Speaker,

Chief Whip,

Alderman Hutcheson

MMC’s,

Alderman Ramushu,

Fellow Councillors,

Municipal Manager,

HOD’s,

Distinguished Guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Good Afternoon.

We Are a few days shy of entering the penultimate month of the year and are nearly half way through our current financial year.

2018 has so far not been short of its triumphs and challenges, all of which I believe have made us better than we were this time last year, and only a shadow of who we will be this time next year.

The first half of the financial year is always largely spent strategizing and preparing for what I like to loosely term “our execution period”, albeit it is impossible to abandon all execution of projects due to the nature of the work we do. However, I believe in order to do something well, you need to spend a lot of time preparing.

As Abraham Lincoln once said, “Give me six hours to chop down a tree and I will spend the first four sharpening the axe.”

Our consultations with the various communities we have visited so far during our IDP meetings have allowed us to prepare well as they are revealing to us the progress we are yet to make as we move ahead into the second half of this financial year.
I am confident that the administration and executive have laid good ground to continue the excellent work Midvaal has become notorious for in the past few years.

Speaker,

I wish to take the time to congratulate Alan Winde on being elected DA Western Cape Premier candidate.

I also wish to congratulate my colleague in the Kwazulu Natal caucus Zwakele Mncwango on being elected Premier candidate in that province.

I also want to take this time to congratulate Tito Mboweni on his appointment as the new Finance Minister and add to the chorus of congratulatory messages.

I hope his appointment goes beyond just looking good on paper and being favourable in the ears of foreign investors, but that he truly brings necessary changes to the stewardship of the fiscus and decision making within Treasury, that will bring about tangible results for all South Africans especially the poor, who we know make up more than half the population of this country.

Colleagues,

May you also join me in congratulating Sahle-Work Zewde as the first female President of Ethiopia – as announced earlier today- and Zingiswa Losi who last month was elected the first female President of COSATU.

I am always conflicted on whether to celebrate ‘firsts’ such as in this incident, as on the one side they point to gaps in promoting and ensuring equality, however in the same breath also affirm that marginalised groups have the same capabilities and credentials to be at the helm.

Speaker,

I wish to also take this time to send our heartfelt condolences to the families of those we have lost in the past few weeks.

To the families of late Minister of Environmental Affairs Edna Molewa, slain Tshwane University of Technology student Katlego Monareng, the three City of Johannesburg fire fighters who died while battling flames at the Bank of Lisbon building early last month, the 26 people killed in the tragic multi-vehicle accident on the N1 in Limpopo
last Friday and most recently to the family of hip-hop artist and music maestro Jabulani Tsambo affectionately known as HHP.

May their families find comfort and peace during their times of mourning as we continue to remember and honour their lives.

I would also like to send our condolences to our employees who’ve also lost family members, friends and loved ones these past few weeks. You too are in our thoughts and prayers as we petition for your strength during these trying times.

Speaker,

Yesterday afternoon, our new Finance Minister Tito Mboweni delivered his maiden Mid-Term Budget Statement in Parliament, which although received some level of faint confidence and optimism all-round – reminds us of the dire state of our economy and the burden many South Africans, especially lower- and middle-income citizens will have to carry for the short to medium term – if there is even a change to happen in the long term.

National Treasury has downgraded the expected 2018 growth rate to 0.7%, in line with projections previously made by the IMF, the World Bank and the SA Reserve Bank.

Finances at state-owned enterprises remain weak.

The state also expects government spending to continue to outpace inflation over the medium term.

The country is facing a R27.4bn revenue shortfall and a R85bn projected shortfall over the next three years – which means that everyone – including local government will have to continue digging deep into our pockets or alternatively – create other avenues of income – in order to stay afloat and continue to deliver the same quality services we have been providing to our communities.

This is no easy feat, and while we know that we will continue to serve our communities with diligence as we have in the past, I will admit that the next couple of years will be especially challenging for everyone, including ourselves. The repercussions of a national government left unaccountable for as long as has been
allowed will continue to be felt across the board and do not appear to be coming to an end anytime soon.

We are being told to dig deeper into our pockets, as mentioned by the Finance Minister, who yesterday reiterated that motorists would be compelled to use their already strained income to settle the nearly R10 billion outstanding e-toll bill. Money that many motorists simply do not have in the first place.

Speaker,

The price of petrol in October passed the R17 a litre mark – reaching an all-time high with another increase expected next month. Economists predict that by 2019, the price of fuel could rise to at least R18.90 a litre if the rand continues to weaken and the price of Brent crude oil remains at its current cost.

As we know, an increase in the price of petrol has a knock-on effect on many other expenses including food, transport and many auxiliary services that also increase as a result.

Coupled with this, Eskom was recently given the green light to hike electricity tariffs meaning, more money coming out of our pockets that what is coming in.

We are having to play catch up, to realise less than the full reward of what we would have realised had South Africa had accountable, servant leadership who put the country’s economy and the wellbeing of the entire citizenry – instead of their personal and party political gains – at the forefront of their decision making.

The current state of affairs in the country reminds me of a principle which can be found three times in the Bible – to emphasise its importance - 1 Samuel 15:22, Jeremiah 7:21-23 and in Ephesians 6:1-4. It simply reads “obedience is better than sacrifice” and while the verses have been interpreted many different ways before, in our case it reminds us why obedience (adherence to the law of the republic in this case) would have been a better alternative to having to sacrifice the livelihoods of many South Africans while trying to play catch up in attempts to save and secure our economy.

We need to realise the power of our vote and that giving it to a particular political party is a privilege and not an obligation, therefore those in power need to constantly
prove to us, through their leadership and stewardship of public funds and other reasons, why they deserve our vote.

Speaker,

We cannot afford to stay silent or oblivious in the face of unaccountability and downright criminal and corrupt leadership.

The fact that 53 people can – without conscious – STEAL nearly R2 billion from the public and nearly get away with it is a huge problem, for many reasons.

Firstly,

It shows the lack of regard and accountability to South Africans by those in leadership. It should concern both you and I that some of our leaders do not see the need to be accountable to the people who put them in office in the initial place, let alone abide by the law.

This shows us that there are leaders who believe that they can break the law and steal from the electorate, including the poor and not have to account for their theft. However, I do not entirely blame them for believing this because to a large extent we have allowed them to do so in the past and get away with it.

We allowed way too many people before the VBS incident to get away with stealing from the public, to allow those who came after to rightfully believe that they too can steal from us and get away with it.

We need to change the culture, criminal behaviour – even by those in power – need to punished. The law clearly states that no one is above the law, and if we begin to make exceptions to people based on their titles and positions – we will continue to suffer the consequences of our complacency.

Secondly,

The VBS debacle, besides being embarrassing, is extremely disappointing and shameful. It is disappointing that the effects of the decisions made by an 53 people will have a devastating effect on millions of people.

These are the millions of families that won't have a Christmas quite as imagined because funds have vanished from their VBS accounts.
Families that will have to postpone burials of their loved ones and consequently prolong their mourning and heartache because 53 people felt entitled to their funds.

Hundreds of communities that will have to forgo basic services, because their municipalities chose to completely disregard the law and invest millions in VBS bank.

People who will have to abandon their retirement plans because thousands in life savings have vanished into the hands of 53 odd greedy people who did not care, and still do not care about the repercussions of their actions.

Let us not forget the millions of South Africans – including you and I who will have to ultimately foot the bill and rescue these municipalities and restore the damage made by these 53 people.

However, the VBS saga is not the first of its nature and certainly not the worst and until we decide to bring an end to it by carefully considering who we place in government. Our decision on who we choose to place in government cannot and should not be made solely through our emotions.

I wish to add on to the voices calling for decisive action to be taken on all levels to bring those responsible to account, including criminal prosecution and conviction as well as the recovery of the looted funds.

Speaker,

I would like to highlight some of our ongoing service delivery projects across the municipality.

Next month, we will officially begin working on the Sicelo substation, by building the foundation for the construction.

This is a three-year project which will come at a total cost of R53 million in this period.

The substation will not only serve the Sicelo community but also Ophir Estates, Meyerton Farms and Valley Settlements.

Speaker,
The protection equipment at the M1 substation in Meyerton have been upgraded at a cost of R1.2m to ensure that faults are cleared in the shortest time to improve the electrical service to our customers and industries.

The installation of new 1300 domestic water meters in Lakeside phase 2 is nearing completion.

This project involves the installation of new water meters in the section of Lakeside where there were previously no water meters. To date 1100 domestic water meters have been installed.

This will assist the municipality in accounting for water used and consumed as well as minimizing water loss.

Speaker,

We are also in the process of finalising the replacement of water pipes in Apple Orchards.

This project involves the replacement of 15.3 km length of asbestos cement water supply pipeline with robust and durable technological water pipe called uPVC.

To date the total of 15.3 km length of asbestos cement pipeline has been replaced, with connections to the households outstanding.

This project will improve service delivery by reducing the number of frequent burst pipes which result to long hours of repairs after pipe bursts which frequently frustrate communities.

We are also in the process of rehabilitating and constructing roads in Riversdale and De Deur,

These include Jan Neetling, Highbury, Rooibok Street & Boundary Road in Riversdale as well as 3rd & 4th Road in De Deur.

Lastly,

Construction on the WWTW project in Meyerton currently stands at 95% and is expected to resume for completion early next year.

Speaker,
On Saturday, the 29th of September, my team and I were ambushed and attacked – both verbally and physically – by a group of ANC members in Savanna City. The same people also destroyed municipal property amounting to more than R60 000 and disrupted a well-intended municipal event solely based on personal and political agendas meant to discredit and tarnish my reputation and that of the DA-led municipality.

The matter was in court on the 1st of October where it was provisionally withdrawn for further investigations. We have cooperated with all police investigations and have submitted statements and evidence to investigating officers. We now await further instruction from the senior prosecutor in the case on when the matter will return to court.

I wish to put it on the record that I will pursue the matter until I get my justice in court.

Speaker,

I have mentioned this before but due to date changes since our last sitting I believe it is worth another mention.

On Friday 2 November 2018, we will be hosting a special screening of the Being Mandela ‘Joko Ya Hao’ film, which is a Midvaal Local Municipality and Nelson Mandela Foundation sponsored 30-minute film modelled on the spirit of Winnie Madikizela-Mandela.

Speaker,

As a result of this partnership, we have also been able to give two young Midvaal residents passionate about the film and television industry the opportunity to gain working experience during the filming of one of the movies which will take place early next year. The production company responsible for the filming has awarded two trainee opportunities to the two participants – to spend the entire during of the movie filming with the team to get hands on experience in the processes involved in making a commercial film.

I would like to congratulate 24-year-old Musa Sithole of Sicelo and 20-year-old Nicole Venter of Golf Park on being awarded this great opportunity.

Speaker,
Yesterday, we hosted the annual Mayoral Golf Day at Eye of Africa Golf Estate which managed to raise just over R250 000 in proceeds, and a further R100 000 in pledges which will be used to fund registration packages for our first-year university and college students who will need assistance in the 2019 academic year.

January has been the bane of my existence for as long as I have been in office, as I would often receive requests from helpless first year students through my office, asking for sponsorships to register for their various courses. However, we often struggled to assist many of them due to a scarcity of funds.

It is for this reason that I decided that all proceeds from this year’s Mayoral Golf Day would go towards that initiative as I strongly believe that no deserving student should be prevented from pursuing their academic aspirations due to a lack of funds.

As late President Nelson Mandela once said, “Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world.” and if we are to fully realise the plans we have to establish Midvaal as an anchor for growth and development in Gauteng, we need to ensure the sustainability of our growth through raising up young leaders, policy makers and great minds who will take over from us when the time comes.

As we prepare to end 2018, I wish you all renewed spirits and revitalised minds, may we continue to work together and remember our commitment to serve all our communities with due diligence.

Thank you!