

'No truth in Vat Alles workers losing jobs'

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CLAIMS by City of Tshwane general workers – part of the Vat Alles programme – that the DA administration planned to fire them were untrue.

City spokesman Lindela Mashigo said: "There is another force behind this trying to get the workers to be given full-time jobs."

Since last week, workers had been harbouring fears of being jobless in six months' time because there were no renewal clauses in their new contracts.

Their old contracts ended in December, and at the centre of their unrest was a statement in the new contracts that reads: "...failure to sign the employment contract will result in the payments of salaries being blocked for beneficiaries".

Vat Alles workers yesterday told the Pretoria News their fear of losing their jobs was not baseless.

The new short-term contracts indicated that the city had no intention of employing them permanently, they said.

The issue of permanent employment has played itself out before, with the workers protesting outside the Sammy Marks Chambers demanding that executive mayor Solly Msimanga gave them permanent posts.

But Mashigo rebuffed claims of plans to fire the workers. "We assure the workers that we will not willy-nilly fire people. We urge them to co-operate and comply with city procedures."

Vat Alles is part of the national Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP), which offers short-term job opportunities to unemployed people to equip them with job-seeking skills.

Mashigo said the workers had to understand that their jobs were on a contract basis in line with the requirements of the EPWP.

The workers would have to apply for their jobs as and when they came to an end, he said, and when the city announced work opportunities on offer.

The disgruntled general workers accused the DA-led administration of hatching plans to replace them with party supporters.

Agnes Makgalathiba, chairwoman of a youth action committee in Cullinan, said the Vat Alles workers were told by DA supporters in the area that Msimanga wanted to replace those employed under former ANC mayor Kgosi Ramokgopa.

Cullinan worker Agastina Tshomo said: "We are frustrated by these contracts. We are feeling betrayed by the municipality because they should be giving us

permanent employment."

Workers likely to be affected were stationed in areas like Metsweding, Hammanskraal, Atteridgeville and the inner-city, they said.

One worker in Hammanskraal claimed their local leaders were used to coerce them into signing the contracts against their will.

"Local leaders told most of us that we stand to lose our jobs if we don't sign the contracts," a worker said.

She alleged that some workers were even followed home, where they were tricked into signing the contracts.

The Metsweding workers from Ward 99 and 100 threatened to take to the streets if the city did not heed their demands of employing them permanently.

Workers in Atteridgeville said they were also affected by the situation which could lead to them losing their jobs in six months.

Mashigo said: "There are other workers who have come to the main office because they understand the nature of Vat Alles to give short-term job opportunities."

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Lindela Mashigo