



PRESS RELEASE

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GSD Statement on Consultative Council is Unintelligent & Infantile

The statement from the GSD on the Consultative Council is, frankly, infantile nonsense which takes an inexperienced and unintelligent approach to a potentially hugely positive innovation that can truly benefit our nation.

What the GSLP Liberal Government has done is create a body to enable Gibraltar's best brains to advise a sitting Chief Minister on important issues affecting the public interest of our Community. The Council will strengthen and mature our democracy.

This is something which has been widely welcomed throughout the whole of our Community.

The fact that people can be required to sign the Official Secrets Act on joining the Council is a normal precaution in terms of being involved with sensitive information. No one in living memory has gone to jail in Gibraltar or been prosecuted for a breach of the Official Secrets Act. In fact, every person who joins the Civil Service in Gibraltar signs the Official Secrets Act and none of them say as a result that they are given a job shrouded in secrecy and on pain of imprisonment if they reveal confidential information.

The Chief Minister of Her Majesty's Government of Gibraltar, the Hon Fabian Picardo QC MP, said: "I am delighted to have now commenced the Consultative Council Act. This is a great thing for Gibraltar. It marks a moment of maturity for us as a people. Getting our best brains to work together is a good thing not a bad thing and it is something which people have long wanted to see happening. With this Act, we finally have in place a permanent mechanism to get our best brains together. I introduced this concept in my Budget Speech in June 2014. I then asked former GSD Deputy Chief Minister, the Hon Keith Azopardi QC, to draft the Bill for me and that is the Act which we have now passed. Importantly, this is a Council that the former GSD leader and Chief Minister, the Hon Sir Peter Caruana QC MP, said in Parliament, in answer to my introduction of it, counted with his full support and which he would form a part of, despite my having referred to the application of the Official Secrets Act for joining. The Act sets up a body which is not dissimilar to the Advisory Council Sir Peter established to advise him at the time of Joint Sovereignty. In the circumstances, I am very much looking forward to the work of the Council commencing and to the advice I will receive from it on matters of public interest. Should the current leadership of the GSD decide they do not wish to join the Council which has been set up to bring Gibraltar's best brains together, they will not be greatly missed. In fact, I would have thought it would be clear to everyone that the last thing I want to do is silence Mr Feetham, far from it. I want Mr Feetham to



have as many opportunities as possible to express his views, as that is what best serves to alienate people from the GSD. The fact is the GSD have had two years to contact me on this issue to make representations on the issues they now say concern them and they have not done so. They are just trying to wreck this excellent Council as they try to wreck everything that they have not thought of, whether or not a particular initiative is good for Gibraltar. Although they might not care about Gibraltar, we do and we will therefore not be deterred in seeing through the establishment and operation of the Consultative Council."

Note to Editors:

Below are the relevant parts of the speeches from the Chief Minister, the Hon Fabian Picardo QC MP, and the former Chief Minister, Hon Sir Peter Caruana QC, at the time of the June 2014 Budget Debate.

The Hon Chief Minister: "... I have spoken before about establishing for Gibraltar a status akin to that of the Privy Council in the United Kingdom. When a nation such as ours finds that there are issues that affect the national interest, there needs to be a body above party politics that can provide an opportunity for consideration of those issues.

Mr Speaker, such a body can of course be established on an ad hoc basis at any time. I have had ad hoc contact with the Leader of the Opposition and his predecessor on such terms last year. The previous Chief Minister established a similar ad hoc consultative body when Gibraltar was facing the threat of Joint Sovereignty but did not choose to include the Opposition in it.

I want to go further than that, Mr Speaker. I want to change the way we do politics on issues that matter to the national interest. I am a supporter and defender of the Westminster party adversarial system. But when the national interest is at stake, then we must all be able to work together, because Gibraltar's best brains can be brought to work in unison when necessary, but not condemned to never have to challenge each other by a change to a committee system of government that some have talked about in the past. But any such new body must in my view be permanent. It cannot be ad hoc.

I therefore today propose to create a body to be known henceforth as the Chief Minister's Consultative Council (CMCC), the make up of which will be as follows:

for their lifetimes, all individuals who have held the post of Chief Minister;

for their lifetimes, all individuals who have held the post of Deputy Chief Minister;

for the period of their tenure in office, the Leader of the Opposition and the Minister for Justice;

for such period as may be stipulated in the notice of the appointment, such other person or persons as the Chief Minister of the day may consider appropriate to appoint.



Membership of the CMCC will require members to sign the Official Secrets Act so that information shared with them is subject to strict rules of confidentiality, or such other equivalent as may be the case in the Privy Council.

The CMCC will enable the Chief Minister of the day to meet with all, some or just one of its members as he or she may consider appropriate, and exchange ideas or take advice on any particular matter or issue within the parameters of the strict confidence required of individuals who will make up the Chief Minister's Consultative Council.

It is my view, Mr Speaker, that all individuals who become members of the CMCC should be able to use the prenominal letters 'The Right Honourable', as is the case in respect of membership of Her Majesty's Privy Council in the United Kingdom.

I have asked that legislation be drawn up for this purpose. Before anyone starts getting any ideas, Mr Speaker, the appointments will not be remunerated!"

The Hon Sir Peter Caruana QC MP: "... Mr Speaker, I accept the Hon. the Chief Minister's invitation as a past Chief Minister to serve on his Consultation Committee or Council. I think it is a useful piece of architecture and as he knows from the number of occasions on which we have spoken, I regard it as part of my responsibilities to this community as an ex-Chief Minister to assist him, in terms of transfer of information, transfer of knowledge, transfer of experience and assisting, as I am sure he will do in favour of his successor, because over and above party politics, we all have the same interests that no-one, no-one in any country should think that they can score goals past the Gibraltar Government because there is a new man in No. 6, and this assists in creating architecture that I think is a jolly good idea and I have no hesitation in accepting."