

Municipality addresses housing issues

The housing situation in Hornlee has been at the centre of recent unrests in the area. While Knysna Executive Mayor Elrick van Aswegen admits that the current demand outweighs the current supply, he confirmed that various housing projects were planned, with a number already being executed.

“The combined reach that current and planned projects will have, will satisfy the existing housing backlog in Hornlee,” van Aswegen said. “This is ultimately dependent on funding that is conditional on a balanced approach wherein the impact is widespread and not concentrated in one location.”

During a meeting held with the Hornlee Housing Committee (HHC) on 28 September it was resolved that the municipality will identify appropriate land as a temporary relocation area for backyard dwellers in Hornlee, and report back to Council and the HHC in three weeks’ time. The item in respect of this resolution and to ensure compliance with national legislation in terms of alienation of land and implementation was drafted and tabled before Council followed by a unanimous Council resolution.

“It is critical that this issue be dealt with in terms of the relevant legislation and housing codes,” he explained. “We must follow the law to avoid some sort of controlled land invasion scenario.”

The municipality had already applied to the Provincial Department of Human Settlements for the implementation of a pilot project for backyard dwellers in Hornlee. This project will see the relocation of these residents to an already identified and serviced portion of land that lies within the approved municipal urban edge in anticipation of the approval of the application submitted to WCDoHS for the related project based on the typology housing model. This process will include survey of all backyard dwellers to establish extent of need and quantities required.

“The Backyarders Project will densify certain approved stands depending on the availability of land and whether current owners will allow for the subdivision of their properties. This will create housing opportunities in different phases and blocks,” said van Aswegen. “This project will be fast-tracked to contain the current situation.

“We are confident that the Backyarders Project will make a significant difference in Hornlee,”. “I remind residents that this will, however, take some time – although it is being fast-tracked. Please be patient and refrain from any further illegal protest action. This will not hasten the process but rather delay it. Also note that when it comes to the allocation of sites, the usual waiting list procedures will be adhered to.”

We are also committed to continuing with our other housing projects in Hornlee.” These projects include 155 sites under the Breaking New Ground plan and 157 sites under the Financed Linked Individual Subsidy Program (FLISP).

“Providing access to housing remains one of our main concerns,” he continued. “The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa makes it clear that housing is a function of National and Provincial governments and not that of Local government. We act as an agent on behalf of the State. Funding for housing development is provided by National and Provincial Government and, because of the vast resources required, the implementation of housing projects is called a Municipal unfunded mandate.

“I can also assure residents in other areas that housing projects are going ahead as planned throughout Greater Knysna,” van Aswegen concluded. “Neither efforts nor resources will be diverted from housing projects running in other areas, as this remains one of our top priorities throughout the municipal area. Furthermore, Hornlee Households must take note that the development process started after many years of delay with the initial development of the current projects nearing completion”, van Aswegen concluded

ENDS

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