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Author: CHRIS NDALISO

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CHRIS NDALISO

Although Msunduzi Municipality continues to face serious service delivery, governance and revenue challenges, new municipal manager Felani Mndebele believes his turnaround strategy is gaining ground.

This is reflected in his latest performance report to council, tabled during one of the worst wildcat strikes to hit the city, in which temporary Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP) workers trashed the CBD while demanding permanent jobs. The municipality has since obtained a court interdict and labelled the strike unlawful.

Mndebele's July report, presented at a recent council meeting, highlighted what he described as notable improvements in key service areas, including fleet operations, roads, water and sanitation.

Among the achievements, the municipality reported servicing and maintaining 239 municipal vehicles at its mechanical workshop, with 228 returned to their departments. Officials said this showed im-

proved turnaround in fleet management.

In roads and drainage, more than 10 850 m² of potholes were repaired and 4 950 m of drainage infrastructure maintained during July.

The municipality also reported resolving 726 traffic signal faults in the same month. The call centre recorded an overall complaint resolution rate of 89,5%.

Water and sanitation operations reported a service response rate of 88,76%, with 133 of 147 mainline burst pipes repaired and 370 of 411 sanitation blockages cleared. The report also noted several completed infrastructure projects due to be handed over to the municipality within two months.

These included the upgrade of Makhaye Road in Ward 5, which was converted from gravel to a surfaced route, as well as significant work on Baleni Road (Ward 40), Somayi Road (Ward 5), the Incwadi Bulk Pipeline, and Ezinketheni Water Reticulation (Ward 30).

In addition, business plans have been submitted for R97 million in grant fund-

ing to reduce non-revenue water losses and R113 million to address sanitation backlogs, particularly in Vulindlela and surrounding areas.

Despite these claims, opposition parties questioned the accuracy of the report. ANC Ward 13 councillor Sibongile Mncwango said the sanitation section failed to reflect conditions on the ground.

"This report on sanitation is not a true reflection of what is happening in my ward. Residents are angry because no honey suckers are being sent to deal with ongoing sanitation problems," she said.

The exclusion of the electricity department drew sharp criticism from the ACDP. Party councillor Rienus Niemand described the department as being in crisis due to theft, mismanagement and corruption. "The exclusion of electricity, especially prepaid, is alarming. The department's dysfunction has a direct and damaging impact on the city's already strained finances," he said.

Niemand also criticised the handling of water issues, calling the report shallow

and lacking vision.

"The MM must be seen as a clear and confident leader. While we are willing to support him in restoring order, we won't tolerate anything less than the best for our ratepayers," he added.

DA caucus leader Ross Strachan acknowledged the report's level of detail but said results mattered more than words.

"The real test lies not in what's written, but in what is done. We need immediate, decisive action," said Strachan.

Fellow DA councillor Garth Middleton also raised doubts about the reported number of vehicles serviced, citing a separate report highlighting poor conditions at municipal workplaces, including the transport department. Earlier this month, *The Witness* reported that a damning Corporate Services Department inspection revealed widespread neglect and hazardous conditions across the municipality's depots and facilities. The worst-affected included the vehicle workshop and the sanitation, water, roads, drainage and transport depots on Doull Road.