

GLOVES OFF OVER WATER

Nkhensani Nkhwashu

The Democratic Alliance (DA) councillor in the Mopani District Municipality, Marie Helm, issued a statement on Monday, July 12 accusing the Maruleng Local Municipality (MLM) of failing to pay for water since 2012.

Helm said the DA in Limpopo has written to the auditor-general (AG) to investigate what happened to the rates paid for water to MLM since 2012.

“This follows after written responses by the minister of Public Works and Infrastructure, Patricia de Lille, to DA parliamentary questions, which revealed that MLM refused to pay for the water use of Hoedspruit and surrounding estates because MLM alleged that the quality of the water was impacted by the floods in 2012,” she said.

According to Helm, that means that since 2012 residents dutifully paid for water every month while the MLM, like so many failed ANC municipalities, are using the rates for their own possibly corrupt activities.

She said the Department of Public Works has been paying for the water, and from July 2020 the water was paid by the Department of Defence. “In essence, taxpayers are paying twice for the same water.

Firstly, through the national departments for the water provided to Hoedspruit and then when the MLM charges and collects rates for the same water,” she said.

Helm said: “In addition, we will request the AG to investigate possible corrupt activities, unauthorised expenditure, irregular expenditure and/or fruitless and wasteful expenditure and we call that consequence management must follow should there be evidence of such.”

She said the DA believes that it is of the utmost importance that residents know what MLM has done with the rates levied and collected for water use from 2012.

The municipal manager, Thabo Magabane, said the municipality has noted the public article by the DA and how it paints the municipality as being prone to corruption and mismanagement of funds.

“We herewith record that it is sheer political point-scoring and sensation seeking by the DA,” said Magabane.

He said MLM is not a water authority but a water service provider and they are the agent of the Mopani District Municipality.

“All activities in the municipality are informed by the powers and functions and as a councillor, the author should know better. The service level agreement that is in force states that we collect money for water and pay it over to the district. Currently, we are not doing so due to debt management issues between our local municipality and the district municipality.

“The municipality had previously had an obligation to pay for water but since the flood incident, the district undertook to pay over the water expenses,” he said.

Magabane said they are currently in the process of managing the debt and the district is awaiting legal documents for them to meet the financial obligation

“For several years the municipality has been footing the bill for the water expenses starting with fuel, stock and human capital and as such misuse and corruption do not arise.

“The collected funds for water usage do not break even with the expenditure but in the quest for service delivery the municipality soldier on,” he said.