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# Unit to push back against threats

**A**s part of a City of Cape Town Facility Protection initiative, 81 law enforcement facility protection officers (FPOs), supported by 200 facility protection monitors (FPMs), will be deployed to crime hotspots across the metro to help safeguard City facilities and protect frontline staff delivering services in communities.

Mayor Geordin Hill-Lewis announced the specialised unit at a launch event held in Leonsdale, Elsies River, on Tuesday 30 May.

Among the areas of deployment are Beacon Valley, Tafelsig, Uitsig, Bonteheuwel, Manenberg, Hanover Park, Imizamo Yethu, Lavender Hill, Retreat, Seawinds, Delft, Delft South, Eerste River, Brown's Farm, Harare, Kuyasa, Langa, Leonsdale, Masiphumelele, Netreg, Nyanga, Philippi East, Site C, Sir Lowry's Pass Village and Wesbank.

Speaking at the launch, Hill-Lewis said that with this initiative, they were pushing back against criminal threats to City staff and public facilities. The programme has a budget of R112 million over three years, an investment the City hopes to recoup in reduced vandalism and theft of critical infrastructure.

"We have established a list of areas and facilities most under threat, to serve as a starting point."

In a media statement released last week, the City said the launch of the unit comes in the wake of rising theft and vandalism of

**"Areas and facilities most under threat."**

- Geordin Hill-Lewis

infrastructure, which, the City said, had doubled to almost R60 million in 2022-'23 "driven by higher stages of Eskom blackouts".

City staff and contractors were also facing regular extortion threats and demands for "protection fees" from local syndicates, the City stated.

FPOs will work closely with the City law enforcement's rapid response unit, Metro Police, Traffic Services, South African Police Services (Saps) and communities. Their duties will include inspecting City facilities and escorting staff requiring protection in the field, while also playing a general crime prevention role.

The FPMs will be deployed to specific facilities to support the officers and to improve overall staff safety and security.

Monitors are employed via the City's Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP) and recruited from within the communities they will be deployed.

JP Smith, the City's Mayo member for safety and security, also attended the launch. He said a good working relationship with stakeholders, especially in communities, was critical to the success of any project.

"That is why our FPOs will be expected to liaise regularly with



The City of Cape Town's facility protection initiative was launched in Leonsdale, Elsies River, on Tuesday 30 May. PHOTO: SUPPLIED

local community structures. We have recruited monitors familiar with their specific neighbourhoods, with insights particular to their deployment area gained from participating in a registered neighbourhood watch or the previous Walking Bus Programme,"

said Smith.

The City calls on the public to make use of the toll-free tip-off line and claim rewards of up to R5 000 for information leading to arrests of anyone targeting City staff with extortion or damaging facilities.

The City says it can take several

weeks or months after the arrest or confiscation is made for the reward to be paid out, "once all relevant administrative processes have been completed". The system is not open to people under the age of 18.

Tip-offs can be anonymous. **▶▶ Call 0800 1100 77.**