

Too much spent on fuel

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The expenditure on fuel was a major issue raised in an Enoch Mgijima Local Municipality special council meeting.

The meeting was held to present the draft annual report for the 2017-18 year, including the mayor's quarterly budget report for the second quarter ending December 2018 and mid-year budget assessment as at the end of December 2017.

Some councillors opposed the proceedings of the meeting, claiming it was illegal and the reports had not been tabled in the finance committee and requested the meeting to be called off. Mayor Sisisi Tolashe appealed to them to proceed with the agenda. Members of the EFF did not stay.

Fuel expenditure was R62,640.15 in October 2018, R202,410.37 in November and R620,989.61 in December. This despite the fact that municipal offices were closed from December 14 and waste vehicles were not operating.

According to the mayor's quarterly budget report, there has been an under collection of revenue of R74m.

Expenditure on overtime was R321,364.17 in October; R364,963.97 for November and R335,826.04 in December. The council had resolved last year that staff were required to take hours off in lieu of payment.

The report tabled amounts still owed by government departments in December 2018 and stated "from November, there was a huge movement from the previous month due to more than 90 days ratepayers' debts that were handed over to Revco and that had been reversed back to their original accounts".

The departments include education, health, national and provincial public works, agriculture, social development, housing, Chris Hani District Municipality and the East Cape Development Corporation.

The report also gave a summary of staff and councillors who were owing the

municipality. Staff accounts in October were R88,293.96, R368,631.76 in November and R333,489.69 for December. Councillors owed R21,123.37 in October, R41,025.51 in November and R56,440.44 in December.

The report stated, "The Municipal Systems Act Code of Conduct prohibits councillors and officials to owe rates and services for more than three months" and the revenue section was experiencing challenges to identify the correct addresses and accounts of councillors.

DA councillor Chris de Wet said, "We are bankrupt. We know the main concern is revenue collection and we have to question the leadership and the people in those departments. Our expenses are way too high, especially relating to staff, accommodation etc."

Chief operating officer Gcobani Mashiya acknowledged, "I must indicate there is some money owed by departments and there are measures in place to collect this. We issued letters of demand whereby they were given seven days to pay. We are currently in the process of disconnecting the government departments for money that is owed. We have dispatched a team for this."

Newly appointed and uncontested council speaker Brenda van Heerden thanked the council for affording her the opportunity to take over after it had received the resignation of councillor Nkululeko Ngcefe, who had served for a week as speaker.

"I have listened to the councillors when nominations were done. I do not take this for granted because I have made a declaration to serve the people of Enoch Mgijima and I will not be able to do that as an individual, but only with the support of the entire council and the community," said Van Heerden

Sonwabile Nomandela was introduced as the acting municipal manager and will serve in the position until April 10 2019.

Tolashe indicated the administrator would present his report by the end of February.