From the Mayor’s Desk

Dear Reader,

It is difficult to believe that three months have passed since the horrific #KnysnaFires swept through our area, leaving destruction and devastation in their wake.

I am sure that many will agree when I say that, following these fires, it is the resilience of our residents that stand out more than any other thing. The residents living in the 944 destroyed structures lost everything in a blink of an eye, and yet they soldier on, determined to rebuild what they lost so quickly. To these victims, and those who have supported and assisted where possible, I salute you. Although I was not physically affected by the fires, I can assure you that my heart aches for all of you as you take each tentative step in rebuilding your lives.

Speaking of rebuilding, I am extremely excited about the establishment of the Western Cape Premier’s Garden Route Rebuild (GRR) Initiative. An initiative that was launched to coordinate the public and private efforts in rebuilding the Garden Route following the devastating fires.

Reconstruction; humanitarian relief; infrastructure rehabilitation; environmental management and skills development are only a few of the areas of work that are being coordinated by this initiative. To read more about this great initiative and what it entails please visit their website, www.gardenrouterebuild.co.za.

By now you all know that the Knysna Municipality has a new Municipal Manager in Kam Chetty. To enable us to take this Municipality forward it is crucial to have the right leadership, and I believe that we now have that leadership in place. Let us all support him and his endeavours and work together to become stronger than before.

Let us create a town that we can all be proud of.

Kind regards,

Eleanore Bouw-Spies
KNYSNA REBUILDS

CONTROL OF MUDSLIDES AND EROSION

The Garden Route Rebuild Initiative’s Environmental Management work stream is installing 7,500 square meters’ erosion control blankets and 500 enviro-logs that will cover 7,000 various sites within Greater Knysna. These measures ensure that erosion and mudslides do not take place, especially during heavy rain. All these products are biodegradable.

From left: Mr Clive Africa (Eden DM Executive Manager: Community Services), Cllr Memory Booysen (Eden DM Executive Mayor), Mr Wayne Young, Dr Hildegard Fast (Coordinator: Garden Route Rebuild Initiative), Cobus Meiring (SCLI), Mr Kam Chetty (Knysna Municipal Manager), Ms Pam Booth (Knysna Environmental Management) and Mr Alan Winde (Western Cape Minister of Economic Opportunities) on a site visit on 23 August.

MEETING WITH NGO’s AND VOLUNTEERS

On 31 August Knysna Municipality and the Garden Route Rebuild initiative (GRR) held a successful meeting with various Non-Profit Organisations and volunteers at the Knysna Town Hall.

During this meeting, Mayor Eleanore Bouw-Spies acknowledged the tremendous contribution of volunteers and relief organisations during and after the fire. GRR engaged with the NGOs to identify the humanitarian needs still to be dealt with, and discussed a way forward for government and civil society to address humanitarian needs together.

Knysna Executive Mayor, Eleanore Bouw-Spies addressing attendees at the meeting held on 30 August in the Knysna Town Hall.

MEETINGS WITH FIRE VICTIMS

The Knysna Municipality is in the process of hosting a series of face-to-face focus meetings with the aim of listening first-hand to the needs of those affected by the recent devastating Knysna fires. In addition, the Municipality is eager to hear ideas from these groups. Ideas on how they can work together in the reconstruction of Greater Knysna are welcome.

The first focus group meeting held at the Brenton Community Hall on 29 August.

OFFICIAL BANKING DETAILS FOR THE KNYSNA DISASTER RELIEF:

Nedbank | Account Name: Emergency Fund | Account number: 1147920699 | Branch code: 198 765
Reference: Knysnafire | International donations: NEDSZAJJ
PROPERTY RATES HOLIDAY FOR FIRE VICTIMS

The devastating fires that destroyed billions of rands of urban development in Knysna have had a traumatic effect on the people’s lives and the economy of the town. During a Special Council Meeting on 24 August, in an effort to assist the 564 households that were completely destroyed, the Knysna Council approved the waiving of the rates on the affected properties for one year.

This contribution by the Knysna Council is valued at R16.5 million. In addition, the municipality has to date spent approximately R7.5 million to restore electricity and water services, provide waivers to demolition and planning applications and support numerous relief efforts.

LEARNER LICENSE PROGRAMME SECOND PHASE

Knysna Municipal Youth Desk launched its second phase of the Learner License Programme on Wednesday, 30 August.

The driver’s license process will be done in groups of 45 participants per phase. Those who passed their learner’s license tests and have not yet booked their learners their driver’s tests will be contacted by the Youth Desk in due course to do so.

This Learner License Programme was officially launched in March this year, with 350 participants. The aim of the initiative is to assist Greater Knysna's unemployed in obtaining their learners’ licenses, which in return will help them in finding employment.

FIRST TIME BUYERS ADVISED ON BUYING A HOME

The Western Cape Department of Human Settlements hosted a finance linked individual subsidy programme (FLISP) support workshop.

First time buyers and low-to-middle income households face many barriers when entering the property market, with challenges including affordability, credit worthiness and the supply of affordable housing in the province. FLISP aims to provide qualifying applicants, who secure mortgage finance with a financial institution, with a once-off subsidy towards their bond.

For more information on this, contact Zandile Damba on 021 483 4958 or send an email to Zandile.Damba@westerncape.gov.za.

FLISP workshop at the Hornlee Civic Centre on 17 August
SPELLING COMPETITION

On Saturday, 26 August approximately 85 learners took part in the Knysna Municipal Library Services’, third successful, annual Inter-School Spelling Bee competition at the Khayalethu Community Hall.

This competition, which aims to improve language skills and encourage reading, included competitors from Grades 4 to 7 who competed in the three municipal official languages, IsiXhosa, English and Afrikaans.

Spelling Bee winners at the Khayalethu Hall on Saturday, 26 August

ANOTHER HOUSING ACCOLADE FOR KNYSNA MUNICIPALITY

During the recent Govan Mbeki Human Settlements Awards ceremony held in Somerset West on Friday, August 11, the Knysna Municipality was announced as joint winners (together with the City of Cape Town) of the Govan Mbeki Human Settlements Award - People’s Housing Project category. They further were announced as runners-up in the Upgrade of Informal Settlements category for its Dam-se-Bos, Vision 2002 and Ethembeni, UISP projects.

This is the sixth time that the Knysna Municipality has received this prestigious acknowledgement since the launch of the Govan Mbeki Human Settlements Awards in 2008.

From left: Knysna Executive Mayor Eleanore Bouw-Spies, 7de Laan actress, Nobuhle Mahlasela and Integrated Human Settlements Manager, Mawethu Penxa at the Govan Mbeki Human Settlements Awards ceremony held in Somerset West on Friday, August 11