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**RESOURCE RAMMED:** Newly constructed fence in Buffalo Flats, paid for from the ward 19 budget last year, was damaged last week because of vandalism. **Picture:** TAMMY FRAY

# Ward-based funding reinstated across BCM

*Projects can finally be implemented*

TAMMY FRAY

**O**n April 3, BCM reinstated the ward-based funding for all 50 wards in the metro, enabling ward councillors to get back to implementing initiatives to address challenges in their respective wards.

Each ward receives R1m, in line with the Municipal Finance Act, to enable them to carry out projects and programmes that have medium to long-term benefit for their communities. This funding was put on hold last year, as the municipal budget haemorrhaged under continuous repairs and replacements of vandalised and stolen infrastructure.

Following the mid-year budget adjustment in February, the municipality released the hold on the funds.

BCM spokesperson Samkelo Ngwenya said: "The ward councillors, together with the community and all other interested ward stakeholders, share the responsibility and accountability of decisions taken on how to spend the ward allocation budget. This is achieved through a ward general meeting."

DA councillor Tessa Botha said preferably, ward-based funding should not go towards only providing service delivery and employment, and that issues relating to potholes and other infrastructure should be voiced by residents at the IDP and budget roadshows to be held by the mayor in East London on April 21.

Ward 15 councillor Nwabisa Mcwabeni said his office would be using the funding to provide relief for shack fire victims in Nompulelo, in addition to

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**WASTED FUNDS:** A close-up view of the damaged fence.

capacitating local sports teams with kit and infrastructure to play.

Ward 19 councillor Shandre Hoffman, who is responsible for Buffalo Flats, Parkside, Greenfields and West Bank, said decisions on how to divide the money up between the diverse areas in her ward were dependent on needs identified by the community.

Just before the freeze, Hoffman was able to use some of the funds to provide a safety fence in Greenpoint Road, Buffalo Flats early in 2022. The fence installed was damaged by vandals last week but has since been reported by Hoffman who is yet to be advised on whether the funds for its repair will have to come from ward based funding or not.

Late last year, she had planned to purchase a tractor and grass-cutting equipment, but when the freeze came into play the municipality would only allow her to employ locals from the ward to assist her with keeping the communities clean through a municipal initiative called the EPWP programme.

Hoffman said: "Fifty EPWP participants were employed — 10 per area in Buffalo Flats, Ghostown, Second

Creek, Greenfields and West Bank.

"These participants have been working since February but with no equipment as the budgets remained frozen. The budget was only opened for employment, but the votes (purchasing power) to purchase any equipment remained closed.

"Though I welcomed the fact that we could employ through EPWP, I did not understand the logic. Employing people but not providing them with equipment is not fruitful.

"I thank the EPWP participants, the ward 19 committee and local residents for assisting with equipment.

"We are awaiting the purchase of the tractor, grass-cutting and cleaning equipment to keep our ward clean, as BCM does not have nearly enough equipment to do so.

"It will remain something tangible that will be used within ward 19 for many years."

Ward 28 councillor Frederick Pohl confirmed his office would also be buying equipment such as a tractor and grass-cutting tools to enable service delivery in Beacon Bay North, Bonza Bay, Beaconsburg and Blue Bend.

Ward 18 councillor Jason Mc Dowell said: "I was surprised when I saw the funding was reinstated because our revenue collection rate was still so low but my office will be buying grass cutting and bush-clearing equipment.

"This will be purchased seeing the municipal department that deals with this is so far behind due to no maintenance and theft of their vehicles.

"There are also security concerns that we can mitigate with bush clearing.

"The residents of the ward can be assured that any equipment bought will stay within the ward and not be used anywhere else."