

**PROTESTING:** Residents in Ritchie took to the streets yesterday to protest against unfair appointments of EPWP workers in the area.

Pictures: Soraya Crowie



# Residents vow to halt projects

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RITCHIE residents have vowed to stall several planned community projects following allegations of nepotism and underhanded dealings by Sol Plaatje Municipality officials.

The residents voiced their unhappiness by taking to the streets in protest yesterday, just days before the Sol Plaatje executive mayor, Mangaliso Matika, is scheduled to visit the community.

During his visit, Matika is expected to announce the names of 20 additional Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP) workers, as well as those appointed to work on a community refuse removal programme.

Matika is also scheduled to officially open an internet café and

announce the establishment of a one-stop centre in the area.

Community members from wards 26 and 27 yesterday barricaded roads leading into the area with rocks and burning tyres, threatening that they would not allow the projects to go ahead unless their grievances were addressed by Matika.

"We will continue to barricade the roads and no one will work at the municipality until the mayor addresses us. We want clarity on the identity of the 20 people appointed to work on the EPWP project. The mayor came to merely inform us about the programme. Now we are told that 20 people, 10 from Phelindaba and 10 from Rietvale, will be working on the project. We do not know how these people were appointed or even who they are. People are appointed secretly by

those who claim they are leaders," they said.

A community representative, Donald Hamnca, accused the ANC of neglecting the community.

"The ANC is the leading party in this area yet they are divided when it comes to running Ritchie. This division has caused the community to suffer. There is no consensus between the two groups, as each only wants what is best for themselves and not the community. "What is happening is really unfair ... the ANC came to lobby community members to vote them into power and yet they have now forgotten about the needs of those who put them in those positions," said Hamnca.

A community member, Llewellyn Volkwyn, said that basic services were only a dream.

"This area has many challenges

such as clean drinking water, refuse removal and even the selling of graves at the cemetery. We have to drink dirty water. There is no progress in Ritchie. Residents have to pay more than R100 to buy a grave for their loved ones, which is much higher than neighbouring towns. Ritchie has been neglected when it comes to service delivery," said Volkwyn.

The community members said that they would continue with their protest action unless Matika addressed them today.

The Sol Plaatje Municipality meanwhile condemned the actions of the community members involved in the protest.

Municipal spokesperson, Sello Matsie, acknowledged that unemployment is a challenge but added that the municipality has to afford employment to those who

qualify for posts.

"The matter of appointments for projects is purely a human resource matter. We are mindful that there are millions of South Africans who are unemployed and when there is an opportunity for employment the municipality tries to ensure that everyone is given a chance. We cannot allow a situation where those who are not getting the opportunity are threatening violence," said Matsie.

"The municipality tries to spread the criteria when the opportunity for employment comes. Nepotism and favouritism are not allowed and such matters should be left with the administration. The municipality can unfortunately not provide employment to everyone however. We condemn any act of vandalism due to unhappiness because of this."

