P R O C E E D I N G S O F T H E

G I B R A L T A R P A R L I A M E N T

AFTERNOON SESSION: 3.02 p.m. – 3.28 p.m.

Gibraltar, Thursday, 11th December 2025

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The Parliament met at 3.02 p.m.

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

[CLERK TO THE PARLIAMENT: P A Borge McCarthy Esq *in attendance*]

Order of the Day

COMMUNICATIONS FROM THE CHAIR

Clerk: Meeting of Parliament, Thursday the 11th of December 2025. Government motions...

Madam Speaker: Before we move on to Government motions, can I just take this opportunity to wish the Hon. Chief Minister a speedy recovery. Emergency medical interventions are invariably traumatic and I, together with the Parliamentary team, wish him all the best in his journey back to health.

Thank you.

GOVERNMENT MOTION

Clerk: Government motions. The Hon. Deputy Chief Minister.

Deputy Chief Minister (Hon. Dr J J Garcia): Madam Speaker, thank you for those sentiments and thank you to everybody else who has also expressed their best wishes to the Chief Minister.

Madam Speaker, the House already knows that the Chief Minister has undergone eye surgery. The operation went well and he continues in recovery. Indeed, he had a medical check-up today. So, I am sorry to be moving this motion in those circumstances but as I said, I want to thank all Members opposite, you too Madam Speaker, and members of the public who have been asking after him. I know that the House will join me in wishing him a speedy and a full recovery and I am grateful to the Honourable Leader of the Opposition with whom we have discussed the agenda for today and the adjournment.

So Madam Speaker, moving on to the motion itself. I want to first pay tribute to our outgoing Mayor, Carmen Gomez. She has held the office with distinction, gravitas and grace. Carmen has made an important contribution to the Office of Mayor. She has brought to bear her flair, the flair of her artistic background, her warmth and her humanity, her kindness and charm, and above all, her passion for her country. Sadly, during part of her tenure, she has been unwell. Despite that, she has persevered and she has overcome. So I want to thank Carmen for her selfless sacrifice on behalf of the Government and the people of Gibraltar.

Carmen Gomez will be replaced by Nicolas Guerrero under the terms of the motion before us today. Better known to all of us as Nicky, he already boasts an impressive record in public life. That life was tourism, and his name has become synonymous with it. Madam Speaker,

I am not sure whether I need to declare a personal interest in this appointment. Nicky Guerrero and I were in the same school year at Bayside Comprehensive School. We studied different subjects and moved in different circles, but that means that we have known each other on and off for over 40 years. Indeed, this is a connection we both share with the Hon. Leader of the Opposition as well. From the student I once knew, Nicky went on to become a committed public servant, fully devoted to Gibraltar and to its future.

We worked together during his spell as CEO of Gibraltar Air Terminal Limited, where he always demonstrated exceptional professionalism. He worked at the Gibraltar Tourist Board for 24 years and retired in June 2021 as its CEO. I have to say that this work often extended beyond conventional tourism. It was permeated with a deep commitment to promoting Gibraltar on the international stage. That facet of his work is reflected in his top roles at the Association of Mediterranean Cruise Ports, MedCruise. Nicky has showcased our identity, our heritage and a sense of community to the wider world outside.

That makes him ideally suited to hold the Office of Mayor. Obviously, the experience gained as Deputy Mayor will also stand him in good stead. This kind of civic engagement is, in my view, made for him. Personal and hands-on, interacting with the lives of real people and hosting many of them in charities, clubs and associations. In addition to this, he will be the visible face of Gibraltar for many overseas visitors to City Hall. Nicky has the qualities we expect from our next Mayor.

In an interview 10 years ago, he said that Gibraltar is much more than a tourist attraction. It is also our homeland, a territory we dearly cherish and care for. That outlook and that personal journey, combined with his professional track record, gives me full confidence to move his appointment as Gibraltar's 21st Mayor.

Madam Speaker, this motion also moves the appointment of Mrs Andrea Simpson as Deputy Mayor. Mrs Simpson, Andrea, too, is very well known in Gibraltar as a top vocalist and a lifelong performer. She is one of our great characters who has made a significant contribution to the rich cultural life which Gibraltar enjoys. It is very fitting that she passes on her energy and her enthusiasm to younger generations by teaching music.

As the Chief Minister said, Andrea has brought creativity, passion and pride through her performances at venues all over our country. I must declare an interest here, too, having had the pleasure to attend many of her wonderful concerts over the years together with my wife and children.

Like Nicky, she has also shown a keen interest in Gibraltar's heritage. In 2021, along with her husband Charles, she received the Individual Heritage Award from the Gibraltar Heritage Trust. This was in respect of the sensitive restoration of one North Pavilion Steps, one of a row of 19th century properties. Andrea Simpson will therefore follow a tradition as Deputy Mayor, like many others from the world of culture who have held the office before.

Madam Speaker, the first Mayor of Gibraltar in recent times was elected in 1955. That is exactly 70 years ago this year. That person was Sir Joshua Hassan. Before then, the position was described as Chairman of the City Council. Now there is no City Council and there is no Chairman. The office has evolved through time. Nonetheless, the Mayor and Deputy Mayor play a key role in the representation of our community. The Government is confident that Nicky Guerrero and Andrea Simpson will make a great team and that this new team at City Hall will continue the good work of their predecessors. We know that they will leave their own mark on an Office which has now spanned seven decades and so Madam Speaker, I commend the motion to the House.

Madam Speaker: I now propose the question in terms of the motion ruled by the Hon. the Deputy Chief Minister. Would any hon. Member like to speak on the motion? Yes, the Hon. Mr Reyes.

Hon. E J Reyes: Thank you Madam Speaker. I note, just a bit of tidying up the homework, I note that the Clerk did announce we were proceeding with Government motions. But because there are two motions in the agenda pending, for the record I think we should clarify that the motion we are debating at the moment is one that notice was given by the Chief Minister, reading that hereby appoints Mr Nicholas Guerrero to be Mayor of Gibraltar and Mrs Andrea Simpson to be Deputy Mayor as from Tuesday 16th of December.

I just say that Madam Speaker because I know the Clerk later on for Hansard purposes always like to be able to reference that. Especially when Parliamentarians like myself come and ask for past things and they carry out this search, which I still have not quite learned how to search for things but I wanted to make life easier for them.

So, getting on with the business Madam Speaker, in 2023 this House unanimously supported a Government motion presented at the time by the Hon. Chief Minister, thereby appointing Carmen Gomez as Mayor of Gibraltar and that Nicolas Guerrero be appointed as Deputy Mayor to take over the role of Mayor after Carmen Gomez.

It, therefore, follows that with the greatest of pleasure the GSD Opposition would today confirm that it continues to support the appointment of Nicolas Guerrero to take over as Mayor from Carmen Gomez.

At this initial stage in my contribution Madam Speaker I would like to take the opportunity to thank Carmen for her exemplary service as Mayor over the last two years. Carmen discharged the required mayoral duties in a very efficient manner, even during the difficult days when she was not in the best of health but above all her beauty and personal charm always ruled the day. We therefore take this opportunity to wish Carmen all the very best in her continued recovery.

In respect of the motion itself now before us, I am sure we can all agree that Nicolas, or Nicky as he is better known to many, has carried out a wide ranging series of events and public duties as Deputy Mayor with his own characteristic personal style and decorum and this ultimately promotes and benefits our community. The Opposition has full confidence that Nicky will continue to serve with equal enthusiasm as Mayor over the upcoming next two years.

Madam Speaker, referring specifically to Nicky as a person now, the Opposition notes his personal background as briefly explained by the Deputy Minister and his experiences, and we know that these will serve him well in the discharge of his Mayor's duties.

As already highlighted in past contributions to motions in respect of the appointment of previous Mayors, it is important to stress that the mayoralty should continue to be open to both our young and those no longer young, and that our City Hall and our civic representative, namely the Mayor, is someone whom Gibraltarians consider approachable.

Personally, Madam Speaker, I must say how time flies. I remember some 50 years ago roughly, a very young Nicky dressed up as Noddy with huge oversized ears to fit the role, taking part in the Three Kings' cavalcade. He was one of the characters in a float entry by the Royal Gibraltar Regiment. Perhaps, Madam Speaker, this might have been his initiation into public performances and public life.

Having been born and raised in Gibraltar as the elder child of a prominent Army officer, Nicky is no stranger to pomp and circumstance. This experience, I suspect, will serve him well in the discharge of some duties the Mayor is frequently called upon to undertake. The soldiers participating in gun salutes in Gibraltar had better watch out, Madam Speaker, because Nicky was born with a silver cannon and not a silver spoon in his mouth.

Nicky Guerrero graduated in hospitality upon completion of his higher education. He is certainly a very hospitable person, and the role of Mayor seems to have been tailor-made for him, just like the Deputy Chief Minister has contributed. He has gained a wide range of experiences throughout his professional career, culminating with his tenure as Chief Executive of the Gibraltar Tourist Board.

If I may refer to a personal experience, I must divulge that during his time at the Tourist Board, I had the pleasure of Nicky's special assistance whilst we entertained Her Royal Highness, the Princess Royal, during an official visit to our Rock.

The Princess's programme included a visit to Stay Behind Cave, and as Minister for Heritage at that time, I was assigned the privileged task to conduct a tour of this important historical site for our Royal Guest. In the planning process, Her Royal Highness expressed a wish to access Stay Behind Cave, not by traditional transport, but rather by walking up via Mediterranean Steps, accompanied by Her Distinguished Husband. It seems Vice Admiral Sir Timothy Lawrence had often spoken to his wife about the magnificent views he had enjoyed during his service in the Royal Navy, from Mediterranean Steps, and Her Royal Highness now wished to personally experience this, of course accompanied by her husband.

I was briefed that Princess Anne is a very fit person, and my gratitude to this day continues to go to Nicky, who accompanied us up Mediterranean Steps. He continuously reassured me that should the Royal couple walk too fast, he would be there and ready to engage into any necessary conversation should I require time to catch up with them. As it turns out, we all managed to keep up together as a single group, partly thanks to a little breathing break we had while Her Royal Highness took photos for her private collection of the ship Federa, which at the time was being salvaged from the cliffs below our lighthouse.

I mention this story as it serves Nicky with first-hand experience in carrying out official duties with royalty, and if we should be blessed with another royal visit in the near future, Nicky is absolutely ready to receive and escort whomever the distinguished royal guest may be. I further believe that with his background, Nicky should encounter little problems in very ably serving the people of Gibraltar in the execution of his official duties. Nicky is no newcomer to the performing arts, he is recognised as an accomplished actor, so looking towards the future with his soon-to-be Deputy Mayor, Andrea Simpson, a much-loved singer, we might well witness new performing arts experiences at the City Hall.

The Chief Minister had consulted the Leader of the Opposition about the nomination of Andrea Simpson as Deputy Mayor, and we are equally happy to support this accomplished lady's appointment. Therefore, Madam Speaker, the entire Opposition Members of Parliament look forward to supporting Andrea in the fulfilment of her duties as Deputy Mayor, and we are pleased to note that such appointment is also included in the motion lying before this House.

Therefore, Madam Speaker, with these concluding words, I have the privilege and pleasure to once again confirm that the GSD Opposition will be supporting the Government's motion as laid before this House, originally proposed by the Chief Minister.

To end, thank you, Carmen Gomez, for your service to Gibraltar, and may you continue with a successful and speedy recovery. We unanimously wish all the best to both Nicky and Andrea for the future in the fulfilment of their mayoral duties.

Madam Speaker: Does another hon. Member wish to speak? Yes, the Hon. Mr Santos.

Minister for Equality, Employment, Culture and Tourism (Hon. C P Santos): Madam Speaker, I rise today to express my full support for the appointment of Mr Nicolas Guerrero as Mayor of Gibraltar and Mrs. Andrea Simpson as Deputy Mayor. I would like to take this opportunity as well to thank our outgoing Mayor, Carmen Gomez, for her two years of service. I had the chance to work closely with Carmen when she was my Deputy, and I must say it has been an honour to see her thrive in her role as Mayor. So thank you, Carmen, I know what this role meant to you.

The role of Mayor is often described as ceremonial, and in many ways it is. But ceremonies matter, traditions matter, and symbols matter.

In a world that moves faster every day, where communities can easily feel disconnected or overwhelmed, the Mayor represents something deeply human and the heart of a community. As Mayor, one becomes the bridge between institutions and the people they serve, the reassuring presence in moments of celebration and in moments of grief, the face of unity when our community gathers, and the voice that reminds us of who we are and what we stand for. It is a role rooted in people, not politics, in presence, not power, and in empathy and not authority.

Having had the privilege of wearing the Chain of Office myself, I know the unique weight and honour of that Office. It teaches you that leadership can be gentle, that representation can be heartfelt, and that sometimes the most meaningful service comes from making connections. It is with this understanding, that my deep respect for the role of the Mayor, that I speak today in support of the appointments before this House.

So allow me to begin with Mr. Nicholas Guerrero. Nicky has been a pillar of Gibraltar's cultural and tourism sectors. My first memory of Nicky was watching him on stage in the 1992 Gibraltar Drama Festival in the play A Man of Letters. And his refined performance certainly left a lasting impression, considering that I still remember it to this day.

He has been an integral part of the local theatre scene and has inspired many young actors like myself to realise that you do not need to be from abroad to have world-class talent. His work in raising Gibraltar's international profile through his leadership in tourism, and his engagement with stakeholders across Europe, with his tireless promotion of our unique heritage, has enriched our community economically, socially and culturally. I am fortunate enough to have seen first-hand how respected he is internationally in the tourism sector.

He has consistently showcased Gibraltar as a place of warmth, history, creativity and spirit. His deep understanding of who we are as a people and what we can offer the world makes him exceptionally well-suited to the role of Mayor.

I can say without hesitation that Nicky Guerrero embodies the dignity, commitment and community-focused values that define this role. So it is with genuine pride that I welcome him into what I like to call the Mayoral family. I have no doubt he will wear the Chain of Office with honour and lead with the same dedication he has always shown in service of our community.

Madam Speaker, I now turn to support the appointment of Mrs Andrea Simpson as Deputy Mayor. Andrea's contribution to Gibraltar's cultural life is widely recognised. For many years, she has been one of our most prominent performers, giving her voice, her time, her heart and her creativity to the people of Gibraltar.

Her work in the arts has been described as inspiring, innovative and deeply rooted in community pride. She has helped shape Gibraltar's cultural identity through her singing, performing and public engagement. She has touched audiences, encouraged young talent and been a spirited ambassador for our local arts scene.

Madam Speaker, while I speak here in my capacity as Minister, I also speak as a friend. Andrea and I share a bond that goes beyond professional admiration. We have performed together, created together, supported each other and grown together. It is no secret, Andrea is one of my people, my soulmate in the arts and in life. And I have seen her commitment to the arts, the late nights, the rehearsals and the perseverance behind the scenes. I have witnessed her kindness, her humility and her ability to unite people simply by being herself.

These qualities are not merely artistic, they are civic, they are leadership. *La Niña de la Caleta*, who burst into the local scene singing La Pantoja, immediately became the nation's sweetheart. And that appreciation from our whole community has only grown as the decades have gone by.

So two friends who sang Beauty and the Beast at the Bayside Christmas Concert in 1993 have since shared many more musical moments. And now we will be sharing the honour of having served our community in the mayoralty. So when I support her appointment today, I do so not only because she is a cultural figure worth of recognition, but because I genuinely believe she will bring heart, dedication, empathy and authenticity to the role of Deputy Mayor.

With Nicolas Guerrero as Mayor and Andrea Simpson as Deputy Mayor, Gibraltar gains a team that embodies cultural pride, community spirit, creativity, connection, empathy and unity. Together they represent the identity of our community. They bring experience, creativity, diplomacy and genuine love for the people of Gibraltar.

Madam Speaker, this motion is more than an appointment. It is a statement that Gibraltar values service, dedication and authenticity. And I commend this motion to the House with my full confidence as Minister and with all my heart as a former Mayor of this cherished Rock.

Thank you very much.

Madam Speaker: Would any other hon. member like to speak? No? Would the mover like to respond? ...Ah... the Hon. J Cortes.

Minister for Education, the Environment and Climate Change (Hon. Prof J E Cortes): Madam Speaker, just a few words. I think I have to contribute very briefly because Carmen Gomez became Mayor during my tenure as Minister for culture and in fact was Deputy Mayor to my hon. friend while I was Minister for culture. So I worked very closely with them both.

So I would like to add my own personal thanks to Carmen for her contribution. Then as Deputy Mayor and now as Mayor, it is always a pleasure to spend time with her and it has been whenever we have coincided at different functions, which we did only last week, probably at her last public function.

As far as Nicky goes, he's a personal friend as well. I think it really is significant that we have had a succession of performers in the Office of Mayor. We've had Christian Santos, Carmen Gomez, professional actor, as we know, Nicky and now Andrea. And there is some significance.

Well, the significance is the richness of culture that there is in Gibraltar and the quality in performers, which is why I continue to work very hard in providing a National Theatre for them. But I think that it is important to recognise that and obviously in supporting all those appointments. It occurs to me, I have been on stage with my hon. Friend, but never performing other than in politics or with Andrea, but I have performed with Nicky.

And if you go to the Inces Hall, there is a poster at the entrance when we performed arts together with our other friend, Peter Canessa. So it occurs to me as it is GBC Open Day today that perhaps for next year, all performers who have been Mayors and perhaps a Minister of Culture who has not been mayor and does not aspire to be Mayor should get together and do something between all of us for GBC Open Day next year because with Nicky, Carmen, Andrea, Christian and this humble servant, it would be quite spectacular.

But anyway, with that light-hearted comment, I just add my support and my thanks to Carmen in particular, who worked so hard during her time. Thank you.

Madam Speaker: Any other hon. Member wishes to speak? Would the mover like to reply?

Hon. Deputy Chief Minister: No, Madam Speaker. I would like to thank the Opposition for their support.

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

With the indulgence of the House, I would like to join hon. Members in thanking Carmen Gomez for her services to Gibraltar and in extending my sincere congratulations to Mr Guerrero and Mrs Simpson in their appointment. I know Mr Guerrero to be a people's person and a great ambassador for Gibraltar and I have no doubt that he will excel in his new role and I wish him all the best.

Adjournment

Clerk: The Hon. the Deputy Chief Minister.

Deputy Chief Minister (Hon. Dr J J Garcia): Madam Speaker, I am conscious this is the last meeting of the House before the festive season so I take the opportunity to wish the House and the wider community all the very best for Christmas, a very happy and peaceful New Year. So having said that, I have the honour to move that this House do now adjourn to Tuesday, the 13th of January, 2026.

Madam Speaker: Time?

Hon. Deputy Chief Minister: Sorry at 3.00 p.m.

Madam Speaker: I now propose the question, which is that this House do now adjourn to Tuesday, the 13th of January, 2026, at 3 p.m. I now put the question, which is that this House do now adjourn to Tuesday, the 13th of January, at 3 p.m. Those in favour? (**Members:** Aye.) Those against? Passed.

This House will now adjourn to Tuesday, the 13th of January, at 3 p.m. and a Merry Christmas and Happy New Year to you. Merry Christmas.

The House adjourned at 3.28 p.m.