

Permanent homeless shelter progress

Efforts to establish a permanent shelter for Knysna's homeless have been fast-tracked by the town's municipality. These members of the community had been housed in a temporary facility at Loerie Park shortly after the national lockdown came into effect. Council resolved to utilise a portion of erf 1343, Church Street, for the construction of a permanent shelter on 7 July 2020.

Acting Municipal Manager Dr Louis Scheepers said that a committee had been formed to facilitate this process. "This group is made up of representatives from the Greater Knysna Business Chamber, the Rotary Club of Knysna, SAPS Knysna, the Knysna Community Police Forum and the Department of Social Development."

Knysna Municipality, The Haven in Mossel Bay and the Department of Social Development will be the primary custodians of the facility. It will be run by Hephziba Solutions, a registered NPO.

Aside from providing a safe haven to the greater Knysna area's most vulnerable residents, the centre will offer a number of interventions. "This base will include a skills development facility to promote self-sustainability and addiction interventions run by the appropriate stakeholders. Where possible, efforts will be made to reunite and reintegrate visitors to the shelter with their families."

"As the Disaster Management Act Alert Level 1 allows certain sporting activities to resume, subject to strict adherence to the relevant regulations, we also need to consider an exit strategy for the temporary facility from Loerie Park," Dr Scheepers continued. "Making Loerie Park available to the sporting public will, however, be a by-product of realising our main priority – implementing a permanent solution to the problem of vagrancy in the greater Knysna area."

Dr Scheepers concluded by thanking the municipality's partners. "This project could not come off the ground or progress without the ongoing engagement with and support from critical stakeholders. Our partners include the organisations represented on the committee and, amongst others, local religious organisations, the Knysna Alcohol and Drug Abuse Centre, Families South Africa, the Rock Church, the Department of Labour, the Department of Health and, of course, the people of Knysna."

The deadline for the submission of comments and or objections by the public was 16 October 2020. These will now be evaluated in order for the project to progress to the next stage.

ENDS
