FROM THE DEPUTY MAYOR’S DESK

Dear residents

We are living in challenging times, the times of the Covid-19 pandemic. As President Cyril Ramaphosa said in his speech on Sunday night, it is the most definitive ‘Thuma Mina’ moment in the history of our democracy. He also declared a national state of disaster, and introduced some stringent measures in an effort to stop the virus from spreading throughout our country.

It is also a Thuma Mina moment for Knysna. Our economy is driven by tourism and events, both of which will be severely impacted by the special measures announced. Small businesses, informal traders and the hospitality industry will also be under considerable stress— It is a most challenging time for our community.

And yet, we dare not do it any differently as the alternative is unthinkable. Along with the rest of the world we are facing a medical emergency - the worst in over a century.

As the President said, he trusts that South Africans will respond positively to his call to common action. I call on all Greater Knysna residents to heed his call.

We have developed and implemented a contingency and business continuity plan for the municipality and are working with Province to make sure we are well prepared to deal with an outbreak in our area. Please familiarise yourself with the symptoms and preventative measures, and work with us to keep the virus at bay.

We will be celebrating Human Rights Day later this month – without the usual celebratory gathering. Maybe this year we can celebrate it by looking out for each other. As President Ramaphosa said, the epidemic will pass. “It is up to us to determine how long it will last, how damaging it will be, and how long it will take our economy and our country to recover. It is true that we are facing a grave emergency, but if we act together, if we act now, and if we act decisively, we will overcome it.”

Stay safe!

Till next month.

AUBREY TSENGWA, EXECUTIVE DEPUTY MAYOR

HOW TO TACKLE THE CORONA VIRUS CHALLENGES

At the time of going to press 554 South Africans and 384,432 people worldwide were affected. In an effort to contain infections, President Cyril Ramaphosa declared a state of national emergency, which made it clear that the virus was a major threat to the wellbeing of South Africans.

Here are some tips on how to weather this storm and tackle the challenges it brings head on:

PREVENTION

The virus is spread via touching an infected person or object, or being in very close contact with a sick patient. Prevent this spread and keep you and your family safe by covering your mouth and nose when you are coughing/sneezing. Avoid touching your face, eyes, nose or mouth, and avoid close contact with those who are sick. Make sure to clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces, and wash your hands often, especially before handling food/after using the toilet, or after you’ve coughed and/or sneezed.

SYMPTOMS

Symptoms are similar to flu and include fever, cough, difficulty breathing, fatigue, body/muscle aches. Only suspect you have COVID-19 if you have a fever along with a cough and shortness of breath, and have travelled internationally in the last 14 days, or had close contact with a confirmed or suspected case of COVID-19.

WHAT SHOULD I DO IF I THINK I HAVE COVID-19?

Do not panic. Phone the General Public Helpline 0800 029 999 and follow their advice. Stay home, except to get medical care as directed by the helpline. Do not go to work, school or public areas. Avoid using public transport and taxis. When in contact with others, wear a mask. Only discontinue home isolation in consultation with the helpline/healthcare provider (usually 14 days).
THE NATIONAL STATE OF DISASTER IN A NUTSHELL

- Beginning 18 March 2020, a travel ban for foreign nationals from high-risk countries wanting to enter SA
- SA citizens advised to refrain from travel to or through high-risk countries, effectively immediately
- SA citizens returning from high risk countries to be tested and put into self-isolation
- All foreign nationals who arrived in South Africa from high-risk areas since mid-February must be tested
- All spheres of government are prohibited from any non-essential travel
- Gatherings of more than 100 people are prohibited
- Visits to all correctional facilities are cancelled for the next 30 days
- Businesses must ensure that all measures are taken to intensify hygiene control
- Shopping centres must ensure that all measures are taken to intensify hygiene control
- The capacity of health centres to be increased nationally

FAKE NEWS

Lastly, we must stop spreading fake and fear-promoting news. We’ve had a head start compared to some other countries and know what it takes to decrease infection numbers. We can do it! Please adhere to the national State of Emergency requirements, and stay safe!

MUNICIPALITY IMPLEMENTS COVID-19 ACTION PLAN

At a special meeting held on Thursday 19 March 2020, the Knysna Council approved a contingency and business continuity plan for Knysna Municipality. Executive Deputy Mayor, Cllr Aubrey Tsengwa, said the Municipality has been following the Coronavirus crisis very closely and hence taken the decision to develop this contingency and business continuity plan.

Based on the 15 March 2020 announcement by President Cyril Ramaphosa which encouraged Social Distancing, the Municipality will implement an internal COVID-19 action plan that includes:

- gatherings of more than 100 people are prohibited, including for practise sessions, picnics, braai and play parks will be closed until further notice
- The Buffelskop camping site in Buffalo Bay will also be closed.
- The Town Hall and community halls with kitchens will be reserved as possible quarantine facilities.
- Council respects the sensitivity of funerals, however, attendees will be limited in line with the President’s directive on social distancing. The timing of burials will also be spaced out to reduce the number of people visiting graveyards at any one time.
- Hand-sanitation stations will be placed throughout the organisation and commonly touched areas will be disinfected at a higher frequency. A Hazard Analysis will be performed to identify key areas of focus when cleaning and sanitising. All cleansing staff will be trained to understand the reason for the inclusion of an area on the cleansing roster, the best method for cleansing and the appropriate use of the relevant cleaning chemicals
- Key personnel will be provided with off-site access to the Municipal ICT network to ensure service delivery can continue without disruption

In dealing with this pandemic, residents should be aware that the Municipality is going to need to determine which services are vital and must be delivered no matter what the circumstances and resources cost, and which can be suspended for a period of time until resources are available again. In doing this assessment, it is key that emotion and subjectivity is removed and a frank evaluation is performed as these services could be the difference between life and death, the tipping point for social unrest, or could even contribute to subsequent disasters.

The Municipality has been advised that, due to the impact of Coronavirus, certain materials that are required for the implementation of projects will not be available as they come from abroad. The materials cannot be purchased due to closure of factories and, in addition to this, many ports have been closed.

Please do not create additional panic by spreading rumours and fake news on social media or WhatsApp. In terms of Government Gazette 318 Disaster Management Act, 2002: Regulations issued in terms of Section 27(2) of the Act published on 18 March 2020, spreading false information could land you in jail.

Deputy Mayor Tsengwa encouraged the staff and the public to remain calm and to follow the standard hygiene practices recommended to prevent the spread of flu and other viruses.

“Be aware and be vigilant, wash and sanitize your hands and frequently used areas continuously. As President Ramaphosa said in this speech, there is no need to panic – we have the knowledge, the means and the resources to fight this disease. And we will”.

KNYSNA PLAYS HOST TO SALGA WESTERN CAPE SPEAKER’S FORUM

Deputy Executive Mayor, Councillor Aubrey Tsengwa welcomed members of the Western Cape Speaker’s Forum at a two-day meeting held in Knysna on 6 and 7 February 2020. The session was hosted by the South African Local Government Association (SALGA) at the Royal Hotel.

SALGA is a constitutionally mandated organisation responsible for local government oversight. It performs two key strategic roles within the system of government. It protects and robustly enforces the rights of the local government sector; and constructively disrupts areas of existing systems that hinder local government in its service delivery mandate.

EMPOWERING SMALL MEDIUM AND MICRO ENTERPRISES

The Local Economic Development Department of the Knysna Municipality collaborated with SANRAL to host an information session aimed at empowering local SMMEs. The session took place at the Khayalethu Community Hall on Wednesday, 29 January 2020. With close to 120 construction company owners in attendance, the purpose of the workshop was to share empowering information regarding construction work and business dealings with SANRAL. The SMMEs were afforded an opportunity to interact with the representatives from the agency, and information on how to qualify to work for SANRAL was shared.

A TIME FOR INTROSPECTION

Knysna Municipality wishes the members of our community who observe Easter, Pesach, or Ramadan a transformative time, even though the usual communal gatherings may not be possible in light of the threat of COVID-19.
KNYSNA MUNICIPALITY WANTS YOU TO REPORT CORRUPTION

Acting Knysna Municipal Manager Dr Michele Gratz is adamant that allegations of corruption within the organisation will be taken seriously. “We need the community’s assistance to ensure that we can thoroughly investigate any reported instance or suspicion and resolve it effectively,” she said.

“I would like to make it clear that any person who reports instances of fraudulent or illegal activity may do so anonymously, including municipal employees,” the Municipal Manager continued, “It is also important to keep in mind that agencies of government – including Knysna Municipality – must follow strict procedures when investigating allegations of corruption.

The process begins with reporting a suspicion or incident. “There are always rumours about corruption within organisations. Sometimes these are unfounded, malicious lies, but they often hold some truth,” said Dr Gratz. “We cannot, however, investigate a rumour or a vague statement. Incidents, suspicions and allegations of corruption must be lodged formally and correctly and include specific details.”

An easy and effective way to do so is by using the Municipality’s mobile application. A new development on the app includes a “Governance” tab with a “Report Corruption” functionality. This links to an independently managed anti-fraud and corruption app. Here members of the public, municipal employees and other stakeholders can anonymously report suspicions of corruption.

“As the app works on non-smart phones too, it really is the easiest, most efficient way to report your suspicion,” Dr Gratz explained, “But there are other ways in which you can blow the whistle.”

Suspiscions of transgressions may also be reported to:
· the National Anti-Corruption Hotline on 0800 701 701;
· tip.offs@westerncape.gov.za;
· the Provincial Forensic Services on 021 483 0931; and
· employees may choose to report directly to their line manager.

“When lodging your report, be sure to provide us with concise, yet precise information,” she urged. “Another good reason to make use of the app to do this, is that it prompts you to provide the necessary information every step of the way.”

It is not always easy to know what should be reported. Any suspicion of non-compliance with any law, rule, policy or value applicable to Knysna Municipality qualifies. As do any suspicions or instances of fraud, corruption, financial misconduct, waste of resources, misuse of municipal assets, sabotage, danger to public health or safety, sexual exploitation and abuse and serious malpractice.

“We have drafted an Integrity Management Framework which will assist us in eradicating malpractice,” she said. “It sets out our responsibility in implementing the Local Government Anti-Corruption Strategy and strengthens measures and standards for managing integrity and promoting ethical conduct within Knysna Municipality.”

“Level 1 water restrictions now apply, which allow:

- for the watering of gardens for one hour, 3 days a week;
- for the use of hosepipes for gardening and other purposes, and
- the use of irrigation systems from 18h00 to 19h00 during December to May (summer) and 17h00 to 18h00 during June to November (winter) as follows:
  - Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays – residents with even street numbers;
  - Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays – residents with odd street numbers;
  - residents should still obtain permission from the Director: Technical Services before filling swimming pools and undertaking maintenance; and

Please report water leaks and water abuse to 044 302 6331 (o/h) or 060 998 7000.

WATER RESTRICTIONS

NATIONWIDE LOCKDOWN CLOSURE OF MUNICIPAL OFFICES:
26 March – 16 April 2020

Following the declaration of President Cyril Ramaphosa of a Nationwide Lockdown on 23 March 2020, please note that the offices of the Knysna Municipality will close at 16h30 on Thursday 26 March 2020 and reopen at 07h30 on Friday 17 April 2020.

All essential & emergency services will be delivered.

Municipal accounts can be paid at the Post Office, Spar, Pick n Pay, EFT and EasyPay points nationwide.

For enquiries or emergencies, please contact the Knysna Fire Department on 044 302 8911.