Speaker,
Chief Whip,
Alderman Hutcheson
MMC’s,
Alderman Ramushu,
Fellow Councillors,
Municipal Manager,
HOD’s,
Distinguished Guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Good Afternoon.

I would like to open and dedicate today’s Council sitting to the women seated here today, and those who serve our societies and country in different spheres on a daily.

To the women nursing us back to health in our hospitals; to the police women, traffic officials, school teachers; the women selling fruit on the side of the road; the women single-handedly leading households and raising generations of children, some of whom not naturally born to them; the women who wake up to lead multi-billion rand JSE listed companies and those who choose to stay at home and tend to their families; the women taking care of our households; the young women still trying to forge a path for themselves and find their place in society and those who are blessed enough to have already figured it out; the women in government whose efforts sometimes go unnoticed; to the women who are constantly being overlooked and undermined despite the efforts and contributions they make to building this nation.

I want to say to you that your efforts are appreciated, you are appreciated and this country would not be where it is today if it were not for your sacrifices, the blood, sweat and tears that have gone into making this country what it is.
I want to take this moment to wish you a Happy Women’s Month and make a renewed commitment not only as a leader of this government, but as a brother, son and a father, to be more intentional about being empathetic towards the the plight of women in this country, to creating more opportunities for women, promoting the voices of women (which often go muted and overridden by those of men) assisting in the protection of women and children and creating an environment where women feel safe to be themselves and to become the best at what they’ve been called to do, without any limitations based solely on their gender.

Most importantly, I pledge to consciously include more women in the highest decision-making processes and the institution of laws and policies concerning the people of Midvaal.

As late former Secretary-General of the United Nations Dr Kofi Annan once said, “There is no development strategy more beneficial to society as a whole - women and men alike - than the one which involves women as central players.”

Speaker,

I wish to send our heartfelt condolences to the families of those our country, continent and the world has lost in the past few weeks.

To the families of former Secretary- General of the United Nations and Nobel Peace Laureate, Honourable Kofi Annan, UCT Professor and recipient of the Order of Mapungubwe Prof Bongani Mayosi, hip-hop artist Linda “ProKid” Mkhize, veteran South African actor Winston Ntshona as well as to the family and friends of Rhodes University student Khensani Maseko, you are constantly in our thoughts and prayers as you go through this difficult and understandably trying period in your lives and we hope you find comfort in knowing that the work your loved ones put into building this country, our continent and the world has made a difference to many people and though they are gone, we will continue to remember and honour their efforts by carrying the baton from where they left off.

Speaker,
I wish to send an extended message of condolences to the Sobukwe family for the death of Mam’ Zondeni Sobukwe, also known as the Mother of Azania. Mam’ Sobukwe’s passing was a particularly bitter one for me personally because, like many women who fought for the liberation of this country, their efforts and sacrifices were only to be later erased, diluted or reduced to that of a supporting role to the men they shared their lives with.

I could name women like Mam’ Winnie Madikizela-Mandela, Mam’ Albertina Sisulu, Mam’ Lillian Ngoyi, Mam’ Ruth First, Helen Suzman, Navi Pillay, Cheryl Carolus, Helen Joseph, Adelaide Tambo and many others whose names just managed to get a flicker of recognition in the years succeeding our nearly 25-year-old democracy. However, this would be an insult to the many other women who never lived to see democracy – like the late Nokuthula Simelane - and those who did but to this day have not received enough recognition for their fearless and relentless contributions towards liberating the people of this country.

Many of us, particularly men, will never get to understand the extent of the hurt and betrayal many of these women had to endure, and continue to live through, as a result of society’s insistence on minimising the depth of what several women had to endure to plant the seeds of the fruit you and I get to enjoy today.

So, to all the women present here today, I want to thank you for your daily efforts and sacrifices in not only building and growing Midvaal, but for the work you do when you leave these gates, in your homes and our societies.

I wish to quote American comedian Rhonda Hansome who once said, “A man’s got to do what a man’s got to do. A woman must do what he can’t.”

We see your efforts and honour your sacrifices and THANK YOU!

Speaker,

This August also marks the 6th anniversary of the Marikana Massacre which, as we know, left 34 miners dead at the hands of the police.

To this day, not one single body, government entity or mining boss has claimed responsibility for that tragedy which has not only left many families destitute, but also left us a nation with trauma and pain of witnessing the brutality of the very people
meant to protect and safeguard us as citizens, not expunging the recklessness and lack of regard for human life by the mine owners.

August 16, 2012 will forever be a day which haunts every South African, with even the tiniest bit of regard for human life and the respect thereof, for many years to come.

My hope is that firstly, the untold stories of Mgcineni Noki and many others who lost their lives in the battle for basic human regard would be told loudly enough to suffocate and override the narratives which continue to be sold in efforts to demonise those mine workers.

Secondly, that more efforts would be made towards finding those complicit in this tragic and careless loss of lives and that they would be brought to book so the families of the deceased miners would finally be able to put this behind them and find a way to move on with their lives.

Speaker,

I wish to take the time to congratulate City of Tshwane Mayor Solly Msimanga on his election as DA Gauteng Premier elect.

I also want to congratulate newly appointed Acting Director of Public Prosecutions head Silas Ramaite.

We trust his appointment signals a new era of intentional commitment towards fighting crime, corruption and other forms of injustice in our country.

I must also congratulate star athlete Caster Semenya, who earlier this month, broke a 25 year long national 400m record at the African Athletics Championships.

Lastly, I wish to congratulate Proteas fast bowler Kagiso Rabada on recently being named the best young male cricketer in the world.

Speaker,

The economics of this country remains under intense pressure and as a result the lower and middle class are suffering the consequences of years of self-centred and unaccountable leadership and governance.
While we as the opposition in parliament have for the past couple of years been cautioning against the current state of affairs in the various government departments, especially state-owned entities, the reality of it unravelling before us is nothing any of us could have ever imagined.

Between the ever-increasing cost of living, VAT hike, petrol price increases, high interest rates and poor performing rand, many South Africans are finding themselves in a tight financial position which leaves them with very little at the end of the month, while many are left dependent on credit to make ends meet.

This also means companies are forced to keep costs minimal which inevitably often leads to having to let employees go, or failing to create new jobs.

Speaker,

To make matters worse, Stats SA recently announced that the country’s unemployment rate has increased by half a percentage point to 27.2% in the second quarter of 2018, compared to the first quarter 2018 rate of 26.7%.

That is 6.1 million people, in South Africa right now, who are without jobs. This not considering the 2.9 million eligible work-seekers who have given up on finding employment.

Unfortunately, black women remain the most vulnerable when it comes to unemployment, largely due to the exclusion and side-lining of even those women who qualify and have the necessary skills set and experience to occupy those positions.

While we welcome the VAT-exempted list expansion, more needs to be done to ensure that South Africans do not only get to survive the month, but to be able to live a quality life throughout the month.

Speaker,

It is for this reason that I wish to present a concept which is not new to any of us as I have spoken on it many times before today, this is the concept of introducing in our townships what we have dubbed “Economic Development Centres”.

We as the Midvaal government have conceptualised and wish to implement the roll out of these EDCs as a practical solution towards addressing the biggest stumbling
block to our growth and development as a country and a people: the problem of poor economics.

South Africa has an abundance of skilled labour, resources and solutions at our disposal to address the socio-economic issues plaguing every community in our country, however as we have come to learn over the past couple of years, what our country lacks is a government that is willing to implement and follow-through on those great plans.

Our government has an implementation-deficit. The reason many of government’s sometimes well-intended policies have failed is not always a result of poor policy-making, but a lack of proper and consistent implementation and monitoring.

The aim of these EDCs is to get the township economy up and running, through the introduction of various economic activities which will be sustained by the economic spending of both local and external consumers.

These will be township-based manufacturing hubs which will ensure our much-anticipated prospect for economic growth and job creation through the introduction of production-based activity in townships vis a vis consumer based.

These hubs, will be situated in five of our biggest townships in Midvaal, namely Mamello, Lakeside, Kliprivier, Savanna City and Sicelo.

Each of the centres will target specialised economic activities that are able to be integrated to serve the overall needs of Midvaal, Gauteng and the country at large.

We want the economic cycle to begin and end in the township, thereby growing the local township economy and creating jobs for local residents.

Colleagues,

I am excited to announce that we have partnered with the Nelson Mandela Foundation and the makers of the Being Mandela three-part movie series, which tells the everyday stories of ordinary South Africans, which are inspired by the life of Nelson Mandela, his work and those closest to him.

To continue celebrating Women’s Day and honour the legacy of Mam’ Winnie, we will be bringing the screening of the first part to the movie, titled ‘Joko Ya Hao’ to Midvaal.
Joko Ya Hao is a 30-minute short film inspired by the life of Mam’ Winnie. The film is set in 1955 during the forced evictions and tells the story of Noziziwe, an aspirant preacher, who after failing to become ordained as a pastor because she was a woman becomes a symbol of resistance.

We will be hosting a screening of the movie on Thursday, the 27th of September and I would like to extend an invitation to everyone present here today to come and join us as at the screening.

Speaker,

On the 25th of July, as Council is aware, I delivered the annual State of the Municipality Address. I would like to draw on some of the main achievements that were highlighted in my speech.

The Risiville substation has been completed and I had the honour of officially opening its doors on the 8th of August.

This is a huge milestone for us a municipality as we have been working on this project for the past two years in efforts to increase the much-needed electricity capacity in Risiville and surrounding areas.

This is especially a huge moment for us as a team because we expect that this will pave the way for commercial and residential development in the area and its surrounds, which will contribute in the years to come towards our plans to grow the Midvaal economy and create jobs.

We have also just finished tarring and repairing roads in Lakeside which have seen streets including Bulalo, Luvo, Mzinto, Mtwalume and Senzela being upgraded.

Furthermore, the Lakeside community will also benefit from a R5.5 million cash injection during this term, that will ensure the completion of the Lakeside Sport Centre.

At the end of June, we completed upgrades to the Rothdene pump station which involved the construction of a rising main to connect to the Meyerton Wastewater Treatment Works.

The upgrades are intended to accommodate growth and development in Midvaal, including commercial and residential, as well as allow build housing and provide
other social services which in the past could not be accommodated due to a lack of capacity.

Speaker,

These are only a handful of the projects we completed in the past financial year, as our record of service delivery and good governance speaks for itself.

We hope to continue with the same vigour and determination in this financial year to ensure that we deliver on the promises we made to the people of Midvaal and continue working towards achieving our vision to inclusively serve the needs of our communities.

However, while the past financial term has been a fulfilling one, it has not come without its challenges.

I would like to touch on three particularly challenging areas which we are currently facing.

Firstly, the cross-border agreements we have with Emfuleni for electricity in Risiville and secondly for water in Lakeside continue to prove a thorn in our flesh as a municipality.

While we have made tremendous efforts towards addressing both issues, we would like to assure residents that we are working to fully realise our plans to find a lasting solution as we share the equal frustration of seeing our residents experiencing compromised service delivery, but being unable to intervene.

Thirdly, our residents in Savanna City continue to seek answers relating to electrification of the Savanna City bonded homes section.

This is an issue which has been going on for several years and while again we understand and share in the frustrations being experienced by our residents, we would like to assure them that we continue to do everything in our power, using every resource at our disposal to ensure that the issue is resolved.

We have again written to Energy Minister Jeff Radebe requesting an urgent meeting to discuss the issue and have sent the necessary documentation and correspondence required and are now waiting for a response and confirmation on a meeting date, which will hopefully see us bring this longstanding issue to completion.
While each of these issues, and others which I have not mentioned here today, are becoming increasingly frustrating for us, but more so for the people who expect the services, we cannot give up on trying, on knocking on doors and on ensuring we work with all the relevant government entities to ensure that our communities receive what is due to them.

So, let us use these challenges as motivation to do better than what we already because if we don’t, and we have seen in other municipalities, the job simply won’t be done.

Colleagues,

I wish to again, thank each of you for your continued commitment towards ensuring the growth and prosperity of Midvaal.

While we have noticeably made great progress in the past few years which has resulted in the improved quality of life many of our residents can boast of, there is still a lot to be done and I have full confidence that I have the right team behind and besides me to ensure that we realise everything we have set out to achieve.

Let us all work together, setting aside our politics and ideologies, bearing in mind that before we are politicians, we are leaders and servants of the public.

We have been put in these positions not because we are politicians but because the people of Midvaal have faith in us and our ability to improve their lives through the quality of services we deliver.

They have faith in our ability to do on their behalf what many have failed to do and we cannot and should not disappoint them simply because we disagree with someone based on their political affiliation or ideologies.

Thank you!