

OVERSIGHT REPORT OF THE PORTFOLIO COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SETTLEMENTS, CO-OPERATIVE GOVERNANCE AND TRADITIONAL AFFAIRS CONDUCTED AT WITBANK WATER TREATMENT PLANT HELD ON 04-05 MARCH 2015 AT EMALAHLENI LOCAL MUNICIPALITY, NKANGALA DISTRICT – DEPARTMENT OF COGTA

1. INTRODUCTION

The Portfolio Committee on Human Settlements and Co-operative Governance and Traditional Affairs (the Committee) has a mandate in terms of Rule 119 of the Rules and Orders of the Mpumalanga Provincial Legislature to conduct oversight over the Department of Human Settlements (the department) by holding it accountable through various measures which the Portfolio Committee may undertake during the course of a financial year.

One of the instruments that enable the Portfolio Committee on Human Settlements; Co-operative Governance and Traditional Affairs to execute its mandate is to conduct public hearings and oversight visits to human settlements housing projects in the Province.

2. OBJECTIVES

The objectives of the visit were to:

- ❖ To obtain the views of the community members on basic service delivery;
- ❖ To assess the support provided by Department of Cogta to eMalahleni Local Municipality;
- ❖ Interact and deliberate on the overall functioning of the Witbank Water Treatment Plant.

2. METHOD OF WORK

After the approval of the Legislature oversight visit programme, invitation was sent to the Department (MEC and HOD) informing them of the oversight visit programme and requesting them to ensure the availability of the department senior officials to interact with the Committee during the oversight visits and to respond to the concerns that will be raised by the Committee

The eMalahleni Local Municipality; as well as the municipal structures were invited to accompany the Committee during the site visits.. Other stakeholders invited to the site visit were the Office of the Auditor-General, the Department of Finance, South African Local Government Association (SALGA) and the Public Service Commission (PSC).

On 04 March 2015, the Committee conducted a public hearing and on 05 March 2015, conducted an oversight visit to the Witbank Water Treatment Plant project. Subsequently, the Committee considered the draft report on 21 July 2015.

4. PUBLIC HEARING

4.1. Comments made by the public

The following concerns were made during the public hearing held at Lynville Stadium:

- ❖ The billing system of elderly people is too high;
- ❖ Most people are using drugs due to lack of unemployment;
- ❖ There is lack of basic services such as water, sanitation and electricity;

- ❖ Coronation has become a dumping station, as there are no dustbins allocated to families;
- ❖ The Community Works Programme (CWP) staff are working without protective clothing e.g. gloves, work more than three months without pay, they request that they (CWP workers) be employed on a full time basis;
- ❖ Most houses have no electric meter boxes;
- ❖ Some RDP Houses have been sold by councilors will being occupied by the relevant owners, thereafter they are left stranded with no shelter as a new owner had occupied the house;
- ❖ Municipality does not collect dustbin on a regular basis;
- ❖ Some RDP houses have no flushing toilets.

4.2. Recommendation

In light of the aforementioned concerns as raised by the community of eMalahleni Local Municipality during the public hearing, the Committee recommends that the Department of Co-operative Governance and Traditional Affairs must provide a comprehensive progress report on all the issues raised before 30 September 2015.

5. WITBANK WATER TREATMENT PLANT

Background

The eMalahleni Local Municipality (ELM) conducted an audit assessment on the bulk water infrastructure at the beginning of 2011. The investigation was initiated as a result of pressing challenges in respect of water services in the municipality. The water treatment and delivery infrastructure as well as the operational management systems had degraded to the extent that water services were compromised in respect of both water quality and quantity.

The audit recommended a phased implementation approach in order to mitigate the risks faced by ELM. In 2011, Rand Water was appointed as the Implementing Agent for the Bulk Infrastructure Refurbishment Programme.

The water supply system of eMalahleni Local Municipality has a number of operational problems for a long time. The challenges were as follows:

- ❖ The Witbank Water Treatment Works (WTW) has not been able to meet the potable water requirements of the town and the surrounding communities such as Ogies and Phola due to the demand exceeding the supply.
- ❖ The aging infrastructure has led to poor performance of some of the components.
- ❖ The deterioration in the condition of the distribution infrastructure has led to many leakages and pipe breakages.

The Department of Water Affairs (DWA) provided funding to bridge the existing lack of financial capacity of the municipality to address the water challenges with the primary objective to;

- ❖ Refurbish the key components of the bulk water infrastructure to mitigate operational risk arising from mechanical and electrical failure;
- ❖ Upgrade key water infrastructure to improve system performance and meet the growing demand;
- ❖ Improve water service operations;
- ❖ Improve water quantity and quality.

Unfunded interventions

The Department reported that the following activities were identified as critical but due to funding and budget constraints, have not been included in the current scope.

Item	Description	Estimated Costs
1	AC Pipeline Replacement (Reticulation)	R 329 602 500.00
2	Bulk Infrastructure Upgrade (WTW)	R 182 950 000.00
3	Replacement of 700mm and 800mm AC Bulk Pipelines	R 94 000 000.00
4	Pressure Management	R 44 013 133.43
5	Installation of Bulk Meters	R 3 200 000.00
6	Replacement of Additional Bulk Lines	R 1 000 000.00
	Total	R654765633.43

The Department reported that even though Rand Water identified AC Pipe Replacement and Water Demand Management on the Reticulation Network as critical, this scope could not be incorporated into the current programme because of RBIG Fund restrictions; but all relevant authorities were informed of the challenge. The AC Pipeline network is approximately 420km and the estimated cost to replace it is approximately R330 million.

Service delivery in respect to Water

The Committee noted the below Statistics South Africa Census 2011

Source of Water	Households
Regional/ Local Water Scheme(Operated by Municipality or other water services provider)	103 755
Borehole	3 988
Spring	202
Rain water tank	298
Dam/Pool. Stagnant water	570
River/Stream	1 214
Water vendor	1 084
Water tanker	4 808
Other	3 955

It was further reported that the free basic water that comprises 6000 liters per household per month is funded using local government revenue and internal cross-subsidies from appropriately structure water tariffs. The eMalahleni Municipality has received 37, 5 % on the blue drop score which indicates poor performance. It is below the minimum score of 50 % which means that it is not good for human consumption. The criterion requires funding for compliance, e.g. Development of Sector Plans and implementation which cannot be done internally.

The Committee was informed that according to the Department of CoGTA, it is assisting the Municipality to fast-track the eradication of backlogs through Department of Water Affairs and Rand water interventions. The eMalahleni Municipality has challenges with the existing infrastructure that is not coping with the demand. Rand Water has identified the quick wins in order to improve the Water Services; the quick wins are as follows;

- ❖ Refurbishment of leaking valves;
- ❖ Installation of stand by generators at Witbank Water Treatment Works and Point D pump station;
- ❖ Replacement of badly leaking non return valve at point D;
- ❖ Cleaning of reservoirs;
- ❖ Installation of Telemetry System at Four Pump station;
- ❖ Replacement of floating roof cover at point D.

Comments by the Committee

Mpumalanga Water Master Plan

The Committee noted that the Mpumalanga Water Master Plan that was compiled in April 2012 indicates the existing asset management; reduction of

unaccounted water; water inefficiencies; water sanitation metering and billing are all inadequate. In terms of policy principles, water has economic value i.e. the way in which water and sanitation services are provided must reflect the growing scarcity of good quality water in eMalahleni in a manner that reflects their value and does not undermine long term sustainability and economic growth.

The Committee further noted that the user-pays principle applied cycle with the indigent policy of the municipality. This is a central principle to ensure that sustainable and equitable development, as well as effective and efficient management. In terms of integrated development requirement, water and sanitation development are not possible in isolation from development in other sectors hence co-ordination is necessary with all spheres of government.

Quality of water

The Committee wanted to know to what extent the Department of CoGTA and eMalahleni Municipality is attending to the quality of water. The Committee further needed clarity on whether the Department has an operation and maintenance plan; if it has to what extent is it being implemented.

In its response the Department reported that, there is a challenge with the supply of water to Phola and Ogies and this is due to under-designed infrastructure that is not able to meet the current and future demands. This infrastructure is currently being upgraded by the project to increase the volumes of water supply and deal with water demand management challenges.

The Department reported that the first phase of the project improved the quality of water and supply, however, due to lack of proper process control, the quality of water is inconsistent and does not always comply with the SANS241:2011 requirements.

The Department further reported that operational problems have also been identified which are attributed to the shortage of technical capacity within the municipality. This included the lack of maintenance on water supply equipment including equipment newly installed or refurbished by the project, and operational procedures not being entirely adhered to by the technical staff. These operational problems are reported to be in the process of being addressed by the municipality.

The Committee wanted an explanation on why is it difficult for the municipality to achieve a blue drop score of 50% or 90% and to what extent does the Department of CoGTA and municipality ensure that personnel with the requisite expertise are employed in the Water Treatment Works. The department requested to submit a written response on this issue.

Waste Water Management

The Committee wanted an explanation on what mechanism has the Department put in place to improve waste water management. The Committee further needed clarity on how does the Department plan to deal with the illegal dumping in sewer. The Department was requested also to explain on how the municipality plan to address the poor storm water control system and needed to know on what is the budget for the provision of water in eMalahleni Local Municipality.

In its response, the Department reported that the water challenges are being addressed, the municipality continues to experience pipe bursts and leaks on the sewer networks throughout the municipality's area of service. The fear is that leaking waste water may be contaminating the potable water supply through seepage. The water quality tests conducted by Rand Water in 2014 indicated the presence of coliforms and E Coli from samples taken from a residential area. These exceeded the requirement of the SANS241:2011.

The Department further reported that the continued poor quality of water and the poor operations and maintenance concerns Rand Water as this overshadows the successful interventions carried out thus far. Rand Water has offered to assist the municipality further by seconding personnel to run the operations and maintenance of the water services. These discussions are still to be concluded.

6. Findings made by the Committee

After the site inspection, the Committee found that:

- a. The challenge of providing quality water is still recurring, due to lack of proper control measures; the quality of water is inconsistent and does not always comply with the SANS241:2011 requirements. The shortage of technical staff within the municipality. This included the lack of maintenance on water supply equipment including equipment newly installed or refurbished by the project, and operational procedures not being entirely adhered to by the technical staff. These operational problems are reported to be in the process of being addressed by the municipality
- b. Emalahleni Municipality has received 37, 5% instead of 50% or 90% on the blue drop score which indicates poor performance; and the response on when would personnel with requisite expertise will be appointment in the Water Treatment Works was not answered by the Department of CoGTA and the municipality, instead a request to submit a written response was made.
- c. The Department is assisting to fast-track the eradication of backlogs through the Department of Water affairs and Rand Water Interventions;

- d. Emalahleni Municipality has challenges with the existing infrastructure that is not coping with the demand;
- e. The Mpumalanga Water Master Plan indicates that the existing asset management, reduction of unaccounted for water and water inefficiencies and billing are all inadequate;

7. Recommendations

After the findings, the Committee recommended that the Department must:

- a. Develop a plan with proper control measures that will strengthen maintenance on water supply equipment including equipment newly installed or refurbished. Also ensure that operational procedures are adhered to, as it was reported that the water provided does not comply with the SAN241:2011 requirements. The plan must be submitted before 30 September 2015.
- b. Ensure that officials with requisite expertise are appointed in the Water Treatment Works in order to achieve 50% and above on the blue drop score as this would be good for human consumption before 30 September 2015.
- c. Ensure that it fast-track the process of eradication of backlogs through the Department of Water Affairs and Rand Water Interventions. A progress report must be submitted on a quarterly basis.
- d. Ensure that the implementing agency (Rand Water) speed up the process in order to improve the water services in terms of installing the standby generators at Witbank Water Treatment Works and Point D pump station.

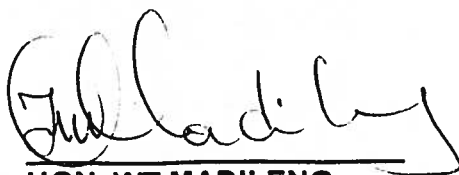
- e. Develop a detailed plan of action outlining on how it plans to assist the Emalahleni municipality in providing quality water and such plan must be submitted to the Committee by 30 September 2015.

The Department should provide a progress report on all the recommendations made by the Committee before 30 September 2015.

8. CONCLUSION

The Chairperson would like to express his heartfelt gratitude to MEC, RM Mtshweni, and the Honourable Members of the Portfolio Committee on Human Settlements, Co-operative Governance and Traditional Affairs, the Executive Mayor, HOD, Councillors for their attendance and active participation during the oversight visit and during the public hearing. He further thanked the Department of Co-operative Governance and Traditional Affairs for cooperation and the Legislature staff for providing support to the Committee.

Lastly, the Chairperson requests, on behalf of the Portfolio Committee, that the House adopts the report with its findings and recommendations.



**HON. WT MADILENG
CHAIRPERSON: PORTFOLIO COMMITTEE ON
HUMAN SETTLEMENTS AND CO-OPERATIVE GOVERNANCE &
TRADITIONAL AFFAIRS**

21/08/2015
DATE