

EZOTHUKELA NEWS

Uthukela District Municipality Online Newsletter

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Mayor briefs media on water challenges in the district

The Uthukela District Municipality residents have had low to no water supply since the beginning of the year. Further to this, the situation has been compounded by recent floods coupled with ageing infrastructure and also vandalism of the same. This has prompted the leadership of the Uthukela District led by the Mayor Inkosi NB Shabalala to summon a media briefing which was held at the Murchison Street offices in Ladysmith.

According to the Mayor, in thirteen months since taking over the office as new leadership they have inherited the municipality that has a backlog as far as the volume of water and sanitation is concerned. This is characterized by the ageing infrastructure and its capacity that cannot cope for the current and future demands. The Mayor attributed the water shortages in the district to power outages at some of municipality's reservoirs, ageing infrastructure, among other challenges. Another thing is the municipal fleet which is very old, almost over 10 years. The municipality that they are leading is operating under unfunded budget which make it difficult to effectively provide sustainable services.

He went on to say the municipality is owing creditors over R700 million which includes over R51 million of litigation as well as court judgements. The Mayor also mentioned the combination of sabotage by disgruntled employees who were unduly benefitting from the overtime and standby allowances. "We are also a municipality which is overwhelmed by maladministration, fraud and corruption which have led to council commissioning forensic investigation which amongst other expenditure when the municipality was incurring more than R 5 million monthly for fuel, oil, repairs and maintenance of our fleet", said Mayor Shabalala.

He said the new administration noticed that within the municipality there were lot of maladministration and fraudulent activities going on and they have subjected all of these to a forensic investigation which is currently underway. The Mayor also mentioned that they have noticed that there were projects implemented by the municipality which did not cater for the for the sod to turn which is a proper kind of approach needed. Most of the projects were like white elephant as they did not produce any water.

"We were also affected by load shedding that is ravaging the entire country as it has a negative impact to supply water sustainably to our communities. It also has a destructing effect on our water infrastructure such that in every turn when electricity supply is restored, it results in pipe bursts and also damages our pumps in the process", explained the Mayor. He also mentioned that the municipality is under administration which makes it difficult for the senior management to apply consequence management against the alleged misbehaving employees, as they normally do as they wish.

Mayor Shabalala then outlined numerous projects that are currently underway where local people are getting temporary employment during the construction phase. He also mentioned a number of projects that are still in the pipeline where it is envisaged that people will benefit a lot from. Responding to some questions, the Municipal Manager Mr Mnguni also mentioned that Uthukela District is grant-dependent, as our revenue collection leaves a lot to be desired. Consequently, therefore whatever activity the municipality does, it is dependently most on grants.

"We are cognizance of cost containment measures hence this session has no financial bearing thus far. We are in this serious quandary in relation to budget issues. On the issue of vandalism, we may sound rhetoric but it is a true reflection of what is happening on the ground", Mr Mnguni elaborated. He went on to say that if we were requested to provide some sort of evidence to corroborate our assertion in a form of pictures, we could actually be able to do so. He said a case in question that he could give reference to is one plant, the Winterton Water Treatment Works which could have easily become the state-of-the-art but it has never because immediately after those pumps were installed just before they were commissioned they were stolen.

"There are buildings that were vandalized, we have records, we have pictures as proof. Not so long ago, we experienced a similar kind of a pattern of behaviour where our plants are targeted for whatever good reason, I don't know. But that is one of the issues that are putting us on a back foot", he said. On the issue of load shedding, Mr Mnguni said with the shoe-string budget that Uthukela District has, no matter how creative we would want to be but we won't succeed on that. He said this is a transversal phenomenon which affects everyone. Some industries have completely collapsed due to persistent load shedding.

Mr Mnguni told the briefing that they have even engaged with service providers to see if it was feasible to install solar panels at the plants in the quest to circumvent the impact of load shedding. But the issue of safety is a concern as we cannot be able to hire security guards due to budget constraints.



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Improving lives with water provision projects

Delivering water to the community remains essential as uThukela District political leadership is fast-tracking the launch of several water provision projects in the district. The sod turnings are being facilitated in our local municipalities by teams of Councillors and Administration led by the District Mayor Inkosi Cllr NB Shabalala, Speaker Cllr TY Nqubuka, Cllr SV Shabalala and Municipal Manager Mr Mnguni respectively.



Mayor Shabalala with Ndlunkulu and Speaker Nqubuka

The team visited Okhahlamba local Municipality to introduce a contractor who will be undertaking a water project. The introduction was conducted at Stulwana Community Hall in Ward 14. GND Construction was handed water reticulation projects. The water project is expected to commence soon and will be completed within 12 months. The construction to install production boreholes and water pipes is expected to create more than 20 job opportunities for locals.

Similar activities were carried out at Weenen under Inkosi Langalibalele Local Municipality in the presence of uThukela District Mayor Inkosi Cllr NB Shabalala and his team of Councillors. They were joined by Inkosi Langalibalele Mayor Cllr Myeza, Deputy Mayor Cllr Dladla and Speaker Cllr Khumalo, Ward 20 Cllr Mlele and Izinduna during the event that was held at Msobotsheni Hall.

The purpose was to introduce water project to the community of Weenen. Sinethemba Construction was handed water project, which is a rising main for new abstraction point. The project will take up to six months to complete, and about 320 households will benefit from this project. More than 10 job opportunities will be created for the locals.

The last stop was at Vimbukhalo Community Hall under Okhahlamba local Municipality, where a team of Councillors led by Uthukela District Mayor Inkosi Cllr NB Shabalala introduced Yimpie Construction to undertake testing and equipping of boreholes. This project is expected to commence soon and to be completed within 12 months. About 10 job opportunities will be created for the locals.

The Mayor pleaded with the community to work hand in hand with the service provider in order for the project to be successful and completed on time. These projects are meant to give relief to a number of households, which are currently struggling to get access to water supply.

Community rejoices as they receive water supply

An enthusiastic select group of people from Vaalkop/ Maqanda area called Ma2000 in Ward 32 visited the UThukela District Mayor's Office to show appreciation for a job well done. This community has been without access to potable water since 2016, as it is a new settlement with steadily increasing population. According to these people, this area will now receive first-time access to clean potable water, thanks to the immediate intervention by Inkosi NB Shabalala, the Mayor of Uthukela District Municipality.

This exciting story started last month when a select group of people from Vaalkop/ Maqanda area called Ma2000, for the first time, visited the Office of the Mayor about their plight. "We were here last month visiting the Mayor's Office complaining about lack of water in our area. The people were fetching water from the river. We felt this practice was not safe as there are various criminal activities in the area. And with the Mayor's effort, we are truly grateful", said community representative, Mr Menzi Sithole.

Mr Sithole went on to say the community then decided to take action to relay their plight to the Mayor. He said the Mayor listened to their issue and made it clear from the onset that the municipality was operating under unfunded budget. But nevertheless, the Mayor committed to helping this community in every way possible. Jojo tank was handed over to the community and a borehole was also drilled in the process.

Water samples were taken to the laboratory for testing to determine if it was safe for human consumption. The results are still pending. The community also came together and contributed in the purchase of three more water tanks. They then approached Uthukela DM again for the connection of stand pipes. UThukela DM assigned a technician who will oversee water operations and also ensure that potable water quality and quantity is kept within the required standard.

The provision of clean and safe water, for drinking and sanitation purposes, remains an important goal to be achieved. It is also a prerequisite to the successful implementation of many other sustainable development goals including poverty reduction.

Mayor assesses work progress at the plant

The leadership of Uthukela District Municipality which included the Mayor Inkosi NB Shabalala, Chairperson for Water and Sanitation Portfolio Committee Cllr MM Khoza and officials visited the Ezakheni Water Treatment Works. The purpose of the visit was to monitor the work of removing the silt from the sumps which was started two days ago.

Upon arrival and inspection thereof, it was clear that the silt deposited into our pumps was too much than it was initially thought. The service provider had said they needed 24 hours to remove the silt, however when the process continued it became apparent that it was impossible to complete the task within the initially said period.



Mayor Shabalala with officials on-site

It is therefore envisaged that the work will be completed later on the following day as workers were working around the clock to meet the deadline. Meanwhile, the repairs work on the main water pipe running through Ezakheni C3 section was progressing well. It was expected that the repairs will be completed later on that day.

Water tankers were also dispatched to the affected areas until the water as temporary measure. A visit to Ezakheni C2 section was aimed at trying to fix all water leakages in order to ensure that the community has a stable water supply. Another visit to Ezakheni D section where persistent sewer blockage was identified by the leadership. A technical team was then assigned to find the root cause of the problem and then devised ways to unblock it once and for all.

Mayor monitors work at Ezakheni WTW

The community of Ezakheni and its surrounding areas complained and claimed to have not received water for a long time. This prompted the Mayor Inkosi NB Shabalala to visit the Ezakheni Water Treatment Works to find out if the work of removing the silt from the pumps was progressing.

It will be remembered that not long ago the workers at the plant were busy removing the silt that was deposited into our pumps during the recent floods. Good news was that the work was nearing completion. As from that day certain part of the community did receive water supply.

Mayor Shabalala apologized profusely to the community



of Ezakheni and Acaciavale areas as these communities have experienced water challenges. He assured them that they will do everything possible to ensure that they finally get water.

Uthukela District commences with the 2023/24 needs analysis and public consultation



Thukela District Municipality has embarked on the 2023/2024 IDP need analysis and public consultation roadshows. This comes as the District Mayor Cllr Inkosi NB Shabalala, together with his team of Councillors, Traditional Leaders and Administration personnel kick-started a very successful public consultation meetings over a three-day period from February 1 to 3. These meetings were held in areas like Tabhane, Sandlwane, Eyethu, Shiyabazali and Langkloof under Okhahlamba Local Municipality respectively.

The purpose of these consultation meetings was to do a community need analysis so that by the time the municipality prepares the budget it will then factor in all those needs identified by the community for the five-year term and also to ensure all interested and affected communities make comments and inputs to the municipal budget.

The IDP is a strategic planning instrument that guides and informs all planning and developments, and all decisions regarding to planning in the municipality for five years. Mayor Shabalala clarified and explained the core function of uThukela District Municipality as the provision of water, sanitation and disaster management.

"This is the meeting where we consult with the community to get their views in order to direct resources where they are most needed. Councillors should be an active link between the municipality and community for any queries that need attention," said Mayor Shabalala. The issues raised by the community were captured for the purpose of making amendments to the budget in order to ensure the needs of the community are met.



facing. About 500 precast VIP toilets are set to be built in the area. The project will also create 150 temporary job opportunities for the locals. It is also expected to take up to six months to complete and about 500 households are expected to benefit from the project.

This project is a direct response to sanitation backlogs in the district. The contractors who will be undertaking this project (precast VIP toilets) is DLV Project Managers and Engineers (PTY) Ltd. These concrete slab structures will also provide dignity and improve the lives of the communities. The communities of Okhahlamba Local Municipality welcomed and appreciated the project and work done by the uThukela District. "It is essential that we provide our community with dignified basic services through infrastructure of water and sanitation", the Mayor concluded.



Inkosi Shabalala addressing the community

This was the first round of the IDP consultation processes. With this initiative uThukela District is trying to improve communication lines between municipality and the community so that both parties clearly understand what is going on in terms of budget allocation according to the community needs. The Mayor also introduced a contractor who will be undertaking the construction of precast VIP toilets at aforementioned areas – Wards 4,5,8,9 and 10 in Okhahlamba Local Municipality.



Community members who attended the roadshows

UThukela District hosts EPWP Focus Week



The Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP) Directorate of the KZN Department of Public Works has convened a technical workshop which was organized and held at the Alfred Duma Civic Center in Ladysmith

The goal of the EPWP Focus week is to improve EPWP awareness and understanding by all relevant Public Bodies, State Owned Entities (SOEs) and Civil Society, improve effective implementation and reporting by public bodies and to expand on approaches for job creation and exit strategies in the Province

The EPWP Technical Practitioners from various sectors saw presentations from the Provincial Government Departments, District and Local Municipalities and technical support. This training programme is aimed at familiarizing practitioners who are part of the EPWP family on Legislative Framework and Implementation with technical requirements applicable in the construction industry, especially when dealing with capital projects.

The workshop serves as a conducive platform for skills transfer and information sharing as it will also equip all attendees with relevant skills and knowledge required when dealing with labour intensive projects. In most cases, labour intensive construction projects tend to employ unskilled people which in a way provides some form of a financial relief to disadvantaged communities.



EPWP workforce



Official is taking notes during proceedings

Ezakheni mainline water pipe fixed

Following the reports about water pipes were being blown up in Ezakheni D section, the Mayor Inkosi NB Shabalala visited the area of Ezakheni to check on the situation.



Service provider is hard at work

He also met with members of the community with the aim of explaining to them that they are trying their best to fix the water challenges.

Uthukela District employees, as well as the service provider were on the ground fixing other damaged pipes. Meanwhile, new pipes and pumps have also been installed at Ezak-

heni Water Treatment Works.

The work continued as expected and it was then envisaged that soon the situation will return to normal and the community of Ezakheni and the surrounding areas will receive normal water supply.



Workers operating tools of trade

Uthukela District with a plan for load-shedding

Uthukela District Municipality Mayor Inkosi NB Shabalala, Speaker Cllr TY Nqubuka, Water and Sanitation chairperson Cllr MM Khoza, Cllr F Zuma CFO Mr B Sithole, Municipal Manager and Corporate Service General Manager Mr OS Mnguni visited the Ntabamhlophe area with the aim of solving the water problem since the water pipe has been out of repair for some time.

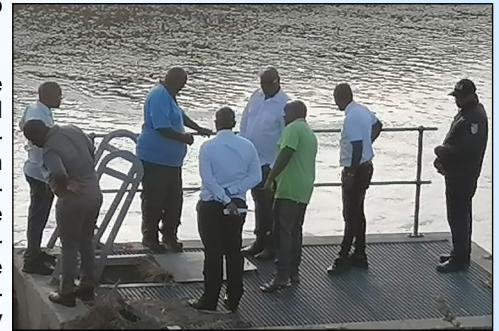


Management and leadership on site

And they also went to the Loskop area with the aim of looking at the new water scheme which has a issue, as the pumps there have bust. According to the Speaker, Cllr TY Nqubuka says that they will do everything possible to ensure that the people of Ntabamhlophe and Loskop get water as they had a meeting to discuss these issues to

so that they come up with a solution.

Another thing the Speaker complained about was the load-shedding, which seems to have a major impact on people not getting water because most of the pumps are using electricity. She said they will come up with a strategy on how to deal with the issue of load-shedding.



Uthukela District hands over sanitation projects



Speaker Nqubuka addressing the audience

The water problem is the biggest issue for the people of Uthukela District Municipality. This was highlighted when the communities of Wards 07 and 27 in the Alfred Duma Local Municipality were afforded the opportunity to comment on the issues they are facing.

This was done so that the Ward Councilors and the leadership of the Uthukela District Municipality could listen to their issues. This happened

during the needs analysis community outreach program that is currently underway.

Uthukela District Speaker Cllr TY Nqubuka was able to listen to the issues faced by the community. She then promised the community that their complaints will be processed by Uthukela District Municipality.

Meanwhile, the community of Ward 07 in Mcitsheni and the community of Ward 27 in St. Chad's each benefited from 100 toilets handover. The community also benefited from temporary job opportunities as 30 people were employed in each ward. The programme ended towards the end of March.

Another round of community needs analysis

Another service delivery intervention by Uthukela District Municipality saw the Chairperson of Water and Sanitation portfolio Cllr MM Khoza who was accompanied by Cllr Qwabe, Cllr Hadebe, Ward Cllr Ngubane and Induna Shabalala visited Ward 32, Rock Cliff Community Hall under Alfred Duma Local Municipality.



Cllr Khoza at the event

The purpose of the visit was to do a community need analysis so that by the time the municipality prepares the budget it will factor in all those needs identified by the community. This will also ensure all interested parties and affected communities make comments and inputs to the municipal budget.

Cllr Khoza also introduced a contractor to undertake 100 precast VIP toilets to be built in the area by DLV Project Managers and Engineers. Meanwhile, Sydwal Construction will be undertaking the spring protection project. These projects are expected to take up to six months to complete and about 40 temporary job opportunities will be created for the locals.

"The spring in this area will assist the community to receive water as the water provision has been a challenge in this area. We will continue to strive to decrease these challenges by providing our communities with reliable water sources", said Cllr Khoza