



MEDIA RELEASE

Embargo: Immediate

DATE: 31 January, 2017

The three spheres responsible for housing

With regard to the provision of housing, the South African Constitution, Schedule 4 sets out the functions and responsibilities assigned to the three spheres of government - National, Provincial and Local government.

Some government departments only exist within the National Government, however Human Settlements exists within both National and Provincial Government as it deals directly with provincial service delivery. Housing falls within this service delivery.

The national Department of Human Settlements is tasked with implementing the mandate set out in Section 26 of Chapter Two of the Constitution that states: "everyone has the right to have access to adequate housing".

The Constitution further states that: "everyone has the right to have access to adequate housing". In this regard the "State must take reasonable legislative and other measures within its available resources to achieve the progressive realisation of this right." Therefore the Constitution creates obligations for government to take all reasonable actions to ensure that all its people have the opportunity to acquire a home.

The Local Government Municipal Systems Act of 2000 puts in place mechanisms and principles to ensure all of government moves towards social and economic upliftment and ensures access to essential services.

Despite the Knysna Municipality's strong belief in Section 26 of the Constitution, it is ultimately reliant on National Government to finance all Greater Knysna housing developments. National Government in turn provides the Provincial Government with the funds and the management of the implementation of housing projects then only becomes the responsibility of local government, or rather municipalities.

"Municipalities are often expected to carry out functions that are not specified or not allocated in the Constitution. Housing is a perfect example of this. Municipalities often do not have the resources required to undertake this responsibility. In other words, Municipalities become the implementing agency for the roll-out of housing projects, and these the housing programmes then become an unfunded mandate that creates additional burdens and challenges on the already strained resources of a Municipality, such is the case in Knysna current," explained Acting Municipal manager, Johnny Douglas.

Besides the external co-operation between the three spheres of government, Knysna Municipality has a well-structured and effective internal organisation that drives an effective municipal housing service delivery program.

“After all, the delivery of human settlements includes much more than just houses. It is the municipality’s task to provide the necessary services. Without water, electricity and roads, a house is not finished. The implementation of these tasks cannot be done by one department or section alone, but needs the cooperation of all departments that are involved in the delivery of human settlements,” added Douglas.

The Knysna Municipality’s Department of Human Settlements is responsible for ensuring sound public participation for all forms of housing development. Such public involvement begins with the development of a Housing Sector Plan that can meet the needs of all parties. In order to reach all involved interest groups, it is often necessary to use a variety of methods for communication and consultation. An example of such a plan is part of the Integrated Strategic Development Framework (ISDF).

“Although the Knysna municipality is committed into taking into account the interest of the community, it must look at the overall aims and needs of the broader Greater Knysna. It is crucial that we balance the need of the affected communities, or housing clients with the broader development responsibilities of the municipality.”

Knysna Municipality is in the fortunate position of having established a very good reputation for the successful delivery of housing. In closing, irrespective of whether housing is legally and technically a Municipal function, it is important that the Constitutional rights of all our residents to adequate and sustainable human settlements are upheld.

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