



■ Roger Damon, Magadien Wentzel and Junaid Jansen say Manenberg's R4 million Elsjeskraal Park is always locked.

'Give us the responsibility to look after this park'

From page 1

Mr Wentzel suggested the City hire someone from the neighbourhood to lock and unlock the park.

He offered to do the work himself, voluntarily for three months, with help from his neighbours, Roger Damon and Junaid Jansen.

"Give us the responsibility to look after this park. It will be a cleaner and safer area, and our children will not be loitering on street corners," Mr Damon said.

Mr Wentzel said he would keep illegal activities out of the park.

"We are here for the children, not for the money. Let us beautify our place and educate people to take responsibility for our community," Mr Wentzel said.

But Zahid Badroodien, mayoral committee member for community services and health, said the park was open for all to use.

His department was recruiting Expand Public Works Programme staff to create a "dedicated presence" in the park, he said. Until then, a department employee had been posted there from Monday to Friday until 3pm.

"If there are any people still using the park at 3pm, staff at the community centre have been asked to assist in locking the park at 4.45pm."

The keys were left with the ward councillor over weekends, Dr Badroodien said.

The park was only locked at night

for security reasons.

"There have been incidents of vandalism where the drain cover was removed, holes were made in the fence and homeless people climb under the fence at night to use the park as a place to sleep."

Dr Badroodien said there were growing concerns that gangs had tried to claim the space as their territory.

Anyone interested in caring for the park should register on the sub-council's EPWP database.

Mr Wentzel also complained that five-a-side soccer on a tar pitch and loud music from 2.30pm to 4pm appeared to be the only activities available for children at the nearby community centre.

"Why not offer life skills at community centres? There is not much keeping our children busy, and then we want to ask why the crime rate is so high," Mr Wentzel said.

Dr Badroodien said seniors' clubs and youth after-school programmes were held at the community centre.

"Open play is allowed outside in the parking area, and sometimes the youth play soccer. The community centre doesn't have a sound system, therefore it is unlikely that loud music is coming from the centre.

"The department is always looking to partner with organisations offering community programmes. Life skills could be of great benefit, particularly in an area affected by gang violence," Dr Badroodien said.