From the Mayor’s Pen

Ward Focus: Ward 1, Councillor: Irene Grootboom

The greater Knysna municipal area is steeped in natural beauty and surrounds some of the most picturesque areas of South Africa. Knysna is undoubtedly the jewel in its crown. Ward 1 consists of Rondevlei, Sizamile, Smutsville, Buffalo Bay, and the Knysna Lagoon. While these are all areas with unique challenges, the residents share a unique sense of community and camaraderie, standing by one another during times of difficulty and celebration.

As a municipality, we are doing what we can to cultivate new enterprises through our SMME Incubator Programme. Initiatives like these mean that we are assisting entrepreneurs in starting their own sustainable business. And, in time, they will be able to pay this assistance back by training others in their area of expertise.

I believe that women, as nurturers by nature, are naturally equipped to nurture their own businesses into thriving enterprises, benefiting themselves, their families, and our local economy.

Arguably one of the most influential female entrepreneurs of all time, and a personal inspiration to me, Coco Chanel once said “There is no time for cut-and-dried monstrosity. There is time for work, and there is time for love. That leaves no other time!”

Women are not only nurturing nurturers by nature, but are also loving and hard working. But I’d like to take the idea behind Chanel’s words a step further, because I believe that when you love what you do, then you won’t feel as if you’re working.

I am confident about the impact and contribution our women can make, and are making, to Knysna’s economy.

Knysna connects local business with the world

The installation of over 126km of fibre-optic cables will connect the entire Knysna municipal area with the rest of the world via high speed, broadband connectivity. This high speed connectivity will present unlimited potential for investment and economic growth.

“There is very little connectivity choice in Knysna and speeds are generally poor,” said Chairperson for the Governance and Economic Development Committee Councillor Emé Edge. “This has been hampering business productivity and investment in our area.”

This situation is set to change as the roll-out of the high speed fibre network will take place over the next five years at an investment value of approximately R150 million. “This new network holds unlimited possibilities for businesses in, with, and from Knysna,” said Edge. “It will be on par with networks in big cities in terms of speed, connectivity and reliability.”

“Businesses outside the region, where connectivity is slower, may relocate to Knysna in order to make use of the newfound high internet speeds. And once they are connected to this network, they may start offering new services that were previously impossible to deliver along slower connections like remote support and call centre operations.”

“Professionals who currently commute between Knysna and larger centres will be able to spend more time here thanks to instant connectivity and the possibilities of video conferencing," she continued. "Other businesses will be able to relocate or expand to Knysna as the high speed and real time nature of the fibre network will make it easy to stay on top of operations.”

In short, this high speed, fibre-optic network will attract investment to the greater Knysna municipal area, allow business growth and facilitate new job creation,” she concluded. “It will help us to create a town where people and nature prosper.”

Expanded Public Works Programme expands temporary earning potential

Ward 1 Councillor Irene Grootboom explained that the Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP) stems from the Growth and Development Summit (GDS) of 2003. “Four themes were adopted at this summit,” she said. “One of which was ‘more jobs, better jobs, decent work for all’.”

The GDS further agreed that public works programmes could provide poverty and income relief through providing temporary work for the unemployed, while carrying out socially useful activities.”

According to the Department of Public Works’ website, the EPWP was launched in 2004 and is still being successfully implemented. The website further states that: “The EPWP is a nationwide programme covering all spheres of government and state-owned enterprises. The programme provides an important avenue for labour absorption and income transfers to poor households in the short and medium-term. It is also a deliberate attempt by the public sector bodies to use expenditure on goods and services to create work opportunities for the unemployed. EPWP projects employ workers on a temporary or on-going basis either by government, by contractors, or by other non-governmental organisations under the Ministerial Conditions of Employment for the EPWP or learnership employment conditions.”

“And the EPWP has been running in Ward 1 as well – with great success,” Grootboom explained. “During the 2014/2015 financial year we were able to provide temporary employment to a total of 47 individuals in Ward 1.”

Of these 47 community members, one was employed as a youth advisor in Smutsville, 11 joined the solid waste team, four worked in the Sedgfield library, two were employed as fire fighters and 29 were employed during the upgrading of the new multipurpose centre in the George Street area.

“This is proof of this municipality’s commitment to job creation and poverty alleviation,” Grootboom concluded. “And these figures don’t even include those jobs created through the ward based projects! These efforts in creating temporary employment opportunities for our residents are clear indications of our intention to create a town where people and nature prosper.”

For more information on the EPWP, please visit www.epwp.gov.za. Employment opportunities and information may be accessed through the ward based projects.

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