

NW SCOPA points finger at MEC, social development department

MAHIKENG MAIL – MAHIKENG: At the time of going to press yesterday afternoon, North West Provincial Legislature's Standing Committee on Provincial Public Accounts (Scopa) had instructed the Department of Social Development led by MEC Hoffman Galeng to prepare a comprehensive report which explains security arrangements and payments to the MEC's private home.

This follows a meeting with the department where it failed to present a detailed report on the exact amount that was spent for the security upgrades and who was responsible for such arrangements.

The Acting Head of Department, Poppy Moremi admitted before the Committee that the department ignored recommendations made by the South African Police Services after an assessment was conducted at the MEC's private residence as per Ministerial Handbook. "After receiving recommendations from SAPS, we engaged the Department of Public Works and Roads to provide cost specifications for security improvements and it was estimated at R128 398 but they were never implemented," said Moremi.

She said instead of implementing those recommendations, the department entered into a service level agreement with the NWDC for provision of security service with effect from 1 July 2017 and was terminated in July 2018 due to irregularities. "We then internally sourced quotations for the month of August/September 2018 amounting to R100, 723," she said.

SCOPA Chairperson, Mahlakeng Mahlakeng said the Committee was disappointed that although the department has admitted that money was spent for physical security at the MEC's private home, there were disagreements among the officials on who ignored the recommendations of SAPS and Public Works department and later authorised payments for separate security arrangements and its exact term of contract.

"We also hoped that the meeting was going to be simple and that information was going to come forward to refute media reports on security arrangement but no one within the department wants to tell the truth. There are 4 versions of the story on the number of months that the security company spent at the MEC'S private home and why there were deviations from recommendations of the two state entities," said Mahlakeng.

He also said the Committee had to send back the department to produce documents as the official statement issued by the Communications unit of the department admitted that over R600 000 was spent for security arrangements for 12 months as stipulated on media reports. "Some people in the very same meeting are denying this amount and the media statement issued. No one is able to take responsibility on the matter," Mahlakeng added.

"We just want to understand whether MEC was aware of these security arrangements happening at his house and if so, whoever responsible must pay back the money," he said.

MEC Hoffman Galeng said the department will ensure that the comprehensive report on the security arrangements at his private home is submitted on time.

Mahlakeng said the report must be submitted before the Standing Committee on Tuesday, October 23.