

Mayor's Speech to Council: 22 April 2021

Good Morning Speaker, Aldermen, Deputy Mayor, Chief Whip, Councillors, Acting Municipal Manager, Directors, Officials, Members of the Audit & Performance Committee, members of the Media

Early in the month, the MM, senior officials and I engaged with National Treasury to present a case for additional Grant funding to assist with the substantial Infrastructure needs of the Municipality to help fund the Capital Expenditure that we need to undertake over the next three year cycle. Our request is for around R100m. While National Treasury have as expected indicated that National Government is unable to assist at this time, they have advised the MM that George should apply for a budget facility for infrastructure which is a programme that caters for applications of at least R1 billion – a programme that the Metros use for their Capital expenditure needs. This is a major application in terms of preparation that also requires our Governance to be of superior quality. There is also a clear expectation that George needs to encourage increased economic activity and growth and that our infrastructure and broad service delivery needs to be tailored towards encouraging investment. It is the investment activity that is needed to make the capital contributions and to pay for services that can then make the loan repayments.

Recent comments by Futuregrowth are relevant in relation to the infrastructure projects that we are currently embarking on in their reference to the ailing state of municipal water infrastructure.

They comment that, research has shown that, under the correct conditions, infrastructure and infrastructure development can play a catalytic role in economic growth and development, with the benefits accruing over time.

Infrastructure development has the following knock-on benefits:

- It allows for easier access to markets, and is an enabler for the development of other sectors and industries which gives communities improved access to the formal economy and markets.
- It has positive impacts on transaction costs. Investment in infrastructure development and maintenance can improve production costs and business competitiveness.
- The link between the lack of appropriate and adequate infrastructure and poverty alleviation efforts has been seen in many areas. Research shows, for example, that access to electricity improves literacy, health-care and

nutrition. If this is not addressed, the cycle of intergenerational poverty is entrenched.

We therefore need a concerted effort to remove bottlenecks to investment and create policy certainty for both local and foreign investors as infrastructure investment plays a key role in spurring economic growth and development.

The MM, Directors, members of Mayco and I will be continuing our engagements in the coming weeks as we continue re-examining our Budget for 2021/22 as we prepare for the Final Budget towards the end of May 2021. The public are encouraged to provide comments on the IDP and the budget via the channels already announced.

With regard to the Cleaning George project that is underway I can report that 113 workers have so far been appointed of which 5 are co-ordinators. 25 of those who were appointed have left their jobs. This means that the recruitment process by Community Services continues as the project is being rolled out. Various areas have been clustered together and once teams have been filled for the wards they will be placed to work in their specified areas.

The work involves the seeping of sidewalks, cleaning of open spaces, litter picking in the areas, etc. Skips have been placed in certain areas.

Initially work begun in the CBD area, then moving into the industrial areas, Blanco, and then into various wards with the main routes getting preference. As the teams get filled the internal street areas will get attention.

The MM has written to each of the councillors encouraging all of you to take up the challenge of reporting the service delivery problems in our wards so that they can receive attention. The Service Delivery Monitoring Committee that has been appointed meets every Friday to resolve any of the more complex problems requiring attention. The MM has indicated to me that very few of you have actually acknowledged her email.

The target in this programme is to employ around 200 workers which will cost the Municipality almost R1m per month in wages. I believe there are many other important projects that could be undertaken of value to communities, rather than collecting litter left by citizens. I appeal to all councillors to urge citizens to take responsibility for their own areas. I have noticed that a number of

councillors are making efforts to establish gardens in areas that were previously illegal dumping sites.

The Municipality has also entered into a number of collaborative programs with Government that will assist in projects linked to ward-based cleaning programs:

With Correctional Services where persons convicted of petty crimes are instructed to do community service to do cleaning of streets and beaches. We have so far received 7 out of an expected 23 parolees.

WC Community Education & Training College operates the Community Learning Centres where learners need to complete 4 months of practical training to receive their certificates of completion. 22 out of 30 expected students have started work.

The Source to Sea Programme with the Dept of Forestry, Fisheries & the Environment will recover litter from 6 of our rivers / waterways, all receiving a daily wage. This program will commence in August 2021.

A company, Kathaka RAW Enterprises have entered into a MOU from 1 May 2021 for a 6 month period as part of a corporate social responsibility project with work taking place in Thembaletu, Parkdene, Maraiskamp, Conville and Rosedale. They will provide skips and work opportunities for community members to turn their waste into a profitable chore.

During the month we were informed that 12 residents have been recipients of a title deed restitution process organised by the Khaya Lam project;

The first 67 houses in the Syferfontein Erf 325 East development have been handed over to the new owners. This hand-over process will progressively take place in the coming weeks and months. We congratulate all these participants and appreciate the work of our WC Dept of Human Settlements partners in this project.

We have been informed by the WCG Head of Dept: Human Settlements that approval has been received for the following projects, targets and budget for 2021/22: R87,112m in Human Settlements Development Grants (586 units) and R10m in Informal Settlements Upgrade Partnership Grants.

We also welcome the Phelophepa Health Care Train to George this week and next week.

We also take note of and are appreciative of the tireless efforts of the Acting MM to stabilise the municipal administration and to establish the necessary dedication within all the Directorates to rectify the inefficiencies that exist within the organisation. To restore George as the pre-eminent secondary city and key investment destination in the country we are going to need a mindset change from all officials and councillors as well as the support of all our citizens.

We thank those officials who have stepped up to plate. Many are working long hours and over weekends to ensure that service delivery standards are improved; that infrastructure failures are repaired as swiftly as possible.

Over the past week we have experienced a water pipeline burst at the Ebb n Flow bridge over the Touw River that has taken time to repair an old steel line. Communities in Touwsranten and Hoekwil were severely disadvantaged. We apologise for their inconvenience and thank our staff for their long stints to get the line repaired.

The turnaround process that we have embarked on is crucial for the future of George and all its citizens. All of us need to act in the best interests of the municipality in executing the tasks ahead of us. I therefore wish to thank each of you for what you are doing in the difficult circumstances that being encountered: the Covid-19 recovery phase, tough economic circumstances. There are green shoots out there and many citizens are positive and grateful for the changes that are witnessing. Let this spur us to greater heights.

