

DA slams mayor's millions

Paddy Harper

eThekweni mayor Zandile Gumede has come under fire over her almost R100-million programme for mayoral events.

The Democratic Alliance believes that the programme is aimed at creating “easy tenders for pals” to boost Gumede’s support in the ANC in the city.

They are also concerned that the bulk of the three-year budget has been allocated for 2018-2019, suggesting it may be also diverted to fund Gumede’s campaign to be re-elected as chairperson of the ANC’s eThekweni region at its conference, which will be held after the 2019 national and provincial elections.

The programme and adjustments to the budget came before the eThekweni council last week and were approved. Opposition parties voted against it.

The 29 listed items include R8 003 215 for “civic functions”, R5 450 000 for a “mayoral imbizo” and R1556 000 for a “mayoral lekgotla” in the 2018-2019 financial year, with lesser amounts budgeted for each in the next two years.

Others are R1500 000 a year for a

“we are responsible young people campaign”, and R300 000 a year for “visit to woman [sic] in prison”. A “mayoral cup” will cost ratepayers R2.4-million over three years and three “youth imbizos” will require a total of R3.5-million.

These amounts total R97777864, an amount described by DA eThekweni caucus chairperson Nicole Graham as “ridiculous”. She said they had queried the events and amounts at executive committee level but had not received answers.

Graham said the DA had voted against the programme because “the events are arbitrarily named and do not include cost breakdowns, smacking of easy tenders for pals”.

“While ordinary residents suffer from increasingly high costs of living and poor service delivery, their

“This is a blatant attempt to control resources she can use for patronage to extend to her allies”

mayor is intent on spending tens of millions to boost her personal profile,” Graham said.

She said many of the events targeted the youth or military veterans and were a last-ditch attempt by Gumede to revive her support from the ANC Youth League and the Umkhonto weSizwe Military Veterans’ Association, neither of which were backing her plans for a second term as eThekweni ANC chairperson and mayor.

Graham also questioned the spending of an unbudgeted R14-million by the mayor’s office for budget hearings and the moving of R92-million into the mayor’s parlour for expanded public works project programmes in the adjustment budget that was presented to council last week.

“She has moved all of this to the mayor’s parlour where she has direct control over it. This is a blatant attempt to control resources she can use for patronage to extend to her allies,” Graham said.

Gumede’s former ally and current eThekweni ANC secretary, Bheki Ntuli, is challenging Gumede for the position of ANC chairperson.

The mayor has also fallen out with



Money-minded: eThekweni Mayor Zandile Gumede wants R100-million for her parlour. Photo: Gallo Images/Jackie Clausen/The Times

the Delangokubona SA Business Forum, which backed her bid for the position.

And she faces a backlash for backing the unsuccessful “status quo” slate at the recent ANC KwaZulu-Natal provincial conference, which has affected her relationship with the youth league and the military veterans.

Gumede’s spokesperson, Mthunzi Gumede, said there was nothing sinister or controversial about the programme.

“These are annual office programmes that are done by the office of the mayor, which are targeting

youth, women, vulnerable members of the community, military veterans and people with disabilities,” he said.

“The allegations by the opposition are baseless. They want to keep the municipal leadership aloof and away from the people.”

He defended the spending on the public works programme, saying it was aimed at providing jobs and income to poor households.

“Anyone who opposes such a programme is against progress and employment of people. The mayor is committed to employment of our people,” he said.