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**PRESS RELEASE**

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**GSD were experts at abusing power when in Government**

The Government considers that the exchange of negative and insulting press releases which the GSD Opposition is intent on pursuing is a complete waste of everyone's time. Unfortunately, the Government also considers that it is necessary for it to reply to most if not all negative and misleading Opposition statements in order to set the record straight.

The reality is that Mr Feetham has little or no credibility when he accuses the Government of an abuse of power precisely because the GSD's time in office was marked by some of the most glaring examples of a Government abusing its position that Gibraltar has ever known. The GSD in Government turned abusing power into an art form and this Government will have no hesitation in exposing this whenever and wherever it is necessary.

**1. GSD Abuse of Power: The Press**

The GSD was particularly abusive in its dealings with the press. They complain about Authorities issuing partisan press releases – but the Gibraltar Health Authority issued such press releases all the time. Moreover, the GSD took personal reprisals against editors who did not support the GSD line. Vox, for example, had all its advertising cut when it stopped supporting the GSD. Conversely, it gave £150,000 of tax payers' money to the 7 Days to publish its propaganda.

That was a clear abuse of power in relation to the press.

**2. GSD Abuse of Power: Parliament**

One of the most serious abuses of the GSD's time in office was their abuse of Parliament. It was common for Parliament to meet for questions only two or three times a year. This meant that the then Opposition could not ask questions about issues in a timely and relevant manner because by the time a meeting came round the issue was already out of date. The GSD Opposition also hold the record, when in office, for calling the least number of meetings in a year. This was in 2003 when there was only one opportunity in the entire year for the Opposition to question the Government. Indeed, in their time in office they showed no

respect for Parliament or even for the office of Speaker, one of whom was virtually hounded out of office for having the temerity to stand up to the then Chief Minister.

This was an abuse of power in relation to Parliament.

### 3. GSD Abuse of Power: The Planning Process

The planning process under the past GSD Government was a closed and secretive affair that took place behind closed doors and shut out the public. Applicants and objectors had no right to appear before the Development and Planning Commission (DPC) in order to make their views known. The Government did not place its own projects before the DPC so that recommendations could be made. People did not find out that a development was going up in the plot next door until the works started. The professionals in the town planning department were completely side-lined and ignored. There was no transparency in respect of applications involving ministers' property or that of their close relatives.

This was an abuse of power in relation to the planning process.

### 4. GSD Abuse of Power: Taxpayer Funding for GSD Manifesto

The GSD Government paid for designs which were included in their 2011 election manifesto with taxpayer's money. The estimated bill run into thousands of pounds and included a number of concept designs which were ordered and paid for the Government and subsequently included in the GSD general election manifesto as if it had been ordered and paid for by the party. No less than 11 concept design images have been so identified. The GSD have never answered this legitimate criticism because they have no credible answer to this complete abuse of the taxpayers money.

The use of public funds for party-political purposes is an abuse of power of the first order and blurred the distinction between the party and the state.

### 5. GSD Abuse of Power: Spending Commitments during Election Campaign

The GSD in office promised a pay rise to employees of a Government-owned company after the last General Election had been called. This was investigated by the Attorney General and was found to be unlawful. It is clear that the GSD cheated at the last General Election by not sticking to the rules on the limits of the power of the Government once Parliament has been dissolved.

This was an abuse of power in a desperate attempt to buy votes.

### 6. GSD Abuse of Power: Contacts Signed at the Last Minute

The GSD Government signed a contract for airport handling services with a private company on 7th December 2011, which was the day before people went to the polls at the last general election and when they were acting in a caretaker capacity. The new Constitution prohibits a Caretaker Government from committing or binding the next successor Government to public funding or liability except in the ordinary course of the day to day affairs of Gibraltar.

This was an abuse of power and potentially unconstitutional.

## 7. GSD Abuse of Power: Government Loans for a Developer's Bentley!

Two reports by the Principal Auditor have recently been tabled in Parliament which cast an interesting light on the conduct, ethics, behaviour and the judgment of the previous GSD Government. One of these reports highlights a loan of £ 4 million that was extended by the previous administration to OEM, which they did not press for repayment, was never repaid and part of which was used to purchase a Bentley!

This was a total abuse of taxpayers money!

It is clear that Mr Feetham and the GSD are experts on abuse of power judging from these and other issues which arose during their time in office. The Government will continue to reply to the nonsensical statements and the baseless accusations made by the Opposition. This Government has done more to increase openness, transparency and democracy in eighteen months than the GSD ever did in their sixteen years in office.

As for the referral of the Principal Auditor's Reports to the Police, the Government has laid these in Parliament so that everyone, including relevant law enforcement agencies now have access to them. This Government will not interfere with matters relating to law enforcement.