

Let's all get with the programme in 2007

IN THE annual 8 January Statement of the National Executive Committee of the African National Congress, the ZK Matthews Award, conferred on the best performing group of ANC councillors, was awarded to the eThekweni Council. I was proud to stand up, to represent these councillors and to receive the award on their behalf. As a veteran of local government, I know all about the long hours, the important family events that you just cannot manage to attend, and the courage, patience and determination it takes to dedicate your life to the transformation of our society – to a non-racist, non-sexist, democratic one.

With the second Vuna Award under our belts, we can say that 2006 was a year in which we made progress. The council and officials of the eThekweni Municipality are indeed making a difference.

But, after decades of colonial and apartheid inequality and neglect, even our most dedicated efforts are but a drop in the ocean. The government alone cannot resolve the challenges of inequality and poverty. That is why we need to unite South Africans in a "people's contract to create work and fight poverty". For us to create sustainable progress we have to involve the whole of our society.

A new year lies ahead, filled with challenges and opportunities. We



Obed Mlaba
eThekweni Mayor

are already involved in some exciting catalyst projects that will turn areas around. A good example is uShaka and what it is doing for the Point area.

The International Convention Centre extension is going to open a range of possibilities and bring new business to the city. So, my wish for the new year is for all the people of eThekweni to "get with the programme", as the Americans say.

I'm not asking everyone to always agree with us or for everyone to belong to the same political party or religion. Let's focus on what we have in common, rather than on our differences. We all want Durban to be a great city; we all want the streets to be clean; we all want a safe and crime-free environment; we all want jobs and skills training; we want our people to be housed within communities where they are comfortable; we want good public transport; we all want to live in a city that caters for the needs of all our diverse communities. I think we can all agree on these points.

Now, are we more likely to achieve our goals if we work together – government, private sector, communities, and individuals or if we each go our own way? I know what I believe, which is why I extend the invitation, on behalf of the government to everybody, every organisation and business in the city to join us, to work with us to make 2007 the best year yet.

If we work together, the future's bright

WE BEGIN 2007 with great indications that in terms of economic growth eThekweni is moving in the right direction.

Our building and construction sectors have outstripped the national average. There has been a sharp increase in the number of registered companies.

Property prices – especially beachfront properties – are escalating.

There has been a huge increase in the number of building plans that have been submitted and even rentals for property are going up.

Car sales are increasing.

There has already been an upswing in the number of large-screen TVs that are being sold.

People around the world are more interested in South African goods and fresh produce. There is more interest in foreign investment.

Believe it or not, there is even an increase in the bottled water industry!

There is massive growth in small businesses.

Our tourism industry is growing quickly – also outstripping the national average – and looks set to grow even more. The A1 grand prix is upon us and throughout the year we will host wonderful events.

More and more people are becoming part of the formal economy.



Michael Sutcliffe
eThekweni Manager

All of this is helping to raise investor confidence in our city and province. And, raised business confidence is leading to an increase in job creation. So the news on the economic front is almost all

good – and this is long before even the first game has kicked off in the 2010 World Cup.

Of course, growth like this brings challenges, from the need to build capacity, through to increasing our city's entrepreneurial base, to growing jobs.

But poverty and crime remain two of our biggest challenges. I have established an interdisciplinary committee to act against crime, grime and bad areas.

Some of their work was evident in the results this past summer which by most accounts was one of our best yet. We are talking to communities about tackling crime. We are undertaking programmes to get the involvement of business and the private sector. All of these things are achieving a sense of optimism about the future of the city. So let's get focussed and work together to find solutions to what on the surface seem insurmountable challenges but if we all play our part, will get sorted out. Let's ensure we increase our levels of skills and education, our level of economic growth, our living and working conditions for everyone and we will find that we will have won the World Cup even before the whistle blows.

WE DON'T LIKE CRICKET, WE LOVE IT



ANTON Kieck photographed these fans as they cheered on the Proteas during the second Test against India at Kingsmead, Durban, in late December. The South Africans won the match by 174 runs, levelling the series, after having earlier suffered disaster against the tourists at the Wanderers. The Proteas won at Newlands a few days later, for a series victory. The cricketing action continues today as the Proteas face Pakistan in the third Test in Cape Town. Send your Durban photographs to *eZasegagasini Metro*, PO Box 5588, Durban, 4001; or e-mail *spincity@durban.gov.za* or *naidoothrusha@durban.gov.za* and we will publish the best high-resolution photos. Please provide your details and the names of the people in your picture

LETTERS

Consolidated bills hit KwaMashu pockets

WE HAVE been terribly affected by the council's decision to integrate water, electricity and rates bills in KwaMashu.

Was this decided at a private meeting to which the community was not invited – or was it just us, the KwaMashu community, who weren't informed about the sudden amalgamation of municipal dues?

Strangely, even one of our area councillors said he had not heard anything about this arrangement before it commenced.

Once the council had introduced the system of integrated credit, they started a new payment method for all employed people and pensioners. Again the council turned a blind eye to the unemployed majority.

Whenever we go to Florence Mkhize to make enquiries, the only thing council staff do is calculate the 25% (of debt) we have to pay up front, and the difference payable on easy terms.

Whether we have the resources to settle the debt is the least of their worries. It doesn't matter if we try to explain our financial

situation to the staff; all they tell us is that they are doing what the council requires – which is either receiving payment from us residents or cutting our supply of basic services. Not even our ward councillor can help.

One other puzzling thing is that, although we all receive similar services from the council, charges are not the same. You get next-door neighbours, using the same amount of water and electricity, but paying completely different charges. How is this possible?

Lastly, we used to know that people who were in possession of deeds of grants did not pay rates. What has happened to that arrangement? Why are we made to pay rates?

LEONORA KHUMALO
KwaMashu

THE decision to consolidate water, electricity and rates was not taken at a private meeting.

According to Section 68 of the Extended Powers Ordinance 18 of 1976, Section 102 of the Municipal Systems Act and the Credit Control

Policy approved by the council, the municipality may consolidate any separate accounts of persons liable for payments to the municipality and credit a payment against any account of such person.

Therefore the municipality was acting within the law.

Unfortunately the municipality does not have a programme for unemployed ratepayers at present.

The only assistance given to ratepayers was extended time to settle outstanding debt.

Previously this assistance was not given to ratepayers who were in arrears with rates.

The municipality used to take all these ratepayers to court, which led to sales-in-execution.

It is difficult to comment on different charges levied on two similar properties unless specific details are provided.

Deed of grants are legal documents that entitle ratepayers to properties. Ratepayers in possession of deed of grants are liable for payment of rates.

PHILILE MADONSELA
Treasury

Umlazi street renaming gone awry

I AM A RESIDENT of Ward 86 in Umlazi and we have a problem with unnamed streets in our area.

The naming process began some years ago but was never completed. Some of the street names are spelt incorrectly and others are not the ones we, as the

community, suggested.

When we take this concern to our councillor he sends us home, saying it is the council's fault.

We made suggestions as to what we would have liked our streets to be called, but something totally different was put up.

Does anyone in council care?

The area in question is Umlazi U-section. Please do something about this. We are not happy with the way things are.

SIPHO MBHELE
Umlazi