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

We meet here today on the last day of what I personally regard as one of the most significant commemorations on the global calendar, which is that of Africa Month.

A time when we get to both celebrate the unity of African nations, look back at the progress we’ve made in solidifying Africa’s place on the global stage, but most importantly a time when we should also confront our failures in creating the Africa many of those who paved the way for the liberation of our African countries have dreamt of.

This vision is impeccably articulated by the African Union as the pursuit “for an integrated, prosperous and peaceful Africa, driven by its own citizens and representing a dynamic force in the global arena.”

As late African liberator and former Ghanaian president Kwame Nkrumah once said, “It is clear that we must find an African solution to our problems, and that this can only be found in African unity. Divided we are weak; united, Africa could become one of the greatest forces for good in the world.”

Africa is waiting for us, to wake up to the reality that unless we embrace our “African-ness” – that which truly makes us who we are- and work together as Africans of different colour, class and creed, for the betterment of this continent – we will continue to watch from the side-
lines as outsiders continue to enrich themselves off the back of Africans using African resources.

Colleagues,

Today, we are also commemorating the signing of the Vereeniging Peace Treaty, which is being marked through various events throughout the day.

Key among them is our commitment to the restoration of the Block House.

The Block House, as some of us may know, was built by British forces during the Anglo Boer War in order to guard the railway territory.

We have taken the decision to work with an investor to restore and preserve the Block House as a monument and an important part of the history of our people.

Speaker,

I would like to applaud the judiciary, National Prosecuting Authority, SAPS and other agencies which were involved in ensuring the successful prosecution and conviction of murderer Sandile Mantsoe, who as we may know was sentenced to an effective 32 years in prison for the murder of Karabo Mokoena.

While I recognise that this is somewhat of a victory for the family who may now begin their journey of healing, there remains a wide gap in securing convictions and handing down of hefty sentences for many other South African women who find themselves in similar situations.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I need not mention that femicide in this country has reached unmentionable levels and needs every member of society and state
agencies to work together if we are to make any progress in protecting women and children.

Every morning we wake up to another headline of a girl, woman, or child being raped, molested and killed often by someone they know and sometimes even by a stranger who bestowed ownership of that woman’s body and life upon themselves and believed it to be their right as a man to decide their fate.

In just the past few weeks, we have had to bear the chilling tales of how women and children like Lindiwe Sibiya, Sheila Mosidi Kopanye, Zolile Khumalo, Ntombizodwa Charlotte Dlamini, Nompumelelo Mthembu, 17-year-old Marna Engelbrecht, her friend 16-year-old Sharnelle Hough and little Courtney Pieters met their death.

These of course are just a hand full of the stories that actually make it to the press, one can only imagine the many other ordeals that take place in our villages, townships, or behind high walls in leafy suburbs.

Women and children continue to be vulnerable, and we as a society, especially men are a huge part of the problem as we have allowed it to continue for far too long.

Looking away, remaining silent or making comments such as “I know him, he would never do that” are what is enabling the violence against women and children to continue at the rate that it is.

Speaker,

I would like to send our heartfelt condolences to the families of the women mentioned above and say that as a man and a leader of this municipality, Midvaal will do everything in its power to ensure that we create a safe environment for women and children.

An environment where men are inclined towards protecting and speaking out against injustices imposed on women even by men who are their friends, colleagues or brothers.
An environment where people learn NOT to mind their own business when witnessing the abuse and assaults on women and children.

I would also like to send our condolences to the family of 10-year-old Katlego Joja, who too was met by an untimely death, and hope that the police will bring closure to her family by finding the person or people responsible for her death.

Let us be clear on this, men do not and can never claim ownership of a woman or her body, whether she’s your wife, girlfriend or someone on your payroll – and yes, I am alluding to a particular Mduduzi Manana who despite his continued disrespect and lack of acknowledgement for women maintains his position in parliament on the taxpayer’s expense.

Speaker,

I would like to congratulate Caster Semenya, who earlier this month set a new South African record for the 1500m at the IAAF Diamond League competition with a time of 3 minutes 59 seconds and 92 split seconds - amid adversary.

We would also like to congratulate Siya Kolisi on his long overdue appointment as captain of the Springboks.

Former Proteas captain AB De Villiers has also announced his retirement from international cricket, albeit a great loss to South African international cricket, we wish him well and thank him for the 14 years he’s committed not only to the sport, but South Africa as a whole.

I would also like to take this opportunity to wish all the mothers present here today – both biological and otherwise – a happy belated Mother’s Day.

Our societies would not be the same without you, and to say you are the backbone of this nation would be an understatement because you do more than just support us, you have built this nation.
Speaker,

A week ago, the Reserve Bank announced that it would keep the repo rate unchanged at 6.5%, with the prime lending rate at 10%.

While this is certainly a move in the right direction considering the state of the economy: our extremely volatile markets, soaring inflation, and rising international oil prices which recently hit a 3 and a half year high, to mention just a few factors.

However, our country remains in an economical rut, with you and I as consumers expected to drive the country’s economic growth in an anti-consumer friendly environment. The pressures on our economy are certainly being felt across sectors, with municipalities not being an exception.

This has made putting together this new financial year budget, which Alderman Hutcheson will present to us shortly, that much harder to do.

Speaker,

I would like to address two issues which have been of much contention within our communities: that of housing and electricity.

On the issue of housing, and I will only speak briefly on it as Alderman Hutcheson will expand on the issue in a bit.

There is only so much we as a local municipality can do to provide housing for our communities, unfortunately.

This as, much of the processes and planning which go in to providing housing are done primarily by the Gauteng Department of Human Settlements and other provincial departments.

This is an issue we have mentioned and discussed various times before, therefore our hands are often tied when confronted by our communities
who often appear at our doorstep requesting that we expedite their housing issues.

When such situations occur, as they have often with Sicelo, Savanna City and recently Mamello, we often do everything in our capacity to liaise with the relevant departments and stakeholders, relaying the community’s dissatisfaction with the pace at which developments are taking place.

This has been the case with the abovementioned areas as well as other areas which have also been earmarked for housing developments.

With regards to the issue of electricity, we have up to date been unable to electrify the Savanna City RDP section due to the unavailability of the grant which was promised to us.

We recently received communication from the steering committee that we would have to look at other ways, to fund the electrification of the area. We are now considering all the various options at our disposal to find the best possible solution.

Therefore, the recent spate of protests in the municipality, which although have mostly been well above the law – with the exception of the vigilante criminal acts that have been happening on the R59 under the guise of protest action – are misdirected.

We understand communities’ dissatisfaction with processes and their need to address those concerns with us as their first point of contact.

However, criminal behaviour, destruction of property and violence are never a solution.

Regardless of how rampant or violent these protests get, our position and jurisdiction on housing developments will remain the same.
All that would’ve changed is the delay in service delivery as a result of often having to redirect funds to fix damaged roads, property or infrastructure, which essentially leaves communities worse off.

So, I call on our communities to approach this issue more constructively and in a manner that will ensure the best outcome for the community, instead of leaving them in a far worse disadvantage than when they started.

Speaker,

Midvaal has been a hot topic in the news this past week after the Auditor General publicly announced our fourth consecutive clean audit, making us the top performing municipality in Gauteng, forming part of the 13% of municipalities in the country who are in full compliance with the relevant legal requirements, having produced quality financial statements and performance reports.

While we are proud of this achievement as it reaffirms our commitment to good governance, ethical leadership, sound financial management, and commitment to regular and rigorous monitoring and evaluation of policies and processes, we are also concerned of the wider picture the report has drawn.

There appears to be a deep-rooted issue common among local governments, which is mainly driven by self-centred leadership allowing corrupt practices, maladministration, wasteful expenditure and the mismanagement of public funds to go unaccounted for, allowing the cycle to continue for the many years it has.

In the past week I’ve had many people ask how Midvaal has managed to maintain its record of good governance over the years, and my answer is simple: we are committed to our people.

Everything we do, the way we do it and the decisions we make are driven by our commitment to the people of this municipality and realising our vision to inclusively serve the needs of our community.
Everyone in Midvaal matters equally, and we want to ensure that we manage the municipality and public purse in a manner which reflects this.

Speaker,

We recently launched a campaign which we’ve dubbed “A Day in the Life of a Worker” which seeks to give the executive an experience of what a typical day looks like for a Midvaal general worker, in efforts to not only empathise with them, but also find ways in which we can improve their working conditions.

Our workers are the backbone of everything we do, without them many of these successes we speak of today would not have been possible, therefore we need to ensure the best possible working conditions for them in order for us to continue doing the work that we’re doing – at the standard we’ve been delivering.

We kicked off the campaign yesterday, as we joined our waste collection workers in cleaning up the streets of Meyerton CBD. The experience has given us a first-hand experience of what it means to truly serve our community.

We are excited to see what other experiences will come from this initiative.

In closing,

I wish to express that we, as the executive, have taken the decision to move the State of the Municipality Address to Wednesday, 25th July 2018. Council will get the exact details relating to the SOMA once they have been finalised in the coming weeks.

Our decision to move the SOMA to a later date was simply to allow us to give a comprehensive report of the entire financial year after it has been completed.
I will now hand over to Alderman Patricia Hutcheson, our MMC for Finance, who will now deliver the medium-term revenue and expenditure framework for the 2018/2019 – 2020/2021 financial year on my behalf.

Thank you