
GOVERNMENT PROPERTY DIVISION

Directorate General

INTRODUCTION

The Government Property Division (GPD) forms part of the portfolio 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 public purpose.

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

The GPD is housed at the Auberge de Bavière in Valletta. However, for lack of space, the Joint Office is located in nearby premises known as the ex-Tal-Pilar School. For some years, housed in Floriana, the Joint Office moved to its present premises in October 2007. The new premises were officially inaugurated by the Minister for Justice and Home Affairs on 6th November 2007.

The proximity of these offices to the rest at the Auberge de Bavière has brought about better coordination and facilitated communication within the Division. In fact, plans to set up one Registry for all Departments within the GPD portfolio have been executed. However, the setting up of one Revenue Unit for the collection of rent payments and other revenue due on government property has had to be postponed due to technical issues. On the other hand, one Customer Care Unit for the whole Division has been running since November 2007. However, it must be said that due to a dearth of minor staff, the running of the Registry and the Customer Care Units is proving to be more than challenging. The Enforcement Unit and the Legal Unit under the remit of the Land Department continue to cater for the requirements of all GPD departments.

Finance & Administration – 2007 Developments

Quality Service Charter

The GPD is continuously striving to further strengthen its commitment to provide the best possible service to its clients within the ambit of the relevant laws and policies. In this respect, the quality service charter that was initially launched within the Division is being reviewed now that the Joint Office has moved to its new premises in the vicinity of the Auberge de Bavière. The objective is to incorporate standards following the amalgamation of the Customer Care and the Registry for the whole of the Division. 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 raise the standards of the services given to the general public. The QSC is acting as a driving force for all staff members to further strengthen their commitment to carry out their responsibilities in a thorough and friendly manner. It is envisaged that the GPD quality service charter will be officially launched in the first weeks of 2008.

Euro Changeover in the Public Sector

In line with Government's commitment to enter the Euro zone, the GPD continued to participate in the preparation and implementation of the Euro Changeover process. The GPD Plan has been regularly updated as preparatory work got under way in line with the task list initially compiled to identify the undertakings that the GPD needs to conduct in order to ensure its euro compliance. MITTS was contracted to undertake the euro compliance of the existing databases including dual display of currencies until € Daġ, whilst hard copies of documents have been amended to include dual display as from 19 February 2007. A Training Plan was drafted and four sessions were organized with the participation of 50 GPD officers. Feedback was continuously provided through the updating of the Action Plan. Cash float requirements were adequately catered for in both offices in Malta and Gozo. As a revenue-earning Division, it was ensured that the changeover process translates into a smooth transition in compliance with official guidelines.

The work of the GPD was recognized as an example of best practice and highlighted during an interview given by the Euro Project Manager, Ms Renee Laiviera, and published in Target Issue No. 7, July/August 2007. Emphasis was made on the cooperation and collaboration of all officers concerned who made possible the smooth transition process.

Better Regulations

Following the evaluation exercise carried out by the GPD of all existing regulations, tariffs and fees within its portfolio, four of the submitted proposals that needed addressing were endorsed and revised to empower the Commissioner of Land to delegate certain powers. Moreover, a policy was introduced giving evictees one month's notice to vacate property prior to execution of eviction except in circumstances dealing with urgent action or security matters. The Disposal of Government Land Act regulating the disposal of non-residential property has been reviewed to allow tenants to directly transfer commercial outlets to their descendants. However, work is still in hand with regard to the last proposal, i.e. the promotion and marketing of tenders for the acquisition of government owned property to increase public awareness.

Rehabilitation works at the Auberge de Bavière and the new Joint Office Premises

Tenders for flooring and some structural works have been adjudicated and awarded, and order to start works on the intermediate floor has just been issued. Clarification with air conditioning contractor and with Contracts Department has been finalized, and an on site meeting with the contractor is envisaged to be held in the first weeks of 2008. All internal rooms have been cleaned and pointed and work continues on the pointing of the ground floor corridor. Timber doors and windows have been restored and are ready to be refitted.

Work on the new Joint Office premises was completed in October of 2007 with staff moving to new building at the end of said month.

Tender for the construction of the Electricity substation was issued twice without any contractors bidding. The tender conditions are being reviewed for a re-issue of the call.

Information Technology

The decision to adopt the euro from 1st January 2008, brought with it considerable work to migrate GPD applications to achieve euro compliance. The necessary changes were made to the Land Management System (LMS), the Land Cheque Printing System, the Agricultural Land Processing System (ALPS), the Joint Office Property Database (JOPD) and the E-Rent and Local Councils Rent Payment. The migrations took place in December 2007 and no problems were entailed during the euro changeover conversion process.

Enhancements on the Land Management System (LMS) were carried out to introduce a more upgraded and detailed rent invoice/receipt layout for clients. In view of this, new equipment including heavy duty laser printers and an inserting and mailing machine was purchased to facilitate the rent billing process.

Similarly, work on the Land Cheque Printing System was undertaken to upgrade the cheques' layout. This will provide an innovative layout and facilitate the printing process by using the same heavy duty printers being used for the LMS.

The Map Scanning Project, which consists of scanning images of various GPD maps, was kept on hold during 2007 pending developments on the LEMIS project and will continue during 2008.

As part of the amalgamation process of GPD services, the Joint Office Docreg System had to be merged with that at the GPD's head office at the Auberge de Bavière. After intensive analysis and testing, the amalgamation was completed in October 2007 and the few issues which cropped up should be solved by end of January 2008.

All GPD's PCs were installed with Outlook 2003 client software as part of the Migration from Teamware to Microsoft Outlook. The actual migration took place in March 2007. In-house training was organised for all GPD staff with the collaboration of the SDO.

The GPD has decided to extend the rent billing service, the payment of rent at local councils service, as well as the e-rent service to ex-Church properties registered in the Joint Office Property Database (JOPD). Since the JOPD does not include a billing facility, migration of JOPD data to GPD's Land Management (LMS) is required. To facilitate data transfer a number of interventions have been made on the JOPD. This project will continue in 2008.

During the year, new equipment including PCs and printers was purchased to replace obsolete tools and for newly appointed officers. A number of PCs, including their operating system software, were also upgraded to current versions.

Human Resources

In spite of the Capacity Building Exercise that was undertaken in 2007, GPD staff complement continues to decrease from year to year. In fact, the total of 156 officers (December 2004) went down to 141 (December 2007). The situation worsens when one considers that within the GPD complement there are a number of personnel on loan from other entities. These include eight (8) ex-Malta Post Office employees, 8 IPSL employees and 1 from the Local Government Department. Four (4) officers are on parental leave, 15 work a reduced time table and 1 is on unpaid leave.

The GPD has made various representations to the Management and Personnel Office in order to address this situation especially with regard to the lack of minor staff that is making consolidation of services difficult to implement.

The table below gives an overview of the distribution of staff in the different sections of the GPD in the years 2004, 2005, 2006 and 2007.

GPD Personnel

	Year	Total	Prntl	Rdcd	Unpaid	ex-Mla	IPSL	P/T	Lcl
			Leave	Hrs	/Study	Post		Advsr	Cncls
					Leave	Office			
GPD	Dec-04	156							
	Dec-05	147	6	12	2	7	10	5	
	Dec-06	146	5	10	1	8	9	4	1
	Dec-07	141	4	15	1	8	8	2	1
Estate Management	Dec-04	27							
	Dec-05	25		1	2				
	Dec-06	24		1	1				1
	Dec-07	26		1	1				1
Land	Dec-04	32							
	Dec-05	30	3	3		4			
	Dec-06	30	3	3		4			
	Dec-07	30	2	4		4			
Joint Office	Dec-04	42							
	Dec-05	41	2	7		3	4	5	
	Dec-06	45	1	5		3	4	4	
	Dec-07	37	1	6		2	3	2	
Fin / Admin.	Dec-04	55							
	Dec-05	51	1	1			6		
	Dec-06	47	1	1		1	5		
	Dec-07	48	1	4		2	5		

Gozo Branch

For the convenience of Gozo residents, the GPD continues to provide personalized 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.

Financial Matters

Funds, allocated to the GPD under the Budget Estimates, are managed with care and due diligence. All reporting is done on a regular basis including accrual accounting reports. Besides the day to day running expenses, the Accounts Section settled all bills related to court registry fees, research, land registration, contracts, electricity and water supply (value of Lm90,000), burthens (221 in no.) and refunds of overpaid ground rent.

In order to be in a position to manage more efficiently water and electricity bills of common parts of government owned blocks of flats and other vacant government-owned premises, a database has been created with regard to blocks of flats. It is envisaged that work to include all premises will continue in the coming year.

Moreover, the GPD administers 221 burthens that are due to various entities. In order to get an overview and plan better their management a database has been created that should help to facilitate the steamlining of this process.

Health and Safety

Health and safety issues are an ongoing process and annual updating of the risk assessment is being carried out in order to continue building on past initiatives. GPD staff members are regularly notified of any course that is available. All staff members are encouraged to attend.

Green Initiative

The GPD continues to support and promote the Green Initiative within the MJHA. The Green Travel Plan, based on first hand data gathered through the carrying out of a survey among GPD employees, was finalized. Waste is being separated and disposed of according to guidelines in collaboration with Wasteserv. Environment stickers to save water and electricity can be seen in prominent places and auto-spouts purchased. Energy saving appliances are used whenever possible.

Developments within the GPD Departments

A separate account of the work undertaken by each of the three Departments within the Government Property Division, highlighting developments in 2007, is given below.

Renee Laiviera
Asst Director (Finance & Administration)

Perit John Sciberras
Director General

30th January 2007