

City's works drive to be revamped to put and end to nepotism and patronage

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THE city's Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP) is set to receive a facelift that will see an end to nepotism, cronyism and patronage.

This, city officials said, was due to years of the programme being embroiled in controversy and failing to grant the poorest of the poor access to job opportunities and skills transfers.

Cilliers Brink, MMC for corporate and shared services, said the programme had for years been

abused by the former administration through its networks of patronage. He said the EPWP recruitment policy had too many loopholes.

These enabled the past administration to abuse the system and reserve jobs for family, friends and party members.

"This policy reform aims to put an end to this practice by closing those loopholes and ensuring that qualifying beneficiaries will have fair and equal access to job opportunities.

"Once adopted, this policy will ensure that there are no more insid-

ers and outsiders. Also, that councillors will no longer play a part in identifying and recruiting beneficiaries," said Brink.

The MMC said the policy reform would distinguish between three training streams, starting off with skills-transfer programmes that involved beneficiaries in operational functions such as greening, cleaning, policing and other activities designed to impart meaningful work skills and experience for a period of up to 12 months.

Second would be capital projects, that ran into overtime and which

would include the possibility of extension of beneficiary contracts once proper consent has been acquired.

There was also the option of a combination of both of these initiatives, depending on the skill set of the EPWP applicants and other considerations. "Programmes must impart, or at least attempt to impart, meaningful skills which enable beneficiaries to exit the programme and enter the world of work..."

Brink said the new policy would also distinguish EPWP from the city's internship policy, and ensure

no conflict in the way the city applied grant funding and how it applied Seta funding.

This, he said, would ensure minimum qualifying criteria and how such qualifications are to be confirmed, and provide for a database of qualified beneficiaries from which appointments would be made, either by means of random picking or from a waiting list system.

"The city believes that the above reforms will win back the trust of communities, lost owing to the previous administration's handling of public works jobs," he said.

The city has recently witnessed strike action by EPWP workers, who have demonstrated outside Tshwane House, demanding permanent contracts, among other issues.

The workers, who formed part of the city's Vat Alles programme, demanded permanent employment and decried lack of payment despite workers reporting for duty.

Mayoral spokesperson Samkelo Mgobozi however said the absorption of the 23 000 workers from the programme was something the city could not afford.

"The city is not an employment

agency. Ours is to ensure that we create an environment conducive for workers to find employment due to the skills transfer gained from the programme."

Mgobozi said the city had a R2 billion deficit and various contracts that were costing the city billions.

He said the city could not pay workers who had not signed a formal contract with the city.

This would be irregular and unauthorised expenditure. "If we just paid the workers without following due process then we would go bankrupt," he said.