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Author: Chanel George

PARKS AND RECREATION DEPT 'COLLAPSING'

CHANEL GEORGE

Democratic Alliance (DA) councillors say they have repeatedly requested a meeting with the Msunduzi Municipality to discuss the "absolute collapse" of the Department of Parks and Recreation.

However, municipal spokesperson Ntobeko Mkhize said that the acting deputy municipal manager had received no such correspondence, so she was unable to comment on the matter.

In the meantime, many parts of Pietermaritzburg have been dealing with issues like the overgrowth of vegetation, which is a security hazard for residents.

Councillor Garth Middleton shared the two emails with *The Witness* that he sent to the acting deputy municipal manager. They had been sent on February 9 and February 23.

Middleton and DA PR councillor Zinhle Ngubo's oversight visit found that the northern areas has one working tractor, the central area has none due to tyre punctures and the Edendale depot also has one tractor, which is on the brink of breaking down.

"Officials and supervisors [are] left with no vehicles to execute their responsibilities, officials [are left] with no tractors due to capacity challenges, and Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP) recruits standing idle with no support or tools of trade," said Middleton.

He said this is a complete waste of the city's finances, especially during the current desperate situation and that it is having a direct impact on basic service delivery across the board.

"There are approximately 20 brush cutters per depot but it is not enough to cover all wards in Msunduzi; we need at least 40 including those to be

used on sport grounds," said Ngubo.

He said the ANC leadership of Msunduzi approves millions for sport clubs and fan park events but has failed to purchase tyres for the tractors or fix them.

"The staff including EPWP recruits are under a lot of pressure as they lack labour tools, they have to take turns going to the field of work for weeks while others sign and remain at the Depot or at home," said Ngubo.

He said there is also an issue of not having enough vehicles for workers, including those from EPWP.

Officials and supervisors are not given vehicles to perform their responsibilities, he added.

Meanwhile, a source told *The Witness* that the Parks and Recreation Department does not have any plans in place to combat the overgrowth in the city due to money owed to suppliers for both the tractors and the brush cutters which have not been settled for quite some time.

"There is no overtime pay for the workers at this stage. Some of the EPWP workers who were in the Parks and Recreation Department are not moving over to work in the waste department with the same salary," they said.

Due to the ongoing issues faced by the department it is unsure as to when tractors will be available to cut areas where grass cutters simply won't work.

"It's unfortunate that the workers are the ones being labelled for incompetency yet it is the management who is really to blame, the workers are not equipped for the job, this is the reason why some of them will be seen doing nothing as they often share equipment and have to take turns," said the source.

· newsed@witness.co.za