

Cogta MEC warns unions they don't control council

Xasa reminds alliance partner Samwu that ANC is still top dog

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Eastern Cape co-operative governance and traditional affairs MEC Fikile Xasa has told striking KSD employees that the ANC controls the Mthatha-based council and that workers will not be allowed to hold residents to ransom.

"Know your position. We are not led by Samwu," he said. "It is the ANC that is in charge."

The MEC was addressing about 400 KSD staff members affiliated to the SA Municipal Workers' Union and Independent Municipal and Allied Trade Union (Imatu) in front of the Munitata building, which is the headquarters of the troubled local authority, on Wednesday morning.

The Daily Dispatch has reported that members of the two labour unions downed tools last week, demanding the removal of mayor Dumani Zozo and acting municipal manager Mbulelo Sigaba.

They also want the immediate reinstatement of allowances that were abruptly stopped by the municipality last year.

Another demand is for about 200 Expanded Public Works Programme and casual workers to be absorbed into KSD's permanent workforce.

Several streets in Mthatha have resembled a dumpsite since last week, when the protesters went on a rampage and threw rubbish onto them.

But an unimpressed Xasa told the protesters that South Africa was a country governed by laws.

"You can't treat the people of Mthatha this way. This has to come a stop. This situation [filthy streets] right here gives the impression that there is anarchy in Mthatha."

Xasa said he had already re-



HELMSMAN: Cogta MEC Fikile Xasa took a firm line with protesting KSD staff in Mthatha on Wednesday. Picture: SUPPLIED

ceived a preliminary report from a team of officials sent by his office to investigate several issues in KSD, including the alleged misappropriation of millions of rands in outstanding task grade payouts owed to

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municipal employees.

Xasa said the investigation had hit a snag due directly to the protest and urged KSD employees to allow for it to be finalised.

He also warned that if the

current situation persisted, it could open the municipality to lawsuits.

"People of Mthatha can take us to court as the filth affects them," he warned while adding that the municipality could be brought to its knees as residents might stop paying for services.

"This is not an ideal image to portray to the country."

On the issues raised by the workers, he assured them that the new municipal manager appointed by council, Ngamela Pakade, would assume his duties on Friday while telling the protesting workers that it had been agreed that KSD would convene a special council meeting on February 5 where more information would be provided on the issue relating to the absorption of casual workers.

On Zozo's removal, Xasa said the ANC would have to decide

whether to recall him or not.

"I have raised the issue and they [ANC] told me there are processes being followed in handling the matter," he said.

But when contacted about this on Wednesday afternoon,

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ANC provincial secretary Lulama Ngcukayithobi said the removal of a mayor affected a large number of people and not just municipal workers.

Therefore a consultative process was required but at the

moment, all they heard were just one third of the municipality's total workforce.

"Samwu is a divided house. We told them to try and get their house in order so that they can speak with a unified voice. They must go back to work. The future of the mayor should be left to the ANC."

Samwu and Imatu leaders in KSD, Lwazi Madyibi and Anam Mkile, after meeting with their members following Xasa's address, told the Daily Dispatch they had agreed to suspend the strike to allow for the processes to unfold. But they warned that they would not hesitate to go back to the streets if they discovered that Zozo was back in the office.

KSD municipal spokesperson Sonwabo Mampoza said cleaning the town was their number one priority.