, the former Financial Secretary resigned from most of the government directorships on 30th September 2022. He was retained and is currently still a director of Gibtelecom and remains on the board of the Gibraltar Electricity Authority. The former Financial Secretary is also a director of Shell LNG Ltd, which is 49% owned by Credit Finance Company Ltd.
575

The former Financial Secretary is not paid a retainer but is paid for the hours of work that he provides, and bills Government in the same way as any other professional who provides a service.
580

For the work in respect of the difficult and technical agreement for the Eastside, which produced a £90 million payment to the Government, the Government paid £132,525 for the 10-month period between October 2022 and August 2023 to Line Trust Corporation Ltd. As I have mentioned previously, the former Financial Secretary did not act as a lawyer in this transaction but rather led on the transaction, liaising with me and other key government personnel on all issues relating to the transaction.
585

Hon. R M Clinton: Madam Speaker, I thank the Chief Minister for his answer. I do not recall hearing – or maybe it is just nil – what the remuneration was, under Question 674, for each of those entities that the Chief Minister listed.
590

Hon. Chief Minister: I specifically replied to that, Madam Speaker, when I said that he is not paid a retainer.

595 **Hon. R M Clinton:** Madam Speaker, I apologise if I did not hear that. Can I ask why he is being retained on entities such as Gibelec, Gibtelecom and Shell LNG? What role is he performing that the Government cannot perform for itself?

600 **Hon. Chief Minister:** Madam Speaker, in fact, he is about to retire from Gibtelecom. He is performing roles on boards which others also perform and are never questioned for performing. For example, a partner in a law firm close to hon. Members opposite has been on the board of Gibelec since before we were elected, and so I am surprised that there is a need to ask a question in respect of somebody of the extreme talent and ability of the former Financial Secretary, and yet others who are not in the Government do not raise any issue with Members opposite. One might think that there is a reason behind the questioning which is difficult to ascertain.

Hon. R M Clinton: Madam Speaker, is it the Government's intention that the current Financial Secretary should adopt the directorships that the former Financial Secretary is holding?

610 **Hon. Chief Minister:** I am afraid, Madam Speaker, the question does not arise. The Financial Secretary is, himself, also on the board of Gibelec, on the board of AquaGib and on all of these boards. The former Financial Secretary is staying there as one of the individuals from outside Government who adds value to these boards.

I do not understand why it raises an issue with the hon. Gentleman, because if I appointed somebody else, from another accountancy practice or another law firm or any other professional field, it is very unlikely that he would ask me questions. The reason I say that is because he has not asked questions about other members of that board, and yet the person who is probably recognised by all of his contemporary professionals as being the most talented and the most able does lead to questions being asked, when in fact he has more experience than anyone because he sat on those boards as Financial Secretary. He does not come from the private sector to sit on those boards, and nobody asks questions about it, even though they may not have had any experience in LNG etc; he comes to those boards from sitting on those boards as the representative of the people, as Financial Secretary, and therefore he brings not just his ability, not just his knowledge, but his experience as having been Financial Secretary.

620 I would venture to suggest, Madam Speaker, that it would be foolish not to have kept the former Financial Secretary on these boards whilst he has been prepared to continue to serve on them. I think Gibraltar has been very well served indeed in respect of the work he has done already and the work that he will continue to do on those boards on which he will continue to serve.

630 **Madam Speaker:** Does the hon. Member have a supplementary?

Hon. R M Clinton: On a different question, if I may, Madam Speaker. If I can turn to Question 675, I believe the Chief Minister said he does not have a retainer, but he is paid according to an hourly rate on hours worked. On what basis is he being paid an hourly rate? Is he engaged for some particular services? He may not get a fixed retainer, but is he under some contract for services; and, if so, what are they?

Hon. Chief Minister: No, ma'am, he is not under any contract for service and he is not under any retainer. He charges when he works and he charges per hour, like most professionals charge.

640 **Madam Speaker:** One last one.

Hon. R M Clinton: On this particular one; I have another one on the next one. If he is charging an hourly rate, he must be providing some service. I was asking what is the nature of that service – and please do not say legal services.

Hon. Chief Minister: Professional services, ma'am, of the sort that are provided by individuals who are qualified as accountants or lawyers and who have had the experience of being former Financial Secretary.

650

Madam Speaker: Does the hon. Member have another question on any other one?

Hon. R M Clinton: Yes, Madam Speaker, if you will bear with me.

655 Moving to question 676, he mentioned the number of around £132,000 for, effectively, if I can use the words loosely, closing the TNG Global deal. Is it envisaged that any other fees would arise from this particular transaction?

660 **Hon. Chief Minister:** No, ma'am, I did not say for closing the deal, I said for 10 months of work from October 2022 to August 2023. If it was just for closing, it would have been a much shorter period of time. It is not envisaged that there will be further fees in respect of this matter.

Madam Speaker: Next question.

Q680/2023

Dealing with affairs of the deceased – One-stop shop service

Clerk: Question 680. The Hon. D J Bossino.

665 **Hon. D J Bossino:** Does the Government continue to provide a central office which allows individuals to deal with a deceased's affairs in a one-stop shop manner?

Clerk: Answer, the Hon. the Chief Minister.

670 **Chief Minister (Hon. F R Picardo):** Madam Speaker, yes. The Civil Status and Registration Office continues to provide a one-stop shop service to deal with the deceased's affairs from their offices at Joshua Hassan House.

675 **Hon. D J Bossino:** Can the Hon. Chief Minister state whether this is exactly the same service as has been provided from when it was announced, I think, in his first term of office? The concern that I have had from somebody is that the service was not available. I am sure there would have been an interregnum during the period of lockdown during COVID, but is he able to confirm that it is exactly the same service that would have been there and available, if my assumption is correct, before the COVID lockdown?

680

Hon. Chief Minister: Yes, ma'am, and the only thing that has changed is that we no longer provide the disconnection-of-utility service, because it was never used.

Madam Speaker: Next question.

Q681/2023

**Hassan Centenary Terraces, Bob Peliza Mews and Chatham Views –
Delivery dates for remaining phases**

685 **Clerk:** Question 681. The Hon. D J Bossino.

Hon. D J Bossino: What are the current expected delivery dates for the remaining phases at Hassan Centenary Terraces, Bob Peliza Mews and Chatham Views?

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

Chief Minister (Hon. F R Picardo): Madam Speaker, the answers remain as set out in answer to Question 460/2023. The second phase of Hassan Centenary Terraces is programmed for completion in May 2025. Chatham Views is programmed for completion in November 2025. The first phase of Bob Peliza Mews is programmed for completion in June 2025, and the second phase in the second to third quarter of 2026, subject to AquaGib's relocation being completed in accordance with the required handover date.

Madam Speaker: Next question.

Q682/2023

**Eastside project –
Commencement and completion dates of deliverables**

700 **Clerk:** Question 682. The Hon. D J Bossino.

Hon. D J Bossino: Please provide details of the commencement and completion dates of each of the deliverables of the Eastside project.

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

Chief Minister (Hon. F R Picardo): Madam Speaker, the timings and phasing of the Eastside project, including the dates for the commencement of the deliverables, are a matter for the developer to define. The ability by them to start constructing the deliverables is tied to them obtaining full planning permission for the various phases of the Eastside project under which these will be built. It is, therefore, not possible to provide the information requested.

Hon. D J Bossino: Madam Speaker, the reason why I ask this question ... He may recognise it as, basically, a legacy, in two respects: one is because it was a question which I phrased, perhaps, wrongly in the May meeting of Parliament when I was talking about the various completion dates of the phases of the Eastside project; and secondly, it is a legacy because it was posed at the time of the June meeting, but then he decided to dissolve the House, so it is basically the same question.

If I can remind him of what he told me back on 25th May, he said:

Second, as I have indicated to him, there are timings which are relevant to the deliverables, so he cannot be barking up the wrong tree because he is asking me the thing that I told him was actually delivered against the timetable. I do not actually have here the exact timetable, which I can share with him if he wishes to write to me or if he wishes to ask the question next time, but the provision of the affordable housing and other aspects of the deliverables need to be provided within a particular period of time.

720 I said I would ask the question at the next session, and he said that he would be happy to provide the answers should I do so. So can I simply try once again: whether he can provide the information now, as he indeed promised he was going to do in the May meeting of the House?

725 **Hon. Chief Minister:** I am grateful for that clarification from the hon. Gentleman, Madam Speaker, because the question he has asked today is about the commencement and completion dates for the deliverables, and I think I have made very clear – and he has, in fact, reflected in what he has said – that I told him that that could not be provided. I cannot give him a commencement date because that requires me to know a date, which requires me to give him a month and a year, at least. What I told him was that there is a timeline.

730 What I think he wants, which is what I am going to give him, is the following. The agreement states that the developer will use reasonable endeavours to stick to timelines which originate from full planning being granted. The apartments have to be delivered within 36 months of the granting of full planning permission and obtention of the building permit, the application for which must have been submitted within 12 months of the grant of the first full planning permission and building permit. The berths will be completed no later than 48 months from the grant of first full
735 planning permission. There is no specific mention on the timing of the 500 parking spaces, but the commitment is to provide 250 spaces for public use at all times during the construction of the whole project.

740 **Hon. D J Bossino:** In relation to that last point, I think he has already provided that answer to this House, albeit in the previous Parliament, in relation to the commitment by the developer to provide continuously throughout the development the 250 parking spaces that he talks about.

May I ask him where he is reading that from? Is this the contractual arrangement which the Government has entered into?

745 **Hon. Chief Minister:** It is in the contractual arrangements that we have entered into, but I am reading it from the note that has been, very helpfully, prepared for me by the Parliament team.

Madam Speaker: Next question.

Q683/2023
Gibraltar Bus Company Ltd –
Industrial claim

750 **Clerk:** Question 683. The Hon. the Leader of the Opposition.

Madam Speaker: Take this question first, and then, the next time, you can go back.

755 **Hon. Dr K Azopardi:** Madam Speaker, how have the industrial claims made by employees of the Gibraltar Bus Company been compromised?

Clerk: Answer, the Hon. the Chief Minister.

760 **Chief Minister (Hon. F R Picardo):** Madam Speaker, the Gibraltar Bus Company Ltd claim for drivers has been resolved by applying the parity principle, as the Government had originally proposed to the union.

765 **Hon. Dr K Azopardi:** Can the Chief Minister explain how that translates in relation to the pay claim that they had put forward? What does it mean in terms of the hourly rate that they were being paid? What does it mean, in terms of an increase?

770 **Hon. Chief Minister:** Madam Speaker, I do not have the exact detail here to do that analysis, but we have moved away from a 10-point scale, we provide a three-point scale now, and we looked at parity based on UK bus driver salaries using appropriate comparators given Gibraltar's size and demographics and were able to agree that with the union.

Hon. Dr K Azopardi: Does he have information as to the percentage increase it represents to the salaries of the bus drivers?

775 **Hon. Chief Minister:** I do not have it here, Madam Speaker, but it is a fraction of what was sought.

Hon. Dr K Azopardi: May I ask when that agreement was entered into?

780 **Hon. Chief Minister:** I do not think it has been entered into yet. I think it may just have been signed in the past week or so, from memory.

Madam Speaker: Next question.

Q684-85/2023

Borders and Coastguard Agency, Gibraltar Health Authority, Civil Service departments – Number of vacant posts

785 **Clerk:** Question 684. The Hon. the Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. Dr K Azopardi: Madam Speaker, how many vacant posts were there in the following authorities or agencies at 1st November 2023: Borders and Coastguard Agency; and Gibraltar Health Authority?

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

Hon. Chief Minister: Madam Speaker, I will answer with Question 685.

795 **Clerk:** Question 685. The Hon. the Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. Dr K Azopardi: How many vacant posts were there in the Civil Service departments at 1st November 2023, giving a breakdown by department and by clerical or technical grade for the vacancies for each department?

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

Hon. Chief Minister: Madam Speaker, as at 1st November 2023, the Borders and Coastguard Agency had a vacant position for a facilities officer. Since the filing of this question, this vacancy has now been filled.

805 Within the GHA, there were 126 full-time vacancies and 13 part-time vacancies. I now hand over a schedule with the information requested in Question 685.

Answer to Question 685/2023

DEPARTMENT	GRADE	NUMBER OF VACANT POSTS
Treasury	Senior Executive Officer	1
	Higher Executive Officer	2
	Administrative Officer	2
	Administrative Assistant	9
	Accountant General	1
Treasury - Central Arrears Unit	Administrative Assistant	1
No.6 Convent Place	Senior Officer	1
	Higher Executive Officer	1
	Executive Officer	2
	Administrative Assistant	3
HM Customs	Administrative Officer	1
Income Tax Office	Senior Executive Officer	2
	Higher Executive Officer	2
	Administrative Officer	3
	Administrative Assistant	11
	Clerk/Word Processor	1
Parliament	Usher (Administrative Officer)	1
Human Resources	Executive Officer	1
	Administrative Assistant	8
Immigration & Civil Status	Senior Officer	1
	Higher Executive Officer	1
	Administrative Officer	2
	Administrative Assistant	1
Financial Secretary's Office	Higher Executive Officer	2
Office Of The Deputy Chief Minister	Administrative Assistant	1
Environment	Higher Executive Officer	1
Education	Administrative Assistant	1
Driver And Vehicle Licensing	Executive Officer	1
Technical Services	Senior Professional & Technology Officer	1
	Higher Professional & Technology Officer	4
	Professional & Technology Officer	3
	Technical Grade 1	3
Social Security	Higher Executive Officer	1
	Administrative Officer	2
	Administrative Assistant	5
Statistics Office	Administrative Assistant	1
Economic Development	Executive Officer	1
	Administrative Assistant	1
	Instructional Officer (Assessor)	1
Procurement Office	Higher Executive Officer	1
	Administrative Assistant	1
Justice	Higher Executive Officer	1
	Administrative Assistant	1
Gibraltar Law Courts	Executive Officer	1
	Administrative Officer	1
	Administrative Assistant	2
	Clerk/Word Processor	1

DEPARTMENT	GRADE	NUMBER OF VACANT POSTS
Policing	Higher Executive Officer	1
	Executive Officer	1
	Administrative Officer	1
	Administrative Assistant	2
	Clerk/Word Processor	1
	Typist	1
Equality	Senior Executive Officer	1
Town Planning & Building Control	Professional & Technology Officer	1
	Technical Grade 1	1
Housing	Administrative Officer	1
	Administrative Assistant	2
Employment	Health & Safety Officer IV	3
	Executive Officer	2
	Administrative Assistant	3
Sport and Leisure	Administrative Officer	1
	Administrative Assistant	1
Digital Services	Executive Officer	1
	Personal Secretary	1
Gambling Division	Higher Executive Officer	1
Business	Higher Executive Officer	1
Tourism	Administrative Officer	1
Postal Services	Executive Officer	1
Policing	Higher Executive Officer	1
	Executive Officer	1
	Administrative Officer	1
	Administrative Assistant	2
	Clerk/Word Processor	1
	Typist	1
Equality	Senior Executive Officer	1
Town Planning & Building Control	Professional & Technology Officer	1
	Technical Grade 1	1
Housing	Administrative Officer	1
	Administrative Assistant	2
Employment	Health & Safety Officer IV	3
	Executive Officer	2
	Administrative Assistant	3
Sport and Leisure	Administrative Officer	1
	Administrative Assistant	1
Digital Services	Executive Officer	1
	Personal Secretary	1
Gambling Division	Higher Executive Officer	1
Business	Higher Executive Officer	1
Tourism	Administrative Officer	1
Postal Services	Executive Officer	1

Madam Speaker: Giving the Hon. the Leader of the Opposition time to consider that schedule, I propose we revert to Question 670, which was from the Hon. R M Clinton.

Q670/2023
Consolidated Fund –
Supplementary questions

810 **Hon. R M Clinton:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I have had time to have a quick perusal of the schedule, and I have two questions. The first one is: my original Question 670 specifically referred to the presentation in the Estimates Book on pages 13 and 14, and where it does follow the heads there is a little footnote which applies to quite a few numbers, which says 'Includes Agency and Authority expenditure to date.' However, that would mean that this is an exact same presentation in terms of the way the numbers are put together in the Estimates Book, and I wonder whether
815 the Chief Minister has this schedule without the numbers which have an asterisks next to them, so as to provide the numbers that will be comparable to the Estimates Book.

Chief Minister (Hon. F R Picardo): No, ma'am.

820 **Hon. R M Clinton:** I thank the hon. Member for his very brief answer.
Madam Speaker, given that this is the only information that we have in terms of the six-month outturn of expenditure, would the Chief Minister care to comment on what would appear to be a £25 million excess on departmental expenditure at the half-year mark?

825 **Madam Speaker:** I think rather than ask the Hon. the Chief Minister to comment, I would ask you to put a specific question, so he knows precisely what it is he needs to answer.

Hon. R M Clinton: Very well, Madam Speaker. Can I, perhaps, ask the Chief Minister to consider Head 46, Health and Social Care, which, according to the schedule he has provided to the House, is at £83.2 million, and, as per the Estimates Book, at the half-year mark, if we divide it by two, should be about £62 million, and is, therefore, £21 million over the halfway mark? Can the Chief Minister advise the House as to why the Health and Social Care cost is, it would appear, £21 million higher than would have been expected?

835 **Hon. Chief Minister:** Madam Speaker, the provision of health services in Gibraltar is demand led. We have this debate at every Budget session. I am afraid the hon. Gentleman, in all the time that he has been here – I believe this might be the beginning of his ninth year in this House – has not yet accepted that it is not possible to see the Health Service, or the Gibraltar Electricity Authority in particular, where the cost of fuel fluctuates, perform in accordance with whatever
840 estimates we may wish to impose as strictures. We, of course, seek that all Departments come in on budget. The Health Authority, because of the nature of the work that it does, and the Electricity Authority, because of issues relating to the price of fuel, are often unable, despite the best efforts of the professionals in each of those areas, to come in on budget.

I would say that the obvious answer to the hon. Gentleman is because we have had to provide
845 that amount in order to ensure that the Health Service can continue to provide the service that it provides. Additionally, it is, of course, not necessarily the case that increases will continue over the period of the next five months until the end of March, but they may, and they may get larger or they may get smaller, and therefore we do not know what the final outturn is going to be until the end of the year. That is why we have the Budget debate once a year, not twice a year.

850 **Hon. R M Clinton:** Madam Speaker, it is precisely because of what the hon. Member said about the Health Service being demand led that we pointed out that we thought that the Estimates Book was unrealistic when it came to the Health Service budget. Does the Chief Minister now accept that the Health Service budget was unrealistic?

855 **Hon. Chief Minister:** No, Madam Speaker, I do not accept that. A question must not be a
pretext for a debate, and I am not going to pretend to debate the hon. Gentleman's question, but
let's be very clear: if we were to make £200 million available to the Gibraltar Health Authority,
would the hon. Gentleman be happy if the Health Authority then came in at a cost of £150 million,
860 or would he accuse us of overproviding? If we ensured, by dint of miracle, as it would be, that we
offered at the time – those of us who vote in favour of the Budget in this House; that is to say
those of us on this side of the House – to support the Health Authority with £148 million and,
miraculously, the Health Authority were to come in at £148 million, would the hon. Gentleman
accuse us of not having tightened down enough to try to bring the cost of health down to ensure
better value for money?

865 All of these issues arise. We do the job that we are advised is best done by ensuring that we
seek value for money by giving the figure that is considered to be advisable in discussions between
the Treasury, the Financial Secretary's office, my office and each of the Departments. In the
context of health, it is brutally difficult to bring in a Health Department on budget. I did the
exercise – Madam Speaker, although you were not here, you might ... Given the question the hon.
870 Gentleman has asked, I did the exercise of going back to the time hon. Members were in
government and was able to show that the greatest overspend in any financial year in the GHA
happened on their watch. Were *they* making not sufficient provision for health services in
Gibraltar at the time? I am sure they were not. They were doing the best possible job against an
estimate, trying to ensure value for money. That is what we are doing and that is what we will
875 continue doing.

It is not worth having this debate at the six-month mark. At the six-month mark, we can have
a view in Government of what we need to do to ensure that expenditure comes in on all the
Departments as the House voted, but we cannot make final determinations as to how a
Department is going to have to continue spending. For example, there may be a need to frontload
880 spending in the purchase of some medicines which we might fear and hon. Members will have
read could become short-supplied in the next few months, so we may have bought more insulin
this month. I am just giving an example, nobody should worry about insulin, but we might have
bought more insulin this month than we will in the next five months, so the cost of insulin will not
necessarily continue to increase for coming months. Does that mean that the Health Authority
885 will be on budget at the end of the financial year? Does it mean it will be over budget? Does it
mean it will be below budget? No, ma'am. None of those things will lead us to any of those
conclusions in any way that is safe. So it is best to allow the whole year's expenditure to come
through, and to then rely on the forecast outturn published in the Book, to make the judgement
the hon. Gentleman wants to make or to make another judgement. But I am sure that if the Health
890 Authority were miraculously to come in, this year, £10 million under budget, the accusation would
be that we had overprovided for them.

Madam Speaker: One very brief question, because this is becoming a debate on funding and
expenditure, which is better made at Budget time, so one brief comeback.
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Hon. R M Clinton: Yes, Madam Speaker, but I think it is of public interest.

Madam Speaker: One brief comeback. I do not need an explanation.

900 **Hon. R M Clinton:** Fair enough. Is the Chief Minister, then, confident that he will achieve his
£2½ million projected surplus? Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Hon. Chief Minister: Madam Speaker, I do not think I am required to express an opinion, given
what the rules on questions require, and therefore what I will do is ensure that at Budget time I
905 am, of course, ready to undertake the analysis, that the House requires when I move the
Appropriation Bill, on how each Department has performed against its budget in what we have

delivered to the people of Gibraltar, whether that is or is not value for money in the view of the Government, and then we will look forward to hearing the contributions that hon. Members make.

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Madam Speaker: Next question.

Q686/2023

**Treaty on future relationship with the EU –
New round of talks**

Clerk: Question 686. The Hon. the Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. Dr K Azopardi: Madam Speaker, is a new round of post-Brexit talks on a possible new treaty on a future relationship for Gibraltar with the EU fixed?

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Clerk: Answer, the Hon. the Chief Minister.

Chief Minister (Hon. F R Picardo): Madam Speaker, a new round of formal UK-EU talks has not yet been fixed.

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Hon. Dr K Azopardi: Given that we now have a new Spanish government – or, at least, a new Spanish Prime Minister, who happens to be the old one, recently sworn in – and there is continuity in Spain, has the Chief Minister been in contact with the British government, and indeed the Spanish government, through this period to try to get a sense of whether the talks would be

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reignited quickly on the investiture of a new Spanish government?

Hon. Chief Minister: Madam Speaker, yes.

Hon. Dr K Azopardi: While there has not been a new formal round set up, does he have an expectation of when that could occur, so that those talks can progress?

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Hon. Chief Minister: Yes, ma'am, I do.

Hon. Dr K Azopardi: Is he concerned, in the run up to that, given the length of time that these talks are taking, that there appear to be new restrictions at the border being faced by residents of Gibraltar?

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Hon. Chief Minister: Madam Speaker, I am concerned about that, but I have to put that in the context of the fact that we have debated this matter in this House before and the restrictions that the hon. Gentleman refers to are in keeping with the statements we have made of the representations made to us about what will happen at the Frontier. That is to say that red ID card holders will continue to be able to access Schengen during the course of the ongoing negotiations without having to comply with the requirements of the Schengen Border Code. The hon. Gentleman knows that although other residents were also benefiting from that – those who hold green, magenta, and blue ID cards – when the United Kingdom introduced controls for EU citizens to access the United Kingdom, the Spanish authorities and other Schengen authorities introduced controls affecting UK citizens, and that included UK citizens resident in Gibraltar who were not red ID card holders.

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The solution to that issue at the Frontier lies in finally agreeing a treaty between the United Kingdom and the European Union which permits a common travel area between Gibraltar and the

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Schengen space and which does away with those controls for all categories of Gibraltar citizens, and indeed any individuals who arrive at Gibraltar by air or by sea. Of course, the alternative, which we would not like to have to countenance but we will be prepared to deal with, if necessary, is that Gibraltar residents of Gibraltar – that is to say red ID card holders – might, if there is not a treaty, also be subjected to the same treatment that today is meted out to Gibraltar residents with different colours of identity cards.

Hon. Dr K Azopardi: Does the Chief Minister agree that we are getting somewhat contradictory signals from Spain? On the one hand, there are statements made about a political willingness to progress the talks, and indeed to conclude them, but on the other hand you have this backdrop of restrictions being faced by residents of Gibraltar, or at least some of them. While I understand the context that the Hon. the Chief Minister has spoken of, about these restrictions being in line with what has been advised could happen, the reality is that for some time this has not happened, and it is perceived, by some people at least, as a tightening of the screw. Hence the point that there are perceived to be contradictory signals from Spain. Does he agree that that is how it is being seen in Gibraltar?

Hon. Chief Minister: Madam Speaker, the hon. Gentleman has asked me a number of questions. He has asked me whether Spain is sending contradictory signals, and then he has asked me whether I agree that that is how it is being seen in Gibraltar. Those are two distinct questions. The first: certainly it is being seen that way by some people in Gibraltar. The second: I would say that Spain has been only sending contradictory signals for the past 70 years or so, so I would not necessarily consider that this is something new.

Nobody should ever think that I would get up here to become an apologist for any colour of Spanish government, but what I would say is that I am conscious that there are European issues in play here, there are Schengen issues in play here, not Spain issues in play here, and that these issues are not just affecting us, as British citizens at this Frontier with Schengen, they are manifesting themselves in different places and they are manifesting themselves to different degrees and in different ways.

I am very clear, and I am sure that I enjoy the support of the hon. Gentleman across the floor of the House and all hon. Members of this House: if anybody thinks that by putting pressure on the Gibraltar negotiating team or by putting pressure on the people of Gibraltar, resident or non-resident, they are going to advance their positions in any negotiation, they have another thing coming. We do not do blink. The more pressure you put on us the tougher we will be. That is very clear. It is the wrong tactic with the people of Gibraltar.

Hon. Dr K Azopardi: Madam Speaker, he certainly does have the support of the Members on this side of the House for that last statement, for taking the position that we are not going to bend to any pressure, and he knows that. Has he conveyed, though, to those contacts in the British government, and indeed the Spanish government with whom he is undertaking talks, the frustration about these contradictory signals and the pressure that people are facing at the border when that was not so before?

Hon. Chief Minister: Of course, ma'am, but the hon. Gentleman has to reflect on what I have said and how these controls were introduced. They were literally introduced when the United Kingdom introduced controls for EU citizens. That is the issue. He will understand that the representations we can make are curtailed by that reality. People in Gibraltar have often heard me say that immigration works on the basis of reciprocity, in most instances. We apply reciprocity at the Frontier. The hon. Gentleman will have seen a statement from Comisiones Obreras issued yesterday, or today, expressing the view to the Spanish government that it needs to explain why these queues are building now. What we have done is ensure that when it comes to Gibraltar we deal with issues in exactly the same way and we ensure that if the Spanish government is making

1005 people queue because they are non EU citizens, then we in Gibraltar are not going to operate a
non-EU/EU queue to facilitate that EU citizens should be able to just walk through into Spain and
have all non-EU citizens waiting in a queue on the Gibraltar side.

1010 So there are lots of angles to this particular puzzle. The hon. Gentleman has often criticised us
for not having resolved it earlier. At the same time, he asks us to ensure that we do not reach any
position which might mean that a concession has been made on any fundamental point and he
urges us to do a deal that is safe, secure and beneficial. We agree that the deal should be safe,
secure and beneficial, but to ensure it is safe, secure and beneficial, we have to go through all of
1015 those angles and ensure that we have covered every angle. It is not deliverable to have done this
sooner, not least because the negotiations started in October 2021, and after May 2023 the
negotiation stopped because there was a live electoral period in Spain – first the regional election
and then the general election. That is one quarter, if not more, of the negotiating period. All of
those things are relevant. Nonetheless, we remain confident that there is goodwill on all sides to
try to secure a UK-EU treaty as soon as possible, and I look forward to developments shortly.

Madam Speaker: Next question.

HEALTH, CARE AND BUSINESS

Q605-06/2023

Speech and language therapy – Numbers referred and numbers in receipt of GHA services

1020 **Clerk:** Questions to the Hon. the Minister for Health, Care and Business.
Question 605. The Hon. Mrs A Sanchez.

1025 **Hon. Mrs A Sanchez:** Madam Speaker, could the Government provide a detailed breakdown
of the number of individuals who have been referred for speech and language therapy services
through the Gibraltar Health Authority in the following financial years: 2012-13, 2013-14,
2014-15, 2015-16, 2016-17, 2017-18, 2018-19, 2019-21, 2021-22, 2022-23 and 2023-24 to date so
far?

1030 **Clerk:** Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Health, Care and Business.

Minister for Health, Care and Business (Hon. G Arias-Vasquez): Madam Speaker, I will answer
this question together with Question 606.

Clerk: Question 606. The Hon. Mrs A Sanchez.

1035 **Hon. Mrs A Sanchez:** Madam Speaker, could the Government provide a detailed breakdown
of the number of individuals who have received speech and language therapy services through
the Gibraltar Health Authority in the following financial years: 2012-13, 2013-14, 2014-15,
2015-16, 2016-17, 2017-18, 2018-19, 2019-21, 2021-22, 2022-23 and 2023-24 to date so far?

1040 **Clerk:** Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Health, Care and Business.

Hon. G Arias-Vasquez: Madam Speaker, the information requested by the hon. Member is
contained in the schedule I now hand over.

Answer to Q605/2023

Speech & Language Service Referrals		
Financial Year	Paediatrics	Adult
12/13	-	-
13/14	-	-
14/15	-	-
15/16	-	231
16/17	-	247
17/18	-	183
18/19	-	369
19/20	156	407
20/21	208	288
21/22	233	288
22/23	186	307
23/24	125*	330*

*As at end of October 2023

Answer to Q606/2023

Speech & Language Service Patients Seen		
Financial Year	Paediatrics	Adult
12/13	-	-
13/14	-	-
14/15	-	-
15/16	-	-
16/17	352	-
17/18	447	-
18/19	472	-
19/20	538	-
20/21	563	-
21/22	661	331
22/23	663	348
23/24	508*	-

*As at end of October 2023

Madam Speaker: Would the hon. Member like some time to consider the schedule before putting any supplementaries? We will move on to the next question.

Q607/2023
Speech and language therapy –
Number of GHA therapists

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Clerk: Question 607. The Hon. Mrs A Sanchez.

Hon. Mrs A Sanchez: Madam Speaker, could the Government specify the number of speech and language therapists employed or contracted by the Gibraltar Health Authority for the following financial years, providing a breakdown by specialisation, for example paediatric, adult etc: 2012-13, 2013-14, 2014-15, 2015-16, 2016-17, 2017-18, 2018-19, 2019-21, 2021-22, 2022-23 and 2023-24 to date so far?

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Clerk: Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Health, Care and Business.

Minister for Health, Care and Business (Hon. G Arias-Vasquez): Madam Speaker, I now hand over a schedule with the information requested.

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Answer to Q607/2023

Speech and language therapists

ANSWER TO QUESTION 607

Speech & Language Therapists

	April (04)	March (3)	Extra Information if needed
Financial Year 2012/2013	3 Speech & Language Therapists and 1 Head Speech & Language Therapist	3 Speech & Language Therapists and 1 Head Speech & Language Therapist	
Financial Year 2013/2014	3 Speech & Language Therapists and 1 Head Speech & Language Therapist	4 Speech & Language Therapists and 1 Head Speech & Language Therapist	03/2014 - 1 officer was over complement
Financial Year 2014/2015	4 Speech & Language Therapists and 1 Head Speech & Language Therapist	5 Speech & Language Therapists	04/2014 - 1 officer over complement 03/2015 - 2 officers over complement
Financial Year 2015/2016	5 Speech & Language Therapists	5 Speech & Language Therapists	04/2015 - 2 officers over complement
Financial Year 2016/2017	5 Speech & Language Therapists	5 Speech & Language Therapists	
Financial Year 2017/2018	5 Speech & Language Therapists	1 Basic Grade Speech & Language Therapist, 2 General Speech & Language Therapists, 1 Speech & Language Therapist Adult Services, 1 Head Speech & Language Therapist and 1 Head Speech & Language Therapist on an SLA	03/2018 - Basic Grade over complement
Financial Year 2018/2019	1 Basic Grade Speech & Language Therapist, 2 General Speech & Language Therapists, 1 Speech & Language Therapist Adult Service, 1 Speech & Language Therapist Paediatrics, 1 Head Speech & Language Therapist and 1 Head Speech & Language Therapist on SLA	1 Basic Grade Speech & Language Therapist, 4 General Speech & Language Therapists, 1 Speech & Language Therapist Adult Services, 1 Speech & Language Therapist Paediatric, 1 Head Speech & Language Therapist on SLA	04/2018 - Basic Grade over complement 03/2019 - 1 General SPL relief cover & 1 General SPL on SLA. Basic Grade over complement
Financial Year 2019/2020	1 Basic Grade Speech & Language Therapist, 4 General Speech & Language Therapists, 1 Speech & Language Therapist Adult Services, 1 Speech & Language Therapist Paediatric, 1 Head Speech & Language Therapist on SLA	1 Basic Grade Speech & Language Therapist, 2 General Speech & Language Therapist Sen II, 1 Speech & Language Therapist Sen II Paediatrics, 2 General Speech & Language Therapists Sen I, 2 Speech & Language Therapists Adult Services Sen I and 1 Head Speech & Language Therapist	04/2019 - 1 General SPL relief cover & 1 General SPL on SLA. Basic Grade over complement 03/2020 - Basic Grade over complement, 1 General SPL Sen II is on SLA, 1 General SPL Sen I is on SLA

Cont...

CONTINUED ANSWER TO QUESTION 607

	April (04)	March (3)	Extra Information if needed
Financial Year 2020/2021	3 General Speech & Language Therapist Sen II, 1 Speech & Language Therapist Sen II Paediatrics, 2 General Speech & Language Therapists Sen I, 2 Speech & Language Therapist Sen I Adult Services and 1 Head Speech & Language Therapist	1 Basic Grade Speech & Language Therapist, 3 General Speech & Language Therapist Sen II, 1 Speech & Language Therapist Sen II Paediatrics, 1 General Speech & Language Therapist Sen I, 1 Speech & Language Therapist Sen I Adult Services, 1 Speech & Language Therapist Sen I Adult in Elderly Care & Dysphagia (ERS) and 1 Head Speech & Language Therapist	04/2020 - 1 General SPL Sen II over complement & 1 General SPL Sen II SLA. 03/2021 - 1 General SPL Sen II relief cover, basic grade over complement,
Financial Year 2021/2022	1 Basic Grade Speech & Language Therapist, 3 General Speech & Language Therapist Sen II, 1 Speech & Language Therapist Sen II Paediatrics, 1 General Speech & Language Therapist Sen I, 1 Speech & Language Therapist Sen I Adult Services, 1 Speech & Language Therapist Sen I Adult in Elderly Care & Dysphagia (ERS) and 1 Head Speech & Language Therapist	1 Basic Grade Speech & Language, 1 General Speech & Language Therapist Sen II, 1 Speech and Language Therapist Sen II Paediatrics, 2 General Speech & Language Therapist Sen I, 1 Speech & Language Therapist Sen I Adult Services and 1 Head Speech & Language Therapist	04/2021 - 1 General SPL Sen II relief cover, Basic Grade over complement. 03/2022 - 1 General SPL Sen II relief cover
Financial Year 2022/2023	1 Basic Grade Speech & Language, 2 General Speech & Language Therapists Sen II, 1 Speech & Language Therapist Sen II Paediatrics, 2 General Speech & Language Therapist Sen I, 1 Speech & Language Therapist Sen I Adult Services and 1 Head Speech & Language Therapist	2 General Speech & Language Therapist Sen II, 1 Speech & Language Therapist Sen II Paediatrics, 2 General Speech & Language Therapists Sen I, 1 Speech & Language Therapist Sen I Adult Services	04/2022 - 1 General SPL Sen II relief cover & Basic Grade over complement
Financial Year 2023/2024	2 General Speech & Language Therapists Sen II, 1 Speech & Language Therapist Sen II Paediatrics, 2 General Speech & Language Therapist Sen I and 1 Chief Speech & Language Therapist		03/2023 - 1 Speech & Language Therapist Sen II Paediatrics

Madam Speaker: I presume the hon. Member would like some time to look at that second schedule as well.

Q685/2023
Civil Service departments –
Supplementary questions

Madam Speaker: Do we have an outstanding schedule from the Hon. the Leader of the Opposition's Question 685? Have we dealt with that?

1060 **Hon. Dr K Azopardi:** No, we have not, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Perhaps we could deal with that now, as it would finish that set of questions.

1065 **Hon. Dr K Azopardi:** A question, if I may, on that.

Madam Speaker: That is Question 685, for the avoidance of doubt.

1070 **Hon. Dr K Azopardi:** Question 685, yes. My very quick question was: there appear to be a lot of clerical vacancies in Treasury and the Income Tax Department. Can the Chief Minister explain whether those are being dealt with and perhaps give us a bit more information as to the reason why that is so? At any given point in time, there just seem to be a lot of vacancies there.

1075 **Chief Minister (Hon. FR Picardo):** Madam Speaker, I understand that those will probably already have been dealt with or are in the process of being dealt with.

Hon. Dr K Azopardi: Can he comment on why that happened, given the numbers of vacancies in those two departments in particular?

1080 **Hon. Chief Minister:** Madam Speaker, for the simple reason that the majority of them are in the AA grade, which requires the external AA recruitment.

Madam Speaker: Next question.

Q608/2023
Care Agency respite facilities –
Plans to expand

Clerk: Question 608. The Hon. Mrs A Sanchez.

1085 **Madam Speaker:** Question 608. We will come back to your supplementaries on the schedules in a moment.

1090 **Hon. Mrs A Sanchez:** Madam Speaker, could the Government provide details on any plans to expand both the day and overnight respite facilities for the service users of the Care Agency and their families?

Clerk: Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Health, Care and Business.

1095 **Minister for Health, Care and Business (Hon. G Arias-Vasquez):** Madam Speaker, since 2011, the Government has offered a considerable number of respite hours to service users and their families. The Learning Disability Service is committed to providing the highest standard of care and can confirm that there are plans to expand the services as the demand for both day and night respite remains.

1100 **Hon. Mrs A Sanchez:** Madam Speaker, I am grateful for the answer. Does the hon. Member envision enhanced respite services through larger and better-equipped facilities for the Care Agency? From people who come to speak to me, I hear various concerns about the current size of the facilities that are being used, problems with the venues being too warm during the summer

1105 and perhaps flooding during the winter. I would like to know if the hon. Member has any plans for improving these resources and creating better facilities for the Care Agency and for respite users.

Hon. G Arias-Vasquez: The services have dramatically improved recently, and yes, we are looking at business plans to improve those facilities.

1110 **Hon. Dr K Azopardi:** Can I just ask in what way services have dramatically improved? Can we have a bit more information as to the improvements that have been made?

1115 **Hon. G Arias-Vasquez:** Yes. The number of children with learning disabilities using the facilities has increased dramatically. The Community Learning Disability team has 23 carers working in new facilities. The majority of respite is actually held at the Boathouse, which takes place between three and seven. Those facilities have been offered recently and have massively improved.

1120 **Hon. Dr K Azopardi:** Does the Minister have the number of children who are benefiting from that service now? She has spoken about an increase: does she have numbers on that?

Hon. G Arias-Vasquez: I do not have the previous figures, but I know there are 20 children currently benefiting from that facility.

Q606-07/2023

Speech and language therapy – Supplementary questions

1125 **Madam Speaker:** Perhaps we can return to Questions 606 and 607, if the Hon. Mrs A Sanchez has any supplementaries.

Hon. Mrs A Sanchez: Madam Speaker, in relation to Question 607, is the hon. Member satisfied that the current complement of speech and language therapists is sufficient to meet the demand and the needs of this service, or does she feel that it might fall short at the moment to meet the needs of all those who require speech and language therapy, and it will continue to fall short?

1130 **Hon. G Arias-Vasquez:** Madam Speaker, I took the liberty of requesting the figures for 2009-10 and 2010-11 and the number of speech therapists that we had at that moment in time. In 2009-10 we had four speech and language therapists, and in 2010-11 we had four speech and language therapists. We have increased those figures to six speech and language therapists. As I said throughout the campaign, I think there is always room for improvement, but I think the service at the moment is quite good.

1140 **Hon. Mrs A Sanchez:** Madam Speaker, is the hon. Member not aware that there are a lot of issues with speech and language therapy on the ground and that there are a lot of children, particularly, who are not receiving the amount of speech and language therapy that they need? Evidently there is still a shortage of speech and language therapy provision. I understand the position of the Government, in the sense that it is a shortage profession around the world, not just here in Gibraltar, but I would like to hear, in you being able to recruit more speech and language therapists, what solutions the Government have to ensure that effective communication strategies and support are put in place instead of speech and language therapy?

1145 **Hon. G Arias-Vasquez:** I am pleased to be able to confirm that we are actually recruiting speech and language therapy assistants at present.

1150 **Hon. Dr K Azopardi:** Madam Speaker, may I just ask the Minister, just to understand, why is it that the Government is not able to provide numbers on the referrals in certain years? In the schedule, we have certain numbers but not numbers for other financial years.

Madam Speaker: Are you on Question 606 now? Are you looking at that schedule?

1155 **Hon. Dr K Azopardi:** Questions 605 and 606, yes.

Hon. G Arias-Vasquez: Madam Speaker, the information is unavailable for some financial years because the systems were paper based.

1160 **Madam Speaker:** Could you repeat that? I think there was a mumbling here, which is making it difficult for your colleague and myself to hear.

Hon. G Arias-Vasquez: Apologies. *(Interjection)* Apologies, Madam Speaker. Information is unavailable for some financial years due to systems being paper based.

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Hon. Dr K Azopardi: It makes it difficult, presumably, to collate that information because of that. I see. I understand.

1170 I am just inviting the Minister, if she may, to comment. I can see that paediatric referrals seem to have been increasing almost year upon year between the years 2016-17 and 2023-24. Noting what she said about the increase in resources, does she consider that despite an increase in resources in the last 12 years, it now needs to be reviewed again, given that there appear to be year-upon-year increases in referrals?

1175 **Hon. G Arias-Vasquez:** Madam Speaker, as I confirmed a moment ago, we are looking at increasing the service and we have actually recruited speech and language therapy assistants.

Madam Speaker: The Hon. Mr Bossino.

1180 **Hon. D J Bossino:** I am grateful, Madam Speaker. In relation to Question 607, did the hon. Member give a number as to the vacancies which she says are being opened up in relation to the recruitment of further speech and language therapists?

1185 If I may, because this question is very much interlinked with that one, she makes almost a general comment that there is always room for improvement, but at the same time I am slightly concerned because she says that she is satisfied with the level of cover. I just want to marry those two things. Does she have any more specifics as to where the improvements should lie, or is it just a general comment that she makes that there is always room for improvement in anything in life?

Hon. G Arias-Vasquez: Madam Speaker, in relation to the hon. Gentleman's first question, I said that there were two speech and language assistants being recruited.

1190 In relation to his second question, I am satisfied that the services provided at the moment are good. We are looking to extend the services provided, and hence the need for further recruitment.

Madam Speaker: Next question.

Q609/2023

**Care Agency care worker posts –
Criteria for applying and details of trainee course**

Clerk: Question 609. The Hon. Mrs A Sanchez.

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Hon. Mrs A Sanchez: Madam Speaker, could the Government provide clarification on the standard criteria for individuals applying for the position of care worker in the Care Agency, along with detailed information regarding the duration and specifications of the trainee care worker course managed by the Care Agency?

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Clerk: Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Health, Care and Business.

Minister for Health, Care and Business (Hon. G Arias-Vasquez): Madam Speaker, an individual wishing to apply for the position of care worker within the Care Agency requires a minimum of two GCSEs, or equivalent or higher qualifications.

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As of 30th October 2023, new trainee care workers have embarked on a Care Certificate induction programme. This induction programme is designed by Skills for Care and has theoretical and practical assessment opportunities. It is envisaged that the trainee care workers will take approximately six months to complete the certification.

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Madam Speaker: Next question.

Q610/2023

**St Bernadette's Centre –
Anticipated new entrants**

Clerk: Question 610. The Hon. Mrs A Sanchez.

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Hon. Mrs A Sanchez: Madam Speaker, could the Government share whether a study has been conducted projecting the anticipated number of new entrants into St Bernadette's Centre within the next five to 10 years? If so, could the Government provide the relevant figures?

Clerk: Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Health, Care and Business.

1220

Hon. G Arias-Vasquez: A detailed view is maintained of the persons expected to become new entrants to St Bernadette's Centre in the next 10 years. The information requested by the hon. Member is contained in the schedule which I now hand over.

Additional work is being done on how St Bernadette's may need to adapt and change going forward.

Answer to Question 610/2023

Predicted number of Adults with Learning Disabilities Requiring Services

Young people leaving St Martin's School over the next 11 years:

YEAR	Number of Pupils leaving SMS
2021/22	3
2022/23	4
2023/24	3
2024/25	5
2025/26	3
2026/27	2
2027/28	6
2028/29	4
2029/30	6
2030/31	3
2031/32	10
2032/33	15

1225 **Madam Speaker:** Does the hon. Member who put the question want to put a question? Yes. The Hon. the Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. Dr K Azopardi: May I ask who has done that study?

1230 **Hon. G Arias-Vasquez:** It is not a study. I did not say it was a study. I said a detailed view is maintained on the number of persons, Madam Speaker, and that has been prepared by the Care Agency.

1235 **Hon. D J Bossino:** May I ask the hon. Member, in terms of the schedule: we have, here, a year-on-year ... from 2021 all the way through to the academic year, presumably, 2032-33, and in the next column we have the number of pupils leaving 'SMS', which must mean St Martin's School. Is that based on the number of pupils in that year and you simply make the analysis as to when those children will be 16, which is when they transition from St Martin's School to St Bernadette's? Is it as rudimentary – if I can put it in those terms – as that? It is possible that you may have a young child in St Martin's School, in one of the earlier years now, who may not necessarily make it – if I can put it in those terms again – to St Bernadette's because there is an improvement and he goes into mainstream schooling? I wanted to understand a bit more the basis and the premise of this analysis.

1240

1245 **Hon. G Arias-Vasquez:** Madam Speaker, I would not say it is as rudimentary as that; I would say it is as accurate as that. It is based on the current figures, yes. People may need St Martin's now who may not move to St Bernadette's. Equally, people may not be in St Martin's now who might need to move St Bernadette's. So yes, it is a projection.

1250 **Hon. D J Bossino:** If I can ask the hon. Member to be more specific in terms of the adaptation and change which she is considering in the context of St Bernadette's and the service that it provides. We have had, across the floor of the House, quite alarming figures in terms of the new entrants to St Martin's over the last couple of academic years, and obviously those children, when they become young adults, will need to be serviced, not necessarily all of them in St Bernadette's. So there will be a higher demand. I think we are talking about an average of – and I say this from personal experience – two or three children transitioning currently from St Martin's School to St Bernadette's, but in the future we are looking at very high numbers of 10 to 15.

1255
1260 **Hon. G Arias-Vasquez:** Madam Speaker, the Learning Disability Service has developed a short-, medium- and long-term plan of exactly what the projections are and where it thinks the service needs to go.

Madam Speaker: Next question.

Q611/2023
Subcontracted care workers –
Responsibility for vetting

Clerk: Question 611. The Hon. Mrs A Sanchez.

1265 **Hon. Mrs A Sanchez:** Madam Speaker, in relation to subcontracted care and the delivery of this care to the service users of the Care Agency and the ERS, can the Government confirm which entity would be responsible for the vetting of these subcontracted carers?

1270 **Clerk:** Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Health, Care and Business.

Hon. G Arias-Vasquez: Madam Speaker, each subcontracted company would be responsible for the vetting of these subcontracted carers. Copies of these vetting forms are sent to the Care Agency Human Resources Department for their records. This is an essential requirement and no carer would commence work unless the vetting form had been received. The subcontracted companies are also responsible for supplying the Care Agency with up-to-date vetting forms for each carer on a yearly basis.

Madam Speaker: Next question.

Q612/2023
Ecotherapy –
Definition

1280 **Clerk:** Question 612. The Hon. G. Origo.

Hon. G Origo: Madam Speaker, can the Government explain what it means by its wish to develop an ecotherapy approach within healthcare, with green prescribing forming a core part of solutions and interventions offered by healthcare professionals?

1285 **Clerk:** Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Health, Care and Business.

1290 **Hon. G Arias-Vasquez:** Madam Speaker, ecotherapy is a formal type of therapeutic treatment which involves doing outdoor activities in nature. There is not one single definition of ecotherapy, but it is often used to describe a regular, structured activity that is led by trained professionals, sometimes therapists, who are there to support you, focuses on doing an activity rather than on your health, takes place in a green environment, is related to exploring and appreciating the natural world, and involves spending time with other people, although you can always choose to interact at your own pace.

1295 Green social prescribing includes both what are known as green and blue activities. At Ocean Views, these include a variety of social interventions such as our recently established walking therapy, meditation and yoga in the garden area and open water swimming in summer on an individual needs basis. We offer paddle boarding during summer through a charity, picnic mornings out in nature and attending community outdoor events. Future projects include re-establishing animal therapy and gardening through supported employment.

1300 All person-centred activities are assessed on a case-by-case basis and adequately risk assessed and administered.

1305 **Hon. G Origo:** Madam Speaker, given that the Government has identified ecotherapy and green prescribing as suitable in forming part of the solutions and interventions by healthcare providers, could the hon. Member please indicate if she has an idea of how many patients the GHA believes would be suitable for such interventions, given that they have identified these practices as being suitable for such patients?

1310 **Hon. G Arias-Vasquez:** Unfortunately, Madam Speaker, I do not have that information to hand, but I can provide it at a later date.

Madam Speaker: Next question.

Q613-14/2023

Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder – GHA pathway for diagnosis of children and adults

Clerk: Question 613. The Hon. Mrs J Ladislaus.

1315 **Hon. Mrs J Ladislaus:** Madam Speaker, what is the current pathway within the GHA for seeking a diagnosis for a child who is suspected of having attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD)?

Clerk: Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Health, Care and Business.

1320 **Minister for Health, Care and Business (Hon. G Arias-Vasquez):** Madam Speaker, I will answer this question together with Question 614.

Clerk: Question 614. The Hon. Mrs J Ladislaus.

1325 **Hon. Mrs J Ladislaus:** Madam Speaker, what is the current pathway within the GHA for seeking a diagnosis for an adult who is suspected of having attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD)?

Clerk: Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Health, Care and Business.

1330 **Hon. G Arias-Vasquez:** Madam Speaker, the current pathway for children suspected of having
ADHD is a referral to Paediatrics after seeing a GP with the concerns. ADHD is one of several
1335 neurodevelopmental disorders, including autism spectrum disorder (ASD), specific learning
disabilities and other related conditions. The diagnosis of ADHD is made by a multi-disciplinary
team, including paediatricians, mental health professionals and, most importantly, the education
1340 service. Children who are suspected of suffering with ADHD can be referred through to the ADHD
assessment and management service, which is currently operated within the GHA as a
collaboration between Mental Health and Paediatrics. We are in the process of setting up a
pathway for assessment and management of children with ADHD. We need input from
1345 educational psychologists and, ideally, we need more input from the education services to provide
a comprehensive wraparound service for these children and their families. The GHA does not
currently have a pathway for diagnosis of ADHD. This requires a review by a psychiatrist, privately,
who will perform the recommended assessment and advise medication, as required. Referral to
GHA Mental Health Services can occur following these initial steps in the private sector. Entitled
patients can then access the service, be monitored and obtain medication via the Community
Mental Health Service.

ADHD affects three to four in 100 adults. A vast majority of these individuals function relatively
well in society; they hold down jobs and they are in stable relationships. ADHD in this setting is
not generally considered a severe mental illness. In the GHA we assess and treat ADHD only where
1350 it is co-morbid with a severe and enduring mental illness such as schizophrenia, bi-polar affective
disorder, addictions, etc. The GHA does not currently offer a service for adults who are otherwise
well and seeking a diagnosis of ADHD. If individuals receive a diagnosis of ADHD and are
established on medication in the private sector, the Mental Health Service in the GHA will review
the diagnosis and treatment plan. Where appropriate, these patients will then be offered the
1355 same medication through the GHA and then their care will be transferred to primary care
physicians in the GHA.

Hon. Mrs J Ladislaus: Madam Speaker, I assume that the Hon. Minister is aware of the GHA
constitution and what it sets out. I refer to one of the eight key principles within the GHA
1360 constitution, which states that access to the GHA is based on clinical need and not on an
individual's ability to pay. How does the Hon. Minister suppose that an individual who is financially
unable to seek a diagnosis will do so?

Hon. G Arias-Vasquez: Madam Speaker, this is dealt with in exactly the way it has always been
1365 dealt with. A diagnosis of ADHD has never been treated differently. This is the way that it has been
dealt with over the past 30 years.

Hon. Mrs J Ladislaus: Madam Speaker, I assume also that the Hon. Minister is aware of the
second part of the GHA constitution, which sets out the rights of an individual to access GHA
1370 services that are appropriate to their medical needs. Would the Hon. Minister, therefore, agree
with me that this is a blatant breach of that constitution?

Hon. G Arias-Vasquez: Madam Speaker, no.

Hon. Dr K Azopardi: Madam Speaker, without, of course, doubting what the Hon. Minister has
1375 said about that being the practice for many years – certainly I was not aware that that was the
case, but if that is the case – does the Minister agree that perhaps that practice needs to change
because there will be people who cannot afford to go to private practice first, to then be able to
be transferred to the public stream? There will be people who fall between those stools because
they are simply unable to pay, so perhaps that practice should change. Does she agree?

1380 **Hon. G Arias-Vasquez:** No, I do not. The pathways are being reviewed currently, but in any event, a diagnosis of ADHD is very difficult to come to. It is not a simple diagnosis which is arrived at easily. I would refer to the discussion that was previously had in this Chamber, Madam Speaker, about the limits of the GHA budget and exceeding the budget. Given the difficulties of the diagnosis of ADHD, that is a consideration which we have to bear in mind.

1385 **Madam Speaker:** Next question.

**Q615-18/2023
GHA psychiatry –**

Total number of psychiatrists and number of psychiatrists qualified to treat children permanently employed; average waiting times for adults and children

Clerk: Question 615. The Hon. Mrs J Ladislaus.

1390 **Hon. Mrs J Ladislaus:** Madam Speaker, how many psychiatrists are currently permanently employed by the GHA?

Clerk: Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Health, Care and Business.

1395 **Minister for Health, Care and Business (Hon. G Arias-Vasquez):** Madam Speaker, I will answer this question together with Questions 616 to 618.

Clerk: Question 616. The Hon. Mrs J Ladislaus.

1400 **Hon. Mrs J Ladislaus:** Madam Speaker, how many psychiatrists who are qualified to treat children are currently permanently employed by the GHA?

Clerk: Question 617. The Hon. Mrs J Ladislaus.

1405 **Hon. Mrs J Ladislaus:** Madam Speaker, what are the current average waiting times for a child to see a psychiatrist at the GHA?

Clerk: Question 618. The Hon. Mrs J Ladislaus.

1410 **Hon. Mrs J Ladislaus:** Madam Speaker, what are the current average waiting times for an adult to see a psychiatrist at the GHA?

Clerk: Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Health, Care and Business.

1415 **Hon. G Arias-Vasquez:** Madam Speaker, in answer to Question 615, there are currently five substantive posts as follows. Three are full time on indefinite contracts. One of these posts is presently covered by a locum psychiatrist, due to long-term sickness, and the contract is ending on 30th April 2024. There are two part time on indefinite contracts.

1420 **Madam Speaker:** I am just going to stop the Hon. Minister there. It might help the other side – well, yes, if the microphone was on, but also, if you are giving statistics, if you just go slightly slower, because I can see them all scurrying to make a note.

Hon. G Arias-Vasquez: Apologies. I will take that from the beginning then, Madam Speaker.

1425 In answer to Question 615, there are currently five substantive posts, and these are as follows.
There are three psychiatrists on full-time indefinite contracts. One of these posts is presently covered by a locum psychiatrist due to long-term sickness. That contract is coming to an end on 30th April 2024. There are two part-time psychiatrists on indefinite contracts. In addition, we have a locum psychiatrist for Child and Adolescent Services. That is one full-time contract ending in July this year.

1430 In answer to Question 616, psychiatry has 11 sub-specialities. These include adult psychiatry, old age psychiatry, child and adolescent psychiatry, forensic psychiatry, psychiatry of intellectual disabilities, psychotherapy, addiction psychiatry, liaison psychiatry, neuropsychiatry, perinatal psychiatry and rehabilitation psychiatry. The Government has advised that for a small jurisdiction such as Gibraltar, it does not make sense to employ a specialist in each of these 11 subspecialties.
1435 The solution in Gibraltar and in other similar-sized jurisdictions – such as Bermuda, Jersey and the Isle of Man – is as follows. The core team of general psychiatrists work across the age range and span of conditions, and, where required, seek advice and input from professionals in the UK. In Gibraltar, two of the general psychiatrists devote four sessions each week to children and adolescents with mental health needs. These two psychiatrists and the entire multidisciplinary team in Gibraltar are supported by a UK-based specialist in child psychiatry. The UK-based specialist works remotely for the GHA for four hours each week – that is two sessions of two hours each – and he visits Gibraltar for a week once every three months. During the course of that week, he offers face-to-face consultations to children and their families.

1440 In answer to Questions 617 and 618, the average waiting time is between three and four weeks. A consultant psychiatrist is available on call 24/7. This is to ensure that children or adults who present a psychiatric emergency or crisis due to an issue with their mental health can be reviewed by a consultant psychiatrist on the same day, often within one or two hours.

1450 **Hon. Mrs J Ladislaus:** Madam Speaker, we have received various reports from service users that the current arrangements in respect of psychiatric treatment, particularly for children, is not satisfactory. Would the Hon. Minister agree that that is the case?

Hon. G Arias-Vasquez: Madam Speaker, no, ma'am.

1455 **Hon. Mrs J Ladislaus:** Madam Speaker, in respect of the contract ending on 30th April, have explorations begun to replace that individual, or will that contract be extended?

1460 **Hon. G Arias-Vasquez:** We are reviewing that position, Madam Speaker, and we are looking for an alternative.

Hon. Mrs J Ladislaus: Madam Speaker, is the Hon. Minister aware – we are aware – that there are alternatives within a few kilometres of Gibraltar which would be a cheaper option, perhaps, than bringing over a consultant psychiatrist from the UK?

1465 **Hon. G Arias-Vasquez:** Madam Speaker, language is usually an issue in these circumstances.

Hon. Mrs J Ladislaus: Madam Speaker, is the Hon. Minister aware that there are individuals, who do speak English also, within the few kilometres of Gibraltar, also practising within Gibraltar itself?

1470 **Hon. G Arias-Vasquez:** Madam Speaker, I am sure the team at the GHA is exploring all options.

Hon. D J Bossino: Madam Speaker, in relation to Question 616, which is the question specifically in relation to the treatment of children, whilst we appreciate on this side of the House that a jurisdiction of the size of Gibraltar is not going to be offering the whole panoply of different
1475

specialities within this field, and linking also with her comment that she feels that the service currently provided is satisfactory, given the answer we have had in respect of St Martin's on the number of children who are requiring special needs – and many of those children will require to be treated from a psychiatric perspective in relation to medication and all the rest of it – I can tell her that the service currently is simply not up to scratch, certainly from the experience that many of us have on this side of the House from speaking to people, and some of us have direct experience of that.

Can I ask her, please, to consider whether it is within the realms of possibilities, in terms of adaptation of government policy and attitude that she has demonstrated across the floor of the House today, to accept that it is not satisfactory, and to consider, please, the possibility of providing this service specifically for children in the context not just of direct experience that many of us have, but also based on the statistics?

Hon. G Arias-Vasquez: Madam Speaker, we have a breakdown of exactly where all the psychiatrists are at the moment. That breakdown is provided by the Mental Health Service in Gibraltar. But yes, I can confirm that if we feel there is a need, we will look into expanding that service.

Hon. D J Bossino: Madam Speaker, if I may, the hon. Member, when she says 'if we feel there is a need', can I ask her, please, to consider the possibility of conducting a study in relation to this? I do not think it necessarily is going to take that long, but I think she will soon find out that this is a very pressing issue, and I would urge her, please, to consider this with some urgency.

Hon. G Arias-Vasquez: Madam Speaker, we note the hon. Member's appreciation of studies. We will carry out a study in this respect, and we will carry it out as a matter of urgency.

Madam Speaker: All right. Next question.

**Q619-20/2023
Cataract surgery –
Average waiting times**

Clerk: Question 619. The Hon. Mrs J Ladislaus.

Hon. Mrs J Ladislaus: Madam Speaker, what is the current average waiting time at the GHA for cataract surgery to take place, once a patient has been referred for that procedure?

Clerk: Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Health, Care and Business.

Minister for Health, Care and Business (Hon. G Arias-Vasquez): Madam Speaker, I will answer this question together with Question 620.

Clerk: Question 620. The Hon. Mrs J Ladislaus.

Hon. Mrs J Ladislaus: Madam Speaker, in cases where cataract surgery is needed on both eyes by a patient, what is the average waiting time at the GHA between surgery taking place on the first eye and surgery taking place on the second eye?

Clerk: Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Health, Care and Business.

1520 **Hon. G Arias-Vasquez:** Madam Speaker, in answer to Question 619, currently, the average waiting time is three months from being referred for a cataract procedure to the procedure date; that is to say a shorter period than is the average in the UK at the moment.

In answer to Question 620, the current average waiting time from the surgery taking place on the first eye to the surgery taking place on the second eye, is two months.

1525

Hon. Chief Minister: Next question.

Q621/2023

**St Bernard's Hospital Theatre 4 –
Whether yet in use**

Clerk: Question 621. The Hon. Mrs J Ladislaus.

1530 **Hon. Mrs J Ladislaus:** Madam Speaker, has the fourth surgical theatre within St Bernard's Hospital been used to carry out surgery yet?

Clerk: Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Health, Care and Business.

1535 **Minister for Health, Care and Business (Hon. G Arias-Vasquez):** Madam Speaker, Theatre 4 has been in use since early September and has been used for a combination of elective and emergency operations. Theatre 4 was designed predominantly as a trauma and emergency theatre, and by being available for such cases has allowed additional elective operations to occur in the other elective theatres, which are theatres 1, 2 and 3, including surgery by visiting specialists from UK tertiary centres. Regular operating sessions for trauma cases will be scheduled in
1540 Theatre 4 as of early December.

Hon. Mrs J Ladislaus: Madam Speaker, does the Hon. Minister have, perhaps, a breakdown of the number of procedures that have taken place within Theatre 4?

1545 **Hon. G Arias-Vasquez:** Not here, no, sorry.

Madam Speaker: Would the hon. Member like to ask another question?
Next question.

Q622-23/2023

**GHA dental services –
Number of dentists employed and types of contract**

Clerk: Question 622. The Hon. Mrs J Ladislaus.

1550

Hon. Mrs J Ladislaus: Madam Speaker, how many dentists are currently contracted by the GHA?

Clerk: Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Health, Care and Business.

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Minister for Health, Care and Business (Hon. G Arias-Vasquez): Madam Speaker, I will answer this question together with Question 623.

Clerk: Question 623. The Hon. Mrs J Ladislaus.

1560 **Hon. Mrs J Ladislaus:** Madam Speaker, what types of contracts are the cohort of GHA dentists employed under?

Clerk: Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Health, Care and Business.

1565 **Hon. G Arias-Vasquez:** Madam Speaker, in answer to Question 622, there are currently five dental officers and two senior dental officers.

In answer to Question 623, at the time of this question being filed, the GHA is in advanced stages of negotiations with dental officers and their union representatives regarding their employment contracts. It would, therefore, not be prudent to comment further on this matter at this time. I will be happy to provide further information when the negotiations are completed.

1570

Hon. Chief Minister: Next question.

Q624/2023
GHA dental services –
Children’s check-up waiting list

Clerk: Question 624. The Hon. Mrs J Ladislaus.

1575 **Hon. Mrs J Ladislaus:** Madam Speaker, is it still the expectation that the GHA’s dental services waiting list will address the backlog for check-ups for children by the end of January 2024?

Clerk: Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Health, Care and Business.

1580 **Minister for Health, Care and Business (Hon. G Arias-Vasquez):** Madam Speaker, the waiting list initiative is now being tackled by a GHA dentist due to operational constraints at the Children’s Health Centre but allows for continuity of care and quality assures the treatment is received. The expectation is that it will take approximately 60 days longer than the end of January to clear this backlog. The current plan is to have reviewed all patients who have opted in by March 2024.

1585 **Madam Speaker:** Next question.

Q625/2023
Telephone CPR –
Whether practised in Gibraltar

Clerk: Question 625. The Hon. Mrs J Ladislaus.

1590 **Hon. Mrs J Ladislaus:** Madam Speaker, is phone resuscitation, whereby the emergency operator will counsel a caller as to steps being taken to resuscitate an individual, practised in Gibraltar?

Clerk: Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Health, Care and Business.

1595 **Minister for Health, Care and Business (Hon. G Arias-Vasquez):** Madam Speaker, telephone CPR has been practised in Gibraltar through 190 since 2019 and 111 since 2020.

Madam Speaker: Next question.

Q626-33/2023
Ambulance Service –
Average number of calls and where received;
sufficiency of paramedics and ambulances available;
fleet condition and maintenance, retrieval of breakdowns, plan for replacement

Clerk: Question 626. The Hon. Mrs J Ladislaus.

1600

Hon. Mrs J Ladislaus: How many calls on average per month are received by the GHA Ambulance Service?

Clerk: Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Healthcare and Business.

1605

Minister for Health, Care and Business (Hon. G Arias-Vasquez): Madam Speaker, I will answer this question together with Questions 627 to 633.

Clerk: Question 627. The Hon. Mrs J Ladislaus.

1610

Hon. Mrs J Ladislaus: Madam Speaker, where are the calls made to the Ambulance Service received?

Clerk: Questions 628. The Hon. Mrs J Ladislaus.

1615

Hon. Mrs J Ladislaus: Madam Speaker, are there currently enough paramedics available at any given time to operate enough ambulances to appropriately service Gibraltar's needs?

Clerk: Question 629. The Hon. Mrs J Ladislaus.

1620

Hon. Mrs J Ladislaus: Madam Speaker, are there currently enough ambulances available to appropriately service Gibraltar's needs?

Clerk: Question 630. The Hon. Mrs J Ladislaus.

1625

Hon. Mrs J Ladislaus: Madam Speaker, is the entire GHA ambulance fleet currently deemed safe and in good working condition to be on the road?

Clerk: Question 631. The Hon. Mrs J Ladislaus.

1630

Hon. Mrs J Ladislaus: Madam Speaker, is there a maintenance programme in place in respect of the ambulance fleet, and can this be outlined?

Clerk: Question 632. The Hon. Mrs J Ladislaus.

1635

Hon. Mrs J Ladislaus: Madam Speaker, in the event that an ambulance breaks down out of normal business hours, what plans are in place for its retrieval?

Clerk: Question 633. The Hon. Mrs J. Ladislaus.

1640 **Hon. Mrs J Ladislaus:** Madam Speaker, is there a fleet plan for the replacement of ambulances?

Clerk: Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Health, Care and Business.

1645 **Hon. G Arias-Vasquez:** Madam Speaker, in answer to Question 626, there are 600 to 650 calls a month received by the GHA's Ambulance Service.

In answer to Question 627, currently all calls are received as follows: 190 by the Fire Control Officer for ambulance and fire dispatch, and 111 by GHA staff with clinical adviser support.

In answer to Question 628, yes, the present ambulance skill set model used by the GHA provides 24/7 paramedic capability and contingency planning to provide resilience.

1650 In answer to Question 629, the current single ambulance model used to respond to the dynamic call volume within our community is satisfactory and is being reviewed together with the implementation of the 2024 999 Emergency Project.

In answer to Question 630, the entire fleet is currently under review. However, all active ambulances are roadworthy and operational as blue light responders and have operational capacity to respond and manage any type of emergency.

1655 In answer to Question 631, currently there are no fixed contractual agreements in respect of maintenance in place. However, all ambulances are fast tracked and maintained through a local provider when required.

1660 In answer to Question 632, in the event that an ambulance breaks down out of normal business hours, the present arrangement is to call a local provider who operates on a 24/7 basis, and they manage the retrieval of the ambulance, be it in Gibraltar or across the border.

In answer to Question 633, yes, the fleet plan includes a phased implementation of both emergency and transport ambulances, which commenced in 2021.

1665 **Hon. Mrs J Ladislaus:** Madam Speaker, perhaps the Hon. Minister could clarify the reason why calls made to the Ambulance Service at 190 go through to the Fire Control Officer.

Hon. G Arias-Vasquez: Madam Speaker, this has always been the case, and that is why we are moving away from that system now.

1670

Hon. Mrs J Ladislaus: Madam Speaker, we have just heard the Hon. Minister state that they are moving away from that system now. Could the Hon. Minister perhaps clarify what she means by moving away: moving away to what system?

1675 **Hon. G Arias-Vasquez:** Madam Speaker, we are moving to a system of 111, where all calls made to 111 go directly to the Ambulance Room. This phased approach is being implemented by 2024. That is the 2024 Emergency Project.

1680 **Hon. Mrs J Ladislaus:** Madam Speaker, we heard that in the event that an ambulance breaks down out of normal business hours, there is a call to a local provider. Could the Hon. Minister shed some light as to whether there is just one provider and whether there is a specific contract or retainer in place for that?

1685 **Hon. G Arias-Vasquez:** Madam Speaker, to my understanding there is just one local provider, but there is no fixed contract in place.

Hon. Mrs J Ladislaus: Madam Speaker, could the hon. Lady confirm who the provider is?

1690 **Hon. G Arias-Vasquez:** Madam Speaker, unfortunately I cannot provide that information, but I will look into it and get back to her.

Hon. Chief Minister: Next question.

Q634-37/2023

Ambulances –

Date of last purchase; number of new ambulances ordered, cost and delivery date

Clerk: Question 634. The Hon. Mrs J Ladislaus.

1695 **Hon. Mrs J Ladislaus:** Madam Speaker, when was the last time an ambulance was purchased by the GHA?

Clerk: Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Health, Care and Business.

1700 **Minister for Health, Care and Business (Hon. G Arias-Vasquez):** Madam Speaker, I will answer this question together with Questions 635 to 637.

Clerk: Question 635. The Hon. Mrs J Ladislaus.

1705 **Hon. Mrs J Ladislaus:** Madam Speaker, how many new ambulances have been ordered?

Clerk: Question 636. The Hon. Mrs J Ladislaus.

1710 **Hon. Mrs J Ladislaus:** Madam Speaker, what is the total cost of the new ambulances that have been ordered?

Clerk: Question 637. The Hon. Mrs J Ladislaus.

1715 **Hon. Mrs J Ladislaus:** Madam Speaker, when does the GHA expect to take delivery of the new ambulances ordered?

Clerk: Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Health, Care and Business.

1720 **Hon. G Arias-Vasquez:** Madam Speaker, on 17th December 2021, two ambulances were purchased, an emergency and a transport ambulance. A further High Dependency Unit (HDU) ambulance was ordered in October 2023 for delivery in 2024. We are proceeding to purchase a further four emergency frontline ambulances, which will include all necessary conversion works. The GHA's plan is to have two of these ambulances operational by 2024 and the remaining two ready in 2025.

1725 HDU ambulance funds are ring-fenced under the Works and Equipment I&DF financial year 2023-24 budget. A 10% deposit on the Renault vehicle has been paid to the value of £3,500. Between the vehicle and the conversion, we are estimating the total to be circa £100,000.

1730 The new HDU ambulance has been ordered within this financial year. The manufacturers have estimated four to six months to obtain the vehicle, and the conversion timeframe is approximately eight to 12 weeks.

Hon. Mrs J Ladislaus: Madam Speaker, in a press release on 27th October 2023, the Hon. Minister stated:

The process of ordering new ambulances was already occurring prior to this week's incident. We will commence to see the arrival of these ambulances in the next few weeks.

1735 We are now four weeks on and we have not seen the arrival of any new ambulances. Could the Hon. Minister give an indication as to when those first ambulances are due to arrive?

1740 **Hon. G Arias-Vasquez:** Madam Speaker, as I have just indicated, the two ambulances were ordered in September 2021 and have already arrived, and a further ambulance was ordered in October 2023. As I also indicated in my answer, the estimated delivery time from the manufacturers is four to six months to obtain the vehicle, and the conversion timeframe is approximately eight to 12 weeks.

1745 **Hon. Dr K Azopardi:** So when they said, on 27th October 2023, that they were going to be here within weeks, that was not so. Is that right?

Hon. G Arias-Vasquez: The ambulances have been ordered and they will be arriving in the next couple of months.

1750 **Hon. Dr K Azopardi:** Well, they are going to arrive, but given the information that the Hon. Minister has given, they then need to be converted for them to be functional in the way that they would be when the conversion is over. Does she not agree? And, if that is so, did she not give a different impression when she issued that press release on 27th October?

1755 **Hon. G Arias-Vasquez:** I do not believe so, Madam Speaker. The two ambulances which were ordered in 2021 arrived, and the further ambulance, the HDU, was ordered imminently.

Madam Speaker: Next question.

Q638-39/2023

**St Bernard's Hospital A&E department –
Minimum staff safety level; number of staff usually on shift**

Clerk: Question 638. The Hon. Mrs J Ladislaus.

1760 **Hon. Mrs J Ladislaus:** Madam Speaker, what is the minimum staff safety level necessary within the A&E department at St Bernard's Hospital?

Clerk: Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Health, Care and Business.

1765 **Minister for Health, Care and Business (Hon. G Arias-Vasquez):** Madam Speaker, I will answer this question together with Question 639.

Clerk: Question 639. The Hon. Mrs J Ladislaus.

1770 **Hon. Mrs J Ladislaus:** Madam Speaker, how many staff are currently on shift at any given time within the A&E department of St Bernard's Hospital?

Clerk: Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Health, Care and Business.

1775 **Hon. G Arias-Vasquez:** Madam Speaker, the information for Question 638 can be broken under two title headings, and these would be as follows.

1780 Nursing: the GHA follows the RCN BEST tool recommendations. Evidence supported by the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) and the Royal College of Nursing (RCN) suggests best use of resources in a fluctuating patient load such as an ED department is to staff at 80% of predicted maximum whilst maintaining baseline par levels to ensure safe allocation for high or total dependency patients.

1785 Doctors: we use data that compares hospitals with a similar yearly attendance rate. Documents such as the Royal College of Emergency Medicine (RCEM) Medical Workforce Guidelines for Remote, Rural and Smaller Emergency Departments recommend manning levels such as those in the Isle of Man to support safe staffing of A&E.

I will now hand over a schedule with the information requested.

ANSWER TO QUESTION 639

Answer to Question 638

Nursing

Hours	RCN Recommendations for safe manning levels in an ED	Calculated at 80%
08:00-20:00	X12 Staff Nurses Including Charge Nurse. 2-3 HCA.	X 10 Staff Nurses including Charge Nurse. 1-2 HCA.
20:00-08:00	X 12 Staff Nurses Including Charge Nurse. 1 HCA	X 6 Staff Nurses including Charge Nurse , 1 HCA - less than 80% considering reduction of demand throughout the night and minimum manning levels.

Doctors

	Isle of Man	Jersey	SBH, GHA
ED attendances/annum	31,500	35,600	30,000
Medical staff			
Consultants (wte)	3	4+2	1
Speciality doctors (wte)	10	8	9
FY2 equivalent	10	12	0

Answer to Question 639

Nursing

Hours	Staffing Levels
08:00- 20:00	X 8 SN including Charge Nurse. 1-2 HCA
20:00-08:00	X4 SN including Charge Nurse, 1 HCA. X 3 SN are supplied for A&E complement, backed up by night pool.

Doctors

Hours	Staffing Levels
Mon – Fri 09:00 - 21:00	3 Doctors
21:00 – 00:00	2 Doctors
00:00 – 08:00	1 Doctor
Sat/ Sun 11:00 – 00:00	2 Doctors
00:00 – 11:00	1 Doctor

Madam Speaker: I will allow you some time to consider the schedule, and we will move on to the next question in the meantime.

Q640-41/2023

**Patient transfers from St Bernard's Hospital to Spain –
Current protocol; contingency plans re no deal Brexit**

1790 **Clerk:** Question 640. The Hon. Mrs J Ladislaus.

Hon. Mrs J Ladislaus: Madam Speaker, what is the current protocol for transporting a patient under the care of St Bernard's Hospital to a hospital in Spain?

1795 **Clerk:** Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Health, Care and Business.

Minister for Health, Care and Business (Hon. G Arias-Vasquez): Madam Speaker, I will answer this question together with Question 641.

1800 **Clerk:** Question 641. The Hon. Mrs J Ladislaus.

Hon. Mrs J Ladislaus: Madam Speaker, what contingency plans are in place in respect of the transfer of patients from St Bernard's Hospital to hospitals in Spain in the event of a no deal Brexit?

1805 **Clerk:** Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Health, Care and Business.

Hon. G Arias-Vasquez: Madam Speaker, as the hon. Member may appreciate, these arrangements are actively being considered as part of the treaty negotiations. I would be more than happy to appraise the hon. Member in private of the present arrangements.

1810 In the case of a no deal Brexit, the current working practices would continue.

Hon. Mrs J Ladislaus: Could the hon. Member just clarify what the current working practices are?

1815 **Hon. G Arias-Vasquez:** Madam Speaker, I am happy to brief the hon. Member in private on these arrangements.

Madam Speaker: Next question.

Q642/2023

**Gibraltar Electricity Authority –
Total number of vehicles owned and number operational**

1820 **Clerk:** Question 642. The Hon. C Sacarello.

Hon. C Sacarello: Madam Speaker, would the hon. Member please confirm the total number of vehicles owned or used by the GEA as part of its fleet, and the total number actually operational or in a serviceable condition.

1825 **Clerk:** Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Health, Care and Business.

Minister for Health, Care and Business (Hon. G Arias-Vasquez): Madam Speaker, the GEA fleet is comprised of 58 vehicles, of which three are currently under repair.

1830 **Hon. C Sacarello:** Madam Speaker, over a month ago, we were informed that in a particular department only nine out of 11 vehicles were deemed to be serviceable and roadworthy and that these vehicles were sometimes leftovers given to them from other departments, not really fit for purpose. Does the Government intend to properly invest in the GEA, including its fleet, or will it continue to leave it to muddle on?

1835 **Hon. G Arias-Vasquez:** Madam Speaker, we have, we do and we will.

Q638-39/2023

**St Bernard's Hospital A&E department –
Supplementary questions**

Madam Speaker: Is the Hon. Mrs J Ladislaus in a position to ask any supplementaries she may wish to, in relation to Questions 638 and 639?

1840 **Hon. Mrs J Ladislaus:** Madam Speaker, could the Hon. Minister clarify whether the numbers provided account for sickness leave within the A&E contingent of staff?

Hon. G Arias-Vasquez: Madam Speaker, I believe that those are the numbers present at A&E, on the ward, at the time.

1845 **Hon. Mrs J Ladislaus:** Madam Speaker, can the Hon. Minister state whether she believes that these levels are satisfactory or whether there is any truth in stating that the A&E department is currently understaffed?

1850 **Hon. G Arias-Vasquez:** Madam Speaker, I am advised by the clinicians that these numbers are satisfactory.

Madam Speaker: Next question.

Q643/2023

Unallocated

Q644/2023

**Gibraltar Electricity Authority –
Number of vacant posts**

Clerk: Question 644. The Hon. C Sacarello.

1855 **Hon. C Sacarello:** Would the hon. Member please confirm the number of unfilled job vacancies within the GEA by section?

Clerk: Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Health, Care and Business.

1860 **Hon. G Arias-Vasquez:** Madam Speaker, there are currently: one vacancy in Finance and Administration, two vacancies in the Consumer Services section, seven in the Electrical Business Services section, four in the Electrical Network section, one in the Electrotechnical section, one vacancy in the Generation (Day) section, seven vacancies in the Generation (Shift) section and seven in the Technomedical section.

1865 **Hon. C Sacarello:** Thank you for the answer.
Madam Speaker, would the hon. Member be able to inform us when these vacancies are expected to be filled, as some have been outstanding for a while?

1870 **Hon. G Arias-Vasquez:** Madam Speaker, these numbers I have just provided are inclusive of the 12 jobs advertised and the interviews that are currently being held, so there is, currently, a process to fulfil 12 of those vacancies.

Madam Speaker: Next question.

Q645/2023

Gibraltar Electricity Authority grid capacity – Ability to cope with EV charging points

1875 **Clerk:** Question 645. The Hon. C Sacarello.

Hon. C Sacarello: What is the GEA's capacity within the grid to cope with the total load demand if every estate were to offer EV charge points?

1880 **Clerk:** Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Health, Care and Business.

Minister for Health, Care and Business (Hon. G Arias-Vasquez): Madam Speaker, like most utilities in Europe, the GEA will not be immune to the demand that is fast approaching with the advent of the take-up of electric vehicles by the population in general.

1885 The GEA has sufficient power capacity to supply electrical vehicle charge points in estates. Some estates are better prepared to absorb the demand than others. However, like other utilities, the GEA is recommending that intelligent systems are deployed to manage EV charging points in order that the capacity available at different locations is shared among vehicles on charge. This would ensure an optimum and efficient uptake of electricity when charging EVs.

1890 **Hon. C Sacarello:** Madam Speaker, I was hoping to glean the actual power output requirement, but obviously it is not forthcoming. In the light of that, perhaps I will specify the question a little bit more carefully next time.

1895 We have heard from some estates that they are applying and encountering difficulties – insofar as they have been rejected – with the idea of installing them because there is not the power in the grid, or there is not enough power to supply them all, and there are delays in this. In light of our commitment to a more sustainable future, does the Government know when this will be available for all estates, private estates included, should they wish to proceed this way?

1900 **Hon. G Arias-Vasquez:** Madam Speaker, there are estates where it will be easier to deploy EV charging points than in others, namely the ones that have allocated parking spaces for their tenants. For the remaining estates, i.e. those that do not have allocated parking spaces within a building, the power capacity is still available, albeit infrastructure works will be necessary to

ensure that allocated or zoned parking spaces have access to a corresponding charging point. I do not have information available as to when that will be done.

1905

Madam Speaker: Next question.

Q646/2023

**Gibraltar Electricity Authority –
Number of subcontracted companies engaged**

Clerk: Question 646. The Hon. C Sacarello.

1910

Hon. C Sacarello: Would the hon. Member please confirm the number of subcontracted companies the GEA has engaged with in the last financial year, and also in the financial year 2017-18?

Clerk: Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Health, Care and Business.

1915

Minister for Health, Care and Business (Hon. G Arias-Vasquez): Madam Speaker, in the last financial year, the number of subcontracted companies engaged by the GEA was 12. In the financial year 2017-18, the number of subcontracted companies engaged by the GEA was five.

1920

Hon. C Sacarello: Madam Speaker, I would like to ask the hon. Member if this would actually be a case of being an exercise in cost reduction; and, if so, what are the savings to the taxpayer with this move towards subcontractation?

Hon. G Arias-Vasquez: Madam Speaker, I do not have that information available, but I can provide it.

1925

Hon. C Sacarello: Madam Speaker, I would like to ask the hon. Member if she is aware that repairs to works originally carried out by private companies are being conducted by the GEA, whereas the responsibility ought to lie with the private entity, as in the case, by way of example, of street lighting, as this obviously offers an unnecessary added cost to the taxpayer.

1930

Hon. G Arias-Vasquez: Madam Speaker, I am not sure how that question arises from the previous question.

1935

Hon. C Sacarello: It is completely relevant. It is to do with the subcontractation of the services which the GEA are paying for and actually carrying out as part of the service themselves.

Madam Speaker: Yes, I am going to allow that supplementary.

1940

Hon. G Arias-Vasquez: Madam Speaker, I need notice of the question in order to confirm that that is, indeed, the case.

Hon. C Sacarello: Unrelated. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

1945

We have received reports from the GEA of a lack of investment in training – at least a notable difference from how it was in the past: no courses are being offered in certain areas; certificates of competence, worryingly, have expired; and staff are being asked to attend courses in their own time, due to high workloads and insufficient staffing levels. Is this part of a drive to decrease the dependency on government-employed workers in favour of subcontracting to the private sector?

1950 **Chief Minister (Hon. F R Picardo):** Madam Speaker, I am surprised the hon. Gentleman has said he has received reports from the GEA. The GEA reports to the Government, not to the Opposition.

Hon. C Sacarello: Okay, Madam Speaker, perhaps read 'people within the GEA, but not actual GEA officially'.

1955 **Hon. Chief Minister:** I see, Madam Speaker. Well, people within the GEA have signed the Official Secrets Act, so I am surprised that they are going to the Opposition.

1960 **Hon. Dr K Azopardi:** Can I just ask: do we have the entities that were subcontracted? The Minister mentioned five. Does she have who those were?

Hon. G Arias-Vasquez: Madam Speaker, I am happy to provide that information behind the Speaker's Chair.

1965 **Hon. Dr K Azopardi:** Can I understand why?

Hon. Chief Minister: Madam Speaker, because the practice of this House for generations has been that we do not share names of companies across the floor of the House. We give them in a schedule and usually behind the Speaker's Chair, but we do not give them across the floor of the House.

1970 **Hon. Dr K Azopardi:** Madam Speaker, I am not sure that that is actually the case. We have specifically asked for the names of subcontractors. If the Government wants to provide it in a schedule because it is extensive information, yes, there is a schedule, but when we are simply asking – when they have mentioned it as being two or three, or, in this case, five – 'Well, who is it?' the information is provided.

1975 **Hon. Chief Minister:** Madam Speaker, if the hon. Gentleman gives notice of the question, he can have it in a schedule, but we cannot give it to him in a schedule now, because we have not got it in a schedule now.

1980 **Hon. Dr K Azopardi:** If I may, the question is does he have the information with him today, and if he has the information today, will he provide it to us today?

1985 **Hon. Chief Minister:** Madam Speaker, we have the information we have indicated on the basis of which we will give it today.

Hon. Dr K Azopardi: So to clarify, he has the information but he is not prepared to say so orally; he will provide it, but not orally, in answer to my question?

1990 **Hon. Chief Minister:** Madam Speaker, we were not asked for this information in the first answer; we have been asked for this information in supplementaries. We have not considered whether it is appropriate to give all of this information across the floor of the House. We are ready to give it to the hon. Member behind the Speaker's Chair, and if he asks a question next time, he can then have it across the floor of the House, if he wishes.

1995 **Madam Speaker:** All right, next question.

Q647/2023

**Northumbrian Water –
Cost of share purchase and funding method**

Clerk: Question 647. The Hon. C Sacarello.

2000 **Hon. C Sacarello:** How much will the purchase of the Northumbrian Water shares cost, and how will it be funded?

Clerk: Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Health, Care and Business.

2005 **Minister for Health, Care and Business (Hon. G Arias-Vasquez):** Madam Speaker, HM Government of Gibraltar is continuing its negotiations with Northumbrian Water to finalise the purchase of their AquaGib shares. For this reason, HMGoG has yet to determine how the purchase will be structured and funded. This will be determined once all pending issues are cleared and a final figure is determined and agreed. In this regard, HMGoG is keeping all of its options open.

2010

Hon. Dr K Azopardi: Can the Minister perhaps give us a bit more information as to the likely timeframe for those negotiations? Does she envisage some kind of conclusion within the next few months or so?

2015

Chief Minister (Hon. F R Picardo): Madam Speaker, I gave an answer to this question before the General Election, in this House, and I said that setting a timeline would only enable those who are negotiating on the other side of this transaction to hold us to something which would give them a negotiating advantage. For that reason, we did not give a timeline before the General Election. We will not change our position on giving a timeline, because all it does is put pressure on the people of Gibraltar to do a worse deal. It makes no sense to negotiate in that way, whether it is this or a treaty.

2020

Madam Speaker: Next question.

Q648/2023

**New development plan –
Publication date**

Clerk: Question 648. The Hon. D J Bossino.

2025

Hon. D J Bossino: Please provide an update as to when the new development plan will be published.

Clerk: Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Health, Care and Business.

2030

Minister for Health, Care and Business (Hon. G Arias-Vasquez): Madam Speaker, the Government has been out to tender and has received responses from tenderers for the preparation of a new development plan. Procurement is currently in the process of organising a presentation board for tenderers, with a view to awarding the tender early next year for the preparation of a new development plan. It is anticipated that it would likely take between 18 and 24 months from the start of the work to the stage where a finally adopted plan could be published.

2035

Hon. D J Bossino: Madam Speaker, this is a matter in respect of which I have been asking a variety of different individuals who have held the hon. Member's current portfolio over the years. I wish not to bore the House with the rather colourful chronology in relation to the delivery of this particular area of government activity, but certainly, as it stands now, we are already four years late, as I am sure the hon. Member will fully appreciate and be aware of.

Is she able to tell this House how many tenderers are currently being considered? And can I ask her to confirm that we are talking about a period of between 18 and 24 months starting from January 2024? I really want, during the course of this House, to pin her down on this, because we need this delivered as soon as possible.

Chief Minister (Hon. F R Picardo): Madam Speaker, I am very surprised that the hon. Gentleman is being really quite so open about what he is trying to do. The Government will be equally open about its view. We believe this is important, but we will not be pinned down by the Opposition on *any* issue.

Hon. D J Bossino: Madam Speaker, I will continue to ask Members opposite, and I will continue to pin them down on timings as I wish.

The hon. Minister has not answered the question. There was a very specific question which I posed, which was the number of tenderers which are being considered by the Government. I also asked her to confirm that we are talking about a time period of between 18 and 24 months from January 2024.

Hon. G Arias-Vasquez: Madam Speaker, unfortunately, I do not have the number of tenderers available with me today. In relation to the timing, I refer to the answer that the Hon. Chief Minister gave a moment ago.

Hon. D J Bossino: Madam Speaker, let's try to make some progress, shall we? Can she at least provide an indication as to whether the tenderers, whatever number they may be, are local tenderers or are from outside, or a mix of both?

Hon. G Arias-Vasquez: Madam Speaker, I do not have that information and neither should I have it. It is being done by an independent board and I do not have that information available.

Hon. D J Bossino: Madam Speaker, if I may press her on that, is it that she is not willing to provide that information if I ask a question again, or simply that she does not have it currently available?

Hon. G Arias-Vasquez: Madam Speaker, as I have said, I do not have the information today. If you ask me the question, I will provide you with the information that you have requested.

Madam Speaker: Last intervention.

Hon. D J Bossino: Madam Speaker, can she make any comment, please, in relation to the last answer I had on this subject, which was on 15th March and provided by Miss Sacramento? I will not quote the whole reply, but she was telling her Department and those who were looking into it:

we need to go full speed ahead because we are in the final stages of what we are doing,

She finalised the answer by saying:

I am assured that we are almost there.

2085 This was in March 2023. Can she make a comment in relation to that? It seems that this particular issue is going to be the subject of much further delay.

Hon. G Arias-Vasquez: Madam Speaker, my only comment is that it was obviously accurate because we are already at the tender stage.

2090

Madam Speaker: All right. Next question.

Q649/2023

**Development and Planning Commission –
Expected completion date of review**

Clerk: Question 649. The Hon. D J Bossino.

2095 **Hon. D J Bossino:** When will the review of the workings of the Development and Planning Commission be expected to be completed?

Clerk: Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Health, Care and Business.

2100 **Minister for Health, Care and Business (Hon. G Arias-Vasquez):** Madam Speaker, the review of the workings of the Development and Planning Commission is a commitment outlined in the manifesto for the current government term and has not commenced yet.

2105 **Hon. D J Bossino:** Another review, Madam Speaker – something that, as I have said before, they criticised us for having mentioned on so many occasions, according to them, in our manifesto. Well, they seem to have quite a few of those –

Madam Speaker: Is there a question coming?

2110 **Hon. D J Bossino:** Madam Speaker, I am allowed, I think, to introduce my question with a slight comment.

Madam Speaker: Switch on your microphone, or we cannot hear you.

2115 **Hon. D J Bossino:** Sorry. I was going to say, Madam Speaker, I think I am allowed to introduce my question with a very small preamble. It was not going to be long.

2120 **Madam Speaker:** We can get into a discussion on that, but my view is that the preamble has to be connected to the question that is coming, so that the question can be made sense of with the preamble. I was not sure you were going there, but there we go.

Hon. D J Bossino: Madam Speaker, it was very much, I accept, a politically charged question, given that we have just contested a General Election and that was very much the subject matter of the contest between the various political parties.

2125 The Hon. Minister talks about the review not having commenced. Can she give us an idea as to when it is likely to commence, and can she also provide the House with a further indication of which areas she is minded to review?

2130 **Chief Minister (Hon. F R Picardo):** I refer the hon. Gentleman to the answer I gave about the commencement of projects in the GSLP Liberal manifesto which do not contain a specific timeline. I did not think of putting this one also in that answer, but the answer applies.

2135 **Hon. D J Bossino:** Madam Speaker, as unhelpful as always, I am afraid.
Can I press the Minister on the second limb of the question I posed, which is which areas she is thinking of reviewing in respect of the workings of the DPC?

Madam Speaker: Press the Minister, but I would urge you, in the future, not to comment on conduct with such words as 'unhelpful'. I suspect you are going to get an answer. It is in the process of materialising, I think.

2140 **Hon. Chief Minister:** Madam Speaker, one of the characteristics of Opposition Members is that, having no policies of their own, having no vision of their own, they are reduced to being timekeepers of the time that it takes to deliver the government projects, often projects which, if they were in office, would not be built or entered into at all. What is the logic of keeping time on our execution of them, I wonder, Madam Speaker?

2145 **Hon. D J Bossino:** Madam Speaker, we have moved on, and the Hon. the Chief Minister has missed the point. I am asking the Minister to answer the second limb of the question. The first limb had to do with timings, and the hon. Member has responded. What I am asking of the Hon. the Minister who has responsibility for this area of government policy is if she can please tell me what areas she is considering reviewing in terms of the workings of the DPC. The Hon. Chief Minister has got it wrong.

2155 **Hon. Chief Minister:** Madam Speaker, with respect to the hon. Gentleman, he started his supplementary by saying that we had been unhelpful because of the answer we had given, so I thought I should read him exactly what the person that he stood for election with in 2011 had said to us in 2008 about the type of question that they are now asking. The difference is that we accepted it and we said, 'Well, fair enough, we won't be timekeepers for those projects.' Everything which I have been told is unhelpful, the things that I am told miss the mark, are the things that we were told by the GSD. This is a direct quote from *Hansard* of what Sir Peter Caruana, then leader of the GSD, said to us when we used to ask them, 'What is this project going to be about and when are you going to start it?'

2160 I wonder whether the hon. Gentleman would like to reconsider whether he thinks that the Government is being unhelpful in taking the same attitude that he used to say to us was a golden legacy to Gibraltar, the legacy of what the GSD had done in office. I accept that he then moved on to another limb, which the hon. Member might want to take now if he wants to repeat that supplementary, but he started by saying that what I said was unhelpful. What I said was much less politically charged than what we used to be told by them when they were in office, and in much tamer terms.

2170 **Madam Speaker:** Can we move on to the specific supplementary you asked? Would you care to repeat it, perhaps, so that we have it fresh in our minds?

2175 **Hon. D J Bossino:** Of course. I am grateful to oblige, Madam Speaker.
The hon. Member continues to impart his barbed political comments and nothing will change the character of the man. As I have told the hon. Member, we have moved on from the issue of timings. I am willing to make a value judgement on the way he has chosen to answer it. I still say, and I am entitled to say, that it is totally and utterly unhelpful – and this is a 'New Dawn' Government, although it is wearing thin now after 12 years in office.

2180 The specific question, Madam Speaker, is simply the question of the review. The second limb of the question, so that we can see whether this review is real: what areas are they now willing to consider – because they have done so many wonderful things in relation to the workings of the DPC, according to them – reviewing to make the workings of the DPC more effective, more efficient, even more open?

2185 **Hon. Chief Minister:** Madam Speaker, I think you invited the hon. Gentleman to ask the question so it was fresh in our minds. Instead, the hon. Gentleman just embarked on a preamble which was politically barbed, calling me some sort of animal that made politically barbed statements. Well, I suppose that the animal that he is calling me is Caruana-esque, because what I did was read him what the man they say was the greatest Gibraltarian of all time said to me when
2190 I was sitting over there. He can make whatever value judgement he likes, that is the reality, but the people of Gibraltar have made a final judgement in respect of the 2021 –

Hon. D J Bossino: Madam Speaker, I wish to make a point of order, and that point of order –
(*Interjection*) No, I have asked a question on three –

2195

Madam Speaker: Just a minute. Yes.

Hon. D J Bossino: I am grateful. I have asked a question now on three separate occasions in respect of the second limb of my supplementary question. The hon. Members – not just the Hon.
2200 Chief Minister, the entirety of the Government – are there to answer questions. We are here to elicit information from them. Can whoever please answer the question in respect of the review of the DPC?

Madam Speaker: All right. The hon. Member has raised a point of order.

2205

Hon. Chief Minister: Madam Speaker, will you hear me on the point of order as well, please?

Madam Speaker: Yes.

2210 **Hon. Chief Minister:** The hon. Member has got up and delivered a statement, a small part of which was, finally, the question. That statement was fully charged, politically. He cannot expect, and neither do the rules say, that the Government has to sit here, listen to a party political soliloquy on behalf of Members opposite and then just limit ourselves to answering the question. Hon. Members can make whatever statements they wish and are permitted by the Chair to make
2215 in respect of the preambular part of their questions, and the Government can decide how it answers.

If the hon. Member had just asked the question, he would have got the answer. Because he delivered a party political statement, he is going to continue to get the answer which delivers the answer to what he said. (*Interjection by Hon. D J Bossino*)

2220

Madam Speaker: Hon. D J Bossino, please could you not comment from a sedentary position?

The position, as I see it, is very simple. I agree that there is a question to be answered and I will, in a moment, ask the Minister to answer the question, but what I was going to say before the Hon. the Chief Minister rose was that the purpose of preambles in a question is to make the
2225 question better understood. It is not to make a statement – a political statement; we are in a political forum. If the hon. Member makes a political statement and the Chair gives him some leeway to do that, he must expect some political statement in return from the other side of the House, and that then cannot be the subject of complaint.

Perhaps it is my fault for not restricting the preamble better to the nexus of the question, and
2230 I shall attempt to do that as we go forward, but if political preambles are made, then they are

going to be answered, and then Question Times are going to become somewhat of a debate, which the rules specifically prohibit.

I am going to resolve this by inviting the hon. Member only to ask the question, and then I will invite the Minister to answer it, if she so wishes.

2235

Hon. D J Bossino: Madam Speaker, will the Hon. the Minister please tell this House what she is considering by way of review of the workings of the Development and Planning Commission?

2240

Hon. G Arias-Vasquez: Madam Speaker, we have not commenced the ambit of the review, so I am unable to answer that question.

Madam Speaker: Next question.

Q650/2023
Mount Alvernia –
New process re residents' wishes to move to Rooke facility

Clerk: Question 650. The Hon. the Leader of the Opposition.

2245

Hon. Dr K Azopardi: Madam Speaker, will the Government or ERS be organising a new process by which residents of Mount Alvernia are asked to express their views as to whether they would like to stay at Mount Alvernia or move to the new Rooke residential home?

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Clerk: Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Health, Care and Business.

Minister for Health, Care and Business (Hon. G Arias-Vasquez): Madam Speaker, as the hon. Member may be aware, during the election campaign a letter was disseminated reflecting our assurance to Mount Alvernia residents and staff. Within this letter, a commitment was given that no resident would be required to move to the Rooke facility.

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Hon. Dr K Azopardi: Well, with all due respect to the Hon. Minister, I am not sure that that answers the question. I appreciate that there may have been an assurance given that no resident would be required to move. That assurance has been given by the person sitting to her left on a number of occasions. I was not asking that. The question does not ask whether there is going to be an assurance that they are not required to leave. The question asks will there be a new process by which residents are asked to express their views.

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For context, last year – I think it was last year; the weeks and months go by and I am not even sure if it was last year, but last year, I think – there was a process run by ERS, we subsequently discovered, by which residents were asked to express a view, and only five residents expressed the view that they wished to move. I am now asking, months on – maybe a year on or maybe six months on – whether there is going to be a new process run by ERS or the Government.

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Hon. G Arias-Vasquez: Madam Speaker, we do not envisage such a process.

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Hon. Dr K Azopardi: If the Hon. Minister does not envisage the process and they are not going to require anyone to leave, how are they going to find out who wants to go there?

Chief Minister (Hon. F R Picardo): Madam Speaker, I hesitate to rise again but we are being asked questions by the Leader of the Opposition, not by the shadow, in respect of these matters,

2275 so I think it is entirely appropriate that I should get up, given that I was also here in the last Parliament and the hon. Member was not.

We do not understand what logical position the hon. Gentleman is trying to put. The process that he is trying to suggest we engage in is one where we go back to what is alleged happened sometime during the course of last year and people are asked whether they think they might want to move, and if we do not do that, then we will not know who will want to move to Rooke. But of course, Rooke is not going to be a government facility, as we have already indicated. People will be asked if they want to move to Rooke in certain circumstances, and it does not require the sort of questionnaire that the hon. Gentleman is suggesting we need.

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2285 This only seems to be failing at the hurdle of logic in the hon. Gentleman's view. It is not failing in our logical view of how we will ensure that no one goes to Rooke who does not want to go to Rooke who is currently at Mount Alvernia.

Hon. Dr K Azopardi: I am afraid to say that I think the failure of logic is in the inconsistent answers we have received, because on the one hand the Hon. Minister says they are not going to run a process, but the Hon. Chief Minister has just got up to say they are going to be asked. That is what the Hon. Chief Minister just said a few seconds ago.

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2295 So let me just try to get clarity. I am not asking them to run the process again; I am asking them whether they are going to do it. It is not a process that was *allegedly* carried out: it *was* carried out, because it was a subject of questions in this House and we were told that five residents had expressed a desire to go, but nobody else had.

2300 There is no illogical leap. My question is: if you are not running the process, which is what the Hon. Minister said, then how do you know whether people want to go there? The Hon. Chief Minister, I think, has now clarified – so I give him the opportunity to do so again – that they are going to ask them. The form of the asking is not something that I have a view on. What I am asking is whether they are going to be asked.

Hon. Chief Minister: But that is not the running of a process, Madam Speaker. It is completely different. If the Government makes the decision, once the facility is open and run by a private sector provider, that some people fitting some characteristics at Mount Alvernia should be offered the opportunity to move, if they want, that is completely different to running a process where you questionnaire everyone at Mount Alvernia. That is what we think is different in the way that they see it to the way that we see it. I hope that makes it sufficiently clear to him, so that his concerns are assuaged.

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2320 **Hon. Dr K Azopardi:** Now that we understand that it appears that the residents will be consulted, in some shape or form asked – (**Hon. Chief Minister:** No.) He is saying no from a sedentary position. I am not trying to put words in his mouth. I am not saying that they are going to put a questionnaire in front of people, but clearly the answers he has given suggest that there is going to be some kind of discussion – let me put it no higher than that – so that they understand whether someone might want to go there. He is shaking his head. He will get up to answer the question and clarify the position, but I was going to ask him – so I will give him the opportunity to do that when he does get up – whether there was a timescale in relation to that, because when we found out about the process that was last followed, which was some months ago, the residential home was in the process of construction. Clearly, many months have now gone by and it will be close to completion, I guess, so it would be sensible, I imagine, that if people are going to have a discussion on it, it would happen relatively soon, would it?

Hon. Chief Minister: Madam Speaker, the whole issue between us is that I think the hon. Gentleman is still postulating this as a process that he seems to think – whether he calls it a process or a consultation – happens in respect of all of Mount Alvernia, but that is not the position that we are looking at, at all. There will be some people who potentially might fit the characteristics of

2330 those who might want to go to Rooke, and those people might be asked if they want to go to
Rooke if the circumstances are right. There is a lot still to happen in respect of whether or not that
occurs, but it is not a process in Mount Alvernia affecting everybody who is resident in Mount
Alvernia who is given the choice to go or not to go. We do not envisage that, and I hope I have
made it sufficiently clear to him and that he understands what it is that might happen, which is
2335 that a number of people who are in Mount Alvernia might fit the characteristics of those who
might be more comfortable at Rooke, and they will not be *required* to go to Rooke, they will be
offered the opportunity to go to Rooke, which is not to run a process or a questionnaire. That is
the first thing.

The second thing is the question of the timeline. Again, I do not think it is appropriate to give
a timeline, first of all because the Rooke facility is not yet completed and because we do not want
to put the Government in the position that it would be in if we give a timeframe. Then we would
be embarrassed if we did not meet it and we might have to negotiate against that timeline, so we
2340 do not want to give the timeline at this stage. It is not sufficiently clear yet to be able to say a date
by when this is likely to happen.

Hon. Dr K Azopardi: Just a final question, if I may. I understand that they will be asking certain
individuals who may fulfil certain characteristics. I assume that that will be based on some kind of
2345 guidance from ERS staff in relation to whether they are independent or not. Is that the kind of
guidance and protocol that will be devised? Can the Chief Minister confirm that that is something
that the ERS staff will run, in terms of the assessment of those individuals?

Hon. Chief Minister: Madam Speaker, the way that we see it is that it will be a choice that will
2350 be given to some people who fit a certain set of characteristics, and those characteristics will be
determined not just by ERS staff but also by the GHA. ERS staff are employees of the GHA, but
there will also be GHA equities in respect of who should or should not go to Rooke. When you put
all that package together, some people will be given the choice of whether or not they are able to
go to Rooke, or wish to go to Rooke.

2355 **Madam Speaker:** Next question.

Hon. Chief Minister: Madam Speaker, is this a convenient moment to offer to recess for
15 minutes before we move on?

2360 **Madam Speaker:** As far as I am concerned, it is very convenient, yes. Thank you.
The House will now recess until 10 past six.

The House recessed at 5.55 p.m. and resumed at 6.17 p.m.

INWARD INVESTMENT AND THE SAVINGS BANK

Q651/2023
Public debt –
Figures for 2023

Q652/2023
General Sinking Fund –
Balance

Q653/2023
Gibraltar Community Initiatives Ltd –
Companies owned or controlled

Q654/2023
Gibraltar Savings Bank Economic Development Registered Debentures –
Amount of money raised

Q655/2023
National Economic Plan –
Projects sponsored and money spent

Q656/2023
Eastern Beach –
Purchaser of land, price and terms

Clerk: Questions to the Hon. the Minister for Inward Investment and the Savings Bank.
Question 651. The Hon. R M Clinton.

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Hon. R M Clinton: Madam Speaker, can the Government please provide the total gross debt, aggregate debt after application of the Sinking Fund to gross debt, cash reserves and net debt figures for public debt for the following dates: 1st May 2023, 1st June 2023, 1st July 2023, 1st August 2023, 1st September 2023 and 1st October 2023?

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Clerk: Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Inward Investment and the Savings Bank.

Minister for Inward Investment and the Savings Bank (Hon. Sir J J Bossano): Madam Speaker, I shall answer this question together with Questions 652 to 656.

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Clerk: Question 652. The Hon. R M Clinton.

Hon. R M Clinton: Madam Speaker, can the Government advise the balance on the General Sinking Fund on the following dates: 1st May 2023, 1st June 2023, 1st July 2023, 1st August 2023, 1st September 2023 and 1st October 2023?

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Clerk: Question 653. The Hon. R M Clinton.

Hon. R M Clinton: Can the Government please provide a list of companies that are owned or controlled by Gibraltar Community Initiatives Ltd as at 30th September 2023?

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Clerk: Question 654. The Hon. R M Clinton.

2390 **Hon. R M Clinton:** Can the Government advise the amount of money raised as at 30th September 2023 for each issue of the Gibraltar Savings Bank Economic Development Registered Debentures, namely one year 6%, three years 5.5% and five years 5%?

Clerk: Question 655. The Hon. R M Clinton.

2395 **Hon. R M Clinton:** Can the Government provide a list of projects sponsored under its National Economic Plan and the amount of money expended against each as at 30th March 2023 and 30th September 2023?

Clerk: Question 656. The Hon. R M Clinton.

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Hon. R M Clinton: To whom has the Government sold the Eastern Beach land upon which the beach sheds are being built, and for what price and on what terms?

Clerk: Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Inward Investment and the Savings Bank.

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Hon. Sir J J Bossano: Madam Speaker, the General Sinking Fund gross debt and aggregate debt from May to October were all at the same level in April 2023.

2410 The cash reserves and the net debt figures were as follows: May, £123.4 million and £71.7million; June, £114.1 million and £731 million; July, £96.8 million and £748.3 million; August, £68.3 million and £776.8 million; September, £66.6 million and £778.8 million; October, £62.3 million and £782.8 million.

In respect of the Gibraltar Community Initiatives question, I have passed the hon. Member's request to the company to deal with.

2415 The amount of money invested as at 30th September 2023 in the Gibraltar Savings Bank Economic Development Registered Debentures was: one year, 6%, £9,000,900; three years, 5.5%, £1,011,000; five years, 5%, £1,257,300.

2420 The list of projects sponsored under the National Economic Plan as at 31st March 2023 was as follows: Etioca Holding (Gibraltar) Ltd, Rooke Residential Home, Victoria Stadium redevelopment, Elderly Home Ownership Scheme, Eastern Beach sheds, and shooting range. The list of projects sponsored under the National Economic Plan as at 30th September 2023 was as follows: Etioca Holding (Gibraltar) Ltd, Rooke Residential Home, Elderly Home Ownership Scheme, Eastern Beach sheds, and Jewish Home extension. No funding or government expenditure was incurred in any these.

The land at Eastern Beach has not yet been sold.

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Hon. R M Clinton: Madam Speaker, if I may ask for an indulgence: Joe tends to lump all his answers together, and I need to unpack them according to the questions I have asked. They are quite diverse and quite detailed from a financial point of view. I will try my best to expedite matters, but I would beg your indulgence.

2430 If I may direct the Minister to his answer to my Question 651 in relation to the debt levels, I see, from what the Minister has said, that the aggregate gross debt ... I take it, from the numbers he has given us, that there has been no new borrowing. If he could just confirm that question, please.

2435 **Hon. Sir J J Bossano:** Correct.

2440 **Hon. R M Clinton:** I am thankful to the Minister for that simple answer. I noticed that the cash reserve numbers, certainly as at October, are at £62 million, and obviously since April, at £123 million, it has come down by half. Does the Minister have any concern about the trend of these cash reserves?

Hon. Sir J J Bossano: I think he will find, Madam Speaker, that if he looks at the answer to this same question in previous years, the trend has been the same. It tends to go down in the first six months of the year, and then it tends to come up as we get closer to the close of the financial year. It happens every year.

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Hon. R M Clinton: Madam Speaker, I have all the numbers here, going back more than 50 months, and the trend is not that clear. When it goes up, it is because there has been new borrowing, and, as the Minister has confirmed, there has not been any new borrowing.

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If I can move on to his answer to Question 653, I think he said he had asked the company, but doesn't the Minister accept that, if this is the entity or group of entities that are driving his National Economic Plan, he should know what entities are involved? He is effectively the mastermind of the National Economic Plan, unless he wants to deny it, in which case, is he telling the House that he has no knowledge whatsoever as to who are the entities involved in the National Economic Plan? There is at least one new entity, which was even mentioned in his own manifesto. Is he unable to come to the House with any answer as to who the entities are that are delivering his National Economic Plan?

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Hon. Sir J J Bossano: I have been the mastermind of the National Economic Plan for the last 52 years, because nobody else produces one. However, Madam Speaker, the fact is that he did not ask me that question; he asked me about the subsidiaries that the entity has. I do not need to know the subsidiaries in order to sponsor a project. Whether the project is in one subsidiary or another subsidiary, or in the holding company, it does not affect the sponsorship. We are not sponsoring the entity that is delivering the project. They can deliver projects which we might not think meet the criteria in the National Economic Plan, and then it would not get sponsored. Etioca is being sponsored and it has nothing to do with Community Initiatives. Had the original sponsorship of the stadium continued, for which, as I mentioned at the time, we were willing to provide the sponsorship and, in that case, provide funding, which was not required because other people came forward ... As I said at the time, we would be happy, if somebody else was willing to take on the responsibility of seeing that the resources to deliver it were there ... we would simply be glad to pull out and get on with other things. So the answer is that he is asking for information which I do not think I have to provide because it is not a government-owned entity, but they may be quite happy to give it to him directly, or they may be quite happy that it should be made public, but it is a matter for the entity that has the subsidiaries, not a matter for me, to take that decision.

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The fact that there are projects that may be being delivered by one subsidiary or another subsidiary is not relevant. That is to say it would not make any difference to the support that we give, which is help in making it happen, help in taking it to the planning stage and help in trying to smooth any problems they have with technical support, but not with money. Therefore, it is the project that matters, because it is a project that has to be identified as meeting something that is required in Gibraltar, like one of the projects that I mentioned, which is the Elderly Persons' Home Ownership Scheme. That was something that we identified was needed because, by the criteria that they used in government and we continue to use, people who are homeowners are not entitled to put their name down on a waiting list for government housing. The people who became homeowners with the original 1988 scheme of the GSLP are now pensioners, sometimes living in apartments that are bigger than they need, and they cannot go into a rented government pensioner flat. I was approached by a number of people in that category who asked couldn't something be done that would enable people to sell a bigger home and buy a smaller flat, and therefore release some of the equity they have, because their family has now shrunk and the children and grandchildren now have their own family homes. I thought it was something that was needed, I thought it was something that was worth supporting, but it was not something for which the Government would take on the responsibility of borrowing money. However, it is attractive from an investor's point of view, because the people who will buy these flats do not have to get a mortgage, so they are able to sell something for a higher price. Therefore, the not-for-profit entity

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2495 that is doing this came up with this scheme where they guarantee that the property will be sold
very near cost price, which means below the open market price, but there will be a restriction, so
that anybody who buys one of these pensioner co-ownership apartments will not be permitted to
resell it into the private sector and make a capital gain. They will have to sell it back. That will
mean that we will be creating pensioner homeowner apartments where the number of
apartments in that category will always be increasing because as pensioners maybe finish up going
to Mount Alvernia or somewhere else, they can only release it back for the benefit of another
2500 pensioner. It is important because our demographic, like everybody else's, is that we have an
increasing ageing population and an increasing number of homeowners. If there is one category
of home ownership that we can guarantee will never go down and only go up, it is this one, and
therefore we have given the support, but not the money, as the Government, and the Department
is supporting that entity. There is a specific company for that. I do not know how many other
2505 companies there are because there is no reason why I should know, but if the hon. Member is
interested, I have already communicated his interest to the company and I am sure that if they
have no problem with it being public or with giving it to him confidentially, they will reply to him.

Hon. R M Clinton: Madam Speaker, I am always grateful to the Hon. Minister for his
2510 explanations, but if I may ask him this: how does this group of companies under a charity,
independently of himself, come up with the identical plan that he has just laid out to us in this
House, of its own volition? How do these ideas get communicated to this charity if it is not a
government project? It is in his manifesto, and, in fact, the entity that will be doing it is listed in
his manifesto, so he knows about the name of at least this subsidiary.

2515 I find it hard to understand how this is the entity delivering his National Economic Plan, and it
seems to adopt his ideas, and yet he has no information to bring to this House about any of these
entities. If he could explain to the House: how does a group of companies come up with ideas
which are identical to his? Is he a shadow director of this group?

2520 **Hon. Sir J J Bossano:** I do not know why the hon. Member feels he has to finish up with a nasty
remark. I have given him a very detailed explanation, so I am not trying to keep any information
from him. I have told him the fact that I know that this company is doing this is because, whether
he realises it or not, I am the Minister for Economic Development. I am constantly talking to people
about developments and about bringing in money, and I suggest things to the people I talk to, if
2525 they do not suggest them to me. I work constantly with people in the private sector in doing this.

He asked me for a structure of all the subsidiaries. That was his original question. I have given
an answer to that original question to get him the information, and I have gone further than his
original question to explain to him how this is operating. If that is not enough to satisfy him, that
is as much as he is going to get, Madam Speaker.

2530 **Madam Speaker:** Another question?

Hon. R M Clinton: Sorry, Madam Speaker, I have, obviously, a whole list of questions to get
through. I accept the Hon. Minister's answer that he gives us in this House, as he has done before.

2535 If I can move on to the next question, Question 654, where he has given an amount of
£9 million for the one-year Economic Development Register Debentures, £1 million for the three-
year and £1 million for the five-year: that comes to about £11 million in the round. Can I ask the
Minister how he is managing this money? Is he ring-fencing it, somehow, in the Savings Bank?
Given the stated objectives of these debentures, how is that money only being invested in that
2540 way?

Hon. Sir J J Bossano: The reason for creating this category is the fact that there are now
competing rates for similar lengths of loans in the market, which we in the Savings Bank can only
offer if we are able to reinvest that money at a profit. Clearly, if somebody is going to be getting

2545 6% for one year, we are not going to do what the GSD did, which was to reinvest money at a lower
rate and incur a loss, which is not the way we wish to be running the Gibraltar Savings Bank. We
want the Gibraltar Savings Bank, as he knows, to be running at a profit. Therefore, the funding
that we provide for entities that are delivering things that are commercial – for example, the
pensioner home – would be based on something that we know is a safe investment that will be
2550 able, if we are paying say 6%, to pay the Savings Bank 6.25% or 6.5%. This is the rationale of this
category of entity. It means that the people who might otherwise put their money in another bank
because the rate is higher than the traditional vehicles that we have, will be given an opportunity
to do this, but of course it can only be done if we have an outlet that will pay us more in the
Savings Bank than we are paying the depositor.

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Hon. R M Clinton: Madam Speaker, I am grateful to the Minister, but he will, of course, recall
that Community Supplies and Services is borrowing at 4%, so it is hardly going to provide the
return he just described.

2560 The Minister has explained the rationale for creating this class in order to compete, but he has
not answered the question in terms of how he is ring-fencing this money to meet his objectives.
Has he set up a sub-fund of sorts within the Savings Bank, in which this money can only be used
for specific projects?

2565 **Hon. Sir J J Bossano:** *[Inaudible]* ... ring-fencing it. The fact is that the money, at the moment,
that has come in has been deposited with the other £200 million we have in cash in Gibraltar. The
cash of the Savings Bank – as he knows, because I give him the figures – is about £500 million, so
this £9 million is a very small part of that £500 million. We would look to balancing the volume, so
that we are getting this kind of return to match the returns that we are paying on those deposits.
At the moment, it is a very small part – out of £1.5 billion, you have £9 million in these debentures
2570 – but it may grow, and to the extent that it grows, we will match it, but not by ring-fencing or
separating it; we will match it in terms of monitoring the two streams, the stream that comes in
and the stream that goes out.

2575 **Hon. R M Clinton:** I thank the Minister for that explanation. If I may just move on to the second-
to-last question, Question 655, he has given us a list of projects as at March and September. Can
he explain to us what happened to the shooting range? That seems to have dropped off. And then,
secondly, I did ask about any money expended against each, on which we have no information.

2580 **Hon. Sir J J Bossano:** It is not being sponsored anymore because it is complete. When a project
is complete, it does not require sponsoring, because it is no longer there. Anything that was in
March and is not in September is not in September because it is not ongoing, so it does not require
any support or help from the Ministry. The project is over, so it is not there anymore.

2585 **Hon. R M Clinton:** Yes, Madam Speaker, I understand that, but again, on the question of money
expended, we have not had an answer. May I just ask him: what sort of support did the shooting
range require? What sort of economic return is there to Gibraltar?

2590 **Hon. Sir J J Bossano:** Madam Speaker, the original question asked what money was expended,
and the answer was that there was no funding or government expenditure incurred in any of
them. If the shooting range borrows money from NatWest, we are helping the shooting range get
off the ground. We were helping it in the context where there was a project that originally was
being conducted by the Government, which did not happen but was planned as a government
project, initially. The materials were there. They had been there for three or four years, lying idle
without being used. It was originally being done by JBS three or four years ago, and, for a variety
2595 of reasons, it did not happen and it did not have a high priority for the Government in terms of
government funding from the I&D. We had some people who were interested in finishing the

project, and therefore we helped them by arranging for them to have the continuity of what had been done already, and therefore the project finished and is no longer sponsored by us.

2600 **Hon. R M Clinton:** Madam Speaker, I really must beg your indulgence. You might see this as slightly tangential, but is he saying that the ...? This is, again, following on from the previous Parliament, in which Sir Joe explained the funding structure from the Savings Bank all the way down to, for example, the Rooke nursing home through GSBA. So when he says there is no money expended, just for the sake of the House and the Members who were not here before, what he means is not expended by the Government, but it is money that has been channelled from the Savings Bank towards these projects. Sir Joe can correct me if I am wrong here. Is he saying that the shooting range was a beneficiary of the same scheme as Rooke, in that it effectively borrowed from GSBA to finish a government project, or what had started as a government project? Is that what he is saying?

2610 **Hon. Sir J J Bossano:** If they actually needed to borrow anything, because this was done with some people from the private sector actually wanting this to happen because they were direct beneficiaries of it in the sense that the parking areas and so on were connected to where their business was, and in fact they were going to be benefiting in terms of the facilities that their business would get by this thing being finished, and we, as the Government, were not in a position to finish what we started. In fact, I think one of the not-for-profit companies came in, but I am not sure whether they actually required any funding or not from the Savings Bank, or if the money was 100% from the private businesses in that area. I do not have that kind of detail, but the bulk was done by the business people, who could not get it done on their own without some co-operation from us, because it was half completed. In fact, I think it would have been a pity not to finish it because the materials, frankly, had cost quite a lot of money and were simply rotting because nobody was in a position to get it done. We managed to get some people together in the private sector and that group predominantly were the funders.

2625 **Hon. R M Clinton:** I will move on to my last supplementary question. If I can take the Minister on to Question 656, in terms of the land on which the Eastern Beach sheds are being built, he tells the House that they have not yet been sold, but as the Minister will be aware, certainly before the summer there was a company called EBS Ltd, which issued a statement saying it was owned by Community Initiatives Ltd, part of that group, and they were inviting expressions of interest for the sheds. May I ask the Minister on what basis they were able to do that, if the land had not yet been sold and the land was effectively still owned by the Government?

2635 **Hon. Sir J J Bossano:** The fact that the Government owns the land means precisely that the Government can give people permission without needing to sell them the land. I can give permission to somebody to develop a project on government land, even though I have not sold the land to them, if I am sponsoring the project because I am persuaded that it is a project worth sponsoring, because it is meeting a need for which there is a demand. At the moment, no sale has yet taken place of that land. It is still Crown land. That is the question and that is the answer.

2640 **Madam Speaker:** Next question.

Q657/2023
Eastern Beach promenade and storage facility project –
Cost

Clerk: Question 657. The Hon. D J Bossino.

Hon. D J Bossino: Please state what the cost of the Eastern Beach promenade and storage facility project is.

2645 **Clerk:** Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Inward Investment and the Savings Bank.

Minister for Inward Investment and the Savings Bank (Hon. Sir J J Bossano): Madam Speaker, there has been no cost to Government in respect of the beach, promenade and storage facilities.

2650 **Hon. D J Bossino:** Madam Speaker, we have been here before, but we live in hope. The question was not the costs specifically to the Government. The hon. Member sits here as the architect of the National Economic Plan. He, himself, in answer to questions that we have just heard from my hon. Friend Mr. Clinton, has said that the construction of the Eastern Beach sheds forms part of that National Economic Plan. He also has, as I understand it, ministerial responsibility
2655 in relation to the Savings Bank, which he wishes makes a profit. In that context, simply to make this political comment: that we find it difficult to understand this blurring of the lines between what is something governmental and ought to be here, before the House, and then he says that ...

I anticipate that part of the reply is going to be that he cannot answer questions in relation to the cost because it has nothing to do with him, but I am going to try to persuade him otherwise in
2660 formulating this question, perhaps, in a different way. Given the introduction, by way of preamble, that I have just given him for the question, can he reconsider and provide us with the answer as to the cost to date of that particular project?

Hon. Sir J J Bossano: *[Inaudible]*

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Hon. D J Bossino: Okay, Madam Speaker, can I ask the hon. Member for the rationalisation of that reply? It has come through as a negative, it is a no: can I ask him why that is the case.

Hon. Sir J J Bossano: Well, it is quite simple, Madam Speaker. I will answer any question that
2670 has to do with the spending of government money which has been voted by this House. If I have a product that I am sponsoring, in the way that I have already explained, without providing any money from the Government Estimates of Expenditure, which is the money that is approved by this House that the Government can spend, and the entity that is carrying out the project gets funding from the International Bank, TSN or NatWest – (**Hon. Chief Minister:** TNG.) TNG, sorry! –
2675 I do not think the Member opposite would be asking me for details. It is only because, if there is funding from the Savings Bank, he thinks that, in the case uniquely of the Savings Bank but which is not true of the Gibraltar International Bank, the Savings Bank has to say how much money it lends to a customer and how the customer has spent that money. I do not know of any bank on the planet that does this.

2680 The Gibraltar Savings Bank produces a detailed account of every penny of £1.5 billion, every month, which has never happened before in the history of this House – it used to happen once a year – and that is not enough information. They want to know what money is actually invested in a company that is carrying out a project, if it happens to be a company in Gibraltar. There are 20,
2685 30 or 40 companies which issue loans that the Saving Bank buys, but they are in the UK. So the ones in the UK can spend the money on whatever they want, and that is nothing to do with this Parliament and the Parliament is not interested, but if the customer happens to be in Gibraltar, then there is something wrong and nebulous about me not telling him what the customer spends.

What I do not understand is why they think there is something wrong in providing funding from a Savings Bank that has a direct impact on the economic growth of Gibraltar, but it is perfectly all
2690 right and no explanations are necessary if we do it to entities that are quoted on the London Stock Exchange that can be worth a lot of money one day and next to nothing the following day. That is their position. In the long list that I produced in the written answer of all the people who are

borrowing millions from the Savings Bank – we have £200 million invested there – they never ask, ‘Can I have a breakdown of what the borrower is using that money for?’

2695 I do not accept that there is a logic, rationale or entitlement to that information about somebody who is here, spending the money in our economy, when it does not apply if there are people in another economy and when it does not apply to the other state-owned bank, which is the Gibraltar International Bank. It is a position they do not have to agree with, but that is my position and that is the explanation.

2700 **Hon. D J Bossino:** Madam Speaker, the hon. Member has been candid, I am sure, in his responses. There is absolutely no doubt about that on this side of the House, and he is absolutely right in the concluding remarks that there is a clear blue line between their position in relation to this and our position in relation to this for the reasons that I briefly cited in the context of the preamble to my previous supplementary question. There is still, in our view, despite the length of his responses, a lack of clarity in many of the details, and I am sure that this view would be shared by the Hon. Mr Clinton when he asks for the detail of these things. We get very nervous on this side of the House, as we are concerned as to how this money is being spent, and we think we are entitled to ask these questions.

2710 Let me ask him this. When he was talking about ... I think it was the pensioners’ flats ... he said that he – presumably as the Minister responsible for economic development, and possibly also as the Minister responsible for the Savings Bank – thought that that was a project which he thought was worthwhile to sponsor. I think that was the word he used. In this case, let’s remind ourselves that Eastern Beach sheds ... From this side of the House, on the basis of the limited information that we have – because we have asked for costs – we simply do not understand what the economic benefit is in this project. So may I ask him this: what attractiveness is there, as far as this particular project is concerned, to investors? It is certainly not clear to us.

2720 **Hon. Sir J J Bossano:** Madam Speaker, if the hon. Member opposite is asking what was there in this project for who to invest, the Government has not invested a penny in anything. The Savings Bank has provided funding, and therefore the Savings Bank is concerned only with the ability to get the interest on the funds and to get the repayment of those funds. If there is an economic benefit, or not, it will have no impact on the return because the return has to be paid whether there is a profit or not. The return is not a share of the profitability, and anyway, the entities that are engaged in this are not entities with shareholders who have to be paid dividends. The projects that are being carried out at a minimal margin over cost are things where there has been an element of demand identified, which demand will not be met by the Government because the Government is not in a position to say, ‘We will divert government money to doing this’, when in fact there are more urgent and more important things in need of that money.

2730 If they are concerned about the Savings Bank, I cannot imagine what their feelings would have been if he had been a Member of this House when the Savings Bank had cash deposits and nothing else, but that is what they want to go back to. They actually said in their manifesto that they would go back to what was there before, which is a Savings Bank that would not have £1.5 billion and would not have accumulated £67 million of profits, it would have £1,444 and £200 million or £300 million where the money was being deposited in local banks at a cost to the Government of £9 million a year in 2010 and £9 million a year in 2011. I do not understand their policy and they clearly do not understand mine. If they ever get back into government, they will have the opportunity to get rid of the Savings Bank and leave it with £1,444, but while I am responsible for the Savings Bank, the Savings Bank will keep on growing like it did between 1988 and 1996, when the same policy that is being implemented today was first implemented.

2740 It is good that at least there is one area where we have diametrically opposed policies: if the people prefer to have their kind of Savings Bank instead of our kind of Savings Bank, then the people make the choice.

2745 **Chief Minister (Hon. F R Picardo):** And they just did.

Madam Speaker: I will allow one more supplementary, but no more; otherwise, this is going to become a debate.

2750 **Hon. D J Bossino:** Of course, Madam Speaker.

The Hon. the Chief Minister said from a sedentary position, 'And they just did', in terms of re-electing them into office – but by a whisker, by very few votes.

2755 **Madam Speaker:** What is said from a sedentary position need not be answered, so next question. (*Interjection*)

2760 **Hon. D J Bossino:** Madam Speaker, the hon. Member has given us a bit of a history lesson. I have always said that it is always a joy to listen to him, even though we ... Certainly I disagree with many of the things he said, and his policy positions, and certainly in respect of this area, but it is a pity ... If I can just say, by way of a slight preamble, that at least if we were given more information by way, for example, of structure charts and all the rest of it, with the detail which I think the Hon. Mr Clinton asks for on many occasions – and he is more than entitled to ask ... If he was more explicit in his responses, maybe it would calm our nerves on this side of the House, and who knows, we may even be persuaded by what the hon. Member says, but it seems that we can only properly understand what the government policy is in relation to this area if we go into Sir Joe Bossano's brain, and then we will have, set out with full splendour, every single detail, so that then we can say actually –

2770 **Madam Speaker:** Question?

Hon. D J Bossino: The response has been very lengthy. I know he is the Father of the House, and I am sure that –

2775 **Madam Speaker:** I am happy for you to give a lengthier preamble if it is connected to your question.

2780 **Hon. D J Bossino:** Madam Speaker, it is connected to the question. It certainly is connected to the response that we have just had from the hon. Member. The specific question is this, because it goes to the core of not just the National Economic Plan but also the safety of the funds of the Gibraltar Savings Bank: in relation to this specific and particular project, the Eastern Beach sheds, can he say whether the loan/sponsoring of that particular project by the Savings Bank has been fully repaid?

2785 **Hon. Chief Minister:** Madam Speaker, the hon. Gentleman's preamble dealt with a number of points which require my response. The first is this question of whether we won by a whisker. Well, we won by a whisker like they won by a whisker in 2007, but the whisker is bigger today than in 2007, and in 2011 –

2790 **Madam Speaker:** I am going to ask the Hon. the Chief Minister to direct himself to answering the question, if that is what he intends to do; otherwise, this really does become a debate.

2795 **Hon. Chief Minister:** I am grateful, Madam Speaker, but the hon. Gentleman has, in his preamble, not asked a question; the hon. Gentleman, in his preamble, has made party political points. If party political points are allowed in the preamble, I have no doubt that you will want to have the full picture put before the people of Gibraltar and have the party political points answered. Otherwise, the Opposition has the opportunity to attack the Government, ask a

question on a small issue, and the Government, in its answer, in respect of which there are no rules other than it should not be excessively long, is not able to deal with the party political points. That will put the Government, in this Parliament, at a disadvantage at which governments are not
2800 in any parliament in the world. And so, in dealing with those points which the hon. Gentleman has made, I would remind him that although we won by half a whisker in 2011, we governed for four years because half a whisker, or one goal, is enough to win a match.

Finally, Madam Speaker, the hon. Gentleman says that we would have to get into Sir Joe Bossano's brain to understand these issues. Well, I do not think, even if we were in Sir Joe Bossano's brain, we would have Sir Joe Bossano's capacity to understand things. The hon.
2805 Gentleman says to us, 'If you gave us structure charts, we might get comfortable, we might be able to support this.' The hon. Gentleman seems to have forgotten that we gave them structure charts on a transaction that we did on an investment in Gibraltar. We took them through all of the rationale. They came to my office at my invitation –

2810 **Hon. R M Clinton:** Madam Speaker, a point of order.

Hon. Chief Minister: No, Madam Speaker, if the hon. Member is going to make a point of order, he is required to point to which part of the Standing Orders he is saying that we are making a
2815 point –

Madam Speaker: I am aware of that, thank you.
Yes?

2820 **Hon. Chief Minister:** Get up and say into the mic what you are saying.

Hon. R M Clinton: Madam Speaker, he is misdirecting the House.

2825 **Hon. Chief Minister:** I am not.

Hon. R M Clinton: What he is saying about a structure chart is something that happened years ago and nothing to do with what Sir Joe is talking about.

Hon. Chief Minister: Exactly the point I am making, Madam Speaker. That is, first of all, not a
2830 point of order. That is just that the hon. Gentleman does not like what I am saying.

Second, they said a moment ago, in the preamble that Mr Bossino was putting, 'If they gave us structure charts, we would get comfortable' – talking about the Savings Bank. My point is that we gave them structure charts, not in relation to the Savings Bank but in relation to another
2835 transaction, and they did not just not get comfortable, they used the explanations that we gave them to attack them, therefore rendering the idea that we could deal with the Opposition as if they were *loyal* enough to understand the point, and then, because they understood it, defend it, totally otiose, and we cannot rely on them for that.

2840 **Hon. R M Clinton:** The Opposition... (Unparliamentary language used).

Hon. Chief Minister: Madam Speaker, I have never heard anybody use unparliamentary language of the sort that the hon. Gentleman has used today. He has said, from a sedentary position, audibly across the floor of the House –

2845 **Madam Speaker:** I would ask the Hon. Mr Clinton not to comment from a sedentary position.

Hon. Chief Minister: Madam Speaker, that is the sort of language that makes it difficult to deal with hon. Members in a way that is convivial and collegiate, which is how the Government would

2850 like to deal with matters in this House. I must say the hon. Gentleman has really let himself down.
I will say nothing else, other than that, Madam Speaker.

2855 **Madam Speaker:** May I direct myself to the hon. Member? Is there something you want to say, because I heard that remark as well. There is no doubt in my mind that that is unparliamentary, and it was really quite inexcusable, so is there anything the hon. Member wishes to say from a standing position?

Hon. R M Clinton: Yes, Madam Speaker – in the heat of the moment – I apologise for that remark.

2860 **Madam Speaker:** Do you withdraw that remark?

Hon. R M Clinton: Yes, unreservedly.

2865 **Hon. Chief Minister:** I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman, and it honours him that he has done so, because I think it was probably the lowest moment of my 20 years in this House.

2870 **Madam Speaker:** In that case, I am going to take no further action. I accept that the House accepts your apology and your withdrawal, and I am going to say this is a very effective place now for us to move on. There is a question pending. Would the Hon. Minister like to answer that question?

Hon. Chief Minister: The answer is what we have said, Madam Speaker. The answer has dealt with the preamble, and that is all we intend to say.

2875 **Madam Speaker:** Next question.

Q658/2023
2023 census –
Expected publication date

Q659/2023
Population numbers for 2022 and 2023 –
Breakdown by nationality

Clerk: Question 658. The Hon. the Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. Dr K Azopardi: Madam Speaker, when is the 2022 census expected to be published?

2880 **Clerk:** Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Inward Investment and the Savings Bank.

Minister for Inward Investment and the Savings Bank (Hon. Sir J J Bossano): Madam Speaker, I will answer this question together with Question 659.

2885 **Clerk:** Question 659. The Hon. the Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. Dr K Azopardi: What is the current estimate of the 2022 and 2023 population of Gibraltar, broken down by nationality?

2890 **Clerk:** Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Inward Investment and the Savings Bank.

Hon. Sir J J Bossano: Madam Speaker, I am informed by the Statistics Department that the 2022 census is expected to be published in the first half of 2024.

2895 I am also informed by the Statistics Department that the current preliminary estimate of the 2022 population of Gibraltar provided by the Census Office stands at 38,000. This estimate is broken down by nationality as follows: British Gibraltar 28,717; UK British, 5,911; Spanish, 891; Moroccan, 261; other nationalities, 2,220. The population data for 2023 will be accessible after 31st December 2023, as the methodology covers all births and deaths within the year, with the census serving as a baseline.

2900 The Gibraltar Central Data Repository, which is funded by the Ministry for Economic Development, has produced an estimate for the current year as follows: Gibraltar population, 34,863 with a nationality breakdown as follows – British citizens 28,400; nationality not stated, 3,556; Spanish, 563; Portuguese, 178; Irish, 175; Polish, 159; Israeli, 134, Filipino, 130; Moroccan, 122; German, 114; French, 101; Indian, 94; Italian, 84; Swedish, 73; Romanian, 71; 2905 Dutch, 59; Danish, 54; Swiss, 53; Malaysian, 50; American, 46; Bulgarian, 38; Canadian, 37; Brazilian, 36; Hungarian, 34; Austrian 29; Chinese, 29; Russian, 29; Slovakian, 29; Lithuanian, 28; Greek, 24; Belgian, 20; Czech, 19; Ukrainian, 15; Argentinian, 13; Finnish, 13; Estonian, 12; Hong Kong, 11; Latvian, 11; Nigerian, 11; and Australian, 10.

2910 The estimated population of Gibraltar, available online on Worldometer, based on UN sources for 2022 and 2023, is as follows: 2022, 32,649; and 2023, 32,688.

The hon. Member can take his pick of which of those three sources he believes.

Hon. Dr K Azopardi: I thank the hon. Member, but I would rather take the pick of the local statistics office rather than Worldometer; I am not sure who is staffing that operation.

2915 He said that the figure for 2023 is not available until after 31st December 2023, but then he gave a figure of 34,800. That is not a locally compiled figure – is that right? I did not catch whose was the figure of 34,800.

2920 **Hon. Sir J J Bossano:** The explanation for the first part is obvious. That is to say they take the census figures as accurate and then they simply add what has happened with the population in terms of births and deaths and make that adjustment. That would, obviously, only be possible after the close of the year, because it is done on a calendar year basis.

2925 The other is the figure that is produced by the Gibraltar Central Data Depository, which has, as a source, all the government institutions that collect data. The data for immigration, the data for schools, the data for people registered for the GHA and the data for people paying tax and Social Insurance are all collated, and those figures are the ones that produce the very detailed breakdown of nationalities that is not available from the census, which has only four categories, and the figure which is, in fact, different from the one from the census. The census is the result of individuals putting an accurate figure in the returns, so the accuracy of the census figure is 2930 dependent on the accuracy of the people filling in the census.

2935 The other figure is a reflection of putting together, in a program, the population if you look at it from the records of the Employment Service, the tax record, the people entitled to healthcare, the people who pay Social Insurance and the immigration figures. The one that we normally rely on is the census, but we have had the problem for as long as I have been here that we always get, for example, three different figures about the size of the working population because the Employment Service will tell you the people who are in employment, but that generally is incorrect at any point in time because of the delay of terminations being registered. Employers normally register employees straight away when they start work – otherwise, they are committing an offence, and, if they are found with a worker who is not registered, they are then using illegal labour and they are fined – but they do not do it as quickly in terms of informing who has been 2940 terminated. There is always a lack of time between the date when somebody is terminated and

2945 the date when the termination is registered, so that source will probably be incorrect, having more people registered as being here than actually exist. I am giving that as an example. Since that is one of the sources that the computer program uses, it may be that there is duplication in the different sources, and that is why the figure will be different.

Hon. Dr K Azopardi: Can I just understand the Hon. Minister? The figure of 38,000 that he gave for the population in 2022 is drawn from the preliminary information of the census – or not? That is a different figure?

2950 Can I just ask him a second, if I may, just to accelerate it? The Gibraltar Central Data Depository that he talks about – is that an entity? And who runs it? Is it the Statistics Department? Is it under the responsibility of the Statistician?

2955 **Hon. Sir J J Bossano:** A separate department. It is, in fact, people who are compiling information in the context of e-government and trying to rationalise the information that is held in different departments where I think there are difficulties in reconciling because the criteria sometimes are different. It is something that has been going on for a number of years, and because we have a census this year, we will be in a position to do a better job of reconciling the compilation of what everybody else has with what the response has been.

2960 When we get figures that are statistical pictures, the criteria that is used in the collection is not always the same everywhere. In fact, in the case of a census, it is the people who are present on a particular day in a particular year. If you were here the day before or the day after, you do not appear in the census. The others are people whose presence is recorded here for some aspect of their lives, and that is what has been put together in this program. This is something that is very useful, for example, because it also has a distribution of population for looking at traffic, it has a distribution of population for looking at schools and where people with young children are, and it was very useful at the time of COVID to see where there was a concentration of elderly people because it has information in terms of gender and age linked to residence. I just added the extra information to give the hon. Member the fullest picture that I could provide in terms of the information that he wanted. I have just limited myself to the census, but I thought I would give him as big a picture as I could.

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2970

Madam Speaker: Can we move on now, please?

Questions for Written Answer

2975 **Clerk:** Answers to Written Questions.

Chief Minister (Hon. F R Picardo): Madam Speaker, I have the honour to table the answers to Written Questions W52/2023 to W59/2023.

Order of the Day

Standing Order 19 suspended to proceed with Government Motions

Clerk: (ix) The Order of the Day – Government Motions. The Hon. the Chief Minister.

2980

Chief Minister (Hon. F R Picardo): Madam Speaker, I have the honour to move the motion standing in my name, which reads as follows:

I hereby give notice of motion, under Standing Order No. 59, to proceed with the suspension of Standing Order No. 19, in order to proceed with Government Motions.

Madam Speaker: Those in favour? (**Members:** Aye.) Those against? Carried.

GOVERNMENT MOTIONS

Establishment of Select Committees – Select Committees on Parliamentary Reform, on Constitutional Reform and on work re departure from the European Union reconstituted – Select Committees on the Environment and on People with Disabilities established – Public Bills Committee established

2985

Clerk: The Hon. the Chief Minister.

Chief Minister (Hon. F R Picardo): Madam Speaker, I have the honour to move the motion standing in my name, which reads as follows:

This House:

Agrees to reconstitute the Select Committee on Parliamentary Reform, the Select Committee on Constitutional Reform and the Select Committee on work related to our departure from the European Union (Brexit);

Resolves and establishes a Select Committee on the Environment which will be chaired jointly by the Chief Minister and the Leader of the Opposition, a Select Committee on People with Disabilities and a Public Bills Committee.

And further resolves that these Committees shall each consist of three Members nominated by the Chief Minister and two Members nominated by the Leader of the Opposition.

2990

Madam Speaker, I have given notice of this motion after having spoken to the Leader of the Opposition to ensure that the House re-establishes the Select Committees, which it has been working with for some sessions already. There is no need to establish the Standing Committee on Standards. That is one which we will populate but we do not have to establish.

2995

There is a new committee, the Public Bills Committee, which is a recommendation of the Canepa Commission on Parliamentary Reform that there should be such a committee in the event that there are particularly complex Bills that should be considered in committee before being dealt with by the House.

On that basis, Madam Speaker, I am moving this motion, and later I will move another motion, which will seek to populate these committees with Members of the House. I commend the motion to the House.

3000

Madam Speaker: I now propose the question in terms of the motion moved by the Hon. the Chief Minister.

3005

Hon. Dr K Azopardi: Madam Speaker, we will support this motion. We have long taken the view that of course there should be business run by parliamentary select committees. As the Chief Minister says, we have been in discussion as to the amendments that are required to populate these committees. I expressed the hope that going forward in this legislature, unlike the last one, the committees that are reconstituted then do meet. I know the Chief Minister has said that they will. I express the hope that, in fact, they will, and that we will make progress in some of these committees, because progress is needed in many of these areas.

3010

Madam Speaker: Does any other Member wish to speak? In that event, I call on the mover to reply.

3015

Hon. Chief Minister: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

I am grateful to the Hon. Leader of the Opposition for indicating support for this motion. I, too, express the hope that these committees will be able to meet, as they did not under the last Parliament, because I expressed the hope, as I expressed at the Ceremonial Opening, that there should not be another worldwide pandemic and that we might, hopefully, also be able to deal with issues relating to Brexit. I have already indicated, however, additionally, that some of these committees will meet before the end of December. It is for that reason I have wanted to ensure that the motion is moved at this first meeting, so that we can comply with that commitment I gave the House that certain of these committees should be constituted and meet during the course of the next calendar month.

3025

Madam Speaker: I now put the question in terms of the motion proposed by the Hon. the Chief Minister. Those in favour? (**Members:** Aye.) Those against? Carried.

Membership of Select Committees – Amended motion carried

Clerk: The Hon. the Chief Minister.

3030

Chief Minister (Hon. F R Picardo): Madam Speaker, I have the honour to move the motion standing in my name, which reads as follows:

This House:

Agrees the composition of the Select Committees listed below as follows:

The Permanent Select Committee on Members' Interests:

The Hon. Dr J J Garcia

The Hon. Prof. J Cortes

Two Members nominated by the Leader of the Opposition

The Select Committee on Parliamentary Reform:

The Hon. Dr J J Garcia

The Hon. Prof. J Cortes

The Hon. G Arias-Vasquez

Two Members nominated by the Leader of the Opposition

The Select Committee on Constitutional Reform:

The Hon. F R Picardo

The Hon. Dr J J Garcia

The Hon. J J Bossano

Two Members nominated by the Leader of the Opposition

The Select Committee on work related to our departure from and future relationship with the European Union (Brexit):

The Hon. F R Picardo

The Hon. Dr J J Garcia

The Hon. N Feetham

Two Members nominated by the Leader of the Opposition

The Select Committee on the Environment:

The Hon. F R Picardo

The Hon. Dr J J Garcia

The Hon. Prof. J Cortes

Two Members nominated by the Leader of the Opposition

The Select Committee on People with Disabilities:

The Hon. C Santos

The Hon. G Arias-Vasquez

The Hon. J Cortes

Two Members nominated by the Leader of the Opposition

The Public Bills Committee:

The Hon. F R Picardo

The Hon. N Feetham

The Hon. G Arias-Vasquez

Two Members nominated by the Leader of the Opposition

3035 Madam Speaker, at the time that I consulted with the Leader of the Opposition, he wanted an opportunity to reflect on who should be the Members of the Opposition who should take up the nominated positions that the Leader of the Opposition and I agreed he should be able to nominate Members on. During the course of today, he and I have once again had an opportunity to confer. Hon. Members will have seen, circulated to them a few moments ago, a letter that I have sent you, seeking your leave to move an amendment during the course of this debate to the motion. The amendment would be, as hon. Members can see, to reflect in the body of the motion the names of the individuals that the Hon. the Leader of the Opposition has communicated to me
3040 would be the Opposition nominees for each of those committees. They are set out in the letter, Madam Speaker; I do not think it is necessary for me to read them out. The House has notice in writing, as is required when bringing an amendment to a motion, of who those individuals would be in respect of each of those committees.

3045 Madam Speaker, I therefore move the amendment to the motion as set out in my letter to you of today's date, with your leave, so that the motion would be amended as reflected by that

amendment. In moving the amendment at this stage, I would ask you to now seek the views of anybody else in the House on the amendment.

3050 **Madam Speaker:** I now propose the question in terms of the amendment moved by the Hon. the Chief Minister.

Hon. Dr K Azopardi: Madam Speaker, I only rise to confirm our support for the amendment and to confirm to the House that the names reflected in the letter of 23rd November to Madam Speaker from the Chief Minister accurately reflect the nominees by me.
3055

Madam Speaker: Thank you.

I now put the question in terms of the amendment moved by the Hon. the Chief Minister. Those in favour? (**Members:** Aye.) Those against? Carried.

3060 What the House now has before it –

Hon. Chief Minister: Now, Madam Speaker, the substantive motion with those amendments is the motion that reflects my nominees to the Select Committees and the Leader of the Opposition's nominees to the Select Committees. It will now be a complete motion setting out the names of those Members of the House who will be on each committee, and I now move the motion in the terms as amended.
3065

Madam Speaker: I now propose the question in the terms of the motion as amended, moved by the Hon. the Chief Minister. If no other Member wishes to speak, do I need to call on the mover to reply?
3070

Hon. Chief Minister: Nothing else to add.

Madam Speaker: I now put the question in the terms of the amended motion proposed by the Hon. the Chief Minister. Those in favour? (**Members:** Aye.) Those against? Carried.
3075

Adjournment

Chief Minister (Hon. F R Picardo): Madam Speaker, despite the fractious moment that we suffered a few moments ago, it is a pleasure to end the first meeting of this House with a unanimous vote in favour of a motion, even if it is a simple motion establishing Select Committees.

I am grateful to all new Members for the way that they have conducted themselves during the course of this first meeting, and I am very grateful to you, of course, Madam Speaker.
3080

I now move that the House should adjourn *sine die*.

Madam Speaker: I now propose the question, which is that this House now adjourn *sine die*.

I now put the question, which is that this House do now adjourn *sine die*. Those in favour? (**Members:** Aye.) Those against? Passed.
3085

This House will now adjourn *sine die*.

The House adjourned at 7.32 p.m.