

## **MAKANA AND GBF MEET TO STRATEGISE ON CHALLENGE FACED BY THE MUNICIPALITY**

In an effort by the Grahamstown Business Forum (GBF) to try and work together with the municipality to address challenges faced by the municipality a Strategic Planning session was hosted by Makana Municipality and the Office of the Premier (OTP) at the 1820 Settlers Monument on Thursday, 16 February 2016.

The meeting was organised to create a platform for Makana Local Municipality, Government Departments, Private Sector and the Business Community to come together to discuss and find ways to address the challenges faced by the municipality.

The process leading up to Thursday's Strategic Planning Session was initiated by the Grahamstown Business Forum, under the leadership of Dr Trevor Davies, after having a meeting with the Office of the Premier last year. Following that meeting, the Premier's Office convened another meeting in December where it was resolved that a Strategic Planning Session should be convened with the relevant stakeholders to assist the municipality in addressing its challenges.

Among the stakeholders attending the session were: Makana Municipality (Mayoral Committee and Senior Management); Grahamstown Business Forum (GBF); Office of the Premier; Eastern Cape Socio Economic Consultative Council (ECSECC); Minister's Fraternal; Rhodes University; Makana Tourism; Grahamstown Foundation; National Arts Festival; Department of Water and Sanitation; Department of Economic Development, Environmental Affairs and Tourism; Revco; MBB Consulting Engineers; Private School Board; Provincial Treasury; Department of Roads and Public Works; MobiSAM; Public Service Accountability Monitor (PSAM) and Eskom.

In her welcoming address the Executive Mayor, Cllr Gaga emphasized that the strategic session should guide the meeting in its quest to better the lives of all who live in Makana. "Key to this strategy would be the development of the programme of action which will guide the implementation by various programmes. Adequate attention must also be put on ensuring that a sufficient sourced structure has to be developed for the implementation of this plan. Our deliberations should incorporate our strategic approach in the fight against illegal dumping, we must fight for a clean city," said the Mayor.

The session which was chaired by Mr Baphelele Mhlaba from ECSECC was an open platform for all stakeholders to speak and share ideas freely. An opportunity to ask questions and get clear responses was allowed from everyone throughout the session. Acting Municipal Manager Riana Meiring painted a clear picture of the current state of the municipality. The Acting Municipal Manager, was commended by the meeting for being honest and transparent about the challenges faced by the municipality. In her report Meiring outlined both positive and negative issues within the municipality.

She stressed that although the revenue collection has increased to 82 percent, which is about R23 million. For the municipality to be able to operate normally it

needs to raise at least R30million on a month-to-month basis to cover all municipal expenses. In her presentation, she outlined what the municipality has achieved, the challenges it faces and what the municipality is currently doing or making progress on.

After the meeting GBF secretary Markus Mostert said the GBF was delighted to be part of a collaborative initiative between provincial and local government and the private sector aimed at improving the quality of life of every citizen of Makana Municipality. "While it is easy to become overwhelmed by our challenges and complain about everything that seems to be going wrong in our City, the positive energy that radiated from the excellent facilitator and the other participants gave us much hope that, working together, we can and will make a difference and become a shining role model for other communities all over our beautiful, beloved country," Mostert said. He said the GBF is looking forward to continuing this productive relationship by negotiating clear outcomes and target dates.

National Arts Festival CEO Tony Lankester who was part of the meeting said he was encouraged by the level of commitment in the room - from Makana Municipality, other government departments, Grahamstown businesses, the NGO sector and other institutions - to confront and address the challenges our City faces. Lankester said there was a lot of positive sentiment from those present, and what seemed to be a genuine willingness to be part of the solution. "I am hopeful for the future of Grahamstown based on the engagement and passion of the participants, and, while the challenges are real and they are big, I am confident that we'll conquer them!" Lankester added: "I look forward to seeing the action plan that emerges, and to seeing the good ideas tabled properly captured, actioned and assigned to people - both inside and outside the Municipality - who will take accountability for driving them forward."

The Acting Municipal said: "it is positive that stakeholders could get together to discuss challenges that residents experience every day. It is important to show that the Municipality is committed to make a difference, even though it is going to happen overnight. I appreciated the high level and frank discussion that took place among all stakeholders. A summary of the resolutions taken at the workshop will be forwarded to the facilitator on Monday and the intention is to have a finalised action plan by Friday, 24/02/17

After the discussions it was decided that all the points raised during the session be noted and forwarded to the Facilitator and the Acting Municipal Manager for the development of an implementation plan for the said resolutions.

The meeting came up with 24 resolutions to be included in the implementation plan which include:

- That the proposal to include the electricity supply of Grahamstown East from Eskom to Makana, be investigated as it would lead to an improvement of the debt collection rate of Makana.

- That REVCO and Makana correct their baseline on the collection rate of Makana and do a data verification process.
- That Makana request PICC's intervention with the Department of Roads and SANRAL to ensure the fixing of the provincial roads in Makana.
- That the Office of the Premier, be tasked to intervene with the PICC to ensure that the funding proposals submitted by Makana to Human Settlements and the Department of Energy are prioritized and implementing agents are appointed.
- That Makana address the concern areas of potholes, water and electricity provision before the Sci-fest and National Arts Festival taking place, through their participation in the various Joint Operation Committees (JOCs).
- That the concept of "one rand from Business and one rand from the Makana LM" be used to fund beautification projects to be determined through the formation of various Clusters where the Business Forum and Makana LM are represented.

A full list of the resolutions will be published on the Makana Municipality website once the final document has been adopted.

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