

Knysna council prioritises safety of councillors

At a Council meeting last week the Knysna Council approved setting up several safe houses for Councillors and staff in the Greater Knysna area. The intention behind this is to ensure the safety of Councillors and their families should their lives and property be in danger, and to do more affordably than what happened in the past.

Knysna Municipality unfortunately in the recent past experienced the tragic loss of one of its Councillors, who was murdered. In the aftermath of this tragedy, two Councillors had to be evacuated and provided with safe accommodation. This cost the Municipality in excess of R600,000, plus the cost of personal security at more than R1,000,000.

Executive Mayor Ricky van Aswegen said that there has been an increase in protest action. “Protests often have a political undertone and Councillors have been threatened. As the unfortunate assassination of Victor Molosi showed us we cannot underestimate these threats. The value of life will always outweigh any monetary commitments to ensure the safety of the Councillors and our staff.”

He said up to now private accommodation was arranged at a considerable cost to Council. “In the long term it will be more cost effective to have our own dedicated safe houses and properties that meet the relevant criteria have been identified and will be converted to match required safety specifications.”

The Upper Limits of salaries, allowances and benefits of Councillors Notice No.43246 published on the 24th of April 2020, makes provision for official accommodation and furniture for full time Councillors. Provision is also made for personal security for Councillors, subject to a threat risk analyses by the South African Police Service.

Van Aswegen concluded by saying that as Councillors they are liaising with the community to try and prevent protest action. “Local Government issues we can address, but often their requests centre around Government functions, which is not in our control.”

ENDS
