

■ IMPUNITY

City fails to punish corrupt officials

'Business as usual' for accused employees

CHRIS NDALISO

chris.ndaliso@inl.co.za

THE eThekweni municipality is silent over hundreds of disciplinary cases where staff stand accused of crime including fraud and corruption dating back to 2010.

An audit report tabled at a recent executive committee meeting revealed that several employees arrested on allegations of fraud and corruption were still employed by the city.

A city employee close to the investigations, but who is not allowed to speak to the media, said some of the cases dated back to 2010.

"The problem is that no action has been taken against some of the implicated individuals, hence the number of existing cases. Many people were arrested in the Safer Cities programme, the Mayor's Parlour and Expanded Public Works Programme," said the employee.

The report revealed that several employees had been arrested on allegations of fraud and corruption.

"The employees in question are still involved with their day-to-day duties. No interventions have been made by the management. The management did not provide the audit committee with the risk mitigation controls for the following risks: victimisation of witnesses who are the subordinates of some of the implicated employees; intimidation and threats on potential witnesses; (and) tampering with essential evidence like audit trails and physical supporting documents," reads the report.

City spokesperson Msawakhe Mayisela said the city was aware of the audit report. "The city is very proud of the giant leap forward it has taken in this regard because the recommendations of the CIU (City Integrity and Investigations Unit) are at all times taken

seriously. Due processes in relation to the Labour Relations Act are applied to all disciplinary matters," he said.

Acting mayor Fawzia Peer said it was the first time she had heard the contents of the report and admitted that no action was taken against those implicated.

"I will ensure that quick action is taken against all those implicated in wrongdoing in the city. I will ensure that the recommendations of the City Integrity and Investigations Unit are implemented," Peer said.

The SA Municipal Workers' Union and Independent Municipal and Allied Trade Union said they were unaware of the cases in question.

"It seems the city is suppressing these investigations simply because they are conducted internally. Had it been the Hawks or another law enforcement agency, there would have been transparency in the manner in which the cases are handled. I'll follow up on these allegations," Samwu provincial secretary Jaycee Ncanana said.

Imatu provincial spokesperson Cathi Botes said they would need to conduct their own investigation.

The Organisation Undoing Tax Abuse (Outa) said the report was a clear indication that the city has serious deficiencies surrounding consequence management.

eThekweni branch manager Jonathan Erasmus said: "The message currently being portrayed by the city is that it is soft on fraud and corruption."

DA caucus leader Nicole Graham said: "People see wrongdoing going on without consequence. That's what has been happening in eThekweni and it has become the culture of the organisation."

The IFP's Mdu Nkosi said politically connected officials were immune to the rules of the city. "Many employees are untouchable," he said.