



R118m sinkhole projects

DEMOLITION: DAMAGED HOUSES RESPONSIBILITY OF MUNICIPALITY

➔ **'More than 200 beneficiaries in area have been allocated houses.'**

1. I have a factory in Stormill Ext 2 which has been experiencing issues with the electricity billing. The council has been sending estimation bills from December 2016 and it looks like there is no road forward to sort this out.

I had a private company install their own meters to overlook the council's bills and I can honestly say that we are getting over-billed.

In December 2016, council billing was R27 000, while the private meter was R6 000. My question is: when is this account going to be sorted out? Are the people doing the accounts in the council qualified to do that work?

Stefano Albano.

Mayor Maneli: With regard to the above question and the observation conducted by the West Rand District Municipality on same, I inform you that the area of Stormill Extension 2 falls within the jurisdictional area of the City of Joburg (Roo-depoort).

The municipality is, therefore, not able to respond to your enquiry. You are kindly advised to make contact with the responsible department from the City of Joburg.

2. I have a complaint against Merafong Municipality about sinkholes in Khutsong. My house has been affected by the sinkhole at 532 Khutsong Location which, in my view, is due to municipal negligence. I have been relocated to a house that was vandalised, but later repaired to minimum living conditions.

The house belongs to public works and we heard a rumour that I will be evicted in six months' time with no permanent solution to my problem. It is now June and no one seems to care about what happens to our property that was damaged by the sinkhole.

I also lost a parent because of the distress caused by the sinkhole.

Is there money allocated by the Merafong Municipality specifically to assist those affected by the man-made sinkhole and, if so, how much? Is it lawful to demolish a house without proper consent and without relocating the owner to a permanent residence? Papi Magwaza

Mayor Maneli: The Merafong City Local Municipality is known to be a highly dolomitic area and thus the formation of sinkholes and subsidence is the

order of the day in such an environment. The area, over a number of years, consistently experienced sinkhole formation and dolines emanating from ageing/decaying water-bearing infrastructure and ingress of water as a result of heavy downpours. From 2015, the number and magnitude of sinkhole formations increased dramatically, affecting the following areas in Merafong: De Pan, Welverdiend, Fochville, Carletonville and Khutsong.

A sinkhole formed in close proximity of stand 590 in Khutsong towards the end of 2016 which also affected five neighbouring properties; namely Stands 530, 532, 534, 588 and 592.

The sinkhole affected a sewer line, storm water drainage and other municipal services.

The municipality commissioned geotechnical studies to inform the possible rehabilitation of the sinkhole and the restoration of municipal services.

The occurrence was during the rainy season which resulted in further ingress of water and extension of the sinkhole.

In January 2017, it was reported that the hole has further collapsed and four families had to be relocated as an emergency measure.

Council identified some vacant houses belonging to the department of public works as emergency housing seeing that no other alternative accommodation was readily available.

The affected families were duly consulted and agreed to be placed in the identified properties.

There is no substance to the rumour that people will be evicted from the emergency houses.

The department of public works was consulted and

informed of the emergency relocation.

Due to the magnitude of the damage and disruption of municipal services, council resolved to recommend the declaration of the local state of disaster to the Provincial Disaster Management Centre.

After a detailed assessment, a local state of disaster was declared and published in the *Provincial Gazette*.

Following the declaration of the state of disaster, funding was made available by the Disaster Management Centre for prioritised short-term interventions. A total of nine projects have been prioritised, some from previous sinkhole occurrences, to the value of R118 075 349.

The prioritised projects entail the rehabilitation of inter alia the sinkhole at stand 590, as well as the reconstruction of services.

In accordance with the engineer's reports, the rehabilitation of the sinkhole at stand 590 necessitated the complete demolition of the collapsed house at stand 532.

A notice to demolish the unsafe building was served to the owner of the house in terms of the National Building Regulations and Building Standards Act.

In terms of the legislation, it is the duty of the municipality to protect life or property and to take the necessary steps in this regard.

The affected families were informed in writing that in accordance with the engineers and geotech report, further investigations need to be conducted to determine the future of other properties and infrastructure in the area.

The affected households will

**Q&A WITH
WEST RAND DISTRICT
MAYOR BOYCE MANELI**

HOT SEAT. West Rand district municipality mayor Boyce Maneli.

Picture: Nigel Sibanda

be kept informed in this regard.

3. Will you please clarify the issue of RDP housing in Westonaria Borwa. As the residents of Waterworks Zuurbekom, we feel neglected and a worrying factor is that some people are being allocated RDP houses in an unfavourable manner. Will you please advise us on this matter. Bongane Twala

Mayor Maneli: The Westonaria Borwa is one of the mega projects within the Western Corridor and it is categorised as a mixed and integrated human settlements development. The development is made up of various phases, which are being implemented as separate projects to deliver the full scope of the development.

The recent allocation of phase 2 was done in 2016 and more than 200 beneficiaries were taken from Thusanang, Zuurbekom and Waterworks.

As verified with Rand West Local Municipality, a profile of all qualifying beneficiaries has been developed and beneficiary administration was done for 400 people who were living in informal housing units.

However, it was evident since subsidy administration has been done, new people moved in.

In the past two weeks, stakeholder engagement was also held with the community to explain departmental plans. To date, more than 200 beneficiaries in that area have thus been allocated houses.

NEXT WEEK

Solly Msimanga, mayor of Tshwane, responds to your questions.