

## **Municipality prepares to balance safety and service delivery**

In evidence of the fact that no one is immune to the corona virus, Knysna Executive Mayor Elrick van Aswegen has confirmed that a proportionately high number of staff members have contracted Covid-19. “The health of our staff remains our top priority,” he said. “As the pandemic escalates, we must find an equilibrium between service delivery and the health and safety of those who deliver those services.”

One municipal employee has already succumbed to COVID-19. With 98 staff members currently in isolation, 16 of whom have tested positive for the disease, the municipality is experiencing an impact on its service delivery. “We are managing this matter internally,” van Aswegen continued. “It does however mean that certain services will be limited during this time. We must implement drastic measures now to avoid the interruption of services on a larger scale later.”

Utmost care will be taken to protect staff members whose duties necessitate direct contact with the public. More details of what this will entail will be issued as soon as possible. In the meantime, the Driving Licence Department, Motor Vehicle Registration and Vehicle Testing Stations will be open between 08h00 and 13h00, from Monday to Friday. The pay stations at Flamingo Street in Sedgfield and Main Street Knysna will also follow these operating hours and residents are encouraged to make payments at Spar, Pick n Pay, EasyPay points or via EFT.

Staff members who have access to the necessary systems will continue to work remotely. Those who do not have access to these systems will be deployed in other sections. Knysna Municipality will follow the Amendment of Directions Issued in terms of Section 27(2) of the Disaster Management Act, 2002 (Act no, 57 of 2002), as gazetted on 3 July 2020 and as it applies to municipal operations and governance.

The municipality, in partnership with the Department of Health and Occupational Safety and the Safety Office, has already interviewed 143 staff members in an ongoing effort to monitor the spread of the virus. It has also implemented Standard Operating Procedures that facilitate timeous communication and targeted public health action.

“I shall engage with our various partners, from the South African Police Service to the education sector, to ensure that individuals, businesses and organisations abide to the safety regulations,” he stated. “We must adopt a policy of zero tolerance towards those who do not follow these simple safety precautions. The instances of positive cases are soaring – not only in South Africa, but in our own town. By following the safety regulations, we can still avoid our country suffering the utter devastation that so many others have – and still are. Our families, communities, society and economy are in your hands. Now more than ever, please act responsibly.”

“Thank you to those members of the public who follow the relevant health and safety regulations,” van Aswegen concluded. “It is encouraging to see how many of our residents take their responsibility to curb the spread of this virus seriously. There are unfortunately still those who ignore these basic precautions. Please do your part by washing your hands regularly and always wearing a mask when you are out in public.”

Knysna was declared a Hotspot in June. Residents are reminded to make use of Knysna Municipality's various communication channels, including the mobile application. The app is available for Android, iOS and non-smart phones.

The amended directions as gazetted on 3 July 2020 are available at <https://www.knysna.gov.za/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/COVID-19-DMA-Amended-Directions-Minister-of-Cooperative-Governance-Traditional-Affairs-GN-R748-of-3-July-2020.pdf>.

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**Knysna Municipality Communications Department**  
P O Box 21, Knysna. 6570. Western Cape. South Africa  
Tel +27 (0)44 302 6300 (switchboard) or 302 6430 (direct)  
e-mail [pr@knysna.gov.za](mailto:pr@knysna.gov.za)