

● **Planning started as Bethelsdorp precinct swamped**

Chatty to get cop shop at last

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Planning has begun for a second police station to be built in the Bethelsdorp policing precinct that will specifically address known crime hotspots.

The police station – for which land has already been secured – is earmarked for construction in the Booysen Park and Chatty area which has been plagued by a high crime rate, including ongoing gang turf wars, for years.

Crime statistics from April 2016 to March 2017 rank the Bethelsdorp police precinct as one of the areas with the highest murder rates in the Bay.

During that period, 117 murders were reported, followed by 114 reported rape cases and 26 hijackings.

News of the new police station – revealed by safety and liaison MEC Weziwe Tikana in a written response to the DA's Bobby Stevenson – comes only months after R53m was ploughed into the revamp of the Bethelsdorp police station.

Tikana said the municipality had donated the land.

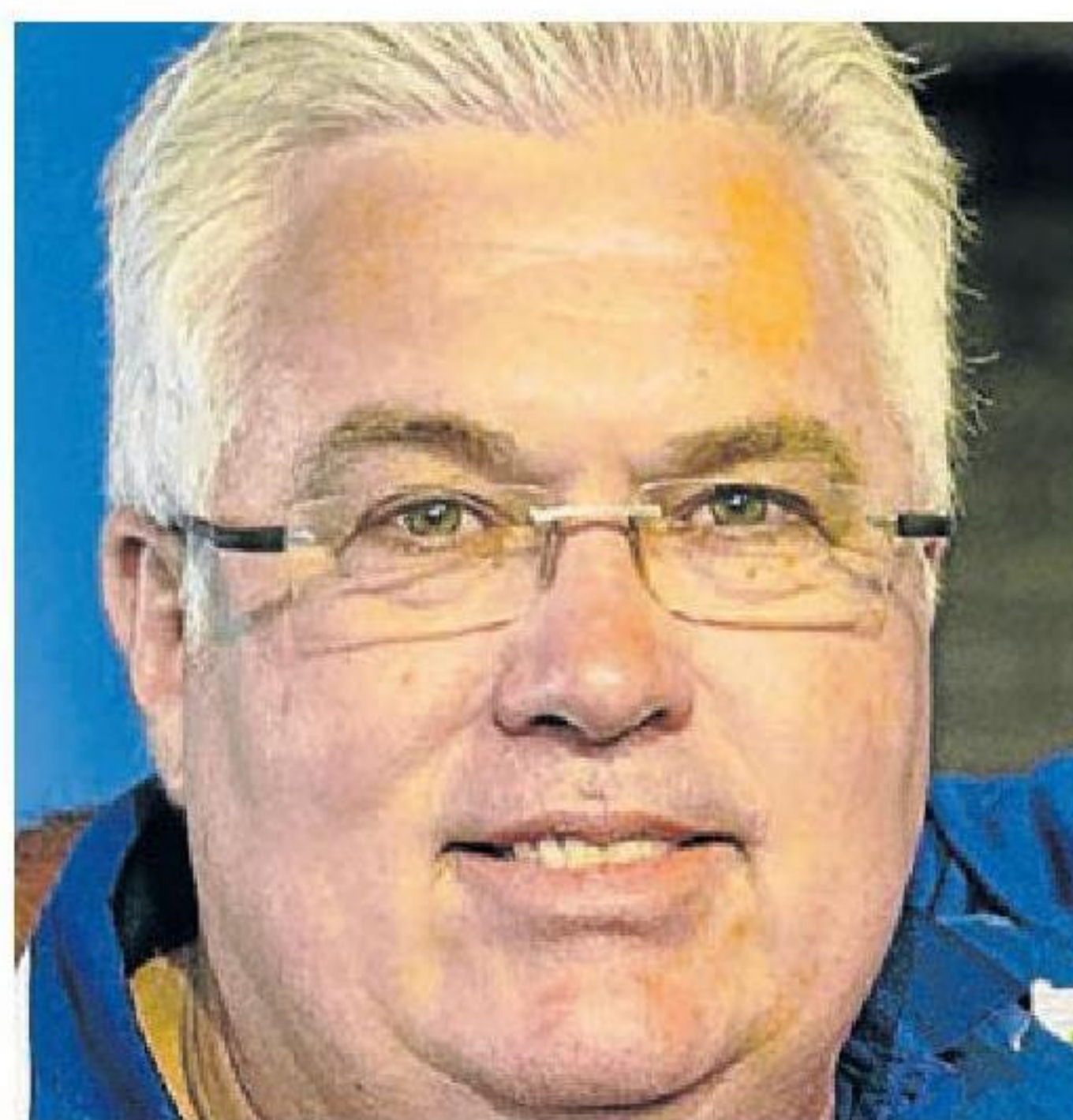
"A town planner, Urban Dynamics, was appointed.

"This company identified the most suitable portion of land and all aspects of site clearances were done."

Tikana said the report compiled by Urban Dynamics had already been handed over to the SAPS's supply chain man-



WEZIWE TIKANA



BOBBY STEVENSON

agement department.

"The construction of the new police station is a very high priority for the SAPS."

Tikana said it would be built pending the availability of funds but the timeframe was subject to funding which was controlled by national police.

Stevenson said the police should show the people of Bethelsdorp that an additional police station in the area is truly a priority.

"There needs to be a greater sense of urgency and progress in this matter."

He said the urgency was based on the growing population in the area.

"One cannot construct thousands of houses in the Chatty area without the establishment of clinics, community facilities, schools and an additional police station.

"It is a known fact that the Bethelsdorp policing area is battling with a disproportionately high crime rate, recording the highest number of calls to 10111 for a policing precinct across the province," he said.

"Having additional policing resources is critical in this area, not only to improve access for communities but also to ensure that the streets are safe for children to play in and where women can walk without fear.

"The war on crime in the northern areas needs to be won, and this new police station is a key weapon in the arsenal required to make this happen."

Urban Dynamics planner Rowan van Gend declined to comment, saying a confidentiality agreement had been signed with the police.

In the recent revamp of the existing station, funded by the department of public works, the community service centre, detective offices and holding cells were upgraded.

The police station was also bumped up from a colonel station to a brigadier station, meaning additional resources were allocated to the area.