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SAMWU march against unsafe, exploitative working conditions

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THE South African Municipal Workers Union (SAMWU) in the King Sabata Dalindyebo (KSD) Local Municipality has threatened a full-blown strike if municipal bosses fail to speedily address their grievances.

The warning was issued during a SAMWU march to KSD and ANC regional offices, on June 14, where the union raised several grievances including an unsafe working environment, end to outsourcing and favouritism, and end to exploitation of Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP) participants and students. The union is further demanding that workers be given the R15 000 monthly locomotion allowance, which it says is currently enjoyed by senior managers.

“As KSD employees we are currently subjected to unsafe working conditions where workers must work in their civilian clothes, due to a lack of protective clothing. The Munitata building [municipal headquarters] is also a health risk as it leaks when it is raining, and there are no emergency exit points in the event of an emergency,” said SAMWU KSD chairperson Lwazi Madyibi.

Madyibi said EPWP workers were currently subjected to perpetual exploitation and do not serve their intended purpose.

“The idea behind the EPWP was for those who participate to be given skills so they can sustain themselves. If you scrutinise the programme within the municipality, you

will find that the municipality does not even provide uniforms for people partaking in the programme, let alone giving them skills. We view this as using people as cheap labour and we are calling for an end to that,” Madyibi added.

The union also bemoaned the outsourcing of services, such as maintenance of electricity infrastructure and access control, saying this was taking benefits away from municipal employees.

“The municipality unilaterally decided to take services that were done in-house and outsource them to external service providers which could have created opportunities for employees to be promoted to render these services. We are saying the municipality must immediately terminate the relationship with external service providers and hire people to do them,” said Madyibi.

KSD municipal manager, Ngamela Pakade, who accepted the union’s petition on behalf of the municipality, said that the municipal administration and council said that the grievances contained in the petition would be gradually attended to, warning that they could not be addressed overnight as the municipality has a limited budget.

The union also marched to ANC OR Tambo regional offices, where they sought the party’s intervention in addressing their grievances, but could not hand over their petition as party bosses were attending a by-election in Port St Johns.

Madyibi said that they would deliver the petition to the ANC at a later stage.

