

COMMENT

Step up and end this folly

THERE was always some doubt whether yesterday's Sol Plaatje City Council meeting would actually take place.

Despite being probably one of the most important meetings in a good couple of years, it seems our city fathers have been frightened off by the very people they are supposed to represent, the residents of Kimberley.

Initially councillors were told to enter the chambers via a side door "for security purposes".

It didn't take long before another message was sent out: the meeting had been postponed until further notice. The reason given was the

safety risk posed by a group of around 100 disgruntled Expanded Public Works Programme workers, who marched to the civic centre. Their mission was an attempt to seek permanent employment and was never aimed at disrupting the council meeting.

The question is, what exactly are the councillors, and specifically the acting Speaker, who called off the meeting, scared of?

Is it really their safety? If so, what is the purpose of the security guards that residents are paying millions of rand for? Or are they scared that they might not get the necessary majority to vote in Patrick Mabilo, who has been promised the post of executive mayor and in anticipation gave up his position in the legislature to Kimberley's ousted mayor, Mangaliso Matika? Or is it the promised Section 106 report and what it says?

Kimberley has been without a mayor for several weeks already. In fact, the old mayor has already found himself a new job.

Council sub-committees, chaired by members of the mayoral committee, have not sat.

Neither has the council itself been able to meet. Development and projects are hanging in limbo in a city that desperately needs investment.

In fact, the city doesn't even have a municipal manager or a chief financial officer, as the period for the appointments of the acting MM and CFO has expired. The business of the day for yesterday's meeting – besides electing a mayor and discussing the Section 106 report – would have been the extension of this acting period for these two crucial officials.

The meeting would also have discussed the "implications of a lack of political oversight".

Our city needs a mayor, we need a municipal manager and a chief executive officer. Without them, the city cannot legally function.

Do we really need a council of 65 politicians who haven't met for months?

Someone needs to step up and end this childish folly. Will it be the MEC for Local Government, Bentley Vass, or will it be the people of Kimberley who say "so much and no further" and start withholding payments to the municipality?