

OPENING OF THE LEGAL YEAR 2026

LAW COUNCIL CHAIR'S SPEECH

Chief Justice, I too welcome His Excellency the Governor, our Chief Minister, the Minister for Justice and other distinguished guests.

My Lord it is a pleasure to stand here before you and make this address for the second year as Chair of the Law Council.

This year has undoubtedly been an extremely busy year for the legal profession. There have been a significant number of positive developments for the jurisdiction led by our Government that have put Gibraltar firmly on the map. As a result, this has led to a significant amount of work for all lawyers across Gibraltar's legal sector.

Firstly, Gibraltar's removal from the Moneyval greylist reinforcing our position as an internationally compliant jurisdiction. We thank our Minister for Justice and his team for the stellar work undertaken together with the support of all stakeholders to obtain this result.

Secondly, of great historical significance to the jurisdiction was the positive outcome of the treaty negotiated with the EU providing access into the Schengen zone, an open border and safeguarding the interests of Gibraltar's economy. For this we thank our Chief Minister and his team, including my esteemed colleague the Attorney General.

Thirdly, another crucial milestone for Gibraltar was the removal of Gibraltar from the Spanish tax haven list opening up business opportunities for Gibraltar both locally and across the vicinity.

These are to name but a few important achievements which have in themselves resulted in a revamp of our infrastructure making us a more resilient, competitive and reputable place to do business as well as opening up a wealth of new opportunities through which to develop our economy.

The Law Council is committed to ensuring that the Legal Profession is able to thrive and continue to contribute positively to the ever developing nature of the jurisdiction.

The Ministry for Justice

I will begin with the Ministry for Justice.

The law council continues to work closely with the Minister for Justice, his ministry and the finance centre team. We are very grateful that our Minister for Justice and his team are always willing to engage on matters of importance to the profession and assist as appropriate.

Through participation on the finance centre council, the law council contributes to matters concerning the financial services sector. The law council also participates in marketing initiatives driven by the Ministry and finance centre both locally and internationally.

The law council has over the past year, participated in numerous events organised by the Ministry which included a financial services careers fair that allowed us to showcase the legal profession to students and young professionals interested in pursuing a career in law.

Through the finance centre council, the law council also participates in consultations regarding changes to legislation in financial services and taxation as well as any other proposed legislative changes of relevance to the wider financial services sector.

The Legal Services Regulatory Authority

I will turn now to the LSRA.

I would once again like to commend the great work that has been undertaken by the LSRA's CEO, Francis Muscat and his team. With the continued guidance of the chairman Sir Peter Caruana and the members of the LSRA board, the LSRA continues to build a robust regulatory framework for the profession.

Besides the continued focus on AML in particular in light of the upcoming Moneyval evaluation, and aside from their day to day regulatory work, the LSRA have been conducting

onsite reviews of legal practices. They have also produced important guidance notes to assist the legal profession in implementing solid procedures to safeguard their businesses, their clients interests and the wider interests of the jurisdiction.

The Courts Service

Turning now to the Courts Service.

The council continues to have a solid relationship with the court service. The Chief Justice, Registrar and CEO are always open to discuss industry-related matters and continue to make time in their extremely busy schedules to discuss issues that arise in the profession and are of common interest.

Progress is being made on the review of the duty solicitor scheme through the Law Councils court uses committee. The Law Council has engaged both with the court service and the Ministry for Justice in relation to this review and we are hopeful that we will be able to achieve a positive outcome all round.

The Law Council would like to thank once again the Chief Justice and all of the Members of the Judiciary for their time and efforts in attending to the heavy caseloads that go through our court system. In particular, it is commendable to note that these are being dealt with in a diligent and timely manner despite the number of cases, which only highlights the fantastic work been done by our judiciary to ensure access to justice.

The Council also thanks the CEO of the court service, Hazel Cumbo, the Members of the Lay Bench, the clerks and all of the staff for their continued hard work and dedication to our legal and justice system. It is thanks to their efforts and support that we enable the proper functioning of the justice system.

The Law Council

The Law Council has once again been extremely busy this year.

The council continues to provide assistance to the university with the Law Course, assisting with the implementation of new modules the continuation of existing modules and facilitating practitioners to deliver the courses. We have also been engaging with the university on the implementation of CPD events which we hope to begin to roll out very shortly.

The Law Council also continues to liaise closely with the LSRA on matters affecting our members both as a representative body and through our seat on the LSRA board. We continue our role in facilitating consultation with the industry where necessary.

The Council has liaised closely with the Minister for Justice and the LSRA on the implementation of the SQE which was successfully implemented. On behalf of the profession, we would like to thank the Minister for Justice and the LSRA for their assistance in this matter which was of significant importance to our members and those that will be joining the profession via the SQE route in the future.

We continue to engage with in-house lawyers to ensure that they are included in initiatives run by the Council. We are pleased to note that in house lawyers have now been fully implemented under Part 5 of the Legal Services Act and welcome them as registered members of our profession. We look forward to continue to work with our in-house lawyers going forward

Earlier this month, we held our second legal walk in aid of the GBC open day for which funds were raised by the legal community for local charities. I am pleased to report that this was once again a success with a significant turn out of members throughout the profession. I would like to thank the Minister for Business for having joined us at the event and for giving an address to those participating.

This year we once again expanded our legal calendar by adding an annual dinner which was open to all practicing lawyers in Gibraltar. We were on honoured to have the support and attendance of our Chief Minister, the Minister for Justice and the Minister for Business with speeches from both our Chief Minister and Minister for Justice. We hope that like the legal walk, this event will also become a permanent fixture in our calendar.

The Law Council is also exploring new ways through which to reach our community through our social media platforms and by continuing to enhance our website. We hope to be able to

create a more visible footprint so that members and young individuals wishing to pursue law can remain easily engaged.

I now take the opportunity to thank all of the members of the Law Council Board for all of their hard work and dedication during the course of this year. I would especially like to thank our vice chair Kenneth Navas who in particular, led on the initiative with the duty solicitor scheme. Tanya Rhamani for her diligent work and assistance on various matters but in particular, for leading on the SQE initiative which was successfully resolved. David Montegriffo for representing the law council on the finance centre council board. Nichola Borge, David Montegriffo and Seth Galia and former member of the council Paul Grant for having once again organised a hugely successful legal walk, Nicholas Borge for his continued work on the website. Freddie Vasquez and Dhiraj Nagrani for their support generally but in particular on more technical matters related to our constitution and legislative changes. Emily Pott for assisting with the organisation of the annual dinner and today's events. Kelly power and Caroline Lane for their support and assistance generally. Last but certainly not least our very diligent secretary, Debbie Spencer, without her hard work this year's events and the continued management of the Law Council would not have been possible.

Personal reflections

Today is all about tradition, it is about celebrating our profession. It is a day to reflect on what our service means to our clients and to the community. A day in which we all come together not as adversaries but as a united profession dedicated to upholding the Rule of Law and doing our part to ensure access to justice for all those that require it.

Let us therefore walk in to this new Legal Year with integrity, humility and above all passion and dedication for our work, because what we do not only impacts our justice system but it also impacts lives.

Turning now to today's events.

Unfortunately, our newly appointed Bishop Charle Azopardi is currently traveling and was unable to officiate the Red Mass this morning, however I would like to thank Bishop Ralph

and Father Paul Bear for their support in his absence. We were pleased to once again have a good turn out at the mass and hope this will continue for years to come.

As is customary, the opening of the legal year lunch will once again take place later on today at the Rock Hotel and we look forward to welcoming our members and esteemed guests.

On that note I second the motion that the legal year be opened.

Emma Lejeune

Law Council Chairman

25 September 2026