



# PROCEEDINGS OF THE GIBRALTAR PARLIAMENT

**AFTERNOON SESSION: 3 p.m. – 6.07 p.m.**

**Gibraltar, Wednesday, 25th September 2024**

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# The Gibraltar Parliament

*The Parliament met at 3 p.m.*

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

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

## PRAYER

*Madam Speaker*

## CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES

**Clerk:** Meeting of Parliament, Wednesday, 25th September 2024.

Order of Proceedings: (i) Oath of Allegiance; (ii) Confirmation of Minutes – the Minutes of the eighth meeting of the fifteenth Parliament, which was held on 24th, 25th and 28th June, and 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th, 5th and 9th July 2024.

5

**Madam Speaker:** May I sign the Minutes as correct?

**Members:** Aye.

10

*Madam Speaker signed the Minutes.*

## PAPERS TO BE LAID

**Clerk:** (iii) Communications from the Chair; (iv) Petitions; (v) Announcements; (vi) Papers to be laid – the Hon. the Minister for Housing and the University of Gibraltar.

15

**Minister for Housing and the University (Hon. P A Orfila):** I have the honour to lay on the table the Report of the Principal Auditor on the Accounts of the Housing Works Agency for the financial year ended 31st March 2012, the Report of the Principal Auditor on the Accounts of the Housing Works Agency for the financial year ended 31st March 2013, the Report of the Principal Auditor on the Accounts of the Housing Works Agency for the financial year ended 31st March 2014, the Report of the Principal Auditor on the Accounts of the Housing Works Agency for the financial year ended 31st March 2015, the Report of the Principal Auditor on the Accounts of the Housing Works Agency for the financial year ended 31st March 2016, the Report of the Principal Auditor on the Accounts of the Housing Works Agency for the financial year ended 31st March 2017 and the Report of the Principal Auditor on the Accounts of the Housing Works Agency for the financial year ended 31st March 2018.

25

**Madam Speaker:** Ordered to lie.

## Questions for Oral Answer

### INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS, CIVIL CONTINGENCIES AND SPORT

Q652/2024

#### Government hostels – Safety inspections and certificates

**Clerk:** (vii) Reports of Committees; (viii) Answers to Oral Questions.

30 Questions to the Minister for Industrial Relations, Civil Contingencies and Sport.  
Question 652. The Hon. A Sanchez.

**Hon. A Sanchez:** Can the Government provide the dates of the most recent inspections by the Gibraltar Fire and Rescue Service (GFRS) of the firefighting equipment, fire exits and emergency lighting at the following locations and confirm whether a safety certificate was issued: (a) the Government hostel at the Queen's Hotel; and (b) the Government hostel at the Sunrise Motel?

35

**Clerk:** Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Industrial Relations, Civil Contingencies and Sport.

**Minister for Industrial Relations, Civil Contingencies and Sport (Hon. L M Bruzon):** Madam Speaker, the Gibraltar Fire and Rescue Service does not issue fire safety certifications, given that buildings' safety and good housekeeping of fire safety measures are the responsibility of custodians or management companies, who consult the GFRS for advice.

Regarding the Sunrise Motel, a building application was submitted in 2014 through which the GFRS outlined fire safety requirements. These were inspected and found satisfactory by 2016, with the GFRS having no objections to issuing the certificate of fitness. The Queen's Hotel has been inspected annually for safety measures, with the last inspection in March 2024. This was due to the establishment holding a petroleum licence. All systems were satisfactory with any faults addressed as needed. It is important to note that moving forward, the petroleum licence is no longer required due to the replacement of fuel tanks with electrical boilers. Government contracts a private company, JT Security, which maintains the fire detection systems, emergency lighting, emergency signage, ventilation systems, dry riser lifts and portable extinguishers at these establishments.

40

**Madam Speaker:** Any supplementaries?

**Hon. Dr K Azopardi:** So that I can understand the answer the Hon. Minister has given, when these annual inspections were carried out, because the Queen's Hotel had a petroleum licence, do I take it that in assessing the petroleum licence requirements it is the Fire and Rescue Service that does this inspection and they are inspecting things that would be of a firefighting, fire exit and emergency lighting nature? Is that right?

45

**Hon. L M Bruzon:** Madam Speaker, that is my understanding, yes.

50

**Hon. Dr K Azopardi:** Also, to understand what the Minister said in terms of the Sunrise Motel, beyond 2016 there has not been an official inspection – is that correct?

**Hon. L M Bruzon:** Madam Speaker, there are annual inspections by a private company. I think Techrolec are employed for that. They are the ones that carry out and issue any certification which is required, not the GFRS.

55

**Hon. Dr K Azopardi:** Is there the possibility for the landlords or the persons managing the particular premises – in this case, for example, the hostel at the Sunrise motel – to contact the Fire and Rescue Service to say, ‘We would like an inspection to make sure that we are still up to scratch’? Is that the kind of thing that is done?  
60

**Hon. L M Bruzon:** Madam Speaker, the GFRS have a fire prevention unit which is always at hand should there be any complaints or any issues, or should the landlords, tenants or whoever require any advice or visits.  
65

**Hon. Dr K Azopardi:** I see, so because the annual inspections have been done by Techtrolec, do I take it that there has been no request to the Fire and Rescue Service to assist in the inspection of this building since then?  
70

**Hon. L M Bruzon:** Once again, Madam Speaker, that is my understanding based on information provided by the GFRS themselves.

**Hon. A Sanchez:** And the annual inspections that are carried out by Techtrolec, I think you said the company is called ... I assume that they issue a safety certificate once they carry out the annual inspection and they verify everything as fit for safety requirements.  
75

**Hon. L M Bruzon:** Madam Speaker, it is my understanding that they do not have the authority to issue a safety certificate. They will do annual inspections of the fire alarms and fire extinguishers and make sure that the emergency exits are free from hazards and so on.  
80

**Hon. A Sanchez:** But they must give the go ahead that everything is up to date and fit for purpose. That is the purpose of the inspection.

**Hon. L M Bruzon:** Yes, Madam Speaker, but that, I believe, is very different to a safety certificate.  
85

**Madam Speaker:** Next question.

**Q653/2024**  
**Europa Sports Complex –**  
**Arrangements for operational management and maintenance**

**Clerk:** Question 653. The Hon. E J Reyes.

**Hon. E J Reyes:** Madam Speaker, can Government update this House with full details in respect of the latest terms, conditions and financial arrangements agreed for the operational management and maintenance of the Europa Sports Park complex?  
90

**Clerk:** Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Industrial Relations, Civil Contingencies and Sport.  
95

**Minister for Industrial Relations, Civil Contingencies and Sport (Hon. L M Bruzon):** Madam Speaker, I can confirm that as from 1st October 2024 the GSLA will be taking over the operation and maintenance of the indoor areas of the Europa Sports Complex. As such, the GSLA management are in discussions with all stakeholders to bring the complex in line with all facilities under the GSLA’s remit.  
100

**Hon. E J Reyes:** Madam Speaker, I was looking back, reference this type of question, and the Hon. Minister's predecessor told us last year, in the previous Parliament, that an agreement had been entered into and was in place with a company – I think it was called Europa Sports Park Management Ltd, or something like that – and the Minister then went on to give us details of the composition of that board and so on. Can the Minister enlighten us as to what has happened to that agreement that had been entered into? For the record, I even asked the Minister could we have a copy of that agreement and he said that as far as Government was concerned, there was no problem but he wanted to check with the other stakeholders that there was no problem in laying that on the table. Unfortunately, a General Election was called following that, so I was never able to get that agreement. If we take the Hon. Minister's predecessor's word for it, if an agreement was in place, what has happened and why are we going to change on 1st October?

**Hon. L M Bruzon:** Madam Speaker, I am pretty sure that we have had this conversation already across the floor, as well as with the Hon. Mr Sacarello, where I explained that we had found the best alternative, which was the GSLA.

**Hon. E J Reyes:** I am asking, first of all, what has happened with the previous contract.

**Hon. L M Bruzon:** Madam Speaker, it has been replaced by the new arrangements.

**Hon. E J Reyes:** Madam Speaker, the feedback I am getting is that there are concerns expressed by parties who were signatories to the previous contract, the sporting associations; mainly rugby and cricket are the ones affected. They fear that their membership of the international governing body may be placed at risk because they no longer have premises that they either own or are leased to them, and that is a condition for their continued membership. Is the Minister aware of this potential problem; and, if he is, what does he intend to do in order to tackle this problem?

**Hon. L M Bruzon:** Madam Speaker, the sporting association that the hon. Gentleman refers to has highlighted this in the past. I have explained to them many times that there is no such thing as a home of a particular sport in Gibraltar. For example, no one argues that the Tercentenary Sports Hall is the home of basketball, but it is also the home of volleyball and futsal, and the dog show once a year. They have the home of rugby; they just have to share it with other sports, just like all other sporting facilities in Gibraltar.

**Hon. E J Reyes:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I take it that one can deduce from that that the Hon. Minister is confident that their international memberships will not be jeopardised.

May I ask, as well: those who were employees of whatever entity was managing the Europa Sports Park Complex beforehand, are they under the TUPE arrangements? Are they going to be absorbed and transferred to the GSLA?

**Hon. L M Bruzon:** Madam Speaker, with regard to his comments on rugby, rugby still does not have recognition of the international governing body.

With regard to the employees, of course the Government will be following the law and the regulations with regard to TUPE.

**Hon. E J Reyes:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Yes, unfortunately the rugby application is still in the pending tray. That is why I am being a bit finicky, making certain that it does not add an extra spanner in the works, especially from the opposition that we get from our neighbours, who although sporting bodies, have no sporting behaviour in the manner they act on things.

**Madam Speaker:** Next question.

155 **Hon. Dr K Azopardi:** Madam Speaker, is this arrangement with the GSLA now a permanent arrangement, and how does it work in terms of the present arrangements? My colleague asked about the operational management. As I understand it now, the operational management – I may be wrong – is being handled by the GFA, at least on a temporary basis until the new ... can I say 'home' for football without getting controversial? – is built. How will it work in terms of going forward once it is no longer needed for football? Is this a permanent arrangement with the GSLA?

160 **Hon. L M Bruzon:** Madam Speaker, just to be clear, we have effectively divided the Europa Sports Complex into two, so we have the outdoor area and the indoor area. Effectively what has happened is that the outdoor area – the playing pitch and the stands – is being managed by the GFA, as far as we are concerned, until the new stadium is built. When the new stadium is built I do not know what might happen. The indoor areas are the ones which will be managed as from 165 1st October by the GSLA, and that is a permanent arrangement.

170 **Hon. Dr K Azopardi:** Following on from that, with a view, then, I ask, that once the GFA is not managing the external areas, the GSLA will take control of the external areas also, or there will be other arrangements?

**Hon. L M Bruzon:** Yes, indeed, Madam Speaker, that is the plan.

175 **Hon. E J Reyes:** Madam Speaker, if I may, because the Minister has now referred to a major differential with the internal areas: in previous questions I have been told that there are entities that run a commercial business using some of the internal areas and they were paying a fee, or rental or licence, or whatever. Can the Minister confirm that those arrangements still remain in place; in other words, that payments are being made – I take it this time probably to the GSLA – to what entity? Is the Minister is aware?

180 **Hon. L M Bruzon:** Madam Speaker, the GSLA is holding meetings with all of the affected individuals. In fact, I believe that one of those meetings is taking place as we speak.

**Madam Speaker:** Next question.

#### Q654/2024

#### Lathbury Sports Complex swimming pool – Cancellation of classes by GASA

185 **Clerk:** Question 654. The Hon. E J Reyes.

**Hon. E J Reyes:** What issues have led to the Gibraltar Amateur Swimming Association (GASA) having recently cancelled classes at Lathbury Sports Complex swimming pool, and by when are these problems expected to be resolved?

190 **Clerk:** Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Industrial Relations, Civil Contingencies and Sport.

195 **Minister for Industrial Relations, Civil Contingencies and Sport (Hon. L M Bruzon):** Madam Speaker, the filtration system at the Lathbury Complex swimming pool has suffered irreparable damage to both the primary and backup pumps. Spares have been ordered urgently. In the meantime, engineers are investigating possible interim solutions. The pool should be, hopefully, fully operational in the next few days.

200 **Hon. E J Reyes:** If I heard correctly, Madam Speaker, the Minister said it was irreparable, the filtration system. That leads me to ask, seeing that it is a new facility, is this system still under guarantee and going to be replaced under that guarantee, or is this an added expense that the Government will have to enter into; and, if so, what, more or less, is the ballpark figure of expected expenditure?

205 **Hon. L M Bruzon:** Madam Speaker, to date no moneys have been paid by the GSLA with regard to any repairs to the swimming pool.

**Hon. E J Reyes:** I know to date they have not paid anything, but my question was is it covered by guarantee, or if not, is there an estimate of how much it could end up costing?

210 **Hon. L M Bruzon:** Madam Speaker, I am not sure about the guarantee but I did ask this question today of the GSLA and I was told that they would not be paying for these repairs. I am not sure whether it is because of its guarantee but they will not be paying, apparently.

215 **Hon. E J Reyes:** I am grateful, Madam Speaker. I know the Minister is trying his best. I know I am always a bit finicky on this, but to be able to get an update on this, six months does seem rather a long time. It will be 2025 if I ask again. May I beg now that Madam Speaker be a bit lenient with me and allow me shortly, maybe in the next quarter or something, to have an update, to see if the filtration system has been fixed? I would appreciate an update at some stage.

220 **Madam Speaker:** If the question is phrased in a manner which does not infringe the six-month rule, then the question is allowed; otherwise, it will not be allowed.

225 **Chief Minister (Hon. F R Picardo):** Madam Speaker, I could not agree with you more. The hon. Gentleman has asked a question today about what happened. A question next month about the progress of the works that the hon. Gentleman has referred to the House would be a completely different question; there is no question of the six-month rule being engaged.

230 As Leader of the House, I have to protect all our rights and privileges, including theirs to ask a question. I do not think there is any need to raise the issue that he would not be able to ask the Hon. Minister until 2025. That is not what the Rules of this House provide. The Rules of this House are very clear and he can ask about those works the next month without having to beg anyone's indulgence, subject, of course, to the fact that you control every question.

**Madam Speaker:** Next question. Yes?

235 **Hon. D J Bossino:** Could I ask the Hon. the Minister what the cost of the interim measures are?

**Hon. L M Bruzon:** Madam Speaker, again, nothing has been paid.

240 **Hon. D J Bossino:** This about the interim measures, with the greatest of respect, which I assume are going to be put in place imminently because the Hon. the Minister says that the pool will be functioning in the next 48 hours. No?

245 **Hon. L M Bruzon:** I said 'hopefully'. Madam Speaker, I did not say 48 hours; I said hopefully in the next few days.

**Hon. D J Bossino:** When does he expect to have an idea of what the cost of the interim measures, which is what is going to give rise to the pool functioning in the next few days ...? When does he expect that that information will be available to him as the Minister?



250 **Hon. L M Bruzon:** Madam Speaker, I will say it again: there is no cost.

**Madam Speaker:** Next question.

**Q655/2024**  
**GSLA sports facilities –**  
**Allocations to team sports**

**Clerk:** Question 655. The Hon. E J Reyes.

255 **Hon. E J Reyes:** Can Government provide details of the number of hourly allocations given to team sports, broken down by sporting facility locations and associations to whom allocations were granted, at any of the premises falling under the auspices of the Gibraltar Sports and Leisure Authority monthly since June 2023 to date?

260 **Clerk:** Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Industrial Relations, Civil Contingencies and Sport.

**Minister for Industrial Relations, Civil Contingencies and Sport (Hon. L M Bruzon):** Madam Speaker, during June, July and August, allocations were granted to associations upon request via the facilities department at the GSLA, with the summer sports programme taking up most of the allocations during the summer months. Only the Gibraltar Amateur Basketball Association (GABBA) secured allocations during these months, with no other requests made from other associations.

265 I now hand over a schedule with allocations from 1st September 2024 until 31st May 2025, although I understand that this information is available in the statistics section of the GSLA website.

270

**Madam Speaker:** I propose that we move on to the next question and then revert to the hon. Member if he wishes to ask any supplementaries.

**ANSWER TO QUESTION 655**

Allocation	Day	Time	Game
Tercentenary Sports Hall Court 1	Monday	3.30 - 11.00pm	Basketball
	Tuesday	3.30 - 11.00pm	Basketball
	Wednesday	3.30 - 11.00pm	Netball
	Thursday	3.30 - 7.00pm	Basketball
		7.00 - 11.00pm	Netball
	Friday	3.30 - 11.00pm	Basketball
	Saturday	9.00 - 3.00pm	Basketball
		3.30 - 5.30pm	Netball
		8.30 - 11.00pm	Football
	Sunday	9.00 - 12.00pm	Basketball
	12.00 - 11.00pm	Football	
Allocation	Day	Time	Game
Tercentenary Sports Hall Court 2	Monday	3.30 - 11.00 pm	Volleyball
	Tuesday	3.30 - 11.00 pm	Volleyball
	Wednesday	3.30 - 11.00 pm	Netball
	Thursday	3.30 - 7.30 pm	Basketball
		7.00 - 11.00pm	Netball
	Friday	3.30 - 7.30 pm	Basketball
		7.30 - 11.00 pm	Volleyball
	Saturday	9.00 - 3.00 pm	Basketball
		3.30 - 5.30 pm	Netball
		5.30 - 8.30 pm	Volleyball
		8.30 - 11.00 pm	Football
	Sunday	9.00 - 12.00 pm	Basketball
	12.00 - 11.00 pm	Football	
Allocation	Day	Time	Game
St. Joseph's Lower School	Monday	6.00 - 8.30 pm	Gymnastics
	Tuesday	6.00 - 8.30 pm	Gymnastics
	Wednesday	6.00 - 8.30 pm	Gymnastics
	Thursday	6.00 - 8.30 pm	Gymnastics
	Friday	6.00 - 8.30 pm	Gymnastics
Allocation	Day	Time	Association / School
St. Joseph's Upper School - Sports Hall	Tuesday	6.45 - 9.45 pm	Jewish School Youth Club
	Wednesday	6.00 - 11.00 pm	Netball
	Thursday	6.00 - 11.00 pm	Netball
Allocation	Day	Time	Sport
St Bernard's	Monday	6.00 - 8.00 pm	Taekwondo
	Tuesday	6.00 - 11.00 pm	Basketball
	Wednesday	7.00 - 8.00 pm	Fitness Class
	Thursday	6.00 - 11.00 pm	Basketball
	Friday	6.00 - 8.00 pm	Taekwondo
Allocation	Day	Time	Sport
Westside School Sports Hall	Monday	6.00 - 11.00 pm	Netball
	Tuesday	6.00 - 11.00 pm	Netball
	Wednesday	6.00 - 11.00 pm	Volleyball
	Thursday	6.00 - 11.00 pm	Volleyball
	Friday	6.00 - 11.00 pm	Basketball

Cont...

**CONTINUED ANSWER TO QUESTION 655**

Allocation	Day	Time	Sport
Bayside School Sports Hall	Monday	6.00 - 11.00 pm	Basketball
	Tuesday	6.00 - 11.00 pm	Basketball
	Wednesday	6.00 - 11.00 pm	Netball
	Thursday	6.00 - 11.00 pm	Basketball
	Friday	6.00 - 8.30 pm	Basketball
Allocation	Day	Time	Sport
Bishop Fitzgerald School	Monday	6.00 - 11.00 pm	Netball
	Tuesday	6.00 - 11.00 pm	Netball
	Wednesday	6.00 - 11.00 pm	Netball
	Thursday	6.00 - 11.00 pm	Netball
	Friday	6.00 - 11.00 pm	Netball
Allocation	Day	Time	Sport
St Anne's School	Monday	6.00 - 11.00 pm	Basketball
	Tuesday	6.00 - 11.00 pm	Basketball
	Wednesday	6.00 - 11.00 pm	Basketball
	Thursday	6.00 - 11.00 pm	Basketball
	Friday	6.00 - 11.00 pm	Basketball
Allocation	Day	Time	Sport
Multi Use Games Area Court 1	Monday	3.30 - 11.00 pm	Netball
	Tuesday	3.30 - 11.00 pm	Netball
	Wednesday	3.30 - 11.00 pm	Basketball
	Thursday	3.30 - 11.00 pm	Netball
	Friday	3.30 - 11.00 pm	Netball
	Saturday	9.00 - 3.30 pm	Basketball
Allocation	Day	Time	Sport
Multi Use Games Area Court 2	Monday	3.30 - 11.00 pm	Netball
	Tuesday	3.30 - 11.00 pm	Netball
	Wednesday	3.30 - 11.00 pm	Basketball
	Thursday	3.30 - 11.00 pm	Netball
	Friday	3.30 - 11.00 pm	Basketball
	Saturday	9.00 - 3.30 pm	Basketball
Allocation	Day	Time	Sport
Europa Sports Hall Court 1	Monday	5.00 - 11.00 pm	Badminton
	Tuesday	6.00 - 11.00 pm	Badminton
	Wednesday	6.00 - 11.00 pm	Badminton
	Thursday	6.00 - 11.00 pm	Badminton
	Friday	3.30 - 8.30 pm	Gymnastics
	Saturday	9.00 - 3.30 pm	Gymnastics
		3.30 - 11.00 pm	Football
	Sunday	9.00 - 6.00 pm	Football
		6.00 - 11.00 pm	Badminton
Allocation	Day	Time	Sport
Europa Sports Hall Court 2	Monday	3.30 - 8.30 pm	Gymnastics
	Tuesday	3.30 - 8.00 pm	Gymnastics
	Wednesday	3.30 - 5.30 pm	Gymnastics
		6.00 - 11.00 pm	Badminton
	Thursday	3.30 - 8.00 pm	Gymnastics
	Friday	3.30 - 8.30 pm	Gymnastics
	Saturday	9.00 - 3.30 pm	Gymnastics
		3.30 - 11.00 pm	Football
	Sunday	9.00 - 6.00 pm	Football
	6.00 - 11.00 pm	Basketball	

**Q656/2024**  
**GSLA facilities –**  
**Fees paid by users in 2023-24**

**Clerk:** Question 656. The Hon. E J Reyes.

275

**Hon. E J Reyes:** Can Government provide a detailed breakdown in respect of all fees paid by users of any facilities falling under the auspices of the Gibraltar Sports and Leisure Authority during the financial year 2023-24, indicating the purpose of their usage, for example whether sporting, cultural or other types of events?

280

**Clerk:** Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Industrial Relations, Civil Contingencies and Sport.

**Minister for Industrial Relations, Civil Contingencies and Sport (Hon. L M Bruzon):** Madam Speaker, fees paid by users for facilities falling under the auspices of the Gibraltar Sports and Leisure Authority during the 2023-24 financial year are as follows: sporting events, £1,100; cultural events, £6,785.90; and community use for sports, £760.

285

**Hon. E J Reyes:** I am grateful that, Madam Speaker. Obviously the Minister has given me the total revenue, which I asked for. Does he have in his notes, for example in respect of cultural, which is the higher figure, £6,785.90, is that a payment for one event by one entity, or a number of events and entities that were involved in this? Does he happen to have that information?

290

**Hon. L M Bruzon:** Madam Speaker, I have a breakdown here, which I am happy to give the hon. Gentleman across the floor or behind the Speaker's Chair, whatever is convenient for him.

295

**Madam Speaker:** Across the floor or behind the Speaker's Chair?

**Hon. E J Reyes:** I am happy as long as *[Inaudible]*

300

**Hon. L M Bruzon:** Take my copy.

**Madam Speaker:** All right, let's move on and then, if necessary, we will revert to this.

**Q655/2024**  
**GSLA sports facilities –**  
**Allocations to team sports –**  
**Supplementary questions**

**Madam Speaker:** Are you ready with supplementaries to Question 655? All right, we are moving on to supplementaries to the previous question, Question 655.

305

**Hon. E J Reyes:** Thank you, Madam Speaker, for allowing us to return to that.

The schedule seems to be well detailed. I have a couple of minor points I wish to clarify. Towards the bottom of the first page, where the allocation premises refer to St Bernard's, for the record can we clarify whether that is premises within St Bernard's Primary School or St Bernard's Hospital? May I start with that?

310

**Hon. L M Bruzon:** Madam Speaker, I am not entirely sure. It does say taekwondo and basketball, but I will find out for him.

315 **Hon. E J Reyes:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. On the second page the Minister has kindly given us the information about the allocations at Europa Sports Hall court 1 and Europa Sports Hall court 2. There is no reference to the outdoor facility at the Europa Sports Park. He has detailed the internal part, which we know from the previous question is going to be passed on to the GSLA as from October. Before that, is it the case that it was not under the GSLA and he can identify who it was or how it works?

320 **Hon. L M Bruzon:** Madam Speaker, no, it was not under the GSLA and it is not under the GSLA again. The GSLA will be taking over the *indoor* areas from 1st October. This has never been under the GSLA, but I can try to get the information on the outdoor facilities and hope that someone has kept the records.

325 **Hon. E J Reyes:** Thank you, Madam Speaker, it would be extremely useful if the Minister is able to get the information because it raises the question ... If Europa sports halls are not being transferred to the GSLA till this coming October, yet the Minister has kindly provided information on what usage it has had ... I think he referred to the date of September. My question was asking from June 2023. Can the Minister enlighten us as to why information from June 2023 to September in his schedule ... It does not actually have a date, which would have been useful for future reference, but it seems to be those ... Is it September to June 2023 that is missing? And is this schedule starting from September 2023, or is it September 2024? I have no idea.

335 **Hon. L M Bruzon:** Madam Speaker, the question clearly says 'premises falling under the auspices of the Gibraltar Sports and Leisure Authority'. The Europa sports facilities have never fallen, technically, under the GSLA. Therefore, we have given him more information than he requested by giving information on the indoor halls. All I can do is ask the people who were running it at the time whether or not they also kept records. I assume they did not because it was being managed by the teams themselves.

340 **Hon. E J Reyes:** Yes, I am grateful to the Minister for that, but can I refer to ...? He gave me a date before and I unfortunately did not make a note of it. This schedule has given me now, with the answer to Question 655 ... Does this go all the way back to June 2023, or is it some other date that the Minister alluded to?

345 **Hon. L M Bruzon:** Madam Speaker, the schedule is from 1st September 2024 to 31st May 2025, but I did also say in my reply that the information he was seeking previously, and some of this as well, is available on the GSLA website.

350 **Madam Speaker:** Any supplementaries to Question 656? Next question.

## HOUSING AND THE UNIVERSITY

Q657-58/2024

Government hostels –

Department responsible; eviction of residents

**Clerk:** Questions to the Minister for Housing and the Gibraltar University. Question 657. The Hon. A Sanchez.

355 **Hon. A Sanchez:** Can the Government confirm which Department is responsible for the management and operation of the Government hostels located at Queen's Hotel and the Sunrise Motel?

**Clerk:** Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Housing and the Gibraltar University.

360 **Minister for Housing and the Gibraltar University (Hon. P A Orfila):** Madam Speaker, I will answer this question together with Question 658.

**Clerk:** Question 658. The Hon. A Sanchez.

365 **Hon. A Sanchez:** Can the Government confirm whether the individuals currently residing at the Government hostel located in the Queen's Hotel will be evicted at the end of this month; and, if so, where they will be relocated?

**Clerk:** Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Housing and the Gibraltar University.

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**Minister for Housing and the Gibraltar University (Hon. P A Orfila):** Madam Speaker, the Housing Department is responsible for the hostels and JT Security is subcontracted to be responsible for the management and operational aspects of the day-to-day running of the hostels.

375 I can confirm that no one will be evicted from the Queen's Hotel and that all existing licensees of the Queen's Hotel will be offered relocation to the Sunrise Motel by 31st October 2024.

**Hon. A Sanchez:** Madam Speaker, the Hon. Minister mentioned that private firm JT Security is responsible for the management of the hostel. Does this mean that the private security is also responsible for the upkeep maintenance of the hostel and ensuring that the hostel complies with environmental health and safety regulations and is also in charge of the rent collection and auditing?

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**Hon. P A Orfila:** Madam Speaker, JT Security is in charge of everything at the moment.

385 **Hon. A Sanchez:** Can the Hon. Minister clarify who monitors all of this to ensure that it is being done correctly and that the hostels are being managed adequately? Does the Housing Department merely subcontract these services and absolve itself of all responsibility? From what we saw when we visited these hostels, it was quite clear that the living conditions were far from pleasant, so could the Hon. Minister clarify who is making sure that the hostels are being managed appropriately?

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**Hon. P A Orfila:** Madam Speaker, the hostels, like I said, are now being managed by JT Security in its entirety. Of course we subcontract, but the Housing Department has a say in what is going on, and we certainly do look into what is going on.

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**Hon. A Sanchez:** Could the Hon. Minister confirm who holds the post of hostel manager?

**Hon. P A Orfila:** Madam Speaker, it is up to JT Security to employ their men. I cannot give a particular name. I know that JT Security are conducting the security and everything else involved with the hostels. They are actually taking care of it for us.

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**Hon. A Sanchez:** Could the Hon. Minister confirm the last time that rent was collected in the hostels?

405 **Hon. P A Orfila:** Last week, Madam Speaker. Rent is now being collected religiously and we are having a very good result. Thank you.

410 **Hon. A Sanchez:** Prior to last week, can the Hon. Minister confirm if there was a significant gap in rent collection? We have information that rent collection ceased for a significant period. We have seen the booklets of the residents that show that rent collection ceased for many months, not because the residents did not want to pay their rent but, in fact, because there was no one collecting rent for a significant period of time. Can the Hon. Minister confirm why nobody was managing the hostels, it seems, adequately and nobody was bothering to charge rent or audit rent collection?

415 **Hon. P A Orfila:** Yes, of course. Rent was not collected because we had Covid at the time and that was the reason why rentals were overlooked. We were going through very hard times and rents were overlooked.

420 **Hon. A Sanchez:** I understand that perhaps rent was overlooked during Covid, but they only started being collected last week. The information we have is that the first time that rent was collected was last week. We have seen the booklets.

425 **Hon. P A Orfila:** No, I am afraid that is not true. They had been paying rent already. You asked me when was the last time that the rent was collected. I said last week, but we had been collecting rent already.

**Hon. A Sanchez:** Can she clarify since when they have been collecting rent? That is not the information that we have been shown.

430 **Hon. P A Orfila:** Rent is being collected. Some people pay via direct debit, others pay physically, but the rent is being collected, and not just from last week or the week before that. We have had the rent being collected generally, yes; we have had rent being collected not just from two weeks ago.

435 **Madam Speaker:** The Hon. Mr Origo.

440 **Hon. G Origo:** Madam Speaker, if I may, the Hon. Minister – and she can correct me if I am wrong – in her reply mentioned that the current tenants residing in the Queen’s Hotel in a few months’ time will be offered licences at the Sunrise Motel, but what will happen if these tenants do not accept the licences for the move? What will the Government be doing then?

**Hon. P A Orfila:** It is not a question of accepting or not; we will terminate their licences.

445 **Hon. G Origo:** Madam Speaker, would the Hon. Minister then confirm that if these licences are rejected, at that point she will be minded to evict those tenants from the Queen’s Hotel?

450 **Chief Minister (Hon. F R Picardo):** Madam Speaker, eviction is not something that I think is relevant in the context of what we are discussing. We are talking about licensees, who do not hold tenancies. The process – from the point of view of the administrative process, from the point of view of the Government – is that we simply terminate the licence. Whether it is then necessary to take a different step thereafter if the individual does not comply with the termination of the licence is a matter that would be addressed at that time. In that sense, the hon. Gentleman’s question is a little bit hypothetical because he is seeking to assume failure to comply with a termination of a licence and a desire on the part of the person who is, in those circumstances, potentially not accepting the termination of the licence not to also accept the new licence offered

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in an alternative location. All of that, in my submission, Madam Speaker, is to set up a hypothetical question.

460 **Hon. Dr K Azopardi:** May I just ask on this issue, while we are on the subject of the people moving, or not, does the Minister have the numbers of people to whom the offer would be made currently in the Queen's Hotel, the capacity that there is in the Sunrise Motel and the number of people who are presently in the Sunrise Motel? Does she have that information?

465 **Hon. P A Orfila:** I am afraid this was not in my question. You can ask me that question at some other time.

470 **Hon. A Sanchez:** Madam Speaker, when we visited the Sunrise Motel, both the residents and the staff expressed concerns that it was almost, if not already, full. We were also shown communal areas that looked like they were being prepared and converted into shared sleeping areas. Could the Hon. Minister clarify if this the case, and perhaps, if she does not have the total number or capacity, at least allay our concerns in this regard?

475 **Hon. P A Orfila:** Well, look, Government takes a different view. We will adequately house everybody in the Queen's Hotel, when the time comes, into the Sunrise Hotel. Plans are already being laid for that.

**Madam Speaker:** Next question. It has been 10 supplementaries.

**Q659/2024  
Housing Act –  
Publication date**

**Clerk:** Question 659. The Hon. D J Bossino.

480 **Hon. D J Bossino:** When will the Housing Act be published?

**Clerk:** Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Housing and the Gibraltar University.

485 **Minister for Housing and the Gibraltar University (Hon. P A Orfila):** Madam Speaker, imminently. The Act is undergoing final pre-publication consideration.

**Hon. D J Bossino:** Is the Hon. the Minister confident that she will be able to comply with the electoral promises that the Act would be published within a year of being sworn into office?

490 **Hon. P A Orfila:** Madam Speaker, yes.

**Hon. D J Bossino:** Does she appreciate that she does not have much more time left?

495 **Chief Minister (Hon. F R Picardo):** Madam Speaker, we all understand the calendar.

**Hon. D J Bossino:** Is she able to advise this House what level of consultation there has been in relation to the production of the draft?

**Hon. P A Orfila:** Madam Speaker, considerable.



500 **Hon. D J Bossino:** With whom has she consulted?

**Hon. P A Orfila:** I would need notice of this question but I can assure you that there is a long list of stakeholders that I have been in touch with, and we have discussed very thoroughly.

505 **Hon. D J Bossino:** Is she able to state whether the Act deals with the issue of private rent control to premises, which, as she knows, is an issue which has caused a lot of concern to private landlords and was the subject of debate that she and I had on GBC television, I think about seven or eight months ago?

510 **Hon. P A Orfila:** Madam Speaker, yes.

**Hon. D J Bossino:** Is she able to provide any further details in relation to that particular issue? What is the Government's policy as to how they intend to deal with the rent control premises issue?

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**Hon. Chief Minister:** Madam Speaker, yes, upon publication of the Bill, when the hon. Gentleman will see the whole thing.

**Madam Speaker:** Next question.

**Q660/2024**

**Varyl Begg –**

**Residents' concerns re ongoing works**

520 **Clerk:** Question 660. The Hon. D J Bossino.

**Hon. D J Bossino:** Will the Minister for Housing consider addressing the concerns of Varyl Begg residents while the works there are progressing?

525 **Clerk:** Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Housing and the Gibraltar University.

**Minister for Housing and the Gibraltar University (Hon. P A Orfila):** Madam Speaker, I have only received one official concern and this was immediately addressed.

530 Construction works will inevitably create a certain amount of disruption to residents, which is unavoidable, but this is being kept to a minimum level. This refurbishment is for the benefit of all residents and will give the estate an extra 20-year lifespan, which will further benefit the taxpayer. I would like to take this opportunity to thank all the residents of Varyl Begg for their continuous support, patience and understanding.

535 Members will recall that the works done under the GSD were more of a superficial facelift, while we are undertaking a full, in-depth refurbishment, including the investment of millions of pounds in order to ensure that the environment in which our tenants live is massively upgraded. Unsurprisingly, we are criticised by hon. Members opposite when we invest in improving the lives of working people. We make no apology for making this important investment in this estate, as we have in others and will in many more.

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**Hon. D J Bossino:** With respect to the Hon. the Minister, it is not we who are criticising them, it is the residents whom we met on site who are criticising them in relation to the various issues which were the subject of the press release – and she, I am sure, is aware of them – dealing with

545 issues of parking, scaffolding which is there permanently and no works are being carried out, and all the rest of it.

There is one issue that I would like to raise with her, but before I do, may I ask her to state which one issue she says she has been in receipt of complaints about?

550 **Hon. P A Orfila:** Sorry, but like I said, we only had one complaint. We have no other complaints from anybody else. I can understand the hon. Gentleman's concern, but I do know that you were called by one person – and we both know who that one is – because one gentleman had to walk with his food shopping bag an extra 10 metres, or 5 metres, and he wanted things moved out of the way, to encumber somebody else and not himself. I think we both know what we are talking about here. This is hearsay. I have addressed the one concern that was given to me and they were  
555 relocated. They were given parking in Midtown, so it would put nobody off; they still have parking areas.

**Hon. D J Bossino:** The Hon. the Minister says it is hearsay; it is not hearsay, it is what the Hon. the Leader of the Opposition and I saw firsthand. We can give direct evidence in relation to the  
560 things that we saw, and we reported it by way of a press release so that everybody could understand the issues that residents there were facing. So, with the greatest of respect to her, again, it is not hearsay. Can I please ask her to answer the question that I posed to her? Which complaint did she receive? What was the subject matter?

565 **Chief Minister (Hon. F R Picardo):** And with the very greatest of respect to the hon. Gentleman, Madam Speaker, when somebody says what somebody else told them, that is hearsay. If the hon. Gentleman is telling us that *he* saw things which *he* is complaining about, then that is not a complaint of the residents; that is *his* view. So, when he is talking about the concerns of Varyl Begg residents as relayed by him in respect of what was said to him, that is obviously hearsay – and he  
570 will forgive me for not taking his word for anything, let alone what a constituent is said to have said to him.

**Hon. D J Bossino:** The Hon. the Chief Minister will forgive me for not taking *anything* he says – and he knows the position that I adopt – at face value. That is clear. That is my position and has  
575 been for a very long time now. But the Hon. the Minister to whom I am asking these questions, who is the Minister responsible for this area of policy ... I have asked her one question: what was the subject of the complaints? We have now tried on three occasions to elicit the response, and the hon. Member has not answered. They are going around the houses and are simply not dealing with the issue. What was the one issue which she says that she received a complaint about?

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**Hon. Chief Minister:** Madam Speaker, I fully respect the fact that the hon. Gentleman will not take anything that I say at face value. He has, at last, adopted of me the position that I have long had to take of him, let alone in respect of what he presents himself as.

585 I have no difficulty with the position that he has taken in the preface to his question. I invite him to look up the definition of 'hearsay' for himself and realise that he has once again made a big mistake in the way that he has referred to this House.

**Madam Speaker:** Question.

590 **Hon. D J Bossino:** Madam Speaker, I have not made a big mistake. This is evidence that we give based on what we *saw*.

**Madam Speaker:** We are not going to discuss the niceties of hearsay. Is there a question the hon. Member wishes to put to the Hon. Minister?

595 **Hon. D J Bossino:** It is the same question I have been putting, attempting to elicit a response  
from the Hon. Minister – and the Hon. Minister ought to be called to order because she is not  
providing the answer – which is what was the subject of the complaint that she received. This is  
now the fourth or fifth occasion that I have made an attempt at eliciting a response from the  
600 Government in relation to this, but it may be that the Chief Minister can enlighten us in relation  
to this issue.

**Madam Speaker:** I am not going to call the Hon. Minister to order, because the manner of  
answering the questions is a matter for Government Ministers. If there is one more question the  
605 hon. Member wishes to pose, I will allow it.

**Hon. D J Bossino:** May I ask the Hon. the Minister whether at least one of the issues which we  
raised and were able to establish ourselves directly was an issue, which is the access of  
ambulances – and that may be the complaint that has been raised; it is not, okay – to that area,  
which is now basically clogged by the headquarters of where the construction works are being  
610 conducted from? I think she knows where I mean; it is a block opposite Harbour Views. That issue  
raises a directive not of comfort, as she alleges, which to me actually shows how disconnected the  
hon. Member is, but actually of potential danger to residents. I think there was an incident which  
was reported recently in the press in relation to that. Can she at least state whether the  
Government intends to address that issue once and for all?

615 **Hon. P A Orfila:** That is not an issue.

**Hon. Dr K Azopardi:** May I understand why the Hon. Minister thinks it is not an issue? For  
example, we understand the issue in relation to ambulances to be that when they have access to  
620 this particular block, first of all they used to go around the block and get out to the Hospital; now  
they have to stop at a particular point and the concern was that because there is a barrier now,  
they cannot carry on going forward and they have to reverse their way out with a patient in the  
ambulance. I understand from residents that that has happened, so we were raising that issue  
constructively to see if that matter could be addressed by the removal of the ... Well, I think I am  
625 doing it constructively while the Chief Minister is in guffaws of laughter. I think anyone listening  
can hear the constructive tone. The removal of the barrier would at least have allowed  
ambulances not to have to reverse on their way out. That is one of the issues.

While I am on my feet, if I can also raise this: there is the deposit of the ... I do not know if the  
Minister wants to hear the question. There is also on the estate, very close to the blocks that are  
630 being worked on, the deposit of substantial amounts of cladding, which of course will be used for  
the particular blocks. It is clear from the way that the works are being rolled out that the cladding  
is not being used for some months. Is there not another location where these things could be  
placed, so that there could be parking facilities for the residents so that they do not have to carry –  
they are elderly citizens – their bags a long distance?

635 **Hon. Chief Minister:** Madam Speaker, I do not believe that it is constructive, if you want to  
achieve something, to issue a press release criticising the Government, because what you are  
doing, actually, is leveraging a matter for party political benefit. It is not constructive engagement  
with the Government. If you go to an estate and you are told things and you relay them to the  
640 Government – although that is clearly hearsay – by phoning the Minister and saying, ‘Look, I have  
been told this. Can you help?’ that is constructive. If you go and see something at the estate and  
you give direct evidence of that in a conversation with the Minister, whom you call and say, ‘Look,  
I have seen this, you may be concerned,’ that is constructive. If you issue a press release on those  
issues, you are not being constructive, you are being party political. We are both in parties. We  
645 are both in politics. It is fine to be party political. The issue is when you try to pretend that you are

not being party political, that you are being constructive, because you want to use the cloak of being the nice bloke to pretend that you are doing something which is different.

650 The reality is that we take advice from the experts who are carrying out the works and from the experts in the emergency services, and they do not share the view that there is any reason for concern about the way that the traffic flow may have to be altered for a short period at this estate, as it was altered at the other estates where we did fantastic work in the lifetime of previous Parliaments when we carried out the refurbishment and were subject to, in the lifetimes of those Parliaments, the self-same criticisms that we are hearing now from hon. Members who, if we were not doing the works, would be criticising us for not doing the works.

655 In the context of the cladding, where it is and how long it is going to be there, or whether it could be elsewhere, hon. Members have to realise, as they probably do, that Gibraltar is full of armchair managers of the GFA, armchair managers of Barcelona, Liverpool, Manchester United and England, and armchair chief ministers and armchair ministers – they know that, in particular the hon. Gentleman because he has been a Minister – and it is also full of armchair site managers, people who walk along a site and decide that they would do it in a different way. That may be something that hon. Members got comfortable with when they had a Chief Minister who was a much better manager of Manchester United, a much better site manager of any works going on in Gibraltar and a much better everything than everybody else. At the moment, with the humble Government that the people of Gibraltar have, this Chief Minister knows that he is not better at managing a site at Varyl Begg than the guy who is paid to do it, and this Minister knows that she is not better at managing a site at Varyl Begg than the guy who is being paid to do so. So, with the very greatest of respect to hon. Members, we are going to abide by the advice that we get from the emergency services and from our site managers.

**Procedure re parliamentary questions –  
Statement by Madam Speaker**

670 **Madam Speaker:** Before we move on to the next question on the Order Paper, Question 661, I just want to address a matter in relation to that question. For the avoidance of doubt, that question, which I allowed, talks about providing the addresses of the 17 properties being made available under the Rent and Repair Scheme. What I want to say relates to Government press releases issued on the subject matter of a question which has already been filed for answer at the upcoming session of Parliament. By way of context, there are two specific issues I want to highlight. One is in relation to this question and one is in relation to a subsequent question on the Order Paper, which I will come to in a moment.

675 In the first instance, in respect of Question 661, on 17th September the Government issued a press release which, by way of summary, stated that there were 17 properties subject to the Rent and Repair Scheme. On 18th September a question was filed in Parliament by the Shadow Minister for Housing asking for the addresses of those 17 properties. On 18th September at 3.05 p.m. the questions were sent by Parliament to the Parliament team at No. 6, and at 3.08 p.m. the questions were sent by Parliament to the Ministers directly. On 19th September a press release was issued by the Government which provided the addresses of the 17 properties, thus effectively dealing with the question filed for answer in this session.

680 The second instance I want to speak about relates to Question 679 on the Order Paper, filed by the Shadow Minister for, inter alia, Youth, but I am going to talk about it now because what I have to say relates to both questions. Question 679 was filed on Wednesday the 18th at 11.30 a.m. and it asked whether the Government had the intention of reintroducing the careers fair. In a press release issued on 24th September the Government announced that it would be running a careers fair in November, thus effectively dealing with the question filed for answer at this session.

Looking back on previous Speakers' rulings, I remind hon. Members that on 22nd February 2013, Speaker Canepa dealt with a similar issue thus:

Once notice of a question is given to the House, if the Government issues a press release on that subject matter, then, in effect, what you are doing is denying the right of Members of Parliament here to question, to hold the executive to scrutiny. That is wrong. It is a practice which in the House of Commons would be deprecated and I deprecate it. The practice should be for the Government not to issue such press releases unless they are matters which are absolutely urgent. I would enjoin upon the Government that they should be very, very conscious of that fact and try, if they can, not to issue press releases which are the subject of questions in the House unless something extraordinary happens, when I think everyone would accept that it would become necessary.

I endorse and adopt that view. That said, I do not ignore that there are new Members in the  
695 House who may have been unfamiliar with this rule of practice, and hence the issue of this  
guidance for the future going forward. For their benefit and for the avoidance of doubt, I  
summarise the position that there is a longstanding rule of practice that when a question has been  
filed it should not be addressed by way of a Government press release, statement, interview or  
700 other announcement save if it is a matter of urgency or pressing public interest, in which case  
exceptions may be made, but those exceptions do not displace the general rule. To bypass that  
rule would challenge the practice and very purpose of parliamentary procedure. I urge all  
Members going forward to be alive to and observe this important rule of parliamentary procedure  
and practice.

705 **Chief Minister (Hon. F R Picardo):** Madam Speaker, on behalf of the Government, we  
absolutely acknowledge that the statement that you have made is the correct position and is the  
position that the Government has abided by in every month in which we have had Question Time  
since that statement from Speaker Canepa, except on a number of occasions where we have had  
no choice but to make statements which relate to questions in the House.

710 In relation to the first question that you were addressing, which is the list of 18 properties, I  
had agreed the issue of the press release for reasons which I will set out now to the House, so that  
it has the information. I was not aware of the question on the careers fair. Perhaps the Minister  
for Education was, but when I cleared the question on the careers fair I was not aware that we  
had a question on it. I had not seen it yet, but the Minister might have. This was brought to my  
715 attention by the Hon. Minister herself on 19th September. Hon. Members will know what was  
going on, on 19th September. My life and the life of the Deputy Chief Minister were not Gibraltar  
centric on that day. They were Brussels centric. The Minister was very insistent, despite the fact  
that we were dealing with other matters, that we should agree the issue of this press release and  
I made a mental note, which I then forgot to action, which was to get in touch with the Hon.  
720 Mr Bossino – with whom the relationship is usually not as tense as it might be when we are across  
the floor of the House – just to mention to him that we had been put under extraordinary pressure  
by a lot of applicants to know what these addresses were. We had issued the press release on  
Rent and Repair and a lot of people were calling the Housing Department. It was literally collapsing  
the Department. For that reason, because of the public interest limb – and I think the Minister has  
725 already said that we have had over 500 people who have become interested in Rent and Repair –  
we agreed that those addresses should be published. This was a huge amount of public interest  
that was making the operation of the Department difficult, but we would not otherwise have done  
so. We abide by the convention footnote, whatever the Minister for Education may tell us about  
the careers fair, which I was not aware of, and I was simply remiss in not being in touch with the  
730 hon. Gentleman. As he knows, I came back, I did *Viewpoint*, and at some stage I also had to sleep  
and think. Otherwise, Madam Speaker, we entirely accept the ruling and the rebuke in the context  
of my not having explained to Members opposite, and indeed to the House, why we had agreed  
the publication of these addresses in the context of Question 661.

735 **Madam Speaker:** Thank you. I think that deals with Question 661. I accept the Hon. the Chief Minister's comments in relation to that and trust that Ministers will bear in mind the guidance going forward.

The Hon. Prof. Cortes.

740 **Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** Madam Speaker, thank you for that. I totally support your view and obviously the one of the Chief Minister. I was going to raise the issue when it came to the question, but I think it is appropriate that I should take it now.

745 Madam Speaker, the careers fair was being organised, as I will explain later, by different Ministries and different Departments and had a separate dynamic to this. The press release was issued by the Press Office. I had not had sight of the final one, and immediately I spotted it had been published I did communicate that this was going to be an issue and that I would raise it here. All I can do is apologise for that having happened, but I think it is important to point out that the action to organise the careers fair was not stimulated by the question. Meetings had been held since February. The venue was booked in March. So, the action was not in response to the question, but clearly the press release should at least have been cleared beforehand. I think the Press Office was not sighted on the question, otherwise I am sure it would not have been issued. We will make sure that this does not happen again.

750 **Madam Speaker:** I thank the Hon. Minister for his apology, which I accept entirely, and I simply ask that in the future greater vigilance be exercised.

**Q661-64/2024**

**Rent and Repair Scheme –**

**Addresses of properties; date when available; details of determining body;  
aspect of scheme for which tenant is responsible**

760 **Clerk:** Question 661. The Hon. D J Bossino.

**Hon. D J Bossino:** Please provide the addresses of the 17 properties being made available under the Rent and Repair Scheme.

765 **Madam Speaker:** Does the hon. Member still want the addresses, despite the fact that it is now in the public domain?

770 **Hon. D J Bossino:** The answer to that question is no, unless the Hon. the Minister was going to do anything other than provide the reply to the question in the very specific terms in which it was put. If she is going to put a bit more beef to the answer, then maybe she can be allowed to respond.

775 **Chief Minister (Hon. F R Picardo):** Madam Speaker, the only thing I would say is that the answer provides them – because they are public, and so they are their public, of course – but there is one more. There are 18. So, maybe for the sake of everyone's sanity and not having to read through something that has already been published (*Interjection*) – oh, there are 17, okay – we can just refer the hon. Gentleman to the list which he has in the wider answer, because the answer comes with the answer to all of the rest of his questions on Rent and Repair together. But there is no need for us to sit through the rereading.

780 **Hon. D J Bossino:** That is absolutely fine, but how will that be recorded for *Hansard* purposes? I have only eavesdropped the very brief remarks that the Hon. the Minister for Housing made to the Hon. the Chief Minister in relation to the number. Are we dealing with 17 or 18?

785 **Madam Speaker:** I will let the Hon. Minister answer the issue of the number, but I think what was whispered was that it was a typo and it was 17. I will let the hon. Member pursue that if he chooses.

In relation to the question of how it is going to be recorded for the purposes of *Hansard*: in the same way as all the other schedules that are handed to hon. Members on request. I am trying to avoid having to read through the whole list if it is unnecessary.

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**EXTRACT FROM HMGOG PRESS RELEASE 600/2024**

Flat number	Address	Location	Flat composition
14/10	South Barrack Road	South Area	3RKB
15/10	South Barrack Road	South Area	2RKB
3/1	Armstrong Steps	South Area	3RKB
1	18 Tarik Road, Prison Quarters	Upper Town	4RKB
4	18 Tarik Road, Prison Quarters	Upper Town	4RKB
5	18 Tarik Road, Prison Quarters	Upper Town	4RKB
6	18 Tarik Road, Prison Quarters	Upper Town	4RKB
7	18 Tarik Road, Prison Quarters	Upper Town	4RKB
2	2/4 Paradise Ramp	Upper Town	3RKB
7/59	Flat Bastion	Town	3RKB
3/59	Flat Bastion	Town	4RKB
3	21/25 Flat Bastion	Town	3RKB
4	9 Crutchett's Ramp	Town	3RKB
1	9 Crutchett's Ramp	Town	3RKB
5	9 Crutchett's Ramp	Town	3RKB
7	9 Crutchett's Ramp	Town	3RKB
8	9 Crutchett's Ramp	Town	2RKB
9	9 Crutchett's Ramp	Town	2RKB

795 **Madam Speaker:** Are there any supplementaries to Question 661?

**Hon. D J Bossino:** I do have a supplementary and it relates to the point that we have alluded to across the floor of the House. I asked for –

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

**Hon. D J Bossino:** Yes, of course.

805 **Hon. Chief Minister:** I think it would be easier for everyone, Madam Speaker, if the answer to Question 661 is taken together with Questions 662 to 664. I think it is probably better if we do all of them together and then – (*Interjection by Hon. D J Bossino*) Yes, because they are all about Rent and Repair, so I think it will save everyone's time if we do that.

**Clerk:** Question 662. The Hon. D J Bossino.

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**Hon. D J Bossino:** When will the 17 properties being made available under the Rent and Repair Scheme be made available?

**Clerk:** Question 663. The Hon. D J Bossino.

815 **Hon. D J Bossino:** Which body will determine who will be able to participate in the Rent and Repair Scheme and will the names of the determining body be published?

**Clerk:** Question 664. The Hon. D J Bossino.

820 **Hon. D J Bossino:** What aspect of the repair element of the Rent and Repair Scheme will be the responsibility of the tenant?

**Clerk:** Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Housing and the Gibraltar University.

825 **Minister for Housing and the Gibraltar University (Hon. P A Orfila):** Madam Speaker, there are 17 addresses and they have already been published, as we know, in a press release. I do not mind giving the list of the 17 addresses, if the hon. Gentleman wants me to. No, okay.

An open house is being held to enable the viewing of the properties. This commenced on Monday, 23rd September 2024 and viewing will continue until this Friday, 27th September 2024.  
830 Expressions of Interest will be collected and reviewed.

Everyone eligible to be on the housing waiting list is able to apply. Priority will, however, go to those already on the waiting list and those releasing other Government properties.

The determining body for allocation of the properties will be the Housing Allocation Committee.

835 Applicants will be responsible for all internal repairs and refurbishments to HMGoG standard.

I must add, Madam Speaker, that this exercise has been a huge success and my thanks go to my hardworking team at the Department.

840 **Hon. D J Bossino:** The Hon. the Minister has confirmed the number 17. It is the number which she set out in the initial press release, which is what provoked this question, but then in the press release which lists the properties I count 18. Can she clarify the difference? Is it that one of the properties which is listed in the second press release, of 19th September, will no longer be available?

845 **Hon. P A Orfila:** That was human error. It was a typo. It was one in Crutchett's Ramp which already was allocated to someone; it was someone's house. Obviously it was a typing error. It was just a typo. Okay?

850 **Hon. D J Bossino:** Okay. There are 6 in Crutchett's Ramp. They are all numbered 9. The thing is, four of them are 3RKBs and 2 of them are 2RKBs. Can she state which is the one that has been removed? One of the 3RKBs? In fact, no, there are flat numbers. I apologise. It makes my life and her life easier. Can she state which flat number is now no longer available? I think that would be of public interest.

855 **Hon. P A Orfila:** Madam Speaker, of course. If you check, it is 9 Crutchett's Ramp, Flat 4, and it was a 3RKB.

860 **Hon. D J Bossino:** When I asked in Question 662 when will the properties be made available, I think the answer was that they are currently being made available for viewing, but beyond that, when does she envisage that these properties will be identified to the successful applicants and then properly be made and titled? Well, not titled because title is remaining with the Government. Does she have a timeline within which the Government expects this process to be completed in relation to these 17 properties? I understand that the Government's policy position is that they will be making more properties available.



865 **Hon. P A Orfila:** We do not really know how long it is going to take, but maybe months, certainly  
not years.

870 **Hon. D J Bossino:** Is she also able to state with any manner of precision what she thinks will be  
the anticipated cost of the repairs to the successful tenants? If she is not able to provide that  
answer now, even a ballpark figure of what she expects is likely to be reasonable cost, whatever  
it is, is that information being provided to the tenants, and at what stage? In other words, is it  
being provided to those who are currently applying and want to benefit from this policy, or is it  
only being provided at the stage that the tenant is told, 'You are successful and it is going to cost  
you this'? At what stage will the tenants be provided with that information, which I would have  
875 thought would be crucially important before you proceed with that particular expenditure?

**Hon. Chief Minister:** Madam Speaker, I have to say to the hon. Gentleman, with the very  
greatest respect, I think that question is incapable of answer because a potential tenant – an  
applicant, if we can better call them that – might take one view about how much they are going  
880 to spend, and another tenant might take another view of how much they are going to spend, and  
there are 17 different properties (**A Member:** And 500 different applicants.) and 500 different  
applicants. The Government Housing Works Agency may take a view as to what their estimate of  
the cost of repairing that property may be to bring it up to our standard, which may be completely  
different to the view that the applicant has of what they are going to do, and the successful  
885 applicant, who will be one of 500, may be one who is going to spend more or is going to spend  
less, but the assessment is going to be made on the basis of the need of the applicant who is able  
to discharge the requirement to bring the property up to their standard. So, with the very greatest  
respect, I think that the hon. Gentleman's question is incapable of being answered in the way that  
he has set out. I think I can interpret his question in a particular way which might be capable of  
890 answer, but that is a matter for him, not for me.

**Hon. D J Bossino:** Yes, I appreciate that perhaps the way I put the question initially is very  
difficult to answer at this stage, but the Hon. the Chief Minister has said that the Government may  
have a view as to what the cost is, and I would have thought that likely to be better qualified to  
895 provide a more specific estimate in relation to the costs of repair, and the applicant may have  
another. At what stage is that discussion held? Is it at the stage of when I file the expression of  
interest? I simply do not understand. Presumably there must be a point where the cost estimates  
of one party and the other must be aligned, because the Government may say that property A  
requires expenditure of £50,000 but a confident applicant may say, 'I can do it for £1,000', and  
900 the Government may say, 'You are not going to be successful because this too low.' There must  
be a stage when the cost estimates must be aligned.

**Hon. Chief Minister:** No, Madam Speaker, I am afraid I do not agree with the hon. Gentleman  
at all. Of course, there will be work that will be required to be done. The Government will require  
905 that in relation to property X, for example, the person who becomes the successful applicant will  
do A, B or C, and indeed, knowing Gibraltarians as I do, Gibraltarians will do A, B, C, D, E, F, G, the  
television from here and all of the rest, which is exactly what we all do in our homes and is exactly  
what we want them to be able to do. So, we will require them to do things. The cost to  
Government of doing things is usually higher than the cost of an individual doing things, so we will  
910 not be saying, 'If you are not prepared to spend £30,000, you will not get this property in  
Crutchett's Ramp.' We will be saying, 'In order to get this property in Crutchett's Ramp, you have  
to satisfy us that you are going to deal with A, B and C, at your cost, to the standard,' but no doubt  
people will be doing that and more. They may be able to do it for considerably less than we can  
do it but just as well, and therefore I think the hon. Gentleman is getting his metric wrong, and  
915 that is why I cannot agree with the way that he is posing his question.

920 **Hon. D J Bossino:** Is the Hon. the Minister able to ...? I ask this by way of seeking a confirmation from her, because I think that there may have been confusion created by the interview that she gave on GBC when she was interviewed following the publication of the list of properties. She is smirking. Can I ask her this: is it the position that it is possible, it is Government's policy, that applicants can be drawn from outside the housing waiting list? Is that the case? I always understood that the pool of applicants would be exclusively from that category, but as I understood it, she was then opening it out. Is that not the case?

925 **Hon. P A Orfila:** Madam Speaker, this has been an eye opener, really. I was not expecting 500-plus. The telephone lines collapsed, the emails were flooding in, and they were all applicants. I said that maybe on hindsight, and I just suggested that maybe – I said maybe – if we do not get any applicants and there are people out of the housing waiting list who want to apply, they may do so, and I did say in my interview that that is not possible anymore; I do not think it is going to  
930 be the case.

**Hon. Chief Minister:** Only because he was telling you it was going to be so unsuccessful.

935 **Hon. P A Orfila:** Yes, I did doubt myself. I did doubt the scheme completely after having heard you talking so negatively, doom and gloom. I thought, 'This is definitely not going to succeed.' It has been overwhelming.

**Hon. D J Bossino:** I am chuffed to see that the Hon. Minister listens to me and I am almost influential on this side of the House as to what Government policy is going to be.

940 The hon. Member, as I understand it, is saying that she considered the possibility of opening it out, thinking that the response was not going to be successful – but it has been hugely successful – and that the 500 or so applications which her Department has received are taken exclusively from the housing waiting list, if right. May I ask this, again by way of confirmation: can she say that the property, if you are a successful applicant and you enter into personal expenditure in repairing it,  
945 will only ever be available to you for renting from the Government? Have I expressed the policy accurately and does that policy remain?

**Hon. Chief Minister:** No, Madam Speaker.

950 **Hon. D J Bossino:** I am very surprised by that answer because I thought, unless I have explained it incorrectly, that that was the Government's position, that the Government would always retain those properties as part of its housing rental stock. Therefore, the successful applicant could only ever rent from the Government and never receive title on it, but the Hon. the Chief Minister is saying no to that proposition. Can he explain why that is the case? Indeed, has the Government  
955 changed its policy in relation to this?

**Hon. Chief Minister:** No, Madam Speaker, the hon. Gentleman has changed his question. His question was will it only ever be available to rent to the person who has repaired it; that is the question I answered no to. In other words, that person who rents today on the terms of rent and relief might, for some reason, in the future become a Government pension property tenant when  
960 their family goes, or they might decide to buy in 50/50, or they might have a much larger family and need a larger property and they could go on the housing waiting list and go somewhere else. That property is not theirs to continue to own if they have moved on elsewhere on the housing waiting list. That is why the answer to the question that the hon. Gentleman posed was no, but  
965 he then got up and asked something else, which was 'Will the Government continue to own the property?' That is a different question, because the Government can take a different view after the tenant who has done the Rent and Repair has moved on – because they have wished to, because they have passed away, or because they have, in all the circumstances that we can

970 imagine and not imagine, moved on to a different Government property. That is the issue, Madam  
Speaker. The Rent and Repair will be set out in a document, and the terms of it will be set out very  
clearly.

975 **Hon. D J Bossino:** The Hon. the Chief Minister is, in his usual word salad ... It may be very clear  
in his mind. Look, it is not clear in my mind. A very simple question and I will ask it in a different  
way – a third different way: is it the position that I, as a successful applicant under this Rent and  
Repair Scheme, can own the property I am given under this scheme, or I repair it but I continue to  
rent from the Government irrespective of what I then do? Is that the position, that I can only rent  
from the Government, the title can never pass to me and I can never own the property? Is that  
the position? Yes or no?

980 **Madam Speaker:** That question borders on the hypothetical as to whether you could ever own  
the property.

985 **Hon. D J Bossino:** No, it does not.

**Hon. Chief Minister:** It does border on the hypothetical, Madam Speaker, you are absolutely  
right. *(Interjection by Hon. D J Bossino)* I can give the hon. Gentleman – *(Interjection by Hon. D J  
Bossino)*

990 **Madam Speaker:** Just a minute.

**Hon. D J Bossino:** I will explain the position. It is not a hypothesis. It is investigating further and  
putting the Hon. Minister on enquiry and asking her to provide a confirmatory yes or no. I would  
have expected the hon. Member to have said yes, the position of the Government –

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**Madam Speaker:** If the hon. Member is asking whether that person could ever own the  
property under any circumstance, that is hypothetical and that is how I am viewing that question.  
If the question is framed differently, then it is framed differently, but the question was, 'Can I ever  
own that property?' That is a hypothetical question.

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**Hon. Chief Minister:** Madam Speaker, if I can assist the House – *(Interjection by Hon. D J  
Bossino)*

1005 **Madam Speaker:** Just a minute. *(Interjection by Hon. D J Bossino)* No, just a minute, please.

**Hon. Chief Minister:** Madam Speaker, if I can assist the House and hopefully the hon.  
Gentleman, this is going to do what it says on the tin, and what it says on the tin is Rent and Repair.  
You are absolutely right that a different Government might take a different view, and so looking  
at the hypothesis of what might happen in the future is impossible, but in our scheme you will  
only be able to rent, because that is what it says on the tin, that is what you are going to sign up  
for, and that is what we have said is our position in respect of post-war properties.

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On pre-war properties, we have a different policy. Some of these properties are pre-war  
properties, but they have been put into the *Rent* and Repair Scheme, and so this not 'Buy from  
us,' this is not 'Repair, and we will sell to you,' this '*Rent* and repair'. I am surprised, Madam  
Speaker, that we are taking quite so long and the hon. Gentleman feels the need to penetrate  
further on the thing that is the first word in the title of the scheme that we are pursuing.

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**Madam Speaker:** We are going to move on. There have been nine supplementary questions  
on this, so we are going to move on.

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**Hon. D J Bossino:** Madam Speaker –

**Madam Speaker:** We are going to move on.

1025 **Hon. D J Bossino:** There were five questions bunched up together.

**Madam Speaker:** We are moving on from *this* question, from this subject. If there is another supplementary question on the other questions then the hon. Member can put it, but not on this subject.

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**Hon. D J Bossino:** Madam Speaker, the hon. Member has the last word. The reality –

**Madam Speaker:** I am not interested in who has the last word. (*Interjection by Hon. D J Bossino*) I have ruled – (*Interjection by Hon. D J Bossino*) Order, please! (*Interjection by Hon. D J Bossino*) I have – (*Interjection by Hon. D J Bossino*) Order, please! Can we just calm down? I have ruled that there are going to be no more supplementary questions on the issue of ownership vis-à-vis rent. If the hon. Member has any other supplementary questions on this, I will allow a reasonable number because we have already had nine on one question.

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1040 **Hon. D J Bossino:** Yes I do, and –

**Madam Speaker:** I would also ask hon. Members that when the Chair is speaking, please contain yourselves and remain seated and silent.

1045 **Hon. D J Bossino:** I do. Madam Speaker, in relation to the cost element, the concern that I have is whether there will be any expenditure on the part of the Government in relation to the infrastructure surrounding these properties. The Hon. the Minister knows that where this, in effect, started was in the Road to the Lines area, which has gone from one Ministry to another and all the rest of it; now I think it is with the Hon. the Minister for Economic Development, and there are no questions in the Order Paper on this occasion but there may be in the future, so I do not want to go into that. As I understand it, looking at it from the outside, the issue when you are dealing with the old Town area is that there will be a significant infrastructural cost to the Government. Can the Hon. Minister please state by way of confirmation, ergo capable of a yes or no response, I would say, that the Government will be the party which will be responsible for all the infrastructure works which will inevitably have to be undertaken in respect of these properties?

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**Hon. Chief Minister:** Madam Speaker, I do not know which part of the hon. Member's first answer the hon. Gentleman did not understand; perhaps he is going to accuse her of a word salad too. Frankly, just to adopt things that the hon. Gentleman has heard the Republican Party accuse the Democratic nominee in the United States of doing is not edifying. The hon. Member said this: 'Applicants will be responsible for all internal repairs and refurbishments to HMGoG standards.' That is what they are going to be responsible for.

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Responsibility for infrastructure in Gibraltar is our responsibility. When people buy from the Government, they take an obligation in respect of infrastructure works, usually the connection to the sewer, the connection to the main etc., but as I have told the hon. Gentleman in answer to his question a few moments ago, this is about rent, not buying. The obligation to do works in respect of infrastructure is in leases when people buy from the Government. That is not the situation that we are dealing with here. I hope that the words I have used have been organised in a manner that the hon. Gentleman has been able to understand, whether he considers them worthy of a salad or not. One is left with the view, Madam Speaker, that hon. Members want to come here being

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the ones who write out the questions and write out the answers, but I hope he has understood the position.

1075 **Hon. D J Bossino:** Yes would have been fine. Can the Hon. the Minister state, in relation to these properties, whether she has an idea of what the cost to the Government will be to have the infrastructure in such a place that the successful individuals will be able to walk in and reside in these properties? This will be a significant issue, not just in relation to cost but also in relation to delay, and also, thirdly, it will have an impact on the expectations of these people who she says  
1080 have been so eager to participate in the scheme and will want to be advised about.

**Hon. Chief Minister:** Madam Speaker, in my capacity as Minister for Public Finance, I have been advised by the Minister for Housing that infrastructure works will not be required to be paid for from the public purse or indeed from the potential renters in respect of these properties, as  
1085 infrastructure works, I am told, are not likely to be necessary at all.

**Hon. D J Bossino:** Yes, I am grateful. Can the Hon. the Minister for Housing, who is responsible for this area, state how many more properties she envisages will form part of the scheme? The press release of 17th September said that many more would be made available, so I would ask her ... I will correct that for the sake of the record: she did not say many more, she said more. Can  
1090 she state how many? Does she have a figure in mind?

**Hon. P A Orfila:** Madam Speaker, first of all, I do not think I said many more. I am sure there are some more. *(Interjection by Hon. D J Bossino)* Okay. When the time comes, you will be the first  
1095 to know. The hon. Member will be informed immediately.

**Hon. D J Bossino:** Well, presumably we will be the first to know because we will read it in the press, so we will ask questions about the matter and we –

1100 **Madam Speaker:** Is there another question?

**Hon. D J Bossino:** Did this policy – which, as far as I can see, but the hon. Member can correct me if I am wrong – form part of the electoral pledge; in other words, the manifesto? I raise this point because of this issue: is it in any way different to the pledge that they had on page 93 under  
1105 the heading Upper Town Affordable Housing, where it said, amongst other things, ‘All housing stock will be refurbished and will be sold to registered Gibraltarians’? Is that a separate policy or is this a replacement of that policy? Can she clarify and edify us on this side of the House in relation to those two points?

1110 **Hon. Chief Minister:** Madam Speaker, it is a separate policy, but I am surprised that the hon. Gentleman thinks that we are here – *(Interjection by Hon. D J Bossino)* Yes, absolutely. Madam Speaker, I am surprised by the anger that the hon. Gentleman seems to bring to this Question Time, to tell you the truth; but anyway, never mind, that is a matter entirely for him. Passion is one thing, Madam Speaker; anger is quite another. *(Interjection by Hon. D J Bossino)*

1115 **Madam Speaker:** Let’s not discuss emotions any further. *(Interjection)*

**Hon. Chief Minister:** I agree, Madam Speaker. We are not answerable for the General Election here; we are answerable for the policy of the Government. We have announced the policy of the  
1120 Government and we have now confirmed to him that it is a different policy in any event.

**Madam Speaker:** Next question.

**Q665/2024**  
**Housing Allocation Scheme –**  
**Publication of amended rules**

**Clerk:** Question 665. The Hon. the Leader of the Opposition.

1125 **Hon. Dr K Azopardi:** Madam Speaker, will the Government publish the amended rules of the Housing Allocation Scheme?

**Clerk:** Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Housing and the Gibraltar University.

1130 **Minister for Housing and the Gibraltar University (Hon. P A Orfila):** Madam Speaker, yes, the Government will publish the Housing Allocation Scheme.

1135 **Hon. Dr K Azopardi:** Would the Minister be able to indicate when that will happen? I believe that they have already been revised and so on. Does she intend to do that ahead of the Act or shortly thereafter?

**Hon. P A Orfila:** Madam Speaker, I think I will have a conversation with the hon. Member behind the Speaker's Chair.

1140 **Madam Speaker:** Next question.

**Chief Minister (Hon. F R Picardo):** I think, without delving into emotions, this might be a convenient moment for bodily functions, and I would invite the House to recess for 15 minutes.

1145 **Madam Speaker:** All right, we will recess for 15 minutes.

*The House recessed at 4.35 p.m. and resumed its sitting at 4.50 p.m.*

**JUSTICE, TRADE AND INDUSTRY**

**Q666/2024**  
**Parking fines against foreign-registered vehicles –**  
**Enforcement**

**Clerk:** Questions to the Minister for Justice, Trade and Industry.  
Question 666. The Hon. J Ladislaus.

1150 **Hon. J Ladislaus:** Madam Speaker, how is the enforcement of parking fines against foreign-registered vehicles that have committed violations in Gibraltar being undertaken?

**Clerk:** Answer the Hon. the Minister for Justice, Trade and Industry.

1155 **Minister for Justice, Trade and Industry (Hon. N Feetham):** Madam Speaker, both the Royal Gibraltar Police and Gibraltar Car Parks Ltd are responsible for issuing parking tickets for parking traffic violations. Any foreign vehicle committing a parking offence is clamped and issued with a parking ticket. The clamping of the vehicle happens in order to ensure that the driver or rider who is not resident in Gibraltar meets the payment of the fines.

1160 **Hon. J Ladislaus:** I am grateful and I appreciate that my question does not stretch to what I am about to ask, but perhaps the Hon. Minister may have the answer to hand. Is the Hon. Minister aware of how other driving violations are being dealt with in respect of foreign vehicles?

1165 **Hon. N Feetham:** No, Madam Speaker, I do not have that information. The question was specifically phrased in relation to parking. If the hon. Member wishes to give notice and table a question, then we will come back with the relevant answers. Thank you.

**Madam Speaker:** Next question.

**Q667/2024**  
**Royal Gibraltar Police –**  
**Towing service**

**Clerk:** Question 667. The Hon. J Ladislaus.

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**Hon. J Ladislaus:** Madam Speaker, does the RGP currently have use of a tow truck?

**Clerk:** Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Justice, Trade and Industry.

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**Minister for Justice, Trade and Industry (Hon. N Feetham):** Madam Speaker, yes.

**Hon. J Ladislaus:** Madam Speaker, is that tow truck part of the RGP's fleet of vehicles, or is it leased from a private company?

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**Hon. N Feetham:** Madam Speaker, I am informed that the RGP has access to the towing service provided through Gibraltar Parking Management Services Ltd.

**Hon. J Ladislaus:** I am grateful. Is there a formal contract in place in respect of that leasing?

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**Hon. N Feetham:** Madam Speaker, I understand the answer to the question is yes, but I defer to my hon. colleague the Minister for Transport if the information that I have just provided is incorrect.

**Madam Speaker:** Any further supplementaries?

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**Hon. J Ladislaus:** Yes, Madam Speaker: is the leased tow truck operated by RGP officers or is it operated by employees of Car Parks Ltd?

**Hon. N Feetham:** Madam Speaker, I understand it is operated by the company.

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**Hon. J Ladislaus:** Has there always been a tow truck available for those employees to operate on behalf of the RGP, or has there been a gap in service in, say, the past six to 12 months?

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**Hon. N Feetham:** Madam Speaker, that precedes my time in office. I believe there are some legacy issues, but it is not something which I am dealing with as the Minister for Justice. Perhaps the hon. Member the Minister for Transport can elaborate further.

**Minister for Education, the Environment and Climate Change (Hon. Prof. J E Cortes):** Madam Speaker, no, I am not aware of the arrangements before it was passed over to Car Parks, which

comes under my responsibility. I am not aware of what arrangements there were with the RGP in the period that the hon. Member is alluding to. It is information which I am sure can be sought if the question is asked.

**Madam Speaker:** Next question.

**Q668-71/2024**

**Sex offenders –**

**MAPPA training; number of dedicated risk managers monitoring;  
numbers resident in Gibraltar; legislation to allow limited access to Sex Offenders Register**

1205 **Clerk:** Question 668. The Hon. J Ladislaus.

**Hon. J Ladislaus:** Madam Speaker, how often is specialist training relating to Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA) being delivered in Gibraltar to designated risk managers? When was the most recent training in this regard delivered and by whom?

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**Clerk:** Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Justice, Trade and Industry.

**Minister for Justice, Trade and Industry (Hon. N Feetham):** Madam Speaker, I will answer the question together with Questions 669 to 671.

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**Clerk:** Question 669. The Hon. J Ladislaus.

**Hon. J Ladislaus:** Madam Speaker, how many dedicated risk managers are there currently in Gibraltar managing and monitoring those who have been convicted of sexual offences and are subject to monitoring requirements?

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**Clerk:** Question 670. The Hon. J Ladislaus.

**Hon. J Ladislaus:** How many registered sex offenders are there currently residing in Gibraltar?

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**Clerk:** Question 671. The Hon. J Ladislaus.

**Hon. J Ladislaus:** Does the Government plan to introduce legislation or a scheme similar to the Child Sex Offender Disclosure Scheme in England and Wales, otherwise known as Sarah's Law, or the Keeping Children Safe Scheme in Scotland, which allows for limited access to the Sex Offenders Register?

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**Clerk:** Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Justice, Trade and Industry.

**Hon. N Feetham:** Madam Speaker, with respect to Question 668, MAPPA training for designated risk managers is delivered annually. The most recent training relating to MAPPA was delivered in March 2024. The training was delivered by Marcela Leonard of Leonard Consultancy, along with her associates Gareth McGibbon of McGibbon Consultancy and Duncan Sheppard of Sheppard Associates.

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With respect to Question 669, there are nine designated risk managers currently in Gibraltar managing and monitoring persons convicted of sexual offences. Furthermore, there are four qualified designated risk managers who provide assistance when required.

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With respect to Question 670, there are 28 registered sex offenders currently residing in Gibraltar: 24 out in the community and 4 remanded in His Majesty's Prison.

1245 With respect to Question 671, this is a subject that I understand has been considered by Government in recent years. I am advised that the position taken, based on advice from relevant professionals, was that no such legislation should be introduced, due to the small size of our community and the potential risk for the offenders' information to be shared. It is a live issue that I understand is reviewed on an ongoing basis. Notwithstanding this, I am informed that registered sex offenders who are managed are encouraged by their designated risk manager to provide disclosures to employers or partners themselves if the manager identifies risks. If a stakeholder has a legitimate concern, a request can be made to authorise a disclosure to the affected parties without the offender's consent. At the time, this was considered a measured alternative.

1255 **Hon. J Ladislaus:** Madam Speaker, I am going to ask supplementaries on Question 671 specifically. I take the point that Gibraltar is a small jurisdiction. In fact, I expected that that would be the response as to why we do not have one. Nevertheless, is the Minister aware that the scheme in the UK allows for disclosure only in very specific and very limited circumstances? Could that scheme not be adapted to suit the needs of our community?

1260 **Hon. N Feetham:** Madam Speaker, the Government can only take advice from those who are better placed than we are, and certainly the advice that we are getting is that the scheme is not necessary in the context of the community. It is a small community, as I have just said. I met one of the stakeholders this morning and I put it to him. He is an adviser to the Justice Ministry, a consultant with huge experience and knowledge of similar schemes operating in other jurisdictions, specifically those that do have a register. I am quoting from the notes that I took pursuant to these discussions. He said Sarah's Law is not a silver bullet, it is just a tool. Small communities such as Gibraltar can end up policing themselves, which presents other significant risks. He said Gibraltar has an excellent multi-agency approach that is the envy of the other Overseas Territories that certainly he has been involved in, in terms of consultancy services that he has provided. I take the advice as being that this not something that certainly he or others have recommended to the Government or even attempted to put a case forward to the Government and to my Justice Ministry.

1275 **Hon. J Ladislaus:** I am grateful. Again, I take the point about the community policing itself and there being a risk, but doesn't that fall on protection of convicted offenders rather than on protection of victims of these offenders? How does the Hon. Minister suggest that individuals who have issues as to whether their child or a child close to them should be in the presence of someone who could have such convictions ...? How would information be passed on to this individual?

1280 **Hon. N Feetham:** I think I attempted to answer that when I answered the question originally. There are circumstances in which the Police can disclose the information to relevant individuals, Madam Speaker. I stand by the answer that I have given and I stand by the advice that I have received as the Minister with responsibility for justice.

1285 **Hon. J Ladislaus:** Just one final question. When the Minister refers to relevant individuals, is that relevant individuals as part of an organisation, or can that be just a member of the public?

1290 **Hon. N Feetham:** That could be anyone who has an interest in the subject matter, Madam Speaker.

**Hon. Dr K Azopardi:** On Questions 670 and 669, am I right in my understanding that dedicated risk managers are presumably police officers? I am not sure if the Hon. Minister has that, but in terms of those individuals, I assume that they are not ... He said that they have nine dedicated risk

1295 managers. Presumably they are not full time doing this job, but perhaps he can clarify. There are  
28 registered sex offenders in Gibraltar, he mentioned in answer to Question 670. How does that  
work in terms of the dedicated risk managers? Does he know whether they have some assessment  
into lower-risk, medium-risk and higher-risk individuals? Is that the kind of thing that those risk  
managers do?

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**Hon. N Feetham:** Madam Speaker, I have a breakdown of the DRMs per agency and I am happy  
to share that with the hon. Member. I am advised that within the Royal Gibraltar Police there are  
three DRMs; Probation Service, two; Care Agency, one; His Majesty's Prison, two; and the  
Gibraltar Health Authority, one. There are four other DRMs which I have also mentioned, and  
these are broken down as follows: Care Agency, one DRM for risk assessment tools for persons of  
low IQ and learning difficulties – this the information that I have been given and I am just quoting;  
Care Agency, one DRM for cases involving risk assessments for juveniles; and the Royal Gibraltar  
Police, two further DRMs, and these are officers who expressed an interest in the subject.

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In terms of his second question, Madam Speaker, perhaps the Hon. Leader of the Opposition  
can table a specific question. I am very happy to provide the answer, but I do not have that  
information with me.

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**Madam Speaker:** Next question.

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#### Q672/2024

#### Domestic abuse –

#### Legislation re disclosure of previous abusive or violent offending

**Clerk:** Question 672. The Hon. J Ladislaus.

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**Hon. J Ladislaus:** Madam Speaker, does the Government plan to introduce legislation similar  
to the Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme in England and Wales, otherwise known as Clare's  
Law, and the Disclosure Scheme for Domestic Abuse Scotland, which would enable the RGP to  
disclose information to a victim or potential victim of domestic abuse about their partner or  
former partner's previous abusive or violent offending?

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**Clerk:** Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Justice, Trade and Industry.

**Minister for Justice, Trade and Industry (Hon. N Feetham):** Madam Speaker, in response to  
the question, His Majesty's Government of Gibraltar is not currently seeking to bring legislation at  
this time because I am advised that the Royal Gibraltar Police and/or any of the strategic partners  
can disclose information to victims or potential victims in appropriate circumstances.

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**Hon. J Ladislaus:** I ask much the same question as in respect of the previous scheme: can  
anybody from the public make an inquiry, or is it just that the RGP will consider when to make  
that disclosure themselves?

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**Hon. N Feetham:** Madam Speaker, if the hon. Member can table notice of that question, I will  
endeavour to provide the information. I do not have that specific information here with me.

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**Madam Speaker:** Next question.

**Q673-74/2024**  
**Income and Company Tax –**  
**Amounts collected in June, July and August 2024**

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

**Hon. R M Clinton:** Madam Speaker, can the Government advise the amount of Income Tax collected in the following months: June 2024, July 2024 and August 2024?

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**Clerk:** Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Justice, Trade and Industry.

**Minister for Justice, Trade and Industry (Hon. N Feetham):** Madam Speaker, I will answer this question together with Question 674.

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

**Hon. R M Clinton:** Can the Government advise the amount of Company Tax collected in the following months: June 2024, July 2024 and August 2024?

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**Clerk:** Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Justice, Trade and Industry.

**Hon. N Feetham:** Madam Speaker, the amount of Income Tax collected for the months of June 2024, July 2024 and August 2024 is as follows: June 2024, £23.76 million; July 2024 £24.34 million; August 2024, £20.33 million.

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The amount of Company Tax collected for the months of June 2024, July 2024 and August 2024 is as follows: June 2024, £0.38 million; July 2024, £1.56 million; August 2024, £2.71 million.

**Madam Speaker:** Next question.

**Q675-76/2024**  
**Removal from EU grey list –**  
**Talks re process; European Commission conditions**

**Clerk:** Question 675. The Hon. the Leader of the Opposition.

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**Hon. Dr K Azopardi:** Madam Speaker, has Government had discussions with the European Commission, directly or via the UK, following the June 2024 European parliamentary elections, on the process to achieve the removal of Gibraltar from the EU so-called grey list given the FATF's reclassification of Gibraltar earlier this year?

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**Clerk:** Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Justice, Trade and Industry.

**Minister for Justice, Trade and Industry (Hon. N Feetham):** Madam Speaker, I will answer this question together with Question 676.

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**Clerk:** Question 676. The Hon. the Leader of the Opposition.

**Hon. Dr K Azopardi:** Is the European Commission now placing, seeking or intimating any conditions on the removal of Gibraltar from the EU so-called grey list given the FATF's reclassification of Gibraltar earlier this year?

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**Clerk:** Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Justice, Trade and Industry.

1385 **Hon. N Feetham:** Madam Speaker, the Government has not had contact with the Commission, either directly or via the UK, on the process to achieve the removal of Gibraltar from the EU so-called grey list since the European elections took place earlier this year.

As far as the Government is aware, the Commission is not placing, seeking or intimating any further conditions on the removal of Gibraltar from the EU so-called grey list. That said, I refer to my response provided to the Hon. Member to Question 465/2024, that on 31st May 2024 the Government received an unequivocal written assurance from the European Commissioner for Financial Services, Mairead McGuinness, confirming that 'the Commission remains committed to delist Gibraltar from the EU list as soon as possible and to engage with Gibraltar on the fight against money laundering and terrorism financing'. This letter followed from the resolution adopted by the European Parliament on 23rd April 2024, in which it objected, under pressure from actors having an agenda on the economic destabilisation of Gibraltar, to the adoption of the European Commission's Delegated Act of 14th March 2024 in which the Commission decided to remove Gibraltar from the EU list of high-risk third-party countries. In the same letter, the Commissioner informed that the Commission will 'have to present a new Delegated Act' in order to once again seek to have Gibraltar's removal from this list formalised.

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**Hon. Dr K Azopardi:** Madam Speaker, I am grateful to the Minister for reminding us of the Commission's letter of May. The reasons for the question were twofold. One was to ask for an update on whether there had been any discussions following the European parliamentary elections; the Minister has confirmed there have not been. The second was because the Minister may have seen, as I have, reports in the press where an official was quoted as saying that perhaps there might be conditions attached, so I was trying to probe whether that information was verifiable in terms of any discussions that the Government had had. The Minister says the Government has not had contact with the EU. Given that he has reminded the House that in the context of the assurance repeated by the European Commission, there is a need to have a new Act introduced so as to implement that commitment, will the Government be getting in contact with the European Commission, either directly or through the UK, so as to understand when that will happen?

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**Hon. N Feetham:** Absolutely, Madam Speaker. As the Hon. Leader of the Opposition knows, the Commission is in transition. Only five or six days ago, the Commission put forward the names of the new Commissioners, which included the Commissioner with responsibility for financial services, a lady who was formerly Minister of Finance in Portugal. The process, I am advised, within the European Commission is that the names are then scrutinised by the European Parliament and subject to a parliamentary vote. So, there is a process. Subject to that parliamentary process, if the names are confirmed, as they are expected to be confirmed, our advice is that the new Commissioners will be in situ by the middle of November, or early November, in which case certainly the Government will engage with the European Commission, and the Commissioner with responsibility for financial services in particular. We have plans to visit Brussels in order to be able to understand more clearly if there are any specific requirements which the Commission is expecting of the Government. Certainly, the information that we have is that the Commission is not seeking to impose requirements on the Government. We are aware of media reports. I am quoting from one of the reports that we have seen, which says 'the Commission did not see the need for additional benchmarks for Gibraltar'.

1430 **Madam Speaker:** Next question.

EDUCATION, THE ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE CHANGE

Q677/2024

Government hostels –  
Health and safety inspections

**Clerk:** Questions to the Minister for Education, the Environment and Climate Change.  
Questions 677. The Hon. A Sanchez.

1435 **Hon. A Sanchez:** Can the Government confirm the dates, providing the exact dates, of the most recent health and safety inspections carried out by the Environmental Agency at the following locations: (a) the government hostel at the Queen's Hotel; (b) the government hostel at the Sunrise Motel?

1440 **Clerk:** Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Education, the Environment and Climate Change.

**Minister for Education, the Environment and Climate Change (Hon. Prof. J E Cortes):** Madam Speaker, the Environmental Agency carries out pest control treatments and inspections in relation to public health matters at both hostels.

1445 An in-depth inspection was carried out on 19th March 2024 at the Queen's Hostel and the findings were reported to the management of the hostel. Pest control has been carrying out by the Environmental Agency, both monitoring and treatment, on a monthly basis, with the last visit carried out on 2nd September.

1450 Similarly, an in-depth inspection was carried out on 25th March 2024 at the Sunrise Hostel and the findings were reported to the management of the hostel. Environmental Agency Pest Control have been carrying out monitoring and treatments and do so also on a monthly basis, with the last visit carried out on 29th August.

1455 **Hon. A Sanchez:** In terms of pest control and the Sunrise Motel, we have received concerns from the residents and staff reporting ongoing issues with infestation of cockroaches and even rats. Can the Hon. Minister confirm whether there has ever been fumigation carried out at the Sunrise Motel in relation to this, and if so, when the fumigation was carried out?

1460 **Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** Madam Speaker, in relation to the Sunrise, on the visits in March rodent indicator blocks were placed. I am just checking the rest of the information but I do know that at the last inspection, which I believe I said in that case was on 28th August, there was no detection of rodents being present in the detector blocks. So, if there were on the first inspection, clearly there has been treatment because they were not identified at the last inspection, in August.

1465 **Hon. A Sanchez:** And in relation to the repeated concerns about infestation with cockroaches, has there ever been fumigation in relation to this at the Sunrise Motel?

1470 **Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** Yes, Madam Speaker, there have been treatments. I am told that at the last inspection, two of the rooms still had the presence of a numbers of cockroaches, which were found in the traps, and the treatments are ongoing, but there was much less than there had been on some occasions in the past.

1475 **Hon. A Sanchez:** And in relation to the Queen's Hotel, we have concerns being expressed to us about maggots in the kitchen. We have footage of maggots crawling everywhere, actually, around the kitchen. Can the Hon. Minister confirm that something is being done about this by the Environmental Agency?

1480 **Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** Madam Speaker, I have a summary of the report on the Queen's at the March investigation, which was the most thorough one, other than the monthly visits, and there is no reference here to the presence of maggots, so I am not aware of that and it does not appear in the information I have been given.

**Hon. A Sanchez:** Perhaps the Hon. Minister might alert the Department to have a look. In relation to all of these issues that are quite concerning, and in relation to all the questions that have been asked about the hostels, would the Hon. Minister or one of the other Ministers be able to clarify the Government's plan moving forward in relation to the hostels and how it intends to provide more suitable living arrangements for these workers in the future – what plans the Government has in mind?

1490 **Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** Madam Speaker, that is not –

**Chief Minister (Hon. F R Picardo):** Madam Speaker, as I understand it, there is a question on the Order Paper from the hon. Lady which says 'Can the Government clarify its plans to improve Government-owned hostels located at the Queen's Hotel and Sunrise Motel to ensure they adequately meet the needs of elderly residents and persons with disabilities in the future?' I understand that question is coming, and so it would be completely out of order for a supplementary to be the same as a question that is down for answer during the course of this meeting.

1500 **Madam Speaker:** What was the question the hon. Member asked?

**Hon. A Sanchez:** I think this a different question; it does not mention disabilities or elderly residents. This one is a wider question, but if you want me to ask this question as a supplementary in the other question, then that is fine, I will ask it there.

1505 **Hon. Chief Minister:** Well, it seems to me, Madam Speaker, to be about future plans in relation to the Queen's Hotel and the Sunrise Hotel, which is what the hon. Lady is asking about, and if it is on the Order Paper it would be inappropriate to take it before it comes up on the Order Paper.

1510 **Madam Speaker:** Take that question on the Order Paper and then, if you want to ask a supplementary that has not been answered, you can ask a supplementary on that.

1515 **Hon. D J Bossino:** Madam Speaker, we have heard about rodents, we have heard about maggots and we have heard about cockroaches in respect of each of these establishments. Is the Hon. Minister able to share with this House, in summary form, the totality of the findings which were then passed on to, as he puts it, the management of each of these hostels? And may I ask further, are those findings capable of being shared, at least with the Opposition in confidence, if not necessarily in public?

1520 **Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** Madam Speaker, I would be very happy to share the outcome, I think, behind the Speaker's Chair, to send it to the hon. Members, and they will see a summary of what was found and the treatment that followed, and then I can give them an update as to the latest. I think they will notice that there has been a lot of work done and that the infestations are now much lower than they may have been in the past. As I said – we have mentioned maggots – I certainly cannot see, as I read this now, that there were any maggots, but I have no problem in sharing this. If the hon. Member would like to remind me and send me an email, I am very happy to share it. There is nothing that I cannot share.

1530 **Hon. D J Bossino:** I understand that this is an answer that was provided by his hon. colleague the Minister for Housing, but may I ask the Hon. the Minister what is the thinking and rationale behind the rehousing of those current licensees at the Queen's Hotel and moving them to the Sunrise Motel? Has it to do with the answers that he has provided in this House right now in relation to the environmental aspects of it, or has it more to do with the fact that there is a project in tow in that particular area?

1535 **Hon. Chief Minister:** No, Madam Speaker, it is nothing to do with that; it is to do with giving vacant possession of the site that was put out to tender, which is something that hon. Members are aware of, and because, as they may recall, when we were elected we found ourselves with a situation where hon. Members had sold the Buena Vista site, which is where the hostel was at the time, without finding an alternative site for the workers who were there. We then had to acquire the Queen's Hotel in order to find a place to put them. The Queen's Hotel was then a three-star hotel. The Buena Vista site would have considered just infestation with maggots, rats and cockroaches a luxury, and we therefore moved people to a three-star hotel and are now moving them to another facility that will be very fit for purpose and entirely in keeping with our obligations when we lease property of this sort.

1545 **Hon. D J Bossino:** It is to do with the proposed development at the Queen's Hotel. What I offered to the Hon. the Minister was is it to do with (a) the environmental issues or (b) the proposed developments? The Hon. the Chief Minister – just to clarify, for the sake of the record – is, in fact, answering because he says no, but I need to ask him to clarify his position. The answer is yes, insofar as the second limb of what I proposed in my question.

1555 **Hon. Chief Minister:** Madam Speaker, the hon. Gentleman *no se aclara*. He just does not manage to get things clear in his mind. It is very difficult to follow his logic when he presents it in Monty Pythonesque manner, as he has done right now. I have given the answer that I have given; I think it is very clear. He can check *Hansard* if he has not understood what I said.

**Hon. D J Bossino:** Next question.

#### Q678/2024

#### St Martin's School and Early Birds Nursery – Additional spaces used as classrooms

**Clerk:** Question 678. The Hon. A Sanchez.

1560 **Hon. A Sanchez:** Can the Government clarify how many classrooms or additional spaces are being annexed or used as classrooms for St Martin's School and Early Birds Nursery from the following schools: (a) Governor's Meadow Lower Primary School; (b) Bishop Fitzgerald Upper Primary School?

1565 **Clerk:** Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Education, the Environment and Climate Change.

**Minister for Education, the Environment and Climate Change (Hon. Prof. J E Cortes):** Madam Speaker, there are four classes used in Governor's Meadow Lower Primary School and one class used in Bishop Fitzgerald Upper Primary.

1570 **Hon. A Sanchez:** Madam Speaker, I am grateful for that answer. Would the Hon. Minister be able to provide clarity as to whether this is the Government's long-term plan in relation to

addressing capacity issues at St Martin's School and Early Birds Nursery or whether the Government is considering other plans; and, if so, could the hon. Member elaborate?

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**Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** Madam Speaker, we planned Governor's Meadow and Bishop Fitzgerald in order to cater for an increase in the number of students on the Wessex campus as a whole, which links St Martin's, Governor's Meadow and Bishop Fitzgerald, so there was room for expansion that we have been able to keep. The hon. Member may recall that in our manifesto we expressed plans to extend the provision. We are discussing exactly how we are going to do it, but the intention is that we will be able to provide the classes as available without necessarily using Governor's Meadow and Bishop Fitzgerald, but as I said, they were designed to be larger than we needed for the foreseeable future in order to be able to absorb the increase in the school population.

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**Madam Speaker:** Next question.

**Q679/2024**  
**Careers fair –**  
**Plans to reintroduce**

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**Clerk:** Question 679. The Hon. G Origo.

**Hon. G Origo:** Madam Speaker, will the Government reintroduce the careers fair that traditionally was run by Bayside, Westside and College schools this academic year?

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

**Minister for Education, the Environment and Climate Change (Hon. Prof. J E Cortes):** Madam Speaker, the Government will be reintroducing the careers fair this academic year, on 28th November at the Muga Complex. The careers fair will initially be held during the school day for year 9 pupils, to help them better understand their GCSE options. It will then be open to the public.

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The aim is to provide a meaningful and inclusive experience through the representation of associations and industry boards to promote various career pathways. My Ministry is working closely with the Employment Ministry and the Chief Secretary to make this a meaningful event, particularly when combined with other initiatives organised by both Ministries, some of which were explained by me in June in answer to Question 516. This will enhance the work already being undertaken in schools, which since the pandemic has replaced the careers fair traditionally run by the schools.

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The fantastic Future Pathways event providing year 12 students with an opportunity to attend workshops, engage directly with professionals from a large number of different fields within industry, develop their CV writing skills and acquire relevant current knowledge which will enable them to make more informed decisions about their future, will continue also to be offered to Bayside, Westside and College students.

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**Hon. G Origo:** Madam Speaker, I am grateful to the Minister for that answer. If I may just address a few points, as this was one of the questions submitted which was addressed by way of a press release, firstly responding to the hon. Member opposite, I accept that this press release was not prompted by the fact of my question. He alluded to the same in his Budget address and I recognise that, and therefore I do not accept that this was prompted by my submission. Secondly, we on this side of the House would like to welcome the reintroduction of the careers fair, which has been missing for the last four years. It is important that our students get the right guidance

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for the future prospects of available work in Gibraltar. On that note, that is welcomed and we hope that it does indeed become a success.

On the press release that was issued, which I am grateful for, there are a number of questions that I intended to ask, most of which were addressed, but there is one which remains outstanding.  
1625 I can see that the Government this time around intends to have a different kind of approach, one which is industry led. Can the Minister confirm what associations will be leading the careers fair and whether he is satisfied that this new approach will enable as many careers and industries as possible to be represented at the fair?

1630 **Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** Madam Speaker, I do not know which associations; that is being organised by officials, but I believe they are calling for associations and businesses to come forward if they are interested. I do not think the list is yet complete. It is a different approach. The target audience, so to speak, is slightly different because, as we also have the Future Pathways event, which is targeted directly at the older students, we believe that they complement each other and we are capturing more of the young people who need guidance in planning their future  
1635 careers.

**Hon. D J Bossino:** The hon. Member mentions, in relation to the answer he gave in connection with the Future Pathway event, the schools that this being offered to, the comprehensives and  
1640 the College of Further Education, but can I ask him this in relation to that offering and also the careers fair, where I think he mentioned there is a special viewing, if I could put it in those terms, for year 9 students because they will be choosing their courses for GCSEs: is that open to children at the private school in Prior Park? Is there any liaison in relation to that by his Department with that particular school? If not, may I perhaps encourage that that be taken on board, or at least  
1645 considered?

**Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** Madam Speaker, yes, there is close liaison. In past years, at similar events, obviously not the same because this is different, it has been open to students at private schools. As Minister for Education, I feel I have a responsibility for the whole of education and not just for  
1650 the government schools, and therefore they will be more than welcome. I would be surprised if they have not already been invited, but I am sure they will be.

**Madam Speaker:** Next question.

**Q680/2024**  
**Museum visitors –**  
**Numbers since January 2023**

1655 **Clerk:** Question 680. The Hon. G Origo.

**Hon. G Origo:** Madam Speaker, can the Government please provide the total number of museum visitors by year and month since January of 2023?

1660 **Clerk:** Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Education, the Environment and Climate Change.

**Minister for Education, the Environment and Climate Change (Hon. Prof. J E Cortes):** Madam Speaker, there have been a total of 21,323 visitors from January 2023 to August 2024. The breakdown, including visits to the Natural History Museum, is as follows.

1665 In 2023: January, 716; February, 804; March, 1,221; April, 1,130; May, 964; June, 1,090; July, 1,182; August, 1,138; September, 1,164; October, 1,476; November, 1,749; December, 608.

In 2024: January, 977; February, 1,057; March, 1,277; April, 1,314; May, 1,138; June, 682; July, 781; August, 855.

1670 **Hon. G Origo:** Madam Speaker, I am grateful to the Minister for that update. The reason I premise this question is because although these statistics are ordinarily available on the government tourist website, there was some lapse on the months that I have requested, so I appreciate the update.

1675 The stats provided seem to be in line with the tourist visitor numbers of previous years. It appears, in my experience, that tourists rarely go to visit the museum. In fact, when I speak to them, of all the attractions that they regularly mention they are going to see, the museum is one which rarely gets mentioned; some do not even know that we have a museum at all. They are typically the hallmark of most cities, showcasing culture and heritage, and yet, despite having both of these things, we fail, it seems, to market our museum properly. Does the Minister have any plans to improve and invest in our National Museum, so that it can attain the hallmark status that every other major city or tourist destination has?

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**Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** Madam Speaker, clearly the work of a museum is not just the visitors. Museums all over the world have a great deal of work which goes on behind the scenes to do with research. They also have collections which are not on public display, which are of immense importance to preserve and curate, and the museum also works in providing curatorial services in restoration of buildings and monuments. So, we cannot just go by visitor numbers.

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The museum is promoted worldwide in relation to the work that it does, at the World Heritage Site, on Neanderthals. We know that it is a world leader in Neanderthal research. Recently it featured in a Netflix series, and that is free publicity which we do not have to specifically pay for. So, I believe that the museum is well known. In order to promote visits to it, we have included it in the Alternative Gibraltar tour, which is one which has been publicised before, which covers parts of the Rock excluding the Upper Rock. That should kick in shortly and we expect to have a significant increase in visitors as a result. All publicity is good publicity. I think that with this inclusion in the alternative tour we will see an increase. Time will tell.

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**Hon. Dr K Azopardi:** May I just probe on that issue? I am a big fan of museums worldwide, by the way, and I am a big fan of at least ensuring that our museum attracts more visitors, as the Hon. Minister, I am sure, agrees. Has there been any correlation between the visitor ...? Just looking at the stats, a thousand attendees per month when we are having visitors in the millions per year: I think that is the striking statistic. Not everyone is going to go to the museum, clearly, but it must be about the product and it must be about a re-evaluation of the product and what it does, what it is selling, what it is marketing and the interest it is attracting.

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To give the hon. Member some comparison of the thrust of my question – and this why I am suggesting that this is about a re-evaluation of the product – as I understood it, London had about 30 million visitors last year; the British Museum had nearly six million visitors and the Natural History Museum around five million visitors. Not every visitor goes to a museum, but if you look at those percentages you can say a very substantial number of the people who go to London will go and see these museums because they are emblematic, significant to the place's heritage and history. I do not think we are in a position where people who are coming to Gibraltar are forming that view of our museum, and that must be about the product. Does he not agree that it is high time to re-evaluate what is now a very old and slightly jaded product?

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**Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** No, Madam Speaker. I think what is dated is the Hon. Leader of the Opposition's recollection of the Museum. I have opened new exhibits at least once a year for the last few years. We have opened a new exhibit in relation to, I believe, the Phoenicians. We have had the reconstructions of prehistoric man, not just Neanderthal, but other former residents of the Rock based on the genetics and on the skulls and so on that have been found. There is a

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1720 tremendous presence of interest in the virtual museum, which is available online. I believe that particularly during Covid there were many visitors to the virtual museum. So, I do not think the hon. Member's assessment is correct. Perhaps it is the fact that visitors to the Rock, all those  
1725 millions that the hon. Member has referred to, tend to concentrate on the Upper Rock tour, which is why we are trying to diversify and why we are trying to introduce alternative tours and other attractions in other parts of Gibraltar that will take visitors to other places as well as the Upper Rock. I do not think it is a reflection on the relevance of the museum or the dynamism of the museum; I think it might be more an artefact of the way that tourists travel around Gibraltar.

1730 **Hon. G Origo:** Madam Speaker, if I may, just for the purpose of the record, seek the Minister's clarification: is it the Government's position that no further investment by way of capital is going to be made in the National Museum product? Is that the position?

1735 **Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** Madam Speaker, I have not said that at all. In fact, more than that, I have said that they are opening new galleries on a regular basis – they opened the Parson's Lodge not that long ago – so clearly there is investment. There is no way that the hon. Member could have assumed what he seems to have assumed from my statement. I certainly did not say that.

**Madam Speaker:** Next question.

**Q681/2024**  
**Alameda Estate courtyard –**  
**Olive tree causing damage**

**Clerk:** Question 681. The Hon. G Origo.

1740 **Hon. G Origo:** Madam Speaker, there is an olive tree sitting on the top of the beginning of Rosia Road, which appears to be pushing out a concrete wall having currently dislodged it from its place. Is the Government aware of this; and, if so, does it have any plans on relocating the tree, given the damage it is doing to the wall and also to the courtyard of the Alameda housing estate?

1745 **Clerk:** Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Education, the Environment and Climate Change.

1750 **Minister for Education, the Environment and Climate Change (Hon. Prof. J E Cortes):** Madam Speaker, before I read my prepared answer, I have to acknowledge and thank the hon. Member for kindly, when we bumped into each other – that is a figure of speech; I was not actually bumping in any aggressive way – in Main Street not a week ago, giving me a preview of the question by showing photographs, which was very helpful because I was able to have a look at the actual tree and the wall. That is my preamble to the answer.

1755 The Technical Services Department's engineers have inspected the wall and can confirm that there is no cause for concern at this time. There is some hairline cracking which may have been caused by the tree that is growing adjacent to the wall, but there is absolutely no concern over its continued structural stability. The Technical Services Department will monitor this and take action, if and when required.

1760 **Hon. G Origo:** Madam Speaker, I am grateful to the Minister for his answer and grateful for him having acknowledged publicly the fact that we do communicate across the floor when it is designed to further the interests of this House and the people of Gibraltar.

I do not have any supplementaries, other than to just comment that the residents will be pleased to hear that the Minister will be reviewing the situation to address the matter at hand should it be required. I am grateful for that.

1765 **Madam Speaker:** Next question.

**Q682/2024**  
**Accessible toilets –**  
**Plans to increase or replace**

**Clerk:** Question 682. The Hon. G Origo.

**Hon. G Origo:** Madam Speaker, does the Government have any plans to increase and/or replace any of the accessible toilets situated around Gibraltar?

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

**Minister for Education, the Environment and Climate Change (Hon. Prof. J E Cortes):** Madam Speaker, the Government has increased the number of accessible toilets in Gibraltar since it came to office and has a programme of repairs in place as and when this required. At present, there are no specific plans to place toilets in other areas, although this may change if specific needs are identified.

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**Hon. G Origo:** Madam Speaker, thank you to the Minister for that answer. On looking at the situation on accessible toilets in Gibraltar from a tourist perspective with my shadow tourist hat on, I noticed that there was a document issued on the Gibraltar tourist website which had the specific locations of all these accessible toilets but was only updated, as far as I can see from the notice, in May 2023. Can the Minister confirm whether this document is up to date and whether there have been any new accessible toilets since that time, as these are maps that are referred to by tourists and Gibraltarians alike who are looking for accessible toilets, or public toilets for that matter?

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**Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** Madam Speaker, is this what the hon. Member ...? I was about to offer to give it to him, but he has got it already. I have not checked toilet by toilet as to whether this is updated, but I undertake to do so and inform the hon. Member accordingly if there is any change.

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**Hon. G Origo:** I thank the Minister for that answer. Another question that I had, having looked at this sheet, was the references to accessible undersized toilets. Can the hon. Member explain what these accessible undersized toilets are? Does he have an understanding of what the difference is between these and the normal accessible toilets?

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**Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** They are toilets that are smaller, probably because of the lie of the land, and perhaps they may not be suitable, for example, for large wheelchairs or whatever. I think that is what is been pointed out there, that they have other facilities, but I stand to be corrected; I am just trying to understand. They may be toilets that have been converted and therefore they may not be as large as we would like, and that is pointed out in advance. I am just assuming that that is the case, subject to confirmation, and if I am wrong I will let him know.

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**Hon. G Origo:** I am grateful to the Minister for that answer, Madam Speaker. The reason I asked this question by way of supplementary on the undersized toilet was that having looked at the list

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of accessible toilets available, there were at least four, around 10% of all accessible toilets, that are accessible undersized. One of these I walk past on my way to work every morning. Even though on this spreadsheet it is listed as being located in Waterport, it is actually located in Water Gardens. I pass it every day. In one instance, I saw tourists who were wheelchair users trying to access the toilet, but because it is undersized accessible, the doorway is much smaller to access this toilet located in Water Gardens, which does not have any deficiencies by way of space or surrounding area, so my question to the Minister is will it still be the practice for the Government to install undersized toilets, given the concerns raised and the fact that most wheelchair users will not be able to access them?

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**Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** Madam Speaker, Water Gardens are in the Waterport area, but perhaps the hon. Member wants it to be more specific. I will have a look at this. It is not something that I was aware of. I am grateful for the Member pointing it out. Whether we are able to do anything about it or not ... we will certainly try.

1815

**Hon. A Sanchez:** Madam Speaker, in relation to the equipment in these toilets, would the Government consider installing more? I understand that the size of the toilets, given our size, is an issue and that we cannot have oversized toilets everywhere, but perhaps they can consider building some more that are big enough to have some ceiling track hoists and some adult-sized adjustable changing tables. We do find that there are a lot of toilets that have baby changing tables that are not suitable for those who need changing who are now adults or are now older, and parents do find it very difficult to use the baby changers; they are not suitable. We find that the toilets are sometimes not fit for the purposes that they are needed for. Also, very often it requires two carers going in, and the toilets are not big enough to fit so many people. Would the Government review, perhaps, the size of some of the facilities and consider, in some key locations, perhaps making them bigger, to fit this equipment?

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**Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** Madam Speaker, I am happy to talk to my hon. Friend and colleague the Minister for Equality, so that we can tackle this together.

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**Clerk:** Next question.

#### Q683/2024

#### Wastewater–

#### Advanced works contract re treatment plant

**Clerk:** Question 683. The Hon. G Origo.

**Hon. G Origo:** Madam Speaker, can the Minister please provide an update on the advanced work contract for the wastewater treatment plant, including what the cost of the contract will be and when he expects it to be signed?

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

**Minister for Education, the Environment and Climate Change (Hon. Prof. J E Cortes):** Madam Speaker, the tender evaluation process is still active and discussions on the advanced works contract are currently being held. I am hopeful that this stage will be completed soon.

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**Hon. G Origo:** Madam Speaker, thank you to the Minister for that confirmation. If I may just ask: why is this negotiation taking this long? I issued a press release a few weeks ago, in which I

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commented that the preferred bidder stage for a company was announced on 7th September 2023, 13 months ago. Is there just not a desire to stop pumping sewage into our oceans and to stop having our reputation tarnished by groups such as Verdemar, who attack us on an international stage? Is this not a government priority, despite having it on four manifestos consecutively?

**Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** Madam Speaker, the Hon. the Chief Minister replied to something similar on television, on *Direct Democracy*. I just have to add that we have very clearly stated why there have been reasons completely outside the Government's control in delaying the process. I am talking to the tender board, so that I am satisfied that all the complex due diligence is being carried out. In fact, I had discussions with them only last week and I am satisfied that although it is taking much longer than any of us would like, the progress being made certainly lets me see the light at the end of the tunnel.

**Hon. D J Bossino:** Next question.

**Q684/2024**  
**Wastewater –**  
**Complaint by Verdemar**

**Clerk:** Question 684. The Hon. G Origo.

**Hon. G Origo:** Madam Speaker, further to the complaints raised by Verdemar on Gibraltar's wastewater management and their calls to remove Gibraltar from the Emerald Network, can the Government confirm whether such a formal complaint has been raised?

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

**Minister for Education, the Environment and Climate Change (Hon. Prof. J E Cortes):** Madam Speaker, a formal complaint has not been raised with my Ministry and I am not aware that one has been logged elsewhere.

**Madam Speaker:** Next question.

**Q685/2024**  
**Tuna fish –**  
**Sanitary issues re gutting, cleaning or filleting**

**Clerk:** Verses 685. The Hon. G Origo.

**Hon. G Origo:** Madam Speaker, how many reports have been made on sanitary issues relating to the gutting, cleaning or filleting of tuna fish in our ports and/or territorial waters?

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

**Minister for Education, the Environment and Climate Change (Hon. Prof. J E Cortes):** Madam Speaker, none have been made.

1895 **Hon. G Origo:** Madam Speaker, I must highlight that a series of images were brought to my attention on this issue. I am concerned that no such report has been made to the Government. I would have hoped that these images were shared with the Minister, so I ask again whether he personally has seen these images, despite there being no reports; and, if he has, was he as concerned as I was?

1900 **Chief Minister (Hon. F R Picardo):** What images, Madam Speaker? We do not know what images they are. How do we know that they are the ones that have been shared with us? We might have seen other images. Unless the hon. Gentleman shares the images with us, we cannot tell him whether we have seen them or not.

1905 **Hon. G Origo:** Madam Speaker, the premise of my question related to the gutting, cleaning or filleting of tuna fish. Therefore, the images evidently would relate to the gutting, cleaning or filleting of tuna fish.

1910 **Hon. Chief Minister:** Madam Speaker, I have seen many images of tuna being gutted. None of them have given cause for concern to us, so we cannot say that we have seen the images that the hon. Gentleman has said he has seen until we see those images to tell him whether we have seen them before or not. I would have thought that is obvious.

1915 **Hon. Dr K Azopardi:** Obviously you cannot tell whether they are the same images. The Minister has answered that there have been no reports on sanitary issues relating to the gutting, cleaning or filleting of tuna fish. My hon. colleague asks – he has seen images – whether, despite there being no reports in relation to sanitary issues, they have seen images in respect of gutting, cleaning or filleting which give the Government concern.

1920 **Hon. Chief Minister:** The answer to that I have already given, and it was no. If hon. Members have images of gutting which should give rise to concern, we would be grateful to receive them.

1925 **Hon. G Origo:** Madam Speaker, the images which were drawn to my attention – and I will describe them here for the benefit of the other Members of this House – concerned local individuals who were gutting and filleting a large tuna on what appeared to be one of our marina pontoons, which was, quite frankly, based on the image I saw, filthy and posed serious health risks and concerns and, most importantly, on a side note, is also illegal to do because I understand that there is a weighing area where the fish are supposed to be cut, cleaned and gutted in a specific place. Given that this was done on a pontoon near one of the marinas, my question is, in light of the fact there have been zero reports on this issue, is it down to a lack of enforcement or resource in this area that we are getting no reports?

1935 **Hon. Chief Minister:** Madam Speaker, I am very grateful to the hon. Gentleman for his generic description of the images that he has seen. If he shares those images with the Government, we may or may not agree with his analysis, but until we have seen them he will understand that a generic description of somebody doing something in a particular place is not something that the Government can then be led to saying is something that should cause us concern or is something that might or might not reflect on enforcement. I would have thought this is really an instance where the old adage that a picture speaks a thousand words is entirely apposite, and if he shows us the pictures we might all agree, but if he does not he will understand it is going to take a thousand words for him to describe it, and we are not really here for that.

1940 **Madam Speaker:** Next question.

**Q686/2024**

**Beaches –  
Cleanliness**

**Clerk:** Question 686. The Hon. G Origo.

1945 **Hon. G Origo:** Madam Speaker, is the Government satisfied with the state of cleanliness of our beaches?

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

1950 **Minister for Education, the Environment and Climate Change (Hon. Prof. J E Cortes):** Madam Speaker, it depends on when. During the summer months, all beaches are cleaned on a daily basis, and on the sandy beaches machinery is used to move and clean the sand. At the end of the day, if litter has been deposited, it will not be satisfactory but this will be picked up early next morning. On occasions when the machinery is out of order for a couple of days, cleaning is manual and then  
1955 may not be as thorough. In autumn and spring, beaches are cleaned twice weekly and once a week during the winter period. When there are storms, a great amount of debris can be washed up, which is addressed as soon as the weather improves.

**Hon. G Origo:** Madam Speaker, the reason I have asked this question is due to what has been reported to us as a high volume of injuries which have been taking place over the course of the summer months at our beaches. My understanding is that a lot of these injuries have resulted from debris, rusty iron construction materials, some of which are found on the beach shores. Does the Minister have any data or statistics on the number of injuries which have been treated at our beaches connected to construction debris and hazards which are still remaining on our beaches?  
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1965 **Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** Madam Speaker, a number of interesting points, perhaps opportunities, have just been raised. Had I been asked for the number of injuries, I would have had that information. I do not have that information here. I have weekly meetings with the team that looks after the beaches and I have not had a large number of reports, which would normally have been mentioned during the course of those meetings, but we are able, if asked, to find that information.  
1970

I can say that in addition to the regular beach cleaning we have had daily collection of stones on most of our sandy beaches in order to remove them. There has been rusting material found there. Immediately we are alerted to this, steps are taken to remove it. The hon. Member may not recall, but the area was used in years gone by to deposit material which perhaps had not been properly screened. This is all screened now, so this could be historic material that is washing ashore. I can assure the hon. Member that cleaning is done regularly and whenever anything is found that should not be there, it is dealt with. I repeat, I do not have the information on cuts and injuries but I can find it if I am asked.  
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1980 **Hon. G Origo:** Madam Speaker, I am grateful to the Minister for his answer. The reason I mentioned the possible use of having data, such as the statistics and reports from lifeguards, was to satisfy and evidence the reports that are being given to us that there is a concern. People are going to the beaches and they are experiencing injuries and getting pinches, cuts and bruises. So, my question to the Hon. Minister is: is the Government not concerned that some of these injuries are still taking place and are related to debris and construction materials from neighbouring construction sites that have been there for the better part of the last decade?  
1985

**Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** Madam Speaker, without knowing what the injuries are, I cannot say whether they are related to what the hon. Member is alleging and whether there is any concern that it is something untoward. I do not have that information, so I cannot comment on that.  
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**Madam Speaker:** Next question.

**Q687/2024**  
**Rosia Bay beach –**  
**Whether plans to refurbish or improve**

**Clerk:** Question 687. The Hon. G Origo.

1995 **Hon. G Origo:** Madam Speaker, does the Government have any plans to refurbish or improve the state of the beach at Rosia Bay?

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

2000 **Minister for Education, the Environment and Climate Change (Hon. Prof. J E Cortes):** Madam Speaker, the policy of the Government in relation to the refurbishment or improvement of the beach at Rosia Bay remains unchanged and continues to be dependent on the funds raised from the sale of the old AHQ building.

2005 **Hon. G Origo:** Madam Speaker, I am grateful to the Minister for his answer that the Government's policy with regard to Rosia Bay development is unchanged. For the purposes of clarity, may I ask the Minister to confirm: is it still the Government's plan, in accordance with page 88 of its manifesto promise, to develop the Rosia Bay area ensuring the restoration of the area is sensitively handled, bearing in mind the heritage and environmental value of the area?

2010 **Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** Madam Speaker, yes.

2015 **Hon. G Origo:** Madam Speaker, although not officially a beach, Rosia Bay is still very regularly used by a lot of members of our community. A few reports this summer evidenced just how many people use it frequently. There are people who go there with their dogs, with their families; it is packed. Notwithstanding, in that report we could see the pier which forms part of Rosia Bay is exposed, has rust, there is iron everywhere and it poses a health hazard. Is the Government intending to make this area safe for Gibraltarians, and are those things part of the refurbishment plans that the Government alluded to earlier?

2020 **Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** Madam Speaker, yes.

2025 **Hon. D J Bossino:** Given that the progress of this project is predicated on the basis of whether the Government is able to ... I put it in those terms. I do not know the detail. Was it the FHQ? Yes. We all know which one we mean, which is the building that overlooks the bay. Can he give the House any progress as to how that is developing, if at all?

**Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** Madam Speaker, it is the subject of an expression of interest which is actively being discussed, run by the office of my friend and colleague the Deputy Chief Minister.

2030 **Hon. D J Bossino:** So, whether the Hon. the Minister or indeed the Hon. the Deputy Chief Minister could enlighten us and provide a response to my question ... He states what I assume – I am not aware – is a matter of fact, that it is the subject of an expressions of interest, but is he able to state how that is progressing and when, if I can put it in different terms, he thinks the Government will be in a position to announce the sale? That will then impact on the question  
2035 asked by my friend in relation to the progress of the works at Rosia Bay.

**Deputy Chief Minister (Hon. Dr J J Garcia):** Madam Speaker, it is not possible to put a timescale on this, but at this stage there have been presentations made, by a number of interested parties, to a panel and the Government is now considering the presentations and the detail of those submissions that were made.

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**Hon. D J Bossino:** And, if I may, is the Hon. the Deputy Chief Minister able to state what number the Government has received?

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**Hon. Deputy Chief Minister:** Madam Speaker, we would need notice of the question but I think it was five or six, if I am not mistaken.

**Madam Speaker:** Next question.

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**Q688/2024**  
**Energy-efficient renovation of existing buildings –**  
**Strategy**

**Clerk:** Question 688. The Hon. G Origo.

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**Hon. G Origo:** Madam Speaker, can the Minister confirm whether it has now developed a strategy for the energy-efficient renovation of existing buildings, including those with heritage sensitivities?

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

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**Minister for Education, the Environment and Climate Change (Hon. Prof. J E Cortes):** Madam Speaker, energy efficiency of buildings is governed by the Environment (Energy Performance of Buildings) Regulations 2012. In addition, the Department for the Environment continues to work closely with the Town Planning Department, the Ministry of Heritage and the Heritage Trust, as well as industry representatives through the Gibraltar Sustainable Buildings Group, to determine the most appropriate methods and standards for the energy-efficient renovation of existing buildings. The recently approved policy of the Development and Planning Commission on roof-mounted solar PV and solar thermal is one of the tangible outcomes of this ongoing collaboration. It is expected that the new development plan will address this issue in more detail.

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**Madam Speaker:** Next question.

**Adjournment**

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**Chief Minister (Hon. F R Picardo):** Madam Speaker, I move that the House should now adjourn to tomorrow at three o'clock in the afternoon, when it will start with my questions.

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**Madam Speaker:** I now propose the question, which is that this House do now adjourn to tomorrow at 3 p.m.

I now put the question, which is that this House do now adjourn to tomorrow at 3 p.m. Those in favour? (**Members:** Aye.) Those against. Passed.

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This House will now adjourn to tomorrow at 3 p.m.

*The House adjourned at 6.07 p.m.*



# PROCEEDINGS OF THE GIBRALTAR PARLIAMENT

**AFTERNOON SESSION: 3 p.m. – 5.25 p.m.**

**Gibraltar, Thursday, 26th September 2024**

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# The Gibraltar Parliament

*The Parliament met at 3 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

CHIEF MINISTER

Q778-83/2024

Government staff turnover –

**Monthly figures for Gibraltar Fire Service, Borders and Coastguard Agency,  
Royal Gibraltar Police, HM Prison, Gibraltar Health Authority and HM Customs**

**Clerk:** Meeting of Parliament, Thursday, 26th September 2024.

Questions to the Chief Minister. Question 778. The Hon. J Ladislaus.

5 **Hon. J Ladislaus:** Madam Speaker, can the Hon. Chief Minister provide statistics as to the average monthly employee turnover of clerical staff and firefighters working for the Gibraltar Fire and Rescue Service, separating the figures between those employed on permanent contracts and those engaged through other arrangements, for the following years: 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019, 2021, 2022, 2023 and 2024 to date?

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

**Chief Minister (Hon. F R Picardo):** Madam Speaker, I will answer this question together with Questions 779 to 783.

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**Clerk:** Question 779. The Hon. J Ladislaus.

20 **Hon. J Ladislaus:** Madam Speaker, can the Hon. Chief Minister provide statistics as to the average monthly employee turnover of clerical staff and Borders and Coastguard officers working for the Borders and Coastguard Agency, separating the figures between those employed on permanent contracts and those engaged through other arrangements, for the following years: 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019, 2021, 2022, 2023 and 2024 to date?

25 **Clerk:** 780. The Hon. J Ladislaus.

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**Hon. J Ladislaus:** Can the Hon. Chief Minister provide statistics as to the average monthly employee turnover of clerical staff and police officers working for the Royal Gibraltar Police, separating the figures between those employed on permanent contracts and those engaged through other arrangements, for the following years: 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019, 2021, 2022, 2023 and 2024 to date?

**Clerk:** Question 781. The Hon. J Ladislaus.

**Hon. J Ladislaus:** Can the Hon. Chief Minister provide statistics as to the average monthly employee turnover of clerical staff and prison officers working for His Majesty's Prison, separating the figures between those employed on permanent contracts and those engaged through other arrangements, for the following years: 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019, 2021, 2022, 2023 and 2024 to date?

**Clerk:** Question 782. The Hon. J Ladislaus.

**Hon. J Ladislaus:** Can the Hon. Chief Minister provide statistics as to the average monthly employee turnover of clerical and medical staff working for the GHA, separating the figures between those employed on permanent contracts and those engaged through other arrangements, for the following years: 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019, 2021, 2022, 2023 and 2024 to date?

**Clerk:** Question 783. The Hon. J Ladislaus.

**Hon. J Ladislaus:** Can the Hon. Chief Minister provide statistics as to the average monthly employee turnover of clerical staff and customs officers working for the Customs, separating the figures between those employed on permanent contracts and those engaged through other arrangements, for the following years: 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019, 2021, 2022, 2023 and 2024 to date?

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

**Hon. Chief Minister:** Madam Speaker, the information requested is too voluminous to provide in the time available.

**Hon. J Ladislaus:** I am grateful for that indication. Can the Hon. Chief Minister provide an indication as to how long it would take to compile such information?

**Hon. Chief Minister:** Madam Speaker, today I confess I will be rising with trepidation because whenever I see a judge wearing black I wonder whether they are here to sentence to death. Therefore, I will do my best to please the House and tell the hon. Lady that if you were to allow the questions to be put again next month, I am informed that we will have been able to compile the information by then. If the hon. Member thinks that this is information which it is worth having – which, given the question, is not one which I consider is delving for information which is not without its use, and I think it is important to have – we would then update it every month on the government website.

**Madam Speaker:** In that case, I will allow the hon. Member to put the question again next session.

Next question.

**Q784/2024**  
**Import Duty –**  
**Amounts collected in June, July and August 2024**

**Clerk:** Question 784. The Hon. R M Clinton.

**Hon. R M Clinton:** Madam Speaker, can the Government advise the amounts of Import Duty collected in the following months: June 2024, July 2024 and August 2024?

80

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

**Chief Minister (Hon. F R Picardo):** Yes, ma'am. The Import Duty collected for June, July and August 2024 is as follows: June 2024, £11,507,756.65; July 2024, £5,150,596.21; and August 2024, £9,906,265.70.

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**Madam Speaker:** Next question.

#### Q785/2024

#### **Borders and Coastguard Agency – Union demands for additional resources**

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

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**Hon. Dr K Azopardi:** Madam Speaker, is the Government in discussions with the unions in respect of demands for additional resources for the Borders and Coastguard Agency, given their recent statement on the under-resourcing in that area?

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

95

**Chief Minister (Hon. F R Picardo):** Madam Speaker, His Majesty's Government of Gibraltar, the Office of the Chief Secretary and the Industrial Relations team continue to be in discussion with the unions concerning the Borders and Coastguard Agency. In these fora, many matters are raised, discussed and addressed, inclusive of resourcing. It is not the Government's position that there is a resourcing issue at the Borders and Coastguard Agency, although it is, of course, open to representations from the union and its members.

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**Hon. Dr K Azopardi:** May I just ask the Chief Minister ...? I take it that, as he says, they are in continued discussions. I asked a different question in this House in relation to Borders and Coastguard industrial action some months ago, and there were detailed exchanges across the floor of the House in relation to press releases issued at the time, where the unions condescended, and so did the Government, into quite a level of detail as to the issues that were being discussed. Given the press release issued much more recently by Unite, alluding to what they view as under-resourcing issues, is there a new list of issues and concerns that have been put to the Government, or are we talking about an extension of discussions on the same issues and the union issuing a press release about the same matter?

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**Hon. Chief Minister:** Madam Speaker, I understand these are continuing discussions about the same issues. Sometimes, issuing press releases is considered by some parties to a negotiation, whether it is a national negotiation or an international negotiation, as a way of putting pressure on the other side, which of course, if we were the other side, we would resist.

115

**Hon. Dr K Azopardi:** So that I understand – I think I have understood the hon. Member's answer, that it is not a fresh set of issues – there is no major new matter that has emerged since May; these are a continuation?



120 **Hon. Chief Minister:** Yes, Madam Speaker, the hon. Gentleman's understanding of my answer is based on my understanding of the issue being exactly as he set out.

**Madam Speaker:** Next question.

**Q786/2024**

**Joshua Hassan House –  
Use as government offices**

**Clerk:** Question 786. The Hon. the Leader of the Opposition.

125

**Hon. Dr K Azopardi:** Madam Speaker, does the Government intend to continue to use Joshua Hassan House for government offices?

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

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**Chief Minister (Hon. F R Picardo):** Madam Speaker, yes, Joshua Hassan House continues to be used to house government offices. As I have repeatedly told Members opposite, the relocation of some government departments is still ongoing. The Government will make an announcement regarding its future plans in due course.

135

**Hon. Dr K Azopardi:** Before I put the question, I am so grateful for the lectern that has been produced by the staff of the House; it makes it so much easier to read stuff with my compromised eyesight.

140

I understand what he says, but the reason for my question is that the information that was being received by Members on this side of the House was that certain Departments that had had longstanding occupation of Joshua Hassan House were moving out or had left and that the premises were now almost empty. That is why I enquire as to that. Does the Chief Minister have a sense of when the Government will be ready to make an announcement as to its future public use?

145

**Hon. Chief Minister:** Madam Speaker, I do have a sense of when we might be able to make that determination, but of course I am not here to provide the hon. Gentleman with a sense of anything; I am here to provide information. Having a sense is not having a certainty, and I must not mislead the House, so when we are ready to make that statement I shall make the statement in the appropriate forum.

150

Finally, Madam Speaker, if I can just say that I, too, benefit greatly from having a lectern these days, which brings matters closer to my eyes, and I am pleased that the hon. Gentleman has also received one from the ardent work of the staff of the House. Now they know where public finance money goes. They say they do not know what we spend our money on. There we go.

155

**Hon. Dr K Azopardi:** I am very grateful for that disbursement of public moneys so that I can put the questions that those who have put us in these seats have asked us to put.

May I just ask one more question on this issue? Is Joshua Hassan House going to be used for government departments, or is it for other entities not formally government departments?

160

**Hon. Chief Minister:** Madam Speaker, I am delighted that they were put there to ask questions and we were put here to answer questions – on the fourth consecutive time of asking, if I may say so.

165 Madam Speaker, the whole point of the original answer was to tell the hon. Gentleman that we shall make a statement in respect of who will be using Joshua Hassan House and for what purpose when the time comes and we have reached that determination. Asking the first question in a different way by way of supplementary is not going to elucidate a different answer.

170 **Hon. R M Clinton:** Madam Speaker, may I ask the Chief Minister if he is able to show the House which departments are moving and to where? Are these in the private sector; and, if so, which buildings?

175 **Hon. Chief Minister:** Madam Speaker, to the extent that those things have happened, they are therefore information that is in the public domain. To the extent that they have not happened but they are planned, I can tell the hon. Gentleman that the Civil Status and Registration Office will be moving, and I understand that that move is already on foot and should be completed soon, and they are moving to a private sector location.

180 **Hon. R M Clinton:** I am grateful to the Chief Minister for that information. Would he be able to identify that private sector location, and can he advise the length of any lease that has been signed?

185 **Hon. Chief Minister:** Madam Speaker, of course I am able to identify the location from my general knowledge because it is one of my departments. CSRO is moving to Leanse Place, but I cannot identify the length of the lease or other terms of it without being given explicit notice of the question.

**Madam Speaker:** Next question.

**Q787-88/2024**

**Minimum Income Guarantee –**

**Number receiving supplement in 2023-24 and cost; total cost by year since 2021-22**

190 **Clerk:** Question 787. The Hon. the Leader of the Opposition.

**Hon. Dr K Azopardi:** Madam Speaker, how many persons claimed and received the supplement to the Minimum Income Guarantee for the elderly during 2023-24 and at what total cost?

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

**Chief Minister (Hon. F R Picardo):** Madam Speaker, I will answer with Question 788.

**Clerk:** Question 788. The Hon. the Leader of the Opposition.

200 **Hon. Dr K Azopardi:** What is the total cost of sums paid by way of the Minimum Income Guarantee for pensioners during the financial year 2021-22, 2022-23 and 2023-24?

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

205 **Hon. Chief Minister:** Madam Speaker, a total of 50 applications for Minimum Income Guarantee were received during 2023-24. Of these, two applications were awarded the supplement of the Minimum Income Guarantee, with a total of £636.

In relation to Question 788, the information requested, I am advised, is available on the government website.

210

**Hon. Dr K Azopardi:** In relation to Question 788, I cannot find that information in terms of the total cost. What I do find on the government website is a table that gives some information, a table that gives bands of rates of the Minimum Income Guarantee, starting from zero to £5, going all the way up, in different bands, to £166 to £170. When you go across the table, it has the number of singles – meaning individuals – and couples receiving different bands, but you cannot work out the total sum expended from that table, and I have not seen any other information that tells you the totals. That is the reason for my question. I would be grateful, if the Chief Minister thinks it is there, for him to point me in that direction, but if he is talking about that table, I think he will find that it is impossible to actually calculate the totals.

220

**Hon. Chief Minister:** Madam Speaker, I think the hon. Gentleman is right. I think that it tells him the number of people in receipt of a sum in that band. It is a pretty tight band, but it is the number of people receiving the amount in that band, and therefore he would not be able to work out where in that band they are.

225

The band is a £4 band. That is to say he might be told there are three people – or three couples, depending on where it is – receiving between £166 and £170. He would not be able, I think he is right to say, to calculate the exact amount that is being paid on the Minimum Income Guarantee, so I have no difficulty, and those in my team who do these things will be hearing me say I have no difficulty, in sending the hon. Gentleman the sums for 2021-22, 2022-23 and 2023-24 which represent that total, after this meeting so that he has that total.

230

**Hon. Dr K Azopardi:** I am grateful for the indication that he will send me that information. In relation to the other question, Question 787, on the supplements to the Minimum Income Guarantee, may I ask him what the level of the supplement is? Is there a fixed supplement? Is there a discretionary band, and how is that calculated or awarded? Again, I ask that question because I cannot find publicly available information about that.

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**Hon. Chief Minister:** Madam Speaker, I believe that the sum is £318 for the supplement. I believe that is the amount. If he looks at what I told him in relation to the answer to the question, when I told him that it is two, that is why the answer given is £636.

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**Hon. Dr K Azopardi:** I see, so it would be a fixed sum. If I make the comparison with the other question, there is a table of different bands, so are we saying that this is a fixed sum, or that there are not bands of this supplement? Is that correct?

245

**Hon. Chief Minister:** Madam Speaker, I am going to venture to say that that is the case, that when you get the supplement you get the fixed amount, but I will be corrected if I am wrong, and in writing to him in the context of the other answer I shall clarify that for him.

250

**Madam Speaker:** Next question.

#### Q789/2024

#### Scam and fraud attempts on government entities – Amount defrauded

**Clerk:** Question 789. The Hon. the Leader of the Opposition.

255 **Hon. Dr K Azopardi:** Madam Speaker, have the Government, government agencies, authorities or government-owned companies lost money in a targeting of government departments, agencies or authorities or wholly owned companies by scam or fraud attempts during 2024; and, if so, how much money was defrauded?

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

260 **Chief Minister (Hon. F R Picardo):** Madam Speaker, no.

265 **Hon. Dr K Azopardi:** I see. The Chief Minister will be aware that during the summer there were a number of articles in the press about scams and people being targeted in Gibraltar – not a wide range of individuals, companies, entities. There was, in late July, an article that pointed to the Government also suffering from an attempt at fraud. The article said that the cybercriminals had also targeted Gibraltar Government departments and companies – in other words, wholly owned government entities – and that a government spokesman confirmed that departments and companies had been targets of recent phone scams and these incidents were being dealt with according to RGP recommendations. At that time, the Government did not wish to comment further, so what –?

270 **Madam Speaker:** I am just going to interrupt the hon. Member. I appreciate that I am getting ahead of the question that is put, but just as a reminder, a question should not be asked as to the accuracy of a press report or statement.

275 **Hon. Dr K Azopardi:** I am grateful, Madam Speaker, but I was not asking about the accuracy of the press statement; I am setting out the factual chronology of what was put out there, which gave rise to the question. Given the answer the hon. Member has given, which is that no money has been defrauded, can he confirm that there were not attempts to defraud the Government during that time?

280 **Hon. Chief Minister:** Madam Speaker, the hon. Gentleman will know that he has now asked me a different question to his first question. His first question specifically asked whether any of these entities, the Government and the wider government entities and companies, had *lost* money. That is why the answer to that was no, and that ‘no’ was not in any way mutually exclusive to the correct reference that the hon. Gentleman has read to what a government spokesman said at the time, because companies were targeted, which are government companies, but that did not result in any loss of money. I hope that is helpful to him.

**Madam Speaker:** Next question.

**Q790/2024**  
**Treaty on future relationship with the EU –**  
**Update re negotiations**

290 **Clerk:** Question 790. The Hon. the Leader of the Opposition.

**Hon. Dr K Azopardi:** Madam Speaker, can the Government update Parliament on the current state of negotiations for a treaty on a future relationship with the EU?

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

**Chief Minister (Hon. F R Picardo):** Madam Speaker, as I have repeatedly stated, it is important that we respect the confidentiality of the negotiating process. The hon. Gentleman is already aware that the last high-level quadrilateral political meeting in Brussels was held on Thursday of last week. I refer him to the joint statement issued in Press Release 599/2024. He is also aware that I appeared on *Viewpoint* that same evening to further inform the community of the issues. Since then, contact has continued at a technical level as we further intensify the negotiations.

**Hon. Dr K Azopardi:** Madam Speaker, yes, indeed, I am aware of those developments. Given the contact continues and the backdrop of the importance – or it seems to us importance – of the events that might happen in November on the entry into the EU and so on, does that in any way have an impact on the timeline of the discussions? Does the Chief Minister envisage another high-level meeting involving Foreign Secretaries before November?

**Hon. Chief Minister:** Madam Speaker, I do not think it would be prudent of me to say more about what the potential chronology of further meetings might be because, of course, in the context of a negotiation where nothing is agreed until everything is agreed, even potential next meetings are not agreed until there is something to agree on at them or there is at least an agreed agenda that might need to be taken at the level of Foreign Secretaries, Vice President of the European Union and the Chief Minister of Gibraltar. But it is important for people to know, and I appreciate that the hon. Gentleman is giving me the opportunity by this question to inform the community that it is not impossible that there might be other such high-level meetings in coming weeks or months. As I have said already, I do not want to fall into the trap of setting up any date in November as a cliff edge against which we would be negotiating, because that would not be in our interest as a negotiating party.

**Hon. Dr K Azopardi:** Madam Speaker, is it still the Government's position that it is a red line that there should be no Spanish officers in Gibraltar after a treaty, whether uniformed or not?

**Hon. Chief Minister:** Madam Speaker, I think we have set out our position in this respect ad nauseam. The jurisdiction of Gibraltar is a matter for the law enforcement agencies of Gibraltar. At the same time, we have also been very clear and unequivocal in saying that we have always accepted, as we could not accept otherwise, that responsibility for the application of the rules and regulations of the Schengen acquis is not a matter for the Government of Gibraltar or the Government of the United Kingdom; it is a matter for the responsible Schengen authorities. In that context, we are very clear that on Gibraltar there only needs to be Gibraltar law enforcement agents, British law enforcement agents, enforcing Gibraltar's laws, including our immigration laws, and giving assurance to third parties in the context of what happens in and around Gibraltar.

**Hon. Dr K Azopardi:** Well, that may be, insofar as some aspects of it, of course, but the hon. Member knows that at least the New Year's Eve agreement alludes to the involvement of Frontex, and so what I was asking more specifically is whether it is still a red line for the Government as to the presence of Spanish officers on Gibraltar soil in the context of a treaty, if it comes.

Given his indication that it is impossible to give a specific timeline – and I understand that, from where he sits – have there been assurances given that the status quo on mobility across the border, so far, in terms of the arrangement on red ID card holders, will continue pending the conclusion of the negotiations?

**Hon. Chief Minister:** Madam Speaker, Frontex is not a law enforcement agency. I think that that is clear. Frontex is a European agency which can aid member states in respect of the provisions of the statute that creates Frontex and insofar as that creates jurisdiction in respect of Frontex.

350 The negotiations have progressed since they commenced in October 2021 and, indeed, from  
the moment that the New Year's Eve agreement was concluded in December 2020, on the basis  
of an assurance that Gibraltar would have the ability to see those who are at one stage resident  
in Gibraltar, at least for the lion's share of that period, and then Gibraltar red ID card holders  
continue to be able to access the Schengen area without the need to have their passports stamped  
if they were going into Spain alone, but if they were going into the wider Schengen area requiring  
355 to have their passport stamped. If I may say so, that, I think, is an arrangement that has worked  
well and it has enabled red ID card holders – and, for a period, also blue ID card holders – to have  
access to Spain, in particular in a way that did not engage the rule that applies already today in  
respect of a non-EU citizen without a valid residence permit in the European Union being able to  
access the EU for at least 90 in 180 days.

360 **Hon. Dr K Azopardi:** If he permits me, I think the Chief Minister has indicated his view and  
analysis of how the arrangements have worked, but he has not specifically answered the question  
whether there has been an assurance that those arrangements will continue pending the  
conclusion of the talks.

365 May I ask him, while I am on my feet, is there an attempt – given that the negotiations continue  
and there is no obvious immediate outcome because he does not have a view on the specific  
timeline, or at least he cannot give an assurance on the timeline – to put in place interim  
arrangements for those blue ID card holders or persons resident in Gibraltar who do not hold a  
red ID card?

370 **Hon. Chief Minister:** Madam Speaker, the way that I answered the first part of the hon.  
Gentleman's current supplementary when dealing with it when it was his previous supplementary  
was by demonstrating to him that the process had worked but it has worked up to now. As he  
knows, there are potentially new rules coming into play in respect of access to all parts of the  
Schengen area, and he will have heard what I have heard the Spanish Foreign Minister say – in  
375 public, not in the context of the parts of the negotiation that are held behind closed doors.

Finally, in the context of blue ID card holders, I could not sympathise more with blue ID card  
holders. I think that their lives are being made unnecessarily difficult. In my view, it was possible  
for blue ID card holders to continue to have the indulgence that they had been granted by the  
Kingdom of Spain for a little longer. That indulgence has continued to be granted to red ID card  
380 holders – in fact, we should always remember that although we use the terms 'red ID card holder'  
and 'blue ID card holder', there is only one type of ID card and that is the red one; the blue is not  
an identity card, it is a residence permit, which is different – but Spain has chosen not to do that.  
There was a relevance at the time when Spain chose to do that, which was that Spain decided not  
to accept the residence permit of British citizens resident in Gibraltar who are not red ID card  
385 holders in the same month as the United Kingdom stopped accepting Spanish ID cards for the  
purposes of travel into the United Kingdom. It has not been possible to persuade Spain to go back  
to the indulgence that they were providing to blue ID card holders – or civilian registration card  
holders – and it is not negotiable to seek to achieve that at this stage without an agreement.

390 Madam Speaker, politics is politics and I fully accept that. I fully accept that although the hon.  
Gentleman says that he wants us to have a safe and secure and beneficial agreement which is  
good for all Gibraltarians, I believe that if I come back with the most secure, safest and most  
beneficial agreement done in the history of mankind – and I am not suggesting that I might, but if  
I were to come back with the safest, most secure, most beneficial agreement done in the history  
of mankind – the hon. Gentleman will find the fifth leg to the cat from his position, standing behind  
395 the door, with the axe in his hand, waiting for me to walk through it, to suggest that it is neither  
safe nor secure, nor beneficial. If it were not so important I might forgive him, but I am very clear  
that that is what he is trying to achieve, and that is why I think it is very important that I do call  
out any attempt to set up things which are non-negotiable as the thing which we should be trying  
to achieve, like, for example, in what must be the latter stages of the negotiation – please God, I

400 am not in the beginning of this negotiation; I do not think my sanity, or my 'sanitary', as the Hon.  
Mr Origo might suggest, would see me through it – that we should now go back and deal with the  
issue of one type of civilian registration card holder colour. What we have to do is finish the  
negotiation, finish it safely, securely and beneficially in the judgement of the Government of  
Gibraltar, because it will be the Gibraltar Cabinet that determines whether what we come back  
405 with can be considered to be safe, secure and beneficial, in which case we will then bring it to this  
Parliament for debate and for approval. That is what we need to do, and that will clear the way  
for fluidity of movement for all colour of civilian registration card holders and Gibraltar red ID card  
holders.

410 If your enemy in a negotiation ... I use the word 'enemy' in its widest form. I do not think  
'enemy' is the right word to use; I will be forgiven for that slip of the tongue. If your counterpart  
in a negotiation is doing something to try to put pressure on you, the worst thing your purported  
allies can do is point to that thing that your counterpart is doing as a thing that causes huge  
pressure. I would leave it at that and allow the hon. Member to reflect on what I have said.

415 **Hon. Dr K Azopardi:** Madam Speaker, just one more question, if I may. I have to say the hon.  
Member prefaced some of his closing remarks before he sat down on the basis that he thinks that  
we are playing a game – presumably; he did not use the word 'game', but that I am putting  
questions – and that whatever he does, because he put it that high, *whatever* he does, we are  
going to find the fifth leg to that cat and be against it. I have always said that our position is that  
420 we want a safe and beneficial agreement. He knows that we are putting questions and sometimes  
disagree with him, but he knows also that he has had a lot of space from the Opposition to  
negotiate that safe and beneficial agreement. I have always said that we will make that judgement  
in due course, and I do not prejudge the assessment that we will make. He said that if the Cabinet  
believes that it is safe and beneficial he will then bring it to this House for approval. Would that  
425 be before or after the entry into the agreement by the EU and UK?

**Hon. Chief Minister:** Madam Speaker, I do not think we have debated this in the past six  
months, but we have debated it before and I have given my answer before. It will be before  
ratification by the United Kingdom.

430 **Madam Speaker:** Next question.

## EDUCATION, THE ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE CHANGE

Q689/2024

**Derelict vehicles –  
Number removed by RGP**

**Clerk:** We continue with questions on Education, the Environment and Climate Change.  
Question 689. The Hon. J Ladislaus.

435 **Hon. J Ladislaus:** Madam Speaker, how many derelict vehicles per month have been removed  
by the RGP in the past 12 months?

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

440 **Minister for Education, the Environment and Climate Change (Hon. Prof. J E Cortes):** Madam  
Speaker, I will avail myself of this wonderful facility.

The RGP no longer has this responsibility. This responsibility is now with GPMSL, who in the last 12 months have disposed of 240 vehicles, with a further 20 currently being dealt with.

445 **Hon. J Ladislaus:** I am grateful for that indication. Just one further question on this, and that is whether the hon. Member could perhaps confirm what has been done with all the vehicles. Have they all been destroyed, or have any of them been sold on?

450 **Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** Madam Speaker, I would need notice of that. I think they will probably have been destroyed. There is a process which then is confirmed in a certificate of destruction, but it is information that I do not have here. I know they have been removed. I can get that information either at a future question or, if the hon. Member reminds me by email, I will seek that information before the next meeting of the House.

455 **Hon. R M Clinton:** Madam Speaker, I would be grateful if the Minister could spell out what GPMSL stands for.

**Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** Yes, Madam Speaker: Gibraltar Parking Management Services Ltd, or words to that effect. I may not be quite right, but that is exactly what it is.

460 **Madam Speaker:** Next question.

**Q690/2024**  
**Hot school meals –**  
**Update re intention to provide**

**Clerk:** Question 690. The Hon. E J Reyes.

465 **Hon. E J Reyes:** Madam Speaker, can Government update this House in respect of its intention to provide hot meals for pupils in schools?

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

470 **Minister for Education, the Environment and Climate Change (Hon. Prof. J E Cortes):** Madam Speaker, the negotiations with the preferred bidder have not been fruitful. Should the situation persist, we will consider whether we should publish a new tender.

**Madam Speaker:** Next question.

**Q691/2024**  
**Hassan Centenary Terraces –**  
**School catchment areas**

475 **Clerk:** Question 691. The Hon. E J Reyes.

**Hon. E J Reyes:** Can Government provide details of the school catchment areas residents of Hassan Centenary Terraces have fallen under as from September 2024?

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



480 **Minister for Education, the Environment and Climate Change (Hon. Prof. J E Cortes):** Madam  
 Speaker, the allocation of catchment areas to government schools is only relevant to the primary  
 sectors, i.e. lower and upper primary. For the September 2024 cohorts, the allocation of school  
 placement based on catchment areas for pupils entering Nursery, Reception and Year 3 were as  
 follows for residents of Hassan Centenary Terraces. Nursery, Notre Dame Lower Primary;  
 485 Reception, Notre Dame Lower Primary; Year 3, St Anne's Upper Primary.

For the sake of clarity, school placements at St Martin's and the secondary schools are not  
 allocated according to catchment areas. In other words, to summarise, they have been allocated  
 to the North District schools.

490 **Madam Speaker:** Next question.

**Q692/2024**  
**Hassan Centenary Terraces –**  
**Number of school pupil residents by school and year group**

**Clerk:** Question 692. The Hon. E J Reyes.

**Hon. E J Reyes:** Can Government provide details in respect of the number of pupils now  
 registered as living at Hassan Centenary Terraces, showing the school and year group in which  
 495 these pupils are enrolled for the academic year which has recently commenced?

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

**Minister for Education, the Environment and Climate Change (Hon. Prof. J E Cortes):** Madam  
 500 Speaker, I now hand over a schedule with the information requested.

**Madam Speaker:** We will move on to the next question and come back to this one.

**Answer to Question 692/2024**

		EDUCATIONAL ESTABLISHMENT													
		GOVERNOR'S MEADOW LOWER PRIMARY SCHOOL	NOTRED DAME LOWER PRIMARY SCHOOL	ST BERNARD'S LOWER PRIMARY SCHOOL	ST JOSEPH'S LOWER PRIMARY SCHOOL	ST MARY'S LOWER PRIMARY SCHOOL	ST PAUL'S LOWER PRIMARY SCHOOL	ST MARTIN'S SCHOOL	BISHOP FITZGERALD UPPER PRIMARY SCHOOL	ST ANNE'S UPPER PRIMARY SCHOOL	ST BERNARD'S UPPER PRIMARY SCHOOL	ST JOSEPH'S UPPER PRIMARY SCHOOL	BAYSIDE SCHOOL	WESTSIDE SCHOOL	GIBRALTAR COLLEGE
School Year	Nursery	0	4	1	0	1	3	1							
	Reception	0	2	0	0	1	1	0							
	Year 1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0							
	Year 2	0	0	0	0	1	0	0							
	Year 3							0	0	0	1	0			
	Year 4							0	0	0	0	0			
	Year 5							0	1	0	2	0			
	Year 6							0	1	1	1	0			
	Year 7							0					0	1	
	Year 8							0					4	1	
	Year 9							0					0	1	
	Year 10							0					3	0	
	Year 11							0					1	0	
	Year 12							0					1	0	0
Year 13							0					1	0	0	
All Levels							0					1	0	2	

**Q693/2024**  
**St Joseph's Lower Primary School –**  
**Intended works**

**Clerk:** Question 693. The Hon. E J Reyes.

505 **Hon. E J Reyes:** Can Government provide details and timescale of the works it intends to carry out at St Joseph's Lower Primary School, inclusive of the playground?

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

510 **Minister for Education, the Environment and Climate Change (Hon. Prof. J E Cortes):** Madam Speaker, the project is currently in the design stage following discussion with the school. The proposal is to carry out works in three phases to allow this to proceed in a functioning school. No timescale is yet available as this will depend on the detail of the design.

515 **Hon. E J Reyes:** I understand that, Madam Speaker. I am grateful for the answer. I did conclude my question by saying 'inclusive of the playground'. Can we have confirmation of that in those plans? The playground I think might possibly require resurfacing or perhaps even levelling. May I have assurances that that is also being carefully considered?

520 **Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** Madam Speaker, the level and the slope in St Joseph's Schools' playgrounds – Lower Primary in particular, but both St Joseph's Schools – have been a cause of great consternation for a long time. It is something that has been brought to my attention not only by the head teachers and the staff but also by my grandchildren, who have been there for quite a number of years; my granddaughter is now in the last year in St Joseph's Upper Primary,  
525 looking forward to going to Westside School. We are solving that problem in the plans that were actually in a pre-design stage as a concept – I believe we put them in the manifesto – building a floor of additional specialist rooms in the playground, with a flat, horizontal, properly surfaced playground on the roof. That is one of the phases of the plans that we are looking at, at the moment, so it will deal with the sloping playground.

530 **Hon. E J Reyes:** I am extremely grateful. It is always reassuring that the Minister shares, as I do, the pleasure and the privilege of having grandchildren in those schools. I am one slightly better than him in that I am a past member of staff of one of the St Joseph's Schools, but it does not matter.

535 I know I am being over pressurising, but on timescales any idea at least by when he hopes to have those original plans? It seems that school started yesterday, and you already hear parents making arrangements for the mid-term break in a few weeks' time, so time does fly.

540 **Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** Madam Speaker, the classical answer is 'during the lifetime of this Parliament'. As I said, we are in the design stage, architects are involved and we need ... It is a complex thing, particularly because, as I said, any works here would have to be phased because they would have to be carried out with a functioning school and we have to minimise disruption. I cannot really say. It is complex, but as soon as we know, we will know.

545 **Madam Speaker:** Next question.

**Q694/2024**

**Zero tolerance on school premises –  
Implementation of policy**

**Clerk:** Question 694. The Hon. E J Reyes.

**Hon. E J Reyes:** What process do schools undertake in their implementation of zero tolerance within school premises, both in respect of pupils and parents/guardians visiting the school?

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

**Minister for Education, the Environment and Climate Change (Hon. Prof. J E Cortes):** Madam Speaker, schools have a duty of care for the health, safety, security and well-being of all pupils and staff. This duty of care incorporates the duty to safeguard all members of the school community from subjection to any form of harm, abuse, nuisance or inappropriate influence. In performing this duty, schools recognise that there can be no complacency where child protection and safeguarding procedures are concerned.

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The Department of Education advocates that each incident of inappropriate or serious behaviour involving children and young people is investigated and that sanctions are applied relative to the pupil's intent, supported educational needs and disabilities and/or circumstances. We advocate that staff work with pupils and their families, in collaboration with external agencies, to help the children, parents and carers understand the consequences of their behaviour. The focus is on understanding why certain behaviours have presented, using this as a learning opportunity to bring about longer-lasting change.

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All schools require that all visitors, without exception, comply with the policy on visitors to schools and with the government zero tolerance policy. In addition, all government schools have a positive relationships/behaviour management policy which clearly frames each school's expectations of its pupils.

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The key processes which schools follow in implementing zero tolerance within premises for all stakeholders include policy development and communication signage, pupil information and assemblies, parent information and assemblies, information on school websites, bulletins and/or newsletters, school handbook, PSHE lessons, role modelling by adults in and out of lessons, peer modelling, INSET and staff CPD. Schools clearly communicate pupil expectations to pupils and reinforce these on an ongoing basis through all teaching and education staff.

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The zero-tolerance policy and positive relationships/behaviour management policy are shared with pupils, parents and carers, and staff through different channels depending on the educational setting and the ages of the pupils. These include pupil handbooks, communication with parents, assemblies, PSHE, Seesaw/Google classrooms, notices around the school, bulletins and newsletters, as I have said. Through these channels the school community and all stakeholders interacting within it are helped to understand the importance of a safe and happy school environment.

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**Hon. E J Reyes:** Madam Speaker, I have received a good, detailed explanation of process, but if I can home in on particular incidents, should, unfortunately, there be physically aggressive behaviour, is there a procedure whereby the school has to report it up along the line, perhaps even reaching a possible investigation by the RGP because it could even be an offence? Perhaps the Minister, in his detailed answer, can home in a bit more on this issue.

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**Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** Absolutely. Madam Speaker, there could be a range of instances, from minor misdemeanours by children to an act of aggression like somebody wielding a knife – a member of staff, a visitor or one of the pupils. Where necessary – and it has happened, fortunately

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rarely, but it has happened – instances have to be reported to the Police and the Police have to attend. That is absolutely the case. Hopefully this is not something that is going to happen often.

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**Hon. Dr K Azopardi:** Given the long policy exposition that the Minister gave us as to the rationale and the attitude that the Government takes in relation to zero tolerance and behavioural management in schools, but given also the concerns that have been expressed by teachers at Westside, does he accept that the policy is not working?

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**Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** Do I accept that the policy is not working? No, Madam Speaker, I do not.

**Hon. Dr K Azopardi:** Does he not accept that the concerns that have been expressed by teachers are well made?

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**Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** Madam Speaker, there is another question on the Order Paper where I refer to those representations by NASUWT. They are the subject of discussion at the moment and the behaviour policy is under discussion to see, using the experience both of our local teachers and Education Department and NASUWT, whether we can improve it. It is active negotiation. If considering your policy in order to improve it is an acceptance of something not working, I do not accept that. Can things work better? Yes, they can. Are we working towards improvement? Yes, we are. But I cannot accept a blanket statement suggesting that our policy in schools in Gibraltar in general is failing as a result of that allegation in that school.

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**Madam Speaker:** Next question.

**Q695/2024**  
**Pupil suspensions –**  
**Number since January 2024**

**Clerk:** Question 695. The Hon. E J Reyes.

**Hon. E J Reyes:** Can Government provide details in respect of the number of pupils, together with generic reasons, who have been suspended from school since January 2024, indicating the school sector where the pupil is or was enrolled and duration of suspension?

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

**Minister for Education, the Environment and Climate Change (Hon. Prof. J E Cortes):** Madam Speaker, 30 suspensions involving 21 different pupils. The generic reasons are disrespectful behaviour and abusive language, unkindness, aggression towards others, damage to property, vaping and smoking. They are all in the secondary sector and the duration is from one day to two weeks, depending on the case.

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**Hon. E J Reyes:** I am grateful for that, Madam Speaker. Perhaps I was not clear enough in my question. The Minister said the duration varies, from one day onwards. I believe there are cases where an incident may happen in the course of the morning classes and the pupil is then suspended for the rest of that day. Is that included in the one day? I think there may be different subtotals there.

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**Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** I believe that those are included as a one-day suspension, but I would need to confirm that.

640 **Hon. E J Reyes:** Yes, I would be grateful. It just helps to complete the statistics table, whether that means one day, because if I get suspended on a Thursday and am told not to go back to school till Monday, then it will probably be two days, but if I am allowed to return tomorrow morning for registration ... That would help to clarify the statistics.

645 **Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** Madam Speaker, I am very happy to clarify that for the hon. Member and exchange information with him. I am sure he will remind me if he does not get it within the next few working days.

**Madam Speaker:** Next question.

**Q696/2024**  
**Wellbeing Support Team –**  
**Number of teachers/instructors with access to services**

**Clerk:** Question 696. The Hon. E J Reyes.

650 **Hon. E J Reyes:** Can Government provide a breakdown for the academic year 2023-24, showing the number of teachers/instructors who have access to services provided by the Wellbeing Support Team, indicating the school sector in which these teachers/instructors are employed?

655 **Clerk:** Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Education, the Environment and Climate Change.

**Minister for Education, the Environment and Climate Change (Hon. Prof. J E Cortes):** Madam Speaker, the figures for seeing people in one-to-ones, with an average of three sessions per person, are primary 13 and secondary 33.

660 **Hon. E J Reyes:** Madam Speaker, is there no distinction between upper and lower primary?

665 **Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** Madam Speaker, I have been provided these figures pooled together, again something that I suspect we will ... This has been provided to us by the Wellbeing Team. I can go back to them, but these are the sectors as they have been given to us.

670 **Hon. E J Reyes:** I apologise. I think the way I worded question when I put down 'the number of teachers/instructors' ... In compiling the information, I believe there is another category, which is the Learning Support Team and so on. Can the Minister, when he is seeking the information, try to conclude that those figures are there, because there are teachers who are instructors, who are normally graduates who have not undertaken a PGCE. Music is one that comes to mind, but there are also a lot of learning support staff who are, strictly speaking, not teachers or instructors; they are supporting staff.

675 **Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** Yes, they are not teachers. I have asked for the information regarding teachers or instructors. Instructors, as the hon. Member knows, do teach/instruct without ... Obviously their terms are different, and qualifications and so on.

680 This probably does not include SNLSAs. It is not included in the question, so it is not included in the answer. Again, I am happy to answer that question on another occasion or obtain that information for him.

**Clerk:** Next question.

**Q697/2024**

**Discipline in schools –  
Actions to address NASUWT/GTA concerns**

**Clerk:** Question 697. The Hon. E J Reyes.

685 **Hon. E J Reyes:** Can Government provide information on what it intends to do to address the concerns expressed by NASUWT/GTA in respect of alleged deterioration of discipline/pupils' behaviour in schools?

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

690 **Minister for Education, the Environment and Climate Change (Hon. Prof. J E Cortes):** Madam Speaker, I alluded to some of this in reply to the Hon. Leader of the Opposition. These concerns which Gibraltar NASUWT alleges have occurred in one school are being actively addressed, with constructive meetings to that end being held every fortnight between the Department of Education and NASUWT. I should just point out that that includes NASUWT and the local branch together at these meetings with the Department of Education.

700 **Hon. E J Reyes:** Madam Speaker, in public statements NASUWT have signified that they have a mandate, if need be, to carry out some type of industrial action and so on. Can the Minister confirm if any industrial action has been put into effect by the teachers' representatives?

705 **Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** Madam Speaker, I can confirm that it has not. We are actively and constructively engaging, reviewing policies, trying to look forward, to see, as I said earlier, whether we can make any improvements, and learning from situations in the past. As these constructive negotiations or discussions are proceeding, there has been no industrial action at this point in time.

710 **Hon. E J Reyes:** Finally, Madam Speaker, the Minister, in his answer, homed it down by confirming that it mainly refers to issues concerning one of our schools, but because the union group representative of all teachers ... any outcomes and so on will be something that will be spread out and implemented throughout all schools, or is the Minister aiming at a solution just for the one particular school in question?

715 **Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** Any lessons learnt and improvements, if they require implementation or tweaking of behaviour policies in other schools, would obviously cascade around to others. We are waiting to see how these discussions conclude. As I said, they are held every fortnight in a very constructive spirit. I am sure that we will end up agreeing, and if we all learn from this, well, it is a good thing and we will have made progress.

720 **Hon. Dr K Azopardi:** The Hon. Minister, in answer to my colleague, talks about the possible review or impact on policies that there might be, but is that the only thing that he envisages in those discussions might change, or are the discussions also addressing things that are not documents, that there are resources or other matters that might be impacted as a result of those discussions?

725 **Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** I am not present in these negotiations myself; they are led by the director and her team. There is no closed agenda and therefore other matters may arise, not only in relation to behaviour but over a broad range of other things. Clearly at the moment the focus is on this particular aspect, but it is not a closed agenda and other things are discussed, and I encourage them to do so.

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**Madam Speaker:** Next question.

**Q698/2024**  
**Mandatory scholarships –**  
**Number awarded in 2024 and total number currently funded**

**Clerk:** Question 698. The Hon. E J Reyes.

**Hon. E J Reyes:** How many new mandatory scholarships have been awarded in 2024, and what is the total number of mandatory scholarships currently being funded?  
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**Clerk:** Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Education, the Environment and Climate Change.

**Minister for Education, the Environment and Climate Change (Hon. Prof. J E Cortes):** Madam Speaker, as at 20th September, when the answer was prepared, 442 new mandatory scholarship awards have been awarded for the 2024-25 academic cycle; and as at 20th September, the Government is currently funding 927 students via the mandatory scholarship route for funding.  
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**Madam Speaker:** Next question.

**Q699/2024**  
**Discretionary scholarships –**  
**Applications since 2019 and total number currently funded**

**Clerk:** Question 699. The Hon. E J Reyes.  
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**Hon. E J Reyes:** How many applications have been received for discretionary scholarships since 2019; and, of these, how many persons were successful in their application, broken down by academic year, together with the total number of discretionary scholarships currently being funded.  
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**Clerk:** Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Education, the Environment and Climate Change.

**Minister for Education, the Environment and Climate Change (Hon. Prof. J E Cortes):** Madam Speaker, as at 20th September, 89 government-sponsored students are currently being funded through the discretionary scholarships funding route.  
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In 2019-20, 90 applicants were successful, but regrettably our current electronic system does not have the information with regard to how many applicants applied through that route, in that application cycle, because applications were previously received in hard copy.

760 There is a similar qualification for 2020-21, when 71 applicants were successful.

In 2021-22 we were able to gather the additional data. There were 74 applicants who applied through the discretionary route. Of these, 47 were successful and 27 were unsuccessful.

In 2022-23, 54 applicants applied through that route. Of these, 24 were successful and 30 were unsuccessful.

765 In 2023-24, 111 applicants applied through the discretionary route. Of these, all were successful.

In 2024-25, the current year, 89 applicants applied through the discretionary route. Of these, 63 were successful and 26 were unsuccessful.

**Hon. E J Reyes:** Madam Speaker, for the sake of clarity, in the figures for 2023, can the Minister repeat how many applications we had and how many were granted?  
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**Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** For 2022-23 or 2023-24?

775 **Hon. E J Reyes:** For 2023-24.

**Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** 111, all successful.

780 **Hon. E J Reyes:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. In my notes, because I did ask in I think it was  
Question 559/2023 and the figure given for 2023 discretionary scholarships was 149 granted, and  
there was a running total at that stage of 175. Those figures do not tally with previous information.  
Sometimes it happens that – I am pre-empting the answer – the Minister gives details of the  
number of applications and then, for some reason or another, the student does not take it up.  
785 Would he undertake to double check the figures as compared to the answer he was able to  
provide to this House last time round?

**Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** Yes, of course, Madam Speaker, absolutely. There will be an explanation.  
We have come across these before. Sometimes students have dropped out and then the figures  
do not tally, or there could be an error, but certainly I will find that information and share it  
790 accordingly.

**Hon. Dr K Azopardi:** Madam Speaker, given the figures that the Hon. Minister has given, as I  
understand it, in September 2021 there were 74 applicants and 47 successful, so about, I guess,  
loosely two thirds; in September 2022, 54 applicants and 24 successful – about half; and in  
795 September 2024 there have been 89 applicants and 63 successful, so again around two thirds. And  
yet in September 2023, 111 and all successful. Is that because it was election year and it was a  
goodie?

**Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** Madam Speaker, that is a very cynical way of looking at it. The  
800 scholarships are recommended by the independent scholarship panel. They are graded in  
sequence, depending on the points system, and it does depend on the funding that is available  
that is voted here in Parliament every year. Where there are unsuccessful ... there is an appeal  
process – again, it is an independent appeals panel – and these are the figures that have resulted  
from that process.

805 **Madam Speaker:** Next question.

#### Q700/2024

#### Distance learning scholarships – Applications since 2019 and total number currently funded

**Clerk:** Question 700. The Hon. E J Reyes.

810 **Hon. E J Reyes:** How many applications have been received for distance learning scholarships  
since 2019; and, of these, how many have been awarded, broken down by academic year together  
with the total number of distance learning scholarships currently being funded?

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

815 **Minister for Education, the Environment and Climate Change (Hon. Prof. J E Cortes):** Madam  
Speaker, as at 20th September, 62 government-sponsored students are being funded through the  
distance learning scholarship route.



820 In 2019-20 there were 30 successful applicants. As I explained for the previous question, we do not have the data for how many applicants there were, just for the successful ones, and that applies for the next two as well. In 2020-21 there were 30 successful applicants. In 2021-22 there were 23 successful applicants. In 2022-23 there were 42 applicants of whom 28 were successful and 14 were unsuccessful. In 2023-24 there were 45 applicants of whom all were successful. And before they say anything, in 2024-25 there were 33 applicants, all of whom were also successful. This is not an election year.

825 **Hon. E J Reyes:** Madam Speaker, thanks for statistics. However, in the past, when the Minister has answered questions in respect of distance learning, he has made a distinction. In 2023 he told me that of those granted as distance learning, 11 were actually mandatory scholarships who had decided to convert into distance. In the figures he has given me, especially this year, of the 33 that have been granted, how many were mandatory following the data as he presented it last year?

830 **Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** Madam Speaker, of the 33 this year? I suspect that filter will have already been carried out, so I will have to check. Perhaps the hon. Member and I could have a conversation later to see exactly what he is trying to ascertain. I am not altogether clear.

835 **Madam Speaker:** Next question.

**Q701-02/2024**  
**Funded courses not successfully completed –**  
**Number of individuals and amount owing to Government**

**Clerk:** Question 701. The Hon. E J Reyes.

840 **Hon. E J Reyes:** How many students who were beneficiaries of scholarships are still debtors to date or must plan and commit to pay back government educational grants given to them, due to not successfully completing the course for which they were funded?

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

845 **Minister for Education, the Environment and Climate Change (Hon. Prof. J E Cortes):** Madam Speaker, I will answer this question together with Question 702.

**Clerk:** Question 702. The Hon. E J Reyes.

850 **Hon. E J Reyes:** What is the current total debt owed to Government by students and/or their guarantors due to not successfully completing the courses for which they were funded?

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

855 **Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** Madam Speaker, the number of students that are currently debtors as at 20th September is 236. There is one student awaiting a repayment plan, for which the debt is not yet included in the final amount because they are still working on it, and there are five students awaiting a decision. These need to be confirmed; therefore, there might be an additional debt but this has not yet been established.

860 The total debt, other than those that are pending, owed to Government as at 20th September is £1,667,380.60.

**Hon. E J Reyes:** Madam Speaker, two small things. I will take the first one. The Minister said that there are some still awaiting a decision: a decision to be taken by whom?

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**Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** There is a process by which, if the student has given up for a cause such as a medical reason, there is an assessment in the Department and then there is a recommendation as to whether that student should be asked to pay back. There could be a legitimate reason – maybe the death of a very close relative, some health reasons and so on – and there is an assessment carried out. Those five are in the process of that assessment.

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**Hon. E J Reyes:** I am grateful; that does help to clarify. On a quick glance at previous figures, I am glad to see that the number of debtors has been reduced from 240 last year to 236. However, the bad news for those Members on both sides of the House who look after our pounds, shillings and pence is that the outstanding debt actually happens to be higher. So, we have fewer students but we are now owed more than what was owed a year ago. Is there any explanation that the Minister can enlighten us with?

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**Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** Madam Speaker, different students will have different amounts that they owe. If a student has given up a four-year course three years into it, they are going to owe more than a student who has been paid one term and then gives up. There is not a direct relationship between the amount of money owed and the number of students, so it does not quite work out in the way that the hon. Member has suggested.

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**Hon. E J Reyes:** Thank you. Madam Speaker, because the two questions were housed together, has the Minister heard from his staff, the Director of Education and his advisers, any concern in respect of the reasons for the number of dropouts? Shall we call it that unkind word? Is there any rise for concern, or does it tend to be a pattern that has been established over the last x number of years?

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**Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** There is a very wide range, Madam Speaker. There could be health issues; there could be mental health issues. We are aware that for young people it seems that the Covid pandemic had an effect on mental health, and that may be showing now. The universities are now sometimes lowering the entry requirements with the inclusion of more foundation courses. The Department is very careful in trying to advise young people who they feel may not be up to a degree, and they do try to encourage them not to try to stretch themselves beyond what it is likely that they can achieve. But we also encourage young people to improve themselves. It may be that they are not as qualified or as able to carry out specific courses. It is a wide range of issues but it is not new. If anything has increased, it may be the mental health issues, but this is an ongoing thing and students have been giving up courses for as long as courses have been held, even in the time when we went to study; we all have friends who did that.

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**Q692/2024**

**Hassan Centenary Terraces –  
Number of school pupil residents by school and year group –  
Supplementary questions**

**Madam Speaker:** Before we move on, I will invite the hon. Member to ask any supplementaries to Question 692.

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**Hon. E J Reyes:** Thank you, Madam Speaker, very short comments on this. First, overall, given the total number of students who are registered as living in Hassan Centenary Terraces, I am

surprised. It does seem a little bit low, given the number of units there, but I do not know, perhaps the Minister is aware of some reason – maybe some are still in the process of moving in or simply have forgotten to inform the school of their new address. If he has any information in that respect ...

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But the one I am homing in on ... He had previously announced the catchment area, which is basically, for lower primary, Notre Dame, and for upper primary, St Anne's School. I see from his chart that there are students pertaining to those schools. However, there are, in the reception year, students choosing to go to St Mary's Lower. Even in the nursery, they are choosing to go to St Bernard's Primary and so on. Is this as a result of requests submitted by the family, requesting transfers, or is it because the schools did not have the room to take in the pupil and therefore they were sent to the old address?

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**Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** Madam Speaker, again, it is not that straightforward. If a family moves location and the child is already in a school outside their new catchment area, the child is allowed to continue in that school unless the parents request a change. So, that is the first thing: we do not want to interrupt ... Then there could be cases in which it has not been reported, but remember that we do get requests for transfers when, for example, a grandparent lives very close to another school and the parents prefer, because of the pick-up by the grandparents, that the child go to another area outside their catchment area. We try to accommodate them – it is not always possible – so that may also be the reason why there are some children who are outside the new catchment area. I suspect it will all settle down once the Centenary Terraces are more populated and have been available for longer, but I think within all that there is scope for explaining why there are children scattered in other schools, even though they live in that wonderful new location.

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**Hon. E J Reyes:** Madam Speaker, again referring to previous answers, given the number of pupils now residing within that housing estate, and looking towards the future, is the Minister able to say that he is confident that the identified schools, namely Notre Dame and St Anne's, would be able to cope with the numbers of those projected to come into their schools, or does he already have certain plans in mind to extend pupil capacity within those schools?

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**Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** At this moment, we are confident that we are covered for the next few years at least, so yes, I am confident that at this point in time we are not expecting any difficulties. Remember that a lot of the families will be moving there and vacating the other schools, so the dynamics currently do not worry us.

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**Hon. E J Reyes:** And, beyond the lifetime of this House, if one looks forward to four years' time, there will probably be a baby boom in that estate given that bedroom compositions will allow families to expand.

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**Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** Madam Speaker, we will still be here to deal with that, too.

**Madam Speaker:** Next question.

**Q703/2024  
Glacis Estate –  
Road safety**

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**Clerk:** Question 703. The Hon. C Sacarello.

955 **Hon. C Sacarello:** Good afternoon. Madam Speaker, there is a growing public concern for the safety of residents of Glacis Estate as a result of the speed of diverted traffic entering the estate off Winston Churchill Avenue. Will the Government seek to address this urgently and head off a potential disaster?

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

960 **Minister for Education, the Environment and Climate Change (Hon. Prof. J E Cortes):** Madam Speaker, this temporary access road was opened in order to allow works to divert the main stormwater culvert out of the one Bayside development. This was done in order to provide direct access into the eastern side of Glacis Estate and avoid the loss of parking spaces within the estate, as otherwise there would have had to have been a two-way traffic flow system within the estate.

965 Bayside Road has now reopened and traffic through the temporary road has reduced. The issue of excess speeding had not been referred to the Ministry and has now been taken up with the RGP. Meanwhile, temporary speed bumps are being placed on site; in fact, I believe they have been placed this week. In addition, the Highways/Traffic team will be meeting up with the tenants' association to address any concerns that may remain.

970 **Hon. C Sacarello:** Madam Speaker, I would like to thank the Hon. Minister for his extensive reply. I would just like some clarification, if possible at all, please, because these concerns were expressed to me by residents of the area, not just for the vulnerable, young and old, who might zip across and fall victim to a speeding car, but also run-of-the-mill people who live there.

975 The Minister mentioned that there were speed bumps. Could he possibly explain the exact location? Are they as they come off Winston Churchill Avenue into the estate, into that little car park? Thank you.

980 **Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** Madam Speaker, I am trying to avail myself of modern technology because I may have a photograph of the location. This is at the entrance of Winston Churchill Avenue, just as you come in, so you have to slow down, otherwise you will get bumped. I repeat: had that entrance not been provided, Glacis Estate would have had to be two-way from the western side, and there would have been a loss of parking. As the hon. Member will be aware, there is a need to keep parking there because of all the works that have been going on, so we worked very hard to do that and hopefully the speed bumps will now resolve the problem.

985 **Madam Speaker:** Next question.

**Q704/2024**  
**Vandalism in public car parks –**  
**Performance of security company**

**Clerk:** Question 704. The Hon. C Sacarello.

990 **Hon. C Sacarello:** I have received numerous reports, Madam Speaker, on issues relating to repeated security and vandalism in our public car parks. The Government already pays a security company to prevent these low-level crimes. Is the Government happy with their performance?

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

995 **Minister for Education, the Environment and Climate Change (Hon. Prof. J E Cortes):** Madam Speaker, the Government is happy with their performance and is working with the security company on how to reduce these instances of vandalism.

1000 **Hon. C Sacarello:** Madam Speaker, I would like to thank the Hon. Minister for his reply. However, I would express the concern of the public where the users of this car park have to traipse past all sorts of nasties as a result of damaged doors and open access. Is the Government seriously satisfied with this and, by extension, their own performance with the car parks, which have continued in this condition for years? Have years of failure not brought them to conclude that they must try something different?

1005 **Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** Madam Speaker, I refer the hon. Gentleman to the answer that I have just given.

1010 **Madam Speaker:** Yes.

**Hon. R M Clinton:** Madam Speaker, we have heard reference to a security company. Would the Minister be able to identify the security company for us?

1015 **Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** Madam Speaker, I believe I know which it is, but I would need to be absolutely sure before I actually name it. I would rather check that fact and provide it on a later occasion. I will check it; I am not absolutely sure.

1020 **Hon. R M Clinton:** Madam Speaker, I am grateful to Minister, but does he not see it as a bit bizarre that he does not know the name of the company but he is satisfied with their performance? How can he equal that?

1025 **Chief Minister (Hon. F R Picardo):** Madam Speaker, there is absolutely nothing irreconcilable about the two answers. The hon. Gentleman has asked the Minister the exact name of the company, no doubt so that he can search it at Companies House, which is his prerogative if that is what he wishes to do. Having the exact name of a company in order to enable a person to search it at Companies House, if that is what they wish to do, is quite different to knowing whether or not you are satisfied with the performance of the company, the exact name of which, for search purposes, you might not be able to recall exactly.

1030 **Hon. R M Clinton:** Madam Speaker, the Chief Minister is presuming the rationale for my question. I am merely asking the name of the company so we can link up that company to any other contracts that may have been awarded by the Government, but the Minister seems to be satisfied with the performance of a company he cannot identify.

1035 **Hon. Chief Minister:** No, Madam Speaker, that is not what the Minister has said, although if the hon. Gentleman wants to say that I am presuming what he is going to do with the name of the company, he can presume, if he likes, that that is what the Minister is doing, but he would be completely and utterly wrong, as he is about most of what he says in this House. The reality is that you can be satisfied with the performance of a company and not be able to name it exactly, whether that is for the purpose that the hon. Gentleman says I have presumed or for the purpose which we must all ensure that we advance, which is not to say something in *Hansard* which is not entirely correct.

1045 **Madam Speaker:** Next question.

**Hon. D J Bossino:** If I may?

**Madam Speaker:** Yes.

1050 **Hon. D J Bossino:** To the question that we are all dwelling upon at the moment, given that the question itself refers to a security company and given that the Hon. the Minister does not have the information, or he has an idea of what the name of the company is but he says he wants to be accurate insofar as his reply is concerned, is it possible for the hon. Member to provide the answer later on in this session – it is relevant and it does arise – rather than let it just go on the never-never and for my hon. Friend to have to ask another question at the next session? I think it is something which arises as a result of the question filed.

1055

**Hon. Chief Minister:** Yes, Madam Speaker.

**Madam Speaker:** Next question.

**Q705/2024**  
**Theatre Royal car park –**  
**Cleaning**

1060 **Clerk:** Question 705. The Hon. C Sacarello.

**Hon. C Sacarello:** When was the Theatre Royal car park last cleaned, and how often is it done?

1065 **Clerk:** Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Education, the Environment and Climate Change.

**Minister for Education, the Environment and Climate Change (Hon. Prof. J E Cortes):** Madam Speaker, let me just add that my Departments deal with several security companies. I need to be careful to know which deals with which different sections. I could give the wrong answer. This is why I need to check.

1070 Madam Speaker, the Theatre Royal car park is a private car park and is not cleaned by the government contractor.

1075 **Hon. C Sacarello:** Madam Speaker, I am grateful for the answer. Could the Hon. Minister clarify, if it is a private car park, is there no connection whatsoever by way of lease or underlease to the Government at all?

1080 **Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** No, Madam Speaker, my team inform me that we are not involved in the cleaning of that car park because it is a private car park. I cannot know how often it is cleaned or who cleans it, and so on; it is a private car park.

**Hon. C Sacarello:** If it is private, does the Hon. Minister mean it is owned by a private company? If so, could he please mention the name of that company?

1085 **Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** Madam Speaker, if it is private it is private. It is owned by somebody, I assume it is a private company, but it is not owned by the Government.

**Madam Speaker:** Next question.

**Q706/2024**  
**Mid Harbours public toilet –**  
**Maintenance**

**Clerk:** Question 706. The Hon. C Sacarello.

1090 **Hon. C Sacarello:** Madam Speaker, could the Minister please explain why the public toilets in Mid Harbours Estate are suffering from a long-term spell of no maintenance?

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

1095 **Minister for Education, the Environment and Climate Change (Hon. Prof. J E Cortes):** Madam Speaker, the hon. Member is wrong to suggest that the Mid Harbours toilets are suffering from anything. In fact, the Mid Harbours public toilet was closed in 2019 at the request of the committee of the Mid Harbours Small Boat Marinas, who are responsible for the building in which it is situated.

1100 **Madam Speaker:** Next question.

**Q707/2024**  
**Provision of electric bus service –**  
**Update**

**Clerk:** Question 707. The Hon. D J Bossino.

1105 **Hon. D J Bossino:** Please provide an update as to when the Government will be providing an electric bus service.

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

1110 **Minister for Education, the Environment and Climate Change (Hon. Prof. J E Cortes):** Madam Speaker, the tender process in connection with the smaller Upper Town buses is nearing completion, with the vehicles that have been proposed being reviewed by the tender board and by technical experts to consider their suitability in terms of size, overhang, torque etc. before test drives are organised. I am hopeful that this will result in electric or at least hybrid vehicles being selected. Tenders for the main fleet are expected to be published in the coming months.

1115 **Hon. D J Bossino:** The Hon. the Minister has distinguished the fleet ones that serve the Upper Town and then the rest of the fleet. I do thank him for his full reply. May I ask him to give us an idea of timings, at least as far as the first limb of his answer is concerned, the Upper Town: when he thinks that they will be up and running, they have done the test runs, and all the rest of it?

1120 **Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** Madam Speaker, I distinguished between the two because the Upper Town requires smaller buses and also it is quite narrow and hilly and so on, so they are different buses. I suspect that it will take maybe two to three months, so I would say, to be realistic, by the first quarter of next year at the latest.

1125 **Hon. D J Bossino:** And if I can press him in relation to the rest of the fleet, it is a longstanding commitment of this Government since I think when they first assumed office in 2011, and there were various reasons, as they have explained in the past, as to why it has not been possible to

1130 provide an electric bus service, but can he give an idea as to when we are going to be enjoying an electric bus service as regards the rest of the fleet?

**Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** Madam Speaker, as I said, the tenders are expected to be published in the coming months. That is as much as I am able to say at this stage.

1135 **Hon. D J Bossino:** And is he more confident that this will now become a reality? From recollection, in my first term in this Parliament the reason why the initiative was shelved and did not progress was because the technology was not there. Is he now confident that the technology is there and that this will become a reality?

1140 **Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** Madam Speaker, technology wise, yes, I think that we have come a long way. Obviously we will have to wait and see what the companies replying to the tenders submit, but certainly the technology should be there. We would have to phase it, clearly, because they are not inexpensive, and we would have to look at the older ones first and so on, but that would be part of the process. So, I think technology wise, yes, but obviously it depends on what comes before us.  
1145

**Hon. D J Bossino:** The Hon. the Minister refers to expense. Is he able to provide any indication as to the cost of both fleets? I imagine he is likely to have more information insofar as the Upper Town Fleet is concerned, because that is closer in time to becoming a reality, and less in relation to the rest of the fleet, but does he have any information in relation to that?  
1150

**Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** Madam Speaker, in view of the fact that one is an active tender process and the other one will be a tender where we expect proposals to come forward, I do not think it would be appropriate for me to speculate on the possible costs.  
1155

**Madam Speaker:** Next question.

**Q708/2024**  
**Bus fares –**  
**Card payment machines**

**Clerk:** Question 708. The Hon. D J Bossino.

1160 **Hon. D J Bossino:** Are there plans to introduce card machines for the payment of bus fares?

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

1165 **Minister for Education, the Environment and Climate Change (Hon. Prof. J E Cortes):** Madam Speaker, this is one on which we could have issued a press release but we held it back – referring to the exchange yesterday.

The Ministry and Gibraltar Bus Company Ltd management have been working on the implementation of card payment machines on our buses for some months. The card machines arrived at the bus depot at the beginning of September. Training has been given to management and has been scheduled for the drivers for this week. Upon completion of the training, the buses will have card payment facilities. This is expected to be operational within the next few weeks.  
1170

**Hon. D J Bossino:** May I, on this side of the House, welcome the very good news? It has been an issue which has been brought to our attention, and indeed I have seen with my own eyes – so



1175 I can give direct and not hearsay evidence in relation to that – the difficulties which are faced by our visitors, who are required to pay because they do not benefit from the free bus service. There is a very strict rule which is sometimes applied, sometimes not, in relation to the provision of exact change, and that causes, I think, a very bad image as far as Gibraltar Inc. is concerned.

1180 Can the hon. the Member opposite give any information as to what the cost to the Government – to the bus company in this case – is going to be?

**Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** No, Madam Speaker, I am afraid I do not have that information, but it was not an unreasonable cost. I am happy to provide that, either here or otherwise. It is precisely because of the shortcomings of the system that we have acquired them, and within the next few weeks visitors to Gibraltar will be able to pay by card.

1185 **Hon. D J Bossino:** Just because I think it is a relevant supplementary to ask, in my view, could I ask him to provide this information during the course of this session? I think I would be very interested to have that information, if he is able to easily have it made available to him by his officials.

1190 By way of a further supplementary question, if I may, Madam Speaker, how is the rollout going to work? Is it going to be immediately set up in relation to all the buses in the fleet, or is it going to be a phased process?

1195 **Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** Madam Speaker, the company has acquired card machines for all the buses and the intention is to introduce them on all the buses in one go.

1200 **Hon. D J Bossino:** Sorry, just one final question, if I may, and I know I am stretching it slightly but it is to do with bus fares and all the rest of it. Will it continue to be the Government's intention and policy for the bus service to be free of charge for residents, or is there going to be a change in that regard?

**Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** Yes, ma'am.

1205 **Madam Speaker:** The Hon. Mr Clinton.

**Hon. D J Bossino:** Just to clarify, for the sake of the record, yes that it is the Government's policy not to change, not that ...? I added something at the end which would be suggestive of a change.

1210 **Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** Maybe I did not hear the bit at the end. I confirm there is no intention to change that, ma'am.

1215 **Hon. R M Clinton:** Madam Speaker, may I ask the Minister who is the provider of the card payment facilities?

**Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** The name escapes me, but it is a well-known provider of card machine services. Again, I will have to get that information.

**Madam Speaker:** Next question.

**Q709/2024**  
**Appropriation Bill 2024 –**  
**Training expenses for Transport Department**

1220 **Clerk:** Question 709. The Hon. D J Bossino.

**Hon. D J Bossino:** Please provide a breakdown of Head 22 item 2(15) entitled 'Training expenses', amounting to £57,000, setting out the detail of what the expenditure relates to.

1225 **Clerk:** Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Education, the Environment and Climate Change.

**Minister for Education, the Environment and Climate Change (Hon. Prof. J E Cortes):** Madam Speaker, I am surprised that the hon. Member puts this question now, given that it refers to the schedule of a Bill we debated in June and that the question is more appropriate at the Committee Stage of the Bill. Nonetheless, and without establishing any precedent in doing so, I am happy to provide the information.

1230 Training expenses relate to a vehicle examiner's course which took place in the UK at a cost of £18,000, approximately, and to other courses which are planned for later in the year for transport inspectors.

1235

**Hon. D J Bossino:** I think one is entitled to ask questions in relation to these items; it certainly has not been disallowed by the House. Indeed, I did raise it in the Committee Stage and I think the hon. Member invited me to ask further questions in the future. He may not recall, but this is why I ask it on this occasion.

1240 If he recalls, this is an increased expenditure from previous years. I think the figure – I do not have it in front of me – was in the £5,000 region. Can he provide an explanation for that? Is this training that is going to be ongoing into the future, so it is that level of expenditure that one is likely to see; or is it a one off, and then, in the future, the training will presumably continue to be done, going forward, in house? Is that what we are looking at?

1245

**Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** Madam Speaker, in taking over the Transport portfolio, I felt that there were gaps in how up to date some of the staff were and I felt it important that we should train them up. These courses, apart from the one that has already taken place, include one on heavy goods vehicle standards. It includes standards of international transportation of merchandise, which is relevant when heavy goods vehicles come in from across the border. It is related to the number of hours that are safe for drivers to be on the road in relation to the use of tachographs. I was not satisfied that we had that expertise, certainly not refreshed, and there was a need to upgrade the training of our very hardworking transport inspectors. Therefore, these were courses that we thought were justified. I do not expect a similar level of expenditure in future years.

1255

**Hon. D J Bossino:** Forgive me if he has answered the question already; if he has, I did not catch it. Is it all the transport inspectors who have benefited from this course, or is it only a few and then they cascade it down to the others?

1260 **Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** The course that has already taken place was for the vehicle examiners, and that was for all of them. All of the transport inspectors are expected to carry out this course. We are trying to get the course run in Gibraltar by UK experts and we are currently negotiating the details of that.

1265 **Hon. D J Bossino:** Finally, presumably the hon. Member is seeking to do that because the cost will naturally come down, and that must be the rationale behind that decision.

**Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** Yes, of course, Madam Speaker, flying one or two trainers in is going to be less expensive.

1270 **Madam Speaker:** Next question.

**Q710-11/2024**  
**Cost of cycling measures –**  
**Hoy Dorman audit; Europa Point Avenue cycle lane**

**Clerk:** Question 710. The Hon. D J Bossino.

**Hon. D J Bossino:** What was the cost of the cycle audit as contracted to Hoy Dorman?

1275 **Clerk:** Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Education, the Environment and Climate Change.

**Minister for Education, the Environment and Climate Change (Hon. Prof. J E Cortes):** Madam Speaker, I will answer this question together with Question 711.

1280 **Clerk:** Question 711. The Hon. the Leader of the Opposition.

**Hon. Dr K Azopardi:** Madam Speaker, how much has the extension to the cycle lane at Europa Point Avenue cost?

1285 **Clerk:** Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Education, the Environment and Climate Change.

**Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** Madam Speaker, the total cost of the Hoy Dorman cycle audit is and was as follows. In the current financial year – which was, if I may explain, part of the process that had not been paid in the last financial year, although the work was carried out then – £8,200; and for the financial year 2023-24, £19,127.13.

The total cost of the extension of the cycle lane at Europa Point Avenue from Governor's Meadow School to the roundabout by Atlantic Suites was £19,123.96.

1295 **Madam Speaker:** First, any supplementaries in relation to Question 710?

**Hon. D J Bossino:** Yes. In relation to that, he may recall that this was a corrected answer that he gave when I posed the question about the cycle audits. I think the information that he gave the House, which he then corrected, was that it had been done in house – I think as a result of a supplementary that I posed. The question is: why wasn't this done in house? In the scheme of things it does not seem overly expensive, but why wasn't it done in house? And, if I may, is it the intention for this type of thing, in the future, to be done in house? I hope I am not straying into the hypothetical; I am asking his current intention.

1300 **Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** Madam Speaker, if I may just clarify: the hon. Member means the cycle audit, not the cycle lane?

**Hon. D J Bossino:** I said audit – or did I say lane?

1310 **Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** No, I did not hear quite ... I am getting my new hearing aid next week, which will help, but he is referring to the audits? (**Hon. D J Bossino:** Yes.) Madam Speaker, this obviously was commissioned by my predecessor, and I think I gave an explanation in a previous

1315 meeting as to the reason for this audit. This was something new in Gibraltar. I think in future these audits can be carried out by our team. If I may give the hon. Member an example, the Sustainable Traffic, Transport and Parking plan, which was done by an overseas consultant, is currently being reviewed by my Transport team and will be published within the next couple of months, done in house, and I suspect that unless there are particularly difficult routes or particularly conflicting interests in any particular area in which we do not feel we have the expertise ... I think we now have the expertise and I am certainly very confident that my team is able to do these things in house in the future.

1320

**Hon. D J Bossino:** I fully appreciate that he, as a Minister, will have a different view than his predecessors, which is what I gather from what the hon. Member is saying, and that is fine. If one wants to be really particular about it, there has been a slight change of government policy, but it is the Minister who has thought that this will result in a saving of expense because we have the expertise in his Department.

1325

I seek his forgiveness once again as to whether this information is already out there, but has the result of that audit been made public? I understand that the audit will have informed the policy decisions that the Government is pursuing in respect of the cycling lanes it is constructing and all the rest of it, but has the audit itself been published?

1330

**Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** Madam Speaker, I do not believe it has.

**Hon. D J Bossino:** Would the hon. Member have any difficulty in committing to publishing it?

1335

**Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** If there is public interest in it, I would have no objections. I suspect it is a very technical-focused audit on particular routes, but I will have a look at it and take a view.

1340

**Hon. D J Bossino:** If he does not mind, I will pursue him on that. The hon. Member expresses a view as to the technical nature of it, but I think there is public interest, and for the sake of transparency I think the Government ought to be publishing it, so I will press him on it.

**Madam Speaker:** Any supplementaries in relation to Question 711?

1345

**Hon. Dr K Azopardi:** I only have one, which is just to ask if the Minister has the information as to how long this extension of the cycle lane was in terms of meterage.

1350

**Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** No, Madam Speaker, I do not have the figures. I can picture it in my head, as I am sure the hon. Member can, but I do not have a figure. I am not going to try to guess it, or even try to work it out in Google Maps right now. It is information that can be made available, but I do not have it here.

**Madam Speaker:** Next question.

## INWARD INVESTMENT AND THE GIBRALTAR SAVINGS BANK

**Q714-15/2024**

**Public debt, cash reserves and net debt –  
Figures for June, July and August 2024**

1355

**Clerk:** Questions to the Minister for Inward Investment and the Gibraltar Savings Bank. Question 714. The Hon. R M Clinton.

**Hon. R M Clinton:** Madam Speaker, can the Government please provide the total gross debt, aggregate debt after application of Sinking Fund to gross debt, cash reserves and net debt figures for public debt for the following dates: 1st June 2024, 1st July 2024 and 1st August 2024?

1360 **Clerk:** Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Inward Investment and the Gibraltar Savings Bank.

**Minister for Inward Investment and the Gibraltar Savings Bank (Hon. Sir J J Bossano):** I will answer this question with Question 715.

1365 **Clerk:** Question 715. The Hon. R M Clinton.

**Hon. R M Clinton:** Can the Government advise the balance on the General Sinking Fund on the following dates: 1st June 2024, 1st July 2024 and 1st August 2024?

1370 **Clerk:** Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Inward Investment and the Gibraltar Savings Bank.

**Hon. Sir J J Bossano:** Madam Speaker, the gross debt, aggregate debt and General Sinking Fund on the dates requested were at the same level as previously provided.

1375 The cash reserves and the net debt for the following months were as follows. Cash reserves: June, £119 million; July, £104.2 million; August, £80.4 million. Net debt: June, £735.3 million; July, £750.1 million; August, £773.9 million.

**Madam Speaker:** Any supplementaries: Next question.

**Q716/2024**  
**2022 Census –**  
**Date for publication**

1380 **Clerk:** Question 716. The Hon the Leader of the Opposition.

**Hon. Dr K Azopardi:** Madam Speaker, can the Government update the House on the date for publication of the 2022 Census?

1385 **Clerk:** Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Inward Investment and the Gibraltar Savings Bank.

**Minister for Inward Investment and the Gibraltar Savings Bank (Hon. Sir J J Bossano):** Madam Speaker, the 2022 Census report is expected to be released later this year.

1390 **Hon. Dr K Azopardi:** Madam Speaker, I think the collation work of the census happened in around November 2022, so it is almost two years ago. Obviously these things take time. I am sure the hon. Member agrees with me that this is an important informational tool not just for Members of this House but to plan things and understand how the population is growing and how there is movement in particular sectors etc. because of the vastness of the census and the fact that it takes a snapshot every 10 years. When he says that there is an expectation, can I probe him a bit more about seeking an assurance, if he is able to give it, that it will be published this year? Or is that not possible given the state of the preparation of the document?

1395 **Hon. Sir J J Bossano:** Madam Speaker, I cannot give him an assurance because I do not know at what stage it is. All I know is that the Department expects to complete it this year. The Scottish

1400 census, for example, was done in 2021 and still has not been published, so we are ahead of  
Scotland in that.

**Hon. Dr K Azopardi:** I am glad to hear we are ahead of Scotland but we are also much smaller  
1405 than Scotland and it would be hoped, does he not agree, that we could get our census out this  
year?

**Hon. Sir J J Bossano:** The Statistics Department has been very prudential in its expenditure. If  
the hon. Member looks at the Budget, he will see that their budget has been very well controlled  
1410 and they only get a greater amount of money, as he knows, from having it voted in this House at  
the time that the information has to be collected and sifted. This is one element of their work. The  
people who are working there are doing it as conscientiously and as quickly as they can. I do not  
think that I would want to spend more money by trying to get it a few months earlier. I think when  
they are ready, they will publish it. It is not a thing that I think everybody is waiting for with bated  
1415 breath to see what happens. Probably I will be the one who will be reading more of it than anybody  
else.

**Madam Speaker:** Next question.

## HOUSING AND THE GIBRALTAR UNIVERSITY

Q712/2024

### Government hostels – Plans for improvement re accessibility

**Clerk:** We return to questions on Housing and the Gibraltar University.  
1420 Question 712. The Hon. A Sanchez.

**Hon. A Sanchez:** Can the Government clarify its plans to improve government-owned hostels  
located at the Queen's Hotel and the Sunrise Motel to ensure that they adequately meet the  
needs of elderly residents and persons with disabilities in the future?

1425 **Clerk:** Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Housing and the Gibraltar University.

**Minister for Housing and the Gibraltar University (Hon. P A Orfila):** Madam Speaker, the  
Government is negotiating with a contractor on an extension at the rear of the Sunrise Motel. The  
1430 plan is to also refurbish the current Sunrise Motel in full, which will of course include disability  
requirements. The Government will be meeting with the contractor shortly.

**Hon. A Sanchez:** Madam Speaker, the Hon. Minister confirmed that the individuals living in the  
Queen's Hotel hostel will be asked to move to the Sunrise Motel at the end of this month. These  
1435 works supposedly will take a while to be completed. In the meantime, the accessibility of the  
Sunrise Motel is not that great, and when we visited we could not see rooms that were adapted.  
Inside the hostel, accessibility was not very good. What will be done in the interim period to  
accommodate elderly individuals and persons with disabilities?

**Hon. P A Orfila:** First of all, they will not be moving at the end of this month, they will be moving  
1440 at the end of next month, which is 31st October, Halloween. After that, we shall be taking it in  
stages. We are going to take the people ... There are 22, actually. We have 23 who cannot be  
located in the Queen's, and we have 22 who are resisting the move. We had this conversation

1445 yesterday, Madam Speaker. They will have to move. It will be staged. There will be room. Maybe, for the time being, they will have to share rooms, but they are aware of this and they are quite happy to do so.

1450 **Hon. A Sanchez:** Madam Speaker, can the Hon. Minister clarify how she understands that the individuals are quite happy to do so when they are refusing to move? I do not understand how she can say that they are quite happy to share when my understanding is that they are not happy to share and they are not happy with the move because they are refusing to move. I do not understand. Can she clarify this?

1455 **Hon. P A Orfila:** Yes, of course, Madam Speaker. Humans are creatures of habit, as we all know, and some people refuse to move because they are quite happy where they are, but the thing is that they have to move because the Queen's Hotel is going to be torn down, demolished. Therefore, they have to move. We are relocating them to the Sunrise. We are not throwing them out, we are relocating them. For the time being they will have to share. The people already there know that this is going to happen and they are quite happy to share with their colleagues. Then stage 2 will occur, which will be when we shall build, behind the Sunrise Motel, extra rooms which will then become the motel, which will move to the back. Then we shall refurbish the front, including the facade, and then the whole of the Sunrise Motel will be completely refurbished.

1460 **Hon. A Sanchez:** Madam Speaker, I think perhaps the Hon. Minister might be misunderstanding the concerns of the residents of the Queen's, at least the ones who have been speaking to us. They do not seem to be refusing the move because they refuse to share; they are refusing to move because they seem to be tired of empty electoral promises that are made to them every time we get to election time and the Ministers turn up to the Queen's hostel and promise them new hostels and new housing that never seem to see the light of day. Instead, what they are met with are infestations of cockroaches, which we heard about yesterday, infestation of maggots, which we heard about yesterday, rodents, and deplorable living conditions which we have witnessed. We have seen for ourselves no running hot water –

**Chief Minister (Hon. F R Picardo):** Is there a question?

1475 **Hon. A Sanchez:** – no – (**Hon. F R Picardo:** Speech.) Let me –

**Madam Speaker:** Continue.

1480 **Hon. A Sanchez:** We have seen no lights in many areas. We have seen deplorable conditions. We have seen no working lifts for elderly residents and persons with disabilities. I can continue, and the conditions in the Sunrise Motel are similar. We have been shown –

**Madam Speaker:** Now get to the question.

1485 **Hon. A Sanchez:** We are concerned with the capacity issues which we have been shown by staff and residents at the Sunrise Motel ... the fact that there is only one room available, an office that has been turned into a room.

**Madam Speaker:** I am going to press the hon. Member for the question now.

1490 **Hon. A Sanchez:** Can the Hon. Minister confirm how she intends to fit all the residents into the Sunrise Motel? Does she plan to cram them all into a room? Is that the solution?

1495 **Hon. Chief Minister:** Madam Speaker, a lot of what the hon. Lady has said is just not true. (**A**  
**Member:** Nonsense.) No, it is not, because I visited the Buena Vista Hostel before the general  
election in 2011, and I visited a hostel that there used to be, known as the Workers' Hostel, on  
Devil's Tower Road, before the election of 2011. I promised the people who were in both of those  
hostels that we would move them out of those hostels into new facilities, and we did, and so the  
hon. Lady is completely wrong to talk about empty promises at election time, about moving  
1500 individuals out of a hostel. We made those promises and we fulfilled those promises. We took  
people who were in dormitory-style arrangements at Buena Vista, with cockroaches, with rats,  
with maggots, with no lights, in an area that had been found to be unfit for human habitation –  
*not* the situation in the hostels today – and moved them to a three-star hotel that was the Queen's  
Hotel, and to a three-star hotel that was the Sunrise Motel. There have been maintenance issues,  
1505 nobody is disputing that, but now we are moving them, as we promised to do – not an empty  
promise – to a new, refurbished facility at the Sunrise Motel, which will include expansion that  
the Minister has already talked about. So, it is not a question of shoehorning people into a facility.

The hon. Lady has to realise that the word that we are dealing with here is not 'hotels' with the  
's' at the end; it is 'hostel' with the 's' in the middle, and the word 'hostel' implies dormitory-style  
1510 arrangements for sleeping. So, if there are going to be dormitory-style arrangements for  
sleeping – in some cases entirely, in some rooms, and in some cases only for a period – then that  
is entirely in keeping with the definition of what is provided for in a workers' hostel and is entirely  
in keeping with what we are committed to provide, what we promise to provide and what we will  
provide.

1515 The hon. Lady may like it or not, but our promises, as we made them before the general  
election to these individuals and to others, are going to be complied with insofar as we believe  
that we comply with them in providing them in this way. Those are our obligations, that is what  
we are going to ensure that we do, and we are going to do it in a way that ensures that neither  
now at the Queen's and Sunrise hotels nor in the future in the new facilities do we ever find  
1520 ourselves with Gibraltar being the subject of international objective criticism for our failure to  
provide a place fit for human habitation for those who need to rely on workers' hostels, which is  
exactly what we found when we were elected into government and exactly what we were dealing  
with when we were in opposition. The views of Members of the Opposition are, of course, party  
political, of course self-serving and not the objective international criticism that Gibraltar was  
1525 facing in 2011 when we were first elected.

**Madam Speaker:** The Hon. the Leader of the Opposition.

1530 **Hon. Dr K Azopardi:** International criticism of our hostels is longstanding because it was not  
perhaps only there ... The hon. Member has a longer memory. He will remember that there was  
international criticism when the GSLP was also in government previously. When he talks about  
2011, it is 13 years ago now and there have been subsequent promises about the relocation of  
these individuals and the improvement of the workers' hostel facilities. Workers' hostel promises  
are made from time to time, projects are announced, they are not really followed through. We  
1535 are where we are, and that is the situation.

May I ask the Hon. Minister to give us a better understanding of the extension proposal on the  
Sunrise Motel? How many rooms are we talking about that would be built at the Sunrise Motel,  
so that people are not kept in communal facilities for a long time, so that we do not go full circle?  
At the end of the day, if the Hon. Chief Minister criticised communal housing and cockroach  
1540 infestation, we do not want to go full circle so that we put people in communal housing and they  
sustained cockroach infestation and maggots only a few weeks or months ago. We do not want  
to go full circle, presumably. So, can we have a better understanding of the extension proposal?  
How many rooms? Who is the contractor that will do this? Is there a preferred contractor or is  
this going out to tender?

1545



**Hon. Chief Minister:** Madam Speaker, the hon. Gentleman, of course, is entirely right. One of the things I have always thought about him is that he is a great professional at what he does, although I do not share his politics, and he can count, and the election in 2011 was 13 years ago. But he would also be right to be reminded that it was not just international criticism and it was not just the GSLP Liberals who were criticising the GSD and the then GSD leader for the state of the hostels; it was also the PDP and its then leader criticising the GSD and their record at the time, although of course that is now the same person. The leader of the PDP is now the leader of the GSD attacking the GSLP Liberals for the state of our hostels, which are nowhere near the deplorable state that we found when we were elected.

Let's be clear: of course there are issues in the hostels. One of the problems we have had in the 13 years that we have been in government – because we have won four successive general elections, I think three of them involving him losing general elections; or two, I lose count – has been that it is difficult sometimes to maintain hygiene in the hostels, not for want of trying, not for want of support, but we have to realise that that is a reality. We have a situation today where we want to improve the lot further of the people whose lot we already improved from what we inherited from them in 2011, 13 years ago – although the fact that it is 13 years ago does not stop them referring to things that they want to refer to more than 13 years ago, 28 or 29 years ago. That means that we are going to ensure that we have not come full circle, that we are not going to tolerate the things that working men had to tolerate in 2011 when we were elected. What we are seeking to do is improve things even further than we have already.

Hon. Members will forgive me for not taking at face value – as the Hon. Mr Bossino said yesterday that they did not take of me, or at least of us – the things that they tell us they found at the workers' hostel, because they are, of course, partisan in their approach. We will take the views we are given by the Environmental Agency, by those who are responsible to us for the maintenance of the hostels, and we will continue to plough the furrow of delivering, as we have promised to do, the facilities that we promised, and we will make an announcement to the general public about what the circumstances of the extension of the Sunrise Motel will entail, who will be involved in delivering it, how we will choose who will be involved in delivering it, and the detail of all those plans when the time comes.

When hon. Members ask a question, we ensure – and you have reminded us of that – that we answer here, subject to those caveats. When we have a project to put out, we put it out when we think it is the best moment to do so in keeping with our views on the best way to inform the community of how that project is going to be developed. When we announce it, people will see it is designed to improve the lives of those who wish to or have to live in a workers' hostel in Gibraltar.

**Madam Speaker:** Next question.

**Q713/2024**  
**Halfway house for men –**  
**Update**

**Clerk:** Question 713. The Hon. D J Bossino.

**Hon. D J Bossino:** Please provide an update on the construction of the halfway house for men, as previously announced by the Government, by the Europa Point area.

**Clerk:** Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Housing and the Gibraltar University.

1590 **Minister for Housing and the Gibraltar University (Hon. P A Orfila):** Madam Speaker, the  
halfway house for men was part of the accommodation centre which was originally planned for  
Europa Point. The intention is that this facility will be relocated to the Sunrise Motel as part of the  
new project. This will be built at the rear end of the Sunrise Motel. The hostel will be completely  
refurbished.

1595

**Hon. D J Bossino:** Wow! Okay, I have understood what the hon. Member has said, but in terms  
of room configuration we are talking about something completely different, aren't we? From my  
recollection – and I can check it – when the news came out that the Government had, a month  
before the election, filed plans to construct this facility at the Europa Point area, we were talking  
1600 of in excess of 200 flats and units. Is the hon. Member seriously saying that we are dealing with  
like for like, that 200-odd flats will be built at the rear of the Sunrise Motel?

**Hon. P A Orfila:** Madam Speaker, all I can assure the gentlemen of right now is that everything  
is being tabled with the contractors and I will have a clearer picture of what he wants when the  
1605 time comes.

**Hon. D J Bossino:** But the hon. the Lady, with the greatest of respect to her, ought to have that  
information here and now. A promise was, in effect, made by way of the application for planning  
that was filed by her Government – a month, weeks, before we went to the polls – to do this, 200-  
1610 odd flats. There would have been people who would have been very happy because they  
themselves, from the information that we have – both Ministers opposite, the hon. Lady and the  
Hon. Minister for Economic Development – visited the residents at the Queen's Hotel and  
promised them a rehousing. They must have thought it was this. She is aware that she has been  
placed under pressure by Action for Housing, only a few weeks ago, about an update in relation  
1615 to this, and that press release was not responded to. Now we know why.

May I ask her further, can she please check her notes and provide us with the detail as to how  
many flats? She must have that information available to her. It is not something that can be in the  
air. This is an extension behind a building which is existing in Devil's Tower Road, which is the  
Sunrise Motel. How can you compare that with what they promised in August 2023? One thing  
1620 has got absolutely nothing to do with the other. I was quite calm this afternoon, but these things  
rile me, for goodness' sakes. I know the Hon. Chief Minister may say I am angry, but these things  
do anger me because injustices are being occasioned on 20 or 30-odd men and many other people  
who need this facility; and, who knows, many people may have voted for them because they had  
promised this to them. This is shameful behaviour. Can she please provide this information which  
1625 she must have available to her?

**Chief Minister (Hon. F R Picardo):** Madam Speaker, the hon. Gentleman's blood pressure  
seems to have gone the route of my hypertension. I am afraid that the Government does not for  
one moment consider that filing an application in the Development and Planning Commission  
1630 amounts to a promise by any stretch of any definition. Indeed, the hon. Gentleman should know  
that although Government Ministers sit on the DPC in their independent capacity, not as Ministers  
to enforce any government whip because they are never whipped in the context of the DPC, the  
DPC makes its determinations, such as they may be, even in respect of government projects. This  
Government did not just open up the DPC so that everyone can see what is happening in the DPC  
1635 and did not just publish the minutes of the DPC; we made the DPC a public process, whilst in their  
time it was a private process behind closed doors. So, is it that he is saying – and I am trying to  
understand his logic – that in our time, because we have made something public when we file  
something, it is a promise, and in their time it was not because it was not public; in our time,  
because the Government now subjects itself to the DPC procedure, when the Government  
1640 subjects itself to the DPC procedure and puts a project in, it amounts to a promise, and in their  
time it did not? So, we are fixed with something as a promise which in their time was nothing?

1645 On top of that, if what he is saying is right – and he has obviously given this absolutely no  
thought, as he usually does when he opens his mouth – what is he saying about the DPC? Is he  
saying that the DPC must approve government projects as they are submitted, or is he saying that  
the Government is making, immediately, a promise that it knows it cannot fulfil if the DPC  
1650 independently changes some part of the project? So, if we have coral gables on an application and  
the DPC decides we are not to have coral gables on the building, we have failed in our promise to  
produce the hostel in that way with coral gables because the DPC has said that it is not to have  
coral gables? What the hon. Gentleman has said can withstand absolutely no logical assessment,  
but that has never stopped him from saying those sorts of things.

1655 I would agree that during the course of a general election, if you say you are going to do  
something and you do not caveat how you are going to say it and you then do not explain why  
you may not be able to do it, you are breaching a promise, but that is not the situation that we  
have here. What the hon. Gentleman has tried to do, which frankly intellectually infuriates me as  
much as he is obviously passionately angered by this, is make something out to be a promise,  
when it is not, in order to then say that we are breaching a promise and feign his anger. That is  
not fair to the people who we all agree may need this project to go ahead. That is why what we  
need to do is ensure that we deliver the project, even if in a slightly different way.

1660 Madam Speaker, if the hon. Gentleman is going to tell me that people thought that we were  
going to do something at Europa Point and it was going to have magnificent views, and now we  
are going to do it behind the Sunrise Motel and it is going to have different views, the first thing  
you will be told in the DPC is that there is no right to a view, so that cannot be the issue that he is  
taking. If he is taking the issue as to how many people are going to be housed in the halfway house,  
well, we have not yet announced the plans. We will publish the plans; he will see how many are  
1665 going to be there. We will subject them to the DPC again; that will not be a promise. We will see  
what the DPC says. What emerges from the DPC we will then be able to build. That is the reality  
of what being in government is about. I recognise that their experience of being in government is  
one out of eight, and even then it is in respect of eight years, and even then – the hon. Gentleman  
the Leader of the Opposition might not like me doing the mathematics, not because it is long ago  
1670 in political terms but it might start to reveal his age – it is in the region of 20 years ago that the  
last one of them who had experience in government left office. That is how things work now,  
because you have an accountable Government that subjects its projects to the DPC, which do not  
amount to a promise.

1675 For all of those reasons, everything that the hon. Gentleman said in the lead up to his question  
was wrong.

**Hon. D J Bossino:** It is absolutely clear what the hon. Gentleman has done and what the hon.  
Gentleman and Lady did during the election campaign. They filed the application. Yes, he may be  
right, technically. I need to concede that. I was wrong. It was not an electoral promise because all  
1680 they did a few weeks before an election was file the application at the DPC: 256 bedrooms, 106  
rooms – very precise, very specific – at Europa Point. That did not have any influence on the voting  
of the electorate and the people who were affected? I think very few people would accept that,  
but technically I do not think it is in the manifesto, ergo, in that sense, it is not an electoral promise.  
But actually, the point I made was that these individuals had been promised by the hon. Lady and  
1685 by the hon. Gentleman to her immediate right that they were going to be rehoused. It now  
transpires that they are going to be rehoused not here at the Europa Point fantastic, new, fancy  
facility with views and all, and with these numbers, but at a dingy hostel at the Devil's Tower  
Road – (*Interjection*)

1690 **Madam Speaker:** Question.

**Hon. D J Bossino:** – and the specific question which this Opposition is asking is: how many  
rooms? It is simply not good enough –

1695 **Madam Speaker:** Question, please, or I will ask –

**Hon. D J Bossino:** I am in the process of asking it.

**Madam Speaker:** Ask the question.

1700 **Hon. D J Bossino:** – when the intention was that 256 rooms ... This was a project ... He may purse his lips and it may make him feel uncomfortable: he ought to be uncomfortable.

**Madam Speaker:** I am not going to ask the hon. Member again to ask a question. No more statements. Now ask the question, please.

1705

**Hon. D J Bossino:** Please provide information as to the number of rooms that the extension behind the Sunrise Motel will provide.

1710 **Hon. Chief Minister:** Madam Speaker, I confess that the hon. Gentleman was right. I did purse my lips, but only at the sight of a Member of this House failing to follow your instructions. On behalf of the whole House, as Leader of the House I do apologise to you for that.

1715 Let's be very clear: it was not possible in August 2023 – and I am going to call her by her name, Pat Orfila, rather than the Hon. Minister, for that is who she was, and still is – for Pat Orfila to file anything in the DPC or to promise anything, because she was not a candidate selected by the Executive Committee of the GSLP in an election campaign, as the hon. Gentleman started by saying, because the then Chief Minister did not call the general election until after National Day, so there was no election campaign to speak of. So, what is the hon. Gentleman talking about? I know that they are constantly fishing around to find someone to blame for why they lost the last general election, which all of us think that they were en route to winning and managed to lose, but can they stop blaming us and start a little bit of introspection as to what happened on Friday, 1720 13th October last year and why it was a nightmare for the GSD and not for Gibraltar? I know that we are talking about 31st October and Halloween and all the rest of it.

1725 How can the hon. Gentleman say, with a straight face, 'It's terrible: they promised rehousing, and instead, they are going to deliver rehousing but in a dingy hostel'? Does the hon. Gentleman have to be reminded that beauty is in the eye of the beholder? What might be dingy to him might be delectable to somebody else. He has not yet seen the designs. The whole purpose of his question at the end, when he came to it, was to ask how many rooms was the design? We are going to give you the design. Maybe, in his heart of hearts, if he can bring his religious mores to bear, he might realise that actually this design is magnificent when he sees it, and he might even then say it. Or he might think it is magnificent and, for political reasons, say, 'It remains as dingy 1730 as I thought it was.' Really, Madam Speaker, if I may say so, with respect to hon. Members, *con la que está cayendo*. That this is what this House is concentrating on today, in this level of detail, is a remarkable demonstration of how well this Government is doing and how well this community is doing, despite what is happening in the world and in our part of it in particular.

1735

**Hon. D J Bossino:** My blood pressure is pretty low and my pulse rate is pretty low as well, thank goodness.

1740 May I make another attempt to seek the information from the Hon. Minister who has been assigned to this question, who is the Minister for Housing – quite properly; it is her responsibility. Given that we are going to have the move from the current resident licensees at the Queen's Hotel imminently, to the Sunrise Motel, in October, and therefore by Halloween – which, in our view, is going to be a nightmare for them, I would hasten to add – they are basically going to be moving into a construction site. That is what she is telling this House. Is the Hon. the Minister able to give us at least some indication ...? I know that she has to look at plans and all the rest of it, but by 1745 when does she think that the construction will have been completed? Does the Department have

an idea? Does she have an aim as to by when she thinks that this will be constructed and then these individuals properly housed?

1750 **Hon. Chief Minister:** Madam Speaker, this issue affects many portfolios, so I shall continue to answer for the Government, especially given the fact that the hon. Gentleman has raised issues which relate to the period before the general election when the hon. Member was not then in the Government.

1755 I am very pleased to hear that the hon. Gentleman has low blood pressure, because high blood pressure is a silent killer. Leave that to me. I am very pleased that that he has low blood pressure. I always knew he was a cold fish.

1760 The nightmare is on the 13th. Halloween is the day for moving, and that is a day of trick or treat. I give an undertaking to this House and to the people who are in that hostel that this Government will never trick them and that what we propose will be a real treat compared to the place where they lived in 2011 and an improvement on the place where we put them thereafter, which was already a huge step forward. The plans will be announced when the Government is ready. The period will be as short as possible for them to move into the new facility. In the interim, arrangements will be made which will be suitable and fit for human habitation, which is exactly what is our obligation to do.

1765 Madam Speaker, I am very happy with the progress that is being made in this respect. I am convinced it is in the interest of those we have a responsibility to in the hostel, and I would urge hon. Members to be a little bit more dispassionate and a little bit more objective about what the Government is doing in this particular area and set it in its historical context, even if it does mean going back 13 years, and realise how much of an improvement this will be to what has been there before, and even today.

1770 **Madam Speaker:** Time to move on.

### Procedural

**Clerk:** Answers to Written Questions.

1775 **Hon. D J Bossino:** Before the Hon. the Chief Minister ... If I may, simply to go back to the –

**Madam Speaker:** I want to hear what the hon. Member has to say. I am not allowing any more supplementaries but tell me what it is the hon Member proposes to say.

1780 **Hon. D J Bossino:** No, I was not seeking your leave in relation to that, but simply I think the Hon. the Minister for the Environment had some questions that he was going to seek to provide during the course of this session. Is he able to? The idea in my head perhaps is completely wrong that he would have –

1785 **Madam Speaker:** The hon. Member is correct, that was discussed. Is the Hon. the Minister for the Environment in a position to give the information during the course of this session? Do you remember what the information was?

**Minister for Education, the Environment and Climate Change (Hon. Prof. J E Cortes):** If the session is going to be completed shortly, I will not have had the time and I will send that information subsequently, either directly to the hon. Members or at the next session.

1790 **Hon. D J Bossino:** I think there were two which impacted on my question and one which impacted on my hon. Friend here.

**Madam Speaker:** The way forward, then, is for hon. Members to remind the Hon. Minister what the information sought was, and then the Hon. Minister can deal with it.

1795 **Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I have made a note but I do not mind and I appreciate being reminded.

## Questions for Written Answer

**Chief Minister (Hon. F R Picardo):** Madam Speaker, I have the honour to table the answers to Written Questions W83/2024 to W98/2024.

### Birthday wishes to Madam Speaker

1800 **Chief Minister (Hon. F R Picardo):** Madam Speaker, I have, now, the honour to move that the House should adjourn *sine die*. Before I do that, and without trying to do as the hon. Member did a moment ago and count years, I would like, on behalf of the whole House, to wish you a very happy birthday – I understand it is today – and also to wish you all the best in coming weeks, as you will be away from the House on a very happy personal journey.

### Freedom of the City for Sir Bob Neill – Motion to be moved at the next meeting of the House

1805 **Chief Minister (Hon. F R Picardo):** Madam Speaker, the Government has not been able to move the motion in respect of the Freedom of the City of Sir Bob Neill – which I know enjoys the support of all Members of the whole House – because the Deputy Chief Minister and I were away in the period of preparation for the House. We very much intend to move it at the next meeting.

### Adjournment

1810 **Chief Minister (Hon. F R Picardo):** I move, Madam Speaker, that the House should now adjourn *sine die*.

**Madam Speaker:** Thank you to the Hon. the Chief Minister and, through him, to all Members of the House for your good wishes. I could not think of anything more pleasant than spending my birthday with you all on such an afternoon. (*Banging on desks*)

1815 Before I propose the question, I would simply remind hon. Members of the provisions of Rule 16 in relation to those oral questions which were tabled and have not been taken today.

I now propose the question, which is that this House do 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.  
This House will now adjourn *sine die*.

*The House adjourned at 5.25 p.m.*

1820