



MEDIA RELEASE

Monday 30 March 2015
EMBARGO: Immediate

SUCCESSFUL FIRST WARD SUMMIT FOR KNYSNA

Speaker Eleanore Bouw-Spies initiated Knysna's first ever ward summit that took place on Saturday the 28th of March.

The aim of the summit was to investigate ways of improving the functioning of Ward Committees to improve participation and communication with the various communities in the Knysna area.

Bouw-Spies said it was a very successful day. "Research shows that public participation is declining, so obviously we have not been successful to date. For the first time we analysed the way we communicate – to the public, but also to the ward committees. The input and feedback we received was extremely valuable and it is now up to the municipality to implement these."

A report by facilitator Bianca Currie from NMMU in George highlighted the following as the key interventions necessary to improve the process – improving communication and feedback mechanisms, improvements in the facilitation processes used, greater contributions from the municipality and other stakeholders and generating greater public awareness of what the ward is about and the activities the wards are involved in.

Representatives from the Department of Health, Western Cape Provisional Government, Social Development, Families South Africa (FAMSA), South African Police Services (SAPS), Knysna Alcohol and Drug Centre and the National Council of Province (NCOP) gave presentations. Various issues were discussed including scope of services provided by the various organisations, how to improve communication as part of the public participation process, gaps and challenges in current legislation and the road map for the upcoming 2016 Local Government Election.

Addressing everyone at the summit she said that they could only be successful if they work together. "I am using Archbishop Desmond Tutu's comparison of the hand and the individual fingers – individually the fingers are weak, but all the fingers and the hand together are much stronger. Also internally we have to combine forces."

She said that public participation and the effective handling of community queries and communication is a focus area going forward. "In my opinion the public participation and communications departments should sit side by side, not in two different buildings. Ward committee meetings should be attended by both. If matters are reported, discussed or decided on there should be a communication strategy in place to ensure implementation is reported on and questions that arise get addressed. This is crucial."

She concluded by saying that as one hand the various parties create a team that can achieve results and create harmony. "Harmony creates a well-balanced environment for us to live and raise our children in. Delegates at the summit were in agreement that if we improve the participation process we will not only create harmony, stability, trust, share, peace and prosperous were some of the other terms that came up. It is clearly in the interest of each and every one living in this area to work towards to reaching our goals. Goals that ultimately benefit our residents."

ENDS

Knysna Municipality Communications Department
P O Box 21. Knysna. 6570. Western Cape. South Africa
Tel +27 (0)44 302 6300 (switchboard) or 302 6471 (direct)
Fax +27 (0)86 215 4818 e-mail communications@knysna.gov.za