

Stony silence

POLICE Deputy Minister Bongani Mkongi's announcement that the R100 million upgrade of Muizenberg police station has been scrapped, is welcomed.

Given the dire need for more police services in crime-ridden areas in several of Cape Town's disadvantaged communities, it was ridiculous, financially and otherwise, to spend so much money on a police station.

But what was it that led to such a decision in the first place?

Since this newspaper broke the story, no proper answer from the authorities has been forthcoming. Police spokespeople have refused to answer questions about why the Muizenberg police station upgrade came at such huge cost while crime on the Cape Flats continues unchecked.

It was only after being pressed that they said police stations were planned for Nyanga, Makhaza and Tafelsig. But these police stations have been in the pipeline since 2003, and 14 years later and still nothing. It is an insult to people in these communities. Why are our people being treated like this? Is it because the majority of them are poor?

Why is that this government is failing the people of Tafelsig, Nyanga and Makhaza? Why did it take a group of activists to protest before the Muizenberg upgrade was reviewed?

Our people deserve answers. It is the epitomé of stupidity to be spending so much money to upgrade a police station where crime is less of a problem while murder, rape and robbery continue unabated elsewhere.

There is confusion about which department is responsible for the construction and upgrading of police stations. But this is irrelevant. What is relevant is that it took pressure for the revamp to be canned. Had it not been for active citizenry, R100m of taxpayers' money would have become wasteful expenditure.

It does not help being told the SA PS decides on new police stations and the Department of Public Works is responsible for upgrades of police stations. Surely these departments should be communicating about these issues? Or is this a case of the right hand not knowing what the left hand does?

Those behind the Muizenberg police station decision should be fired, and the auditor-general would do well to look into this matter. Our communities, particularly the disadvantaged, are too often being treated like second-class citizens. This must stop, and it must stop right now.