
Government Property Division

INTRODUCTION

The Government Property Division falls within the remit of the Ministry for Justice and Home Affairs and is responsible for the management of government's immovable estate.

The mission of the GPD is to promote and maintain the highest and best use of Government's immovable estate and to ensure an equitable process for the acquisition of property that may be required for a public purpose.

The GPD incorporates the Land Department, the Estate Management Department and the Joint Office. Whereas each of the three departments has particular objectives to achieve within a specific remit, the GPD acts as the co-ordinator of all operations whilst ensuring smooth management through the provision of the necessary financial and administrative backup.

The GPD is housed at the Auberge de Bavière. However, for lack of space, the Joint Office is located in Sa Maison. Plans are underway for the Joint Office to move to the ex-Pilar School in St Sebastian Street, Valletta in order to be closer to the Auberge de Bavière. This would enable better co-ordination and facilitate communication within the Division. It is envisaged that this move will be made in the coming year.

FINANCE & ADMINISTRATION – 2005 DEVELOPMENTS

Quality Service Charter

The GPD is continuously striving to strengthen its commitment to provide the best possible service to its clients within the ambit of the relevant laws and policies. In this respect, a Quality Service Charter has been drafted for the Division with the direct participation of the three departments under its responsibility. The main objective of the Charter is to provide a brief overview of all legislation and policies that regulate GPD operations and to highlight the quality of the services and standards offered within set timeframes in order to better meet the needs of the general public. The QSC should act as an impetus for all staff members to further strengthen their commitment to carry out their responsibilities in a diligent and friendly manner. It is envisaged that the GPD Quality Service Charter will be launched in 2006.

EURO Changeover in the Public Sector

In line with Government's commitment to enter the Eurozone, the GPD is participating in the preparation and implementation of a plan to ensure compliance with the requirements arising from the implementation of the Euro. By the end of the year, the GPD had carried out an assessment of the legislative, financial, operational, communication and training matters that will need particular attention in carrying out this process. A task list has been compiled identifying the undertakings that the GPD will need to conduct in order to address such matters in the coming years. As a revenue-earning Division, the changeover process requires a smooth transition in compliance with official guidelines.

OECD EU Peer Review on Regulatory Management

As part of the Ministry for Justice and Home Affairs, the GPD participated in the first task of this project, namely the completion of a questionnaire on Regulatory Management Capacities. The scope of the study is limited to general institutional matters and regulatory policies and is in the form of peer reviews. The areas covered included regulatory management planning, formulation of policy process and its translation into regulations, regulatory quality assurance process, enactment process, and enforcement and compliance mechanisms. The outcome of the project will be a study of the regulatory management capacities of the New Member States with the ultimate object of the promotion, development, improvement and implementation of better regulation practices within the ten New Member States.

Preparedness for Pandemic Influenza

A contingency plan has been drafted by the GPD as part of the Ministry's initiative to combat the pandemic flu, when and if it hits Malta some time in the future. The scope of this exercise is to take all necessary measures to prevent the dispersal of the virus and to contain it once it spreads, whilst ensuring continuity of the Division's essential operations. As a first step, the key functions and operations of the Division, the Estate Management Department, the Land Department and Joint Office were identified. The Plan goes on to map out risk reduction measures for the general public and the GPD staff. These included the use of different means of communication to lessen direct contact among the staff and between the staff and the general public. Different work arrangements were also proposed to ensure continuous ongoing service provision. Stocks, hygiene, health and safety and security issues were also addressed.

Gozo Branch

For the convenience of Gozo residents, the GPD continued to provide personalised service to clients through its branch in Gozo where rents, ground rents, and *qbiela* may be paid. The Gozo office also provides customer care services.

Rehabilitation Works at the Auberge De Bavière

In-house works continued as part of Phase 2 plans to refurbish the Auberge. These included the cleaning and pointing of walls and barrel vaults in main staircase and of walls and ceilings in nine offices; replacement of broken *franca* stone slabs; refurbishment of all internal doors and exterior windows; removal of surplus cabling, conduits and other unnecessary wall fixtures and installation of data and voice wiring. Plans and permits are being prepared for the remaining works under Phase 2. These incorporate flooring, air-conditioning, electricity, telephone and data wiring as well as some structural works. Permits for the installation of an electricity substation in West Street in order to upgrade the power supply for the Auberge have been received and ground investigations are presently being carried out. Plans and tenders for the rehabilitation of ex-Pilar School to house Joint Office are presently being prepared.

Information Technology

During 2005, GPD's efforts for modernisation included a number of IT initiatives.

A modern training room was set up that provides the necessary tools and equipment for the training of GPD personnel in the use of office software and the various local computer systems.

The new DocReg System, a corporate computerised system, was installed to track file movements and provide improved management reporting capabilities. Following thorough testing and training, access to the system was provided to all sections to allow direct querying by staff. Efforts are currently underway to integrate the DocReg System at Joint Office with the one at GPD head office. This will enable the integration of the two Registry sections, creating synergy and savings on space and staff resources.

The Land and Estate Management Information System (LEMIS) project spans across all the departments that constitute the GPD. LEMIS comprises a GIS-based system of property management that incorporates revenue management, property disposal and acquisition, and electronic document management. During 2005, the Division continued the adjudication of the LEMIS ITT and it is envisaged that implementation will commence during 2006.

During the year, new equipment was purchased to replace obsolete tools including PCs, printers and photocopiers. Operating system software on existing PCs was also upgraded to current versions.

Land Management System (LMS) Upgrading Project was undertaken as a safeguard against the lack of Government/MITTS Ltd expertise in Novell operating systems. This was seen as a potentially high risk issue in the event of sudden hardware failure and the concomitant inability to restore the system. The chosen solution was to change the operating system to Windows NT that, apart from providing higher security levels, also allows improved configuration of menu-systems and user access. The project is planned to be completed in February 2006.

Joint Office Reference Property Database was migrated to a Windows NT environment to improve security of referential data in the system.

All computer equipment was re-configured for the new Magnet II technology which allows for faster and more efficient wide area network operations.

The Agricultural Lease Processing System Upgrade was carried out to allow the automated generation and printing of lease agreements for agricultural land providing for faster service delivery.

Human Resources

The staff complement at the GPD is decreasing from year to year. In fact, the total of 156 officers (December 2004) went down to 147 (December 2005). Seven of these are ex-Malta Post Office employees whilst 10 are IPSL employees deployed with the Division. Six officers are on parental leave, 12 work a reduced time-table and two are on unpaid leave. Five officers have a part-time contract as advisors. This translates into approximately 134 officers working a full time-table.

The table below gives an overview of the distribution of staff in the different sections of the GPD in the years 2004 and 2005.

| | Year | Total | Parental Leave | Reduced Hours | Unpaid/ Study Leave | Ex-Mla Post Office | IPSL | P/T Advisors |
|-----------------|----------|-------|----------------|---------------|---------------------|--------------------|------|--------------|
| GPD | Dec - 04 | 156 | | | | | | |
| | Dec - 05 | 147 | 6 | 12 | 2 | 7 | 10 | 5 |
| Est. Management | Dec - 04 | 27 | | | | | | |
| | Dec - 05 | 25 | | 1 | 2 | | | |
| Land | Dec - 04 | 32 | | | | | | |
| | Dec - 05 | 31 | 3 | 3 | | 4 | | |
| Joint Office | Dec - 04 | 42 | | | | | | |
| | Dec - 05 | 41 | 2 | 7 | | 2 | 4 | 5 |
| Fin. & Admin. | Dec - 04 | 55 | | | | | | |
| | Dec - 05 | 50 | 1 | 1 | | 1 | 6 | |

Health and Safety

Various Health and Safety issues were addressed in the year 2005. These included the drawing up of a risk assessment for the Auberge de Bavière, identifying and taking action so as to eliminate and/or reduce the risk to GPD staff, contractors and the general public. Risks are regularly revisited and readdressed.

Maintenance agreements were drawn up for the Passenger and the Dumb Waiter lifts that are regularly certified by Mechanical Engineers to conform with the current OHS&A Regulations.

Fire extinguishers have been installed in the offices, whilst a maintenance agreement has been drawn up for the fire detection and fire suppression system installed in the IT Centre. Warning signs at key positions were fixed to limit access to unauthorised areas. First Aid boxes were placed at strategic positions whilst volunteer staff members underwent First Aid Training. Technical personnel, who perform out-door duties, were issued with safety shoes and high visibility jackets.

Financial Matters

Besides the management of funds allocated for personal emoluments and operational and maintenance expenses of the Division, by the year end, the Accounts Section had settled all bills related to court registry fees, research, land registration, contracts, electricity supply for common parts of government blocks, burthens and refunds of ground rent.

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