

Politics web

Tshwane only getting better and better – Solly Msimanga

Solly Msimanga | 06 July 2017

Mayor says a City that responds to needs of its residents and expand freedom, fairness and opportunity for all is what is planned

Despite the challenges we inherited the new ones we face today, we are making progress to cultivate a safe, connected and inclusive Tshwane of opportunity

It is common cause that when new administrations are elected that there are a number of changes that will come into effect. Most of which are good and work towards building a safe, connected and inclusive Tshwane of opportunity that provides better services.

This new administration is also working tirelessly to build a Tshwane that is responsive and honest with its people as we have done in the past with respect to what we have inherited from the previous administrations and the obstacles which we have to overcome which will take time. Part of being an open government is about sharing with the public the challenges currently faced in our city, but more importantly, what we are doing to overcome those challenges.

Robberies at respective licensing departments will be met with swift and decisive action to provide better services in a safer Tshwane:

As such Mayor Msimanga has noted with concern the frustrations experienced by motorists at the various city's licensing departments. This follows a spate of break-ins and theft at the Watloo, Akasia and Centurion license departments.

"I am angered by these robberies and will do all that is within our power to ensure that those responsible for these robberies are brought to book. This is why I will be conducting oversight visits tomorrow to the affected licensing departments to see for myself the state of affairs and to determine what further, long-term steps will be taken by this administration to ensure that these robberies are prevented in future so that our people may get the necessary services they deserve." Said Mayor Msimanga.

Incident 1 at Waltloo Licensing Centre

The Waltloo Licensing Centre experienced a break-in on the 1 June 2017 where equipment was stolen. The equipment stolen included:

- Seven of live capturing unit computer system used for eye testing and thumb imprint;
- E-Natis System Computers;
- One revenue information management system; and

- Three of the City's computers.

Incident 2 at Waltloo Licensing Centre

The same Licensing Centre experienced a subsequent incident of robbery on the 20 June 2017, where security personnel and officials of the City got assaulted and injured by unknown assailants. The robbers escorted a security guard to the safe and stole an undisclosed amount of money.

Appreciating that these incidents have inconvenienced our residents and indifference to our commitment to delivering the services our people deserve; the following services will be rendered at Waltloo Licensing Centre despite the unfortunate incident of the break-in:

- Collection of drivers licenses;
- application for learners and driving licenses; and
- testing of learners and driving licenses.

Unfortunately the centre will not be in a position to render professional driving license and driving license renewals until such time as the equipment has been replaced.

Centurion Licensing Centre

The Executive Mayor also had a brief report from the Acting Chief of Tshwane Metro Police Department, Ms Jenny Malan, on the recent break-in at the Centurion Licensing Centre during the night of 4 July 2017. Preliminary investigation underway has revealed the items that are missing due to theft to be inclusive of PCs, camera equipment and E-Natis screens.

The theft prompted an immediate shutdown of the Centurion Licensing Centre to allow the South African Police Services to conduct an investigation without hindrances.

The Implications of this crime committed are:

- From Today, 6 July 2017 only learner license testing, driving license testing and driving license card collection can be sustained.
- No driving license card renewals are possible at this stage.
- Normalization of services as soon as is possible, are being negotiated. All stolen computer infrastructure, including procurement/installation and maintenance thereof fall under the jurisdiction of the Gauteng Department of Roads and Transport in conjunction with the Driving License Card Account Entity (National Department of Transport). The nearest date for resumption of all services will be communicated in future.

Akasia Licensing centre

Located in the North of the Capital, the Akasia Licensing centre experienced a break-in on the 6 June 2017. Fortunately nothing was taken, and the quick response time by Metro Police and SAPS yielded to the arrest of two people in this regard. The robbers attempted to access the safe but were unsuccessful.

We are thankful to our men and women who acted quickly and swiftly in this regard and we will institute measures to ensure all responses to yield results such as at Akasia Licensing Centre. Public are reminded that for driving license testing or related services they may visit any other operational centres. This means that Tshwane residents are not restricted to Tshwane centres.

The City together with the Tshwane Metropolitan Police Department prioritised all security and safety measures to be enhanced speedily to prevent re-occurrence of such incidents. Outside and inside security technology will be upgraded to highest standards. This intervention will be rolled-out to all other Licensing Centres within the City.

We are cautiously optimistic that the police will investigate and arrest the perpetrators who are hell-bent on disrupting service delivery in our city. The city will not be deterred in its endeavor to make Tshwane a safe and responsive city. Despite some delays to A Re Yeng, City is committed to integrated transport system in efforts to build an inclusive Tshwane: As of the 30 June, 2017, A Re Yeng has completed the first phase of the dry run operations from Church Square to Wonderboom, the dry run started on the 2 May, 2017, with six buses running along the main route with no feeder buses to the surrounding areas. Travelling was free to commuters during this period of the dry run.

Operations have continued on this alignment, commuters now require a connector card to board, the free period has ended. Connector cards can be obtained from all A Re Yeng Stations, Church Square and Sammy Marks walk in centre. The dry run is a partial service on that alignment which offered commuters the A Re Yeng experience. The first phase of the dry run period also gave opportunity to the commuters in the surrounding areas to obtain their connector travelling cards before A Re Yeng resumes the full operations

In preparation of the full operations, the City is finalizing the construction of the interchange facility at Rainbow Junction and a depot at Belle Ombre. The construction works for Belle Ombre is divided into three projects. The Bulk earthworks construction was completed on schedule on the 1 March 2016. Civil works for the depot commenced on the 4 March, 2016 and was initially scheduled for completion by year end 2016. The Building works commenced in April 2016, this was scheduled for completion in March, 2017.

The delays were due to poor performance by the Contractors and Project Managers. To remedy the situation penalties were imposed on the poor performing contractors, the scope of works was re-visited and re-assigned to the best performing contractors. In addition, new leadership was brought into the department to ensure that the project is completed within a reasonable time.

The Depot which will accommodate 144 buses is now expected to be completed by 30 September, 2017. The new distance-based fares will be charged on a straight-line distance that one travels as per the table below:

The permanent compensation report will serve at the next council for approval and this will allow the taxi industry to clear the routes for A Re Yeng to ferry passengers into the CBD.

It is anticipated that the launch will be during the October Transport month. For both Line 1A and 2A, a total of 70 buses will be made available to cater for the service. During the Budget Speech which is aligned to IDP, the Executive mayor made a commitment of allocating R669.2 million for A Re Yeng.

Security guards will have access to opportunity:

In dealing with the issue of security guards it is important to note that the city could not continue paying in excess of R200 million a year to the existing security companies.

As such the City thought long and hard about how best to optimize existing resources within the city to ensure that the protection of our assets was done in a manner that was cost effective.

To this end the city identified human capital within the Tshwane Metro Police Department (TMPD) who could perform the functions of guarding the city's strategic assets with the help of an additional 1187 police officers who would collectively provide security services at the city's properties at a far cheaper rate than that of the security companies that were employed with the city.

Part of creating opportunities in this city requires us to be smart with our resources. That is to say that of the R210 million budget for overtime in the 2017/18 financial year, R110 million will be used to create employment in the places where we need it most. That is our artisans such as plumbers and electricians who actually do the work to provide better services for our people.

I have said repeatedly we simply cannot afford to absorb every worker into the city. Our precarious financial position is well-known and R200 million a year is simply unsustainable for the city when there are other, more affordable options at our disposal.

The core business of cities is to deliver better services and to create an environment that is enabling for the economy to grow and employment can be created. However, I am mindful that cities do have some immediate job creation capacity through EPWP and the development of infrastructure and we aim to create 23 000 EPWP opportunities in the foreseeable future.

Claims that the city refuses to absorb employees are simply not true as evidenced by the absorption of employees from SWA, Boffin and Fundi which includes meter readers and the like.

We have a duty to act responsibly in the best interests of the city and we are currently doing that in deference to our efforts to stabilise the city and its finances

City responds to SAMWU demands in an effort to cultivate a Tshwane of opportunity:

When taking office, the current DA-led multi-party government in Tshwane discovered that a number of beneficiaries of the EPWP programme Vat Alles had no updated contracts with the City.

The City therefore required the current beneficiaries to sign updated contracts. This exercise also enabled us to eliminate so-called “ghost workers” from the City’s payroll.

This decision has provoked the ire of SAMWU, who also demands that EPWP workers be appointed on a permanent basis – a move that will see the City lose all national EPWP grant funding.

The City will not abandon the EPWP programme as SAMWU’s demand entails. Losing national grant funding will make it impossible for the City to expand EPWP work opportunities.

We will instead reform the programme, stop the abuse of beneficiaries for party political purposes, and end the system of insiders-and-outsiders which characterised EPWP recruitment in the past.

The City also refuses to contravene the law by paying employees and beneficiaries with whom we do not have written agreements.

Such payments will be deemed as “irregular expenditure” in terms of the Municipal Finance Management Act, a practice which was rife under the former ANC administration in Tshwane.

Irregular expenditure is also to blame for much of the City's current financial shortfalls. The DA-led multi-party government is determined to reverse this trend.

The truth is that only a minority of Vat Alles beneficiaries have refused to sign contracts with the City, and in them SAMWU seems to be looking for a new constituency.

Some of the beneficiaries who have refused sign have also failed to report for duty for a number of months. It is only after the "no work, no pay" principle was applied, that these individuals made their appearance.

We can only deliver on our mandate of change that creates jobs, stops corruption, and ensures service delivery if we manage the City's finances responsibly.

We remain committed to workers' rights, maintaining a good relationship with labour unions, and the ideal of a happy and productive workforce.

The City's response to other SAMWU demands is as follows:

Allegations of mass dismissals from the City.

- The CoT had fixed term contract with the ITSEBE and WBOT officials, and notices were sent to inform said officials about their contract expiry dates.
- The contracts were terminated in line with the contracts stipulations.
- SAMWU should provide proof of these allegations of mass dismissals and purging of staff, or that the CoT has contravened any labour law in this matter.
- SAMWU should use existing bargaining forums to address any grievances given that they are signatories to the main collective agreement.

Utilisation of Metro Police as security.

- The CoT has the prerogative to utilize its employees in line with the applicable policies and procedures.

- The utilization of Metro Police should be understood in the context of cost savings and as interim in nature, due to budgetary constraints inherited from the previous administration.

- The CoT will consult meaningfully with affected personnel and ensure that the employees acquire the proper skills prior to assumption of the proposed duties.

That the City engage all security companies and ensure that jobs are saved or alternatively absorb all those affected.

- SAMWU does not have standing in terms of law or any collective agreement to make demands on behalf of employees employed by third parties or service providers.

That all those employees on probation be absorbed and their scale increments be implemented.

- The scale increments of employees who qualify in terms of their employment contract will be processed for July 2017.

Non Provision of PPE and danger allowance and that the employer conducts an audit of all the PPE.

- The CoT is committed to ensure compliance with the OHS Policy on PPE.

- An audit on all required PPE's is currently underway; and therefore the CoT will update SAMWU on the progress at the Local and Labour Forum.

That all meter readers be paid a danger allowance.

- A report on the Danger Allowance was finalized and feedback was submitted to organized labour in this regard.

- Danger allowance is therefore not an option to consider for meter readers.

That the employer ensure enough security for all its employees.

- The CoT is committed to ensure safe working environment for all its employees.
- All measures are put in place to ensure the safety of all CoT employees including the meter readers.

Sharing of Bunker Gear.

- All staff in the Emergency Services Department are issued with full bunker gear, and have been encouraged on numerous occasions to take good care of their equipment.
- SAMWU is requested to submit evidence of the allegation so that the City Manager could investigate.

Resting Places and Sharing of Bathrooms/changing Rooms

- All stations have resting places with the necessary equipment.
- The City will investigate areas that requires further refurbishing and upgrading.
- SAMWU is requested to provide proof of those stations where bathrooms/changing rooms are shared by males and females.
- As far as the City is concerned, separate the bathrooms/change rooms are allocated to both males and females.

Security for Fire Employees

- The City will investigate the issue of security in the mentioned fire stations and a report will be shared with SAMWU.
- The City has in the meantime erected fencing, walls, electric fencing and gate control to ensure safety of the employees in the said fire stations.

Emergency Services: Disciplinary cases

- The CoT is committed to a fair, transparent and consistent disciplinary process as prescribed in the Labour Relations Act as amended, and the different codes of conducts relevant to the local government sphere.
- SAMWU is requested to submit evidence of inconsistencies in dealing with disciplinary cases in the Emergency Services Department.

Emergency Services: Chronic shortages of resources

- The City places on record that 100 new ambulances were received, 50% of fire engines are two (2) years old, six brand new Rapid Intervention Vehicles were delivered.
- These allegations are rejected.

Emergency Services: Request to City Manager to place the Department under Administration.

- The City Manager commits to address and monitor the performance of the Department effectively, but cannot put the Department under administration without any valid reasons.

That the City Manager convenes an urgent meeting with Labour.

- The City Manager subscribes to an open door policy and will always welcome round table discussion with SAMWU.

Progress made to create a Mahube Valley and Tshwane of inclusivity:

On 28 June 2017, the City under the leadership of Member of the Mayoral Committee for Housing and Human Settlements, Mandla Nkomo, held a steering committee meeting with representatives of the Mountain View informal settlement following violent clashes which erupted two weeks ago with formal home owners from Mahube Valley Extension 1.

The residents of Mahube Valley EXT 1 didn't attend the steering committee meeting raising safety issues. The MMC resolved that he will meet with them separately and proceeded with those from informal settlement.

The meeting resolved that the City team commence the shack marking and registration of households in mid July 2017. The team is currently relocating and rearranging beneficiaries into permanent stands in Phomolong, as part of its continuous plans and efforts to formalize communities in a systematic and sustainable manner. It is, in fact, within this context that the City strongly discourages land invasions as they disrupt and derail existing plans to relocate and formalize beneficiaries/ households who have been waiting for years to be assisted.

Below is an update on progress in Mahube Valley Ext 1:

- Installation of new 11KV feeder cable to Mahube Valley EXT 1 is completed. The splicing of the newly laid cable between T4 no 2 in Mahube valley substation to Mini-sub PP Coetzee/Solomon Mahlangu were completed 2 days ago. The team is currently testing the new cable before it can be commissioned. The newly laid cable is planned to be energised today. The new 11KV feeder cable will be used as a back-up supply to Mahube Valley Ext 1. This is as per commitment by the Executive Mayor to residents of Mahube Valley Ext 1.

- We have repaired all 14 vandalised water metres at Mahube Valley Ext 1 and water was restored. The team compiled the report for Finance team to adjust for affected consumers.

- The City has obtained the court order interdicting the residents from informal settlement from connecting illegally on the service infrastructure and also not to vandalise the infrastructure.

The City continues to engage the communities in finding sustainable and lasting solutions in addressing the problems that spiked the violence between the two communities, within the confines of the law.

In our Budget and IDP we have committed to the Formalisation of seven informal settlements under project Tirane.

As part of the roll out of Project Tirane, the City will upgrade the following areas to fully serviced stands, with some areas provided with bulk infrastructure:

Kudube X9

Refilwe Manor

Themba View

Olievenhoutbosch Ext 60

Zithobeni Heights

Zithobeni Ext 8 & 9

Mabopane Ext 1

A total of R40 million has been put aside as Opex to finalise planning and detailed designs for the following informal settlements:

Mabopane X12

Mahube Valley Ext 15

Jeffsville & Malusi (Booyens Ext 4)

Hammanskraal West

Mabopane Ext 11

Atteridgeville Ext 46 (Lotus Gardens) for the people of Itireleng.

Furthermore, to restore dignity the City will invest R480 million over medium term on the rudimentary basic services to begin addressing the often undignified sanitary conditions which so many of our people have to endure.

This is a priority of this administration. We will through our actions and IDP supported by the budget, make strides towards building a City that responds to the needs of its residents and expand freedom, fairness and opportunity for all.

Issued by Samkelo Mgobozi, Spokesperson to the Executive Mayor of Tshwane, 6 July 2017