

# Council double dipping exposed

## Call for urgent probe

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**E**THEKWINI municipal employees were found to have been double-dipping in government funds meant for the unemployed, an audit committee report revealed yesterday.

The report, contained in yesterday's executive committee (Exco) meeting agenda, revealed that permanent municipal employees benefited from the Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP), which is meant to help unemployed people.

The matter was deferred after concerns by the councillors that the author was not present at the Exco meeting and that it had no signature.

The Exco meeting proceeded with an agreement that the item be tabled in the next sitting.

According to the report, since the last audit committee, a special review of 20 out of 58 projects for the 2015/16 financial year revealed that EPWP beneficiaries also appeared as full-time paid employees of eThekweni Municipality.

The review found duplicate payments to a EPWP beneficiary, and the beneficiary had worked on more than one project simultaneously.

Payments were also made to beneficiaries with incorrect identification numbers.

During this period, the transgressions have cost the programme just over R2.5 million.

The *Daily News* sent a list of questions to the municipality seek-



ing an explanation and clarity on these alleged transgressions.

Gugu Sisilana, eThekweni's publications manager, said all items on the Exco agenda were embargoed until they were discussed by the committee.

"It will be irresponsible of you to report on an item that has not been fully deliberated by the executive committee as the report will come back to Exco in due course. I would advise you to report on the matter then," Sisilana said.

Kgomotso Mathuloe, EPWP national manager, said her department (Public Works) was the custodian of the programme while local bodies such as municipalities were the implementing agents.

"We play a co-ordinating role, and our monitoring and evaluation unit monitors progress through reports from the implementers."

"We provide the implementing agents guidelines that must be followed and there is no way that permanent employees should benefit from the programme in any way."

"Our policy is clear that beneficiaries should produce identity documents, and must report and be captured on each day of participating in the programme,"

Mathuloe said.

Mdu Nkosi, IFP Exco member, said the audit committee identified problems and requested Exco to take urgent action.

"All those to whom the report refers must be identified and dealt with."

"Obviously, this happened under the noses of the previous manager, so the new manager must play his role and take action."

"These people are thieves."

"Wherever you go there's an outcry about unemployment and lack of skills development opportunities. The EPWP is for the unemployed and is meant to empower them."

"These thieves do not deserve to work at the municipality and they must pay back all the money they stole from the government," Nkosi said.

Apparently, the EPWP issue was raised in March during a full council meeting where "a series" of questions was posed regarding the alleged shady operation of the implementation of the programme.

Sharon Hoosen, the DA's council member, said: "The fact is that we do not have a current policy to employ EPWP workers, and in the absence of a policy, the city's EPWP workers are being paid as full-time employees."

"I will await a presentation at the next executive committee and will further call for an investigation into the alleged shady operation of the EPWP," Hoosen said.