



HM GOVERNMENT OF GIBRALTAR
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80% of rent arrears were inherited from GSD Government

The Opposition do themselves no favours by highlighting the position of arrears of housing rent. They have the cheek to complain that these stand at £4.9 million when no less than £4 million of that sum was actually inherited from them during their time in office!

The reality is that the existing position on rent arrears is a reflection of the failure of the previous GSD administration to come to grips with the problem. In many respects they made it even worse. They allocated flats in Mid Harbours, for example, to tenants who already owed considerable sums in rent arrears without ensuring that these were paid. The end result being that some tenants now owe rent both for their previous flat and for the existing new one.

It is the height of political hypocrisy for the Opposition to claim that a 20% increase in rent arrears over the last two years "is very worrying". In the first two years of their own administration rent arrears shot up by 60%, which is three times as much. They must presumably have been three times more worried then.

The arrears position in March 1996, the year in which the GSD were first elected was £655,031. This had increased to £872,413 by March 1997 and to £1,105,031 by March 1998. This represented a year on year increase of 33.1% and 26.7% respectively. Indeed, it was under their watch that rent arrears increased steadily beyond the £1 million mark, reaching the £2 million by March 2002, and the £3 million by March 2005.

This deterioration in the housing rent arrears position was highlighted by the Principal Auditor to the GSD Government time and again.

It is obvious that the Opposition, in their eagerness to hit out at the Government on every conceivable issue, have conveniently forgotten to look at their own poor track record on rent arrears when they were in office, which increased by about 600% during the period.

This shows that nothing they say can be taken seriously because, as with so many other issues that they now criticise, they failed dismally to come to grips with the matter over nearly sixteen years. Yet another case of do as I say and not as I did!