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Court to be upgraded

TWELVE years after much-needed upgrades were first approved, the Humansdorp Magistrate's Court is set to receive a facelift in the near future - making it safer and more user-friendly.

The multi-million Rand project, to be implemented over a period of 30 months, is expected to start in the second half of this year and reach completion by the end of 2021.

The Department of Justice and Constitutional Development is set to confirm availability of funding for the project by the end of May, while the Department of Public Works (DPW) need to finalise the necessary design and process the approval of the sketch plan.

Malcolm Figg, Tsitsi-Kouga Constituency Leader, says, "The building is in a total state of disrepair and is inadequate - putting the safety of employees and members of the community at risk.

"Major concerns include the lack of security measures, the presence of dangerous weapons on site and easy access to the magistrate chambers.

"Incidents include two men armed with knives entering the court building, as well as the discovery of a concealed panga-type weapon in the only mail toilets opposite the chief magistrate's chambers.

"No arrests were made by either the security guards or local police."

He continues that although separate from the main court rooms, there is no safe and private area designated for children who need to testify. The specific room used, is shared with the senior pro-secutor when interviews need to be done.

"The office of the family planning officer can only accommodate three people at a time - which is not an ideal situation.

"This is not an acceptable professional environment where the lives of magistrates, public prosecutors and court personnel are endangered on a daily basis."