

Peoples Assembly – 28 April 2010

We are almost at the end of the 2009/2010 financial year and it is a pleasure to provide you with a brief feedback on the municipality's main achievements as well as our proposed plans for the coming year.

I already warned ratepayers last year that 2009/2010 would be a difficult year for us all and my prediction proved to be correct. More than 1 million South Africans have lost their jobs and thousands of companies had to close down. Midvaal lost millions of rands in income because of the fact that many ratepayers simply could not afford to pay their monthly accounts.

Obviously if you have less money you have to cut expenditure otherwise we would bankrupt the municipality and cause irreparable damage to the area. Sadly, a few ratepayers in Midvaal still do not understand the basics of running a municipality. You can only get services if you pay for them and you can't spend more than what you have.

The Local Government Turnaround Strategy is very clear that a municipality must first maintain what it has before it can embark on new projects and often wasteful and luxurious projects.

Sewerage

Over the past 10 months Midvaal has spent R4,2 million on maintaining and upgrading the sewer network and purification plant and in the coming financial year another R3 million will go towards this infrastructure. However, I have warned the Council and the Department of Housing that we cannot allow any more large scale housing developments until the purification plant undergoes a major upgrade. Midvaal is already struggling to handle the current volume of effluent and any additions will lead to potentially catastrophic environmental problems.

Roads

Midvaal has 1150 kilometres of road to maintain. 595 Km's are tarred and 555 are gravel or dirt roads. By the end of the current financial year we would have resealed 47.7Km's of tarred roads which is 8% of the network. We would also have tarred 10.5 Km's of gravel road being 2% of the network.

The heavy rains experienced earlier this year have had a very negative effect on our roads – especially gravel roads and storm water damage runs into many millions of rands.

Priority is being given to potholes and roads that were totally washed away, but we can only do what we have money for.

In the coming financial year we will attempt to repair some of this damage by spending:

R5,5 million on gravel to tar programmes – specifically for wards 8 & 10

R9,8 million for the resealing and maintenance of existing tarred roads, and

R6,0 million for the maintenance of gravel roads

Electricity

Upgrades to Meyerton's main M1 substation are now complete and will ensure a reliable supply to the central area for many years to come. Midvaal has given permission to Eskom to complete the electrification of Lakeside Extension 1.

Residents should take note that electricity tariffs will increase by 28% as from 1 July 2010 and everyone is urged to implement savings measures in households and businesses. I would however like to warn those residents who have bypassed meters and who are effectively stealing electricity that we are conducting inspections in all areas and if you are found to be stealing you run the risk of being criminally charged and arrested. It is not fair that your neighbours have to pay for your water and electricity consumption.

Town Planning

I am excited to announce that Midvaal will be appointing specialist consultants to assist with the compilation of detailed development plans for each ward and for the area as a whole. The process will also endeavour to combine all existing town planning schemes into a single policy. In the coming months many public meetings will be held where residents will be asked for comments on how they feel their ward should be developed. We must clearly set aside areas for industrial, commercial, low and high density residential, agricultural and recreational purposes and I encourage the public to get involved in this process.

Tourism

The Midvaal Tourism Association has been re-established and is driven by members of the community. Whilst Midvaal will make every effort possible to assist the Tourism Association we believe that residents and business owners are well placed to promote the area and its attractions.

It is clear that the soccer world cup will not hold much direct benefit for businesses in the Midvaal area but we must look beyond 2010 to developing a more vibrant tourism sector which will in turn create more jobs and further skills development in our area.

We are currently also seeing the building of multi-purpose centres in the lakeside and sicelo communities and I hope that these will become centres of excellence where residents can equip themselves with skills. I have also noted that Midvaal has not received any allocation from the EPWP and have spoken to the MEC in this regard. Within the next two months I would like to see our administration finalise business plans so that we can tap into these funds and provide temporary employment to those communities who are most in need.

Health

Many of you may know that there is a national initiative to get as many South Africans as possible to perform HIV tests over the coming months. It is important to know your status and to realize that being HIV positive is not a death sentence. There is medication and advice available from our clinics and it is possible to live a good life even though you are HIV positive. BUT you must know your status. My MMC's, the Speaker and myself went for our HIV tests last week at the Meyerton Clinic and I encourage each and every resident in Midvaal to do the same.

Cemeteries

Residents may have noticed some construction work next to the Meyerton Cemetery. The Council is currently extending the Cemetery to ensure enough burial space for the near future. However, this extension is relatively small and once it is complete, we will have to find more suitable land to cater for our needs over the long term.

Libraries

I am pleased to see that the community of Sicelo is making good use of the new library. In the coming financial year we will be spending R380 000 on new books for all our libraries and we will also be extending and upgrading the Daleside Library.

Midvaal has been fortunate to receive R3,4 million in Grant Funding for the building of a Fire Station in the Vaal Marina / Mamello area to serve those communities. Currently fire engines and ambulances have to travel long distances from Meyerton when responding to emergencies around the Vaal Dam area and the new Fire Station will go a long way to ensuring better emergency services to our residents.

Within the next few weeks we will be formalizing the informal market / trading area around the Meyerton Taxi Rank. Not only will we attempt to upgrade the appearance of the area but we are also negotiating with the lessee of the taxi rank to provide lockable stalls to vendors.

By now residents should know that Midvaal achieved an unqualified Audit report for the 2009/2010 financial year. In fact, it was the best audit report ever achieved by this municipality and proves that we are committed to clean and accountable governance. We also received compliments from the Provincial Government in that our Annual Report, together with Tshwane's, was ranked as the best in Gauteng.