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Rundown New Brighton police station to be relocated

● Replacement building to be constructed after AG's report flags deplorable condition of existing facility

Brandon Nel

The New Brighton police station is in such a deplorable state a decision has been made to move the entire facility to a new building.

This follows the release of the auditor-general's 2022/2023 general report on national and provincial departments, which flagged the poor condition of the police station, saying it resulted from a lack of routine maintenance.

Tabled in parliament earlier this week, the report said the situation had reached a point where, due to structural damage to the walls of the detention area and a drain blockage, the station had to temporarily move detainees to holding cells at other police stations in the city.

An insider who works at the station said the findings did not come as a surprise, considering how old the drain system was.

"Drains are a problem and they affect the entire detention facility."

"There's a pungent smell, it's terrible, and an old system," he said.

"The blockage presents a health risk to us police officers."

The AG said based on a condition assessment conducted in



CRUMBLING AWAY: The New Brighton police station is in extremely poor condition, according to an auditor-general report Photograph: GOOGLE MAPS

October last year, neglect had left the police station in a poor condition, with some walls needing to be demolished and rebuilt.

"A year later, in September 2023, no repairs had been done."

"The structural damage to the cell walls and the drain blockage left the holding cells unusable, with the police station having to use the holding cells of other police stations instead."

Police spokesperson Colonel Priscilla Naidu said the custodianship of the building lay with the department of public works and infrastructure.

Naidu said she had been informed that public works offi-

cial had inspected the building some time ago.

Upon reviewing the findings, the department said due to the deteriorating condition of the building, it was necessary to construct a new one.

Public works spokesperson Lennox Mabaso said: "As the first step, the department has purchased a piece of land next to the current police station and is engaging with [the] client about building a new police station on the land the department has already purchased."

The New Brighton magistrate's court is situated on one side of the police station, while on the other side there is an

open field that stretches towards Struanway.

It was still unclear by the time of publication whether the existing police station building would be demolished.

"It's a crying shame," policing expert Patricia Mashale said of its condition.

"Repeatedly, numerous police personnel at this station have expressed their concerns over the shabby condition of the station, which not only affects their ability to carry out their duties effectively, but also poses significant health risks."

"The very environment meant to support their work has become a source of imped-

iment, making their tasks more arduous than necessary.

"It is not merely an inconvenience; it is a pressing issue that demands urgent attention."

"The distressing state of the police station is further underscored by the troubling fact that an assessment conducted in 2022 already highlighted the station's shocking state."

"It's disheartening to acknowledge that a year later, despite the clear identification of issues, no substantial action has been taken to rectify the deteriorating conditions."

Anti-crime lobby group Action Society's Ian Cameron said it was not only a matter of neglect, but a systemic failure.

"The essence of maintaining a police station goes beyond the bricks and mortar; it speaks to the commitment to public safety and the wellbeing of those entrusted with upholding the law," he said.

"When a building that plays such a pivotal role in the safety and security of a neighbourhood is allowed to deteriorate, accountability becomes paramount."

"Those responsible for the upkeep of the New Brighton police station must face scrutiny."

"The question arises — how did a facility tasked with such a vital role in the community

reach such a deplorable state?" Sources said after the release of the report, discussions ensued regarding the indefinite closure of the cells.

The New Brighton police station has had its share of controversy of late.

A 57-year-old police officer stationed there was charged with corruption in November last year after he allegedly approached a detective and offered him money in exchange for a murder docket.

Last year, the former station commander appeared in court in connection with charges of fraud and corruption arising from the procurement of furniture for the police station.

In March, a parliamentary committee visited the New Brighton police station and expressed concern about the large caseload its detectives were expected to handle.

"The committee considers an average of 44 cases per detective as unsustainable and will result in poor investigations and low conviction rates," it said in a statement.

"The committee is aware of the SA Police Service's financial constraints, but has emphasised the need for detectives to be capacitated, along with visible policing to prevent crime, in the first instance, and the investigation of cases."