

■ MUNICIPALITIES

Cogta playing 'watchdog' role

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DEPUTY Minister for Co-operative Governance and Traditional Affairs (Cogta) Parks Tau yesterday said his department was playing an oversight role with municipalities to ensure they took appropriate steps to recruit senior managers who met the requirements.

"All officials found to be corrupt must be held to account," Tau said.

He made the comment when responding to oral questions in the National Council of Provinces.

Tau said in March, his department compiled a database of 290 municipal officials who were dismissed on charges of financial misconduct, fraud and corruption.

"We will be issuing a circular to indicate how the database should be implemented and that should indicate how such data should be accessible to municipalities," Tau said.

He also said the Municipal Finance Management Act made it an offence for officials who did not take reasonable steps to implement supply-chain management policy and did not prevent unauthorised, irregular, fruitless



Parks Tau

and wasteful expenditure.

This comes against the backdrop of moves to bar officials dismissed for serious financial misconduct from being employed in councils.

He told MPs his department was making progress to address concerns raised by traditional leaders regarding their tools of trade.

He said his department had undertaken a process to develop a framework on the allocation of resources for traditional leaders, which was approved by the forum of the Cogta minister and MECs. This was developed because of provinces providing tools of trade at

varying levels that led to inconsistencies.

"To address the inconsistencies, the department is reviewing the 2013 framework and has developed a draft handbook for traditional leaders."

According to Tau, the handbook was being developed in consultation with the Commission on Remuneration of Public Office Bearers. The handbook was expected to be finalised before the end of March next year.

Tau said they hoped the handbook would facilitate equity in the provision of the tools traditional leaders needed and would also include mechanisms for accountability.

Early this week revelations emerged that national and provincial governments owed municipalities up to R5.7 billion for rates and other services.

It was highlighted that the debt by national departments stands at R3.1bn, while all nine provincial governments owed their respective municipalities a total of R2.6bn.

Public Works and Infrastructure Minister Patricia de Lille said her department was working on a project to settle all the government debt owed to municipalities.