

STATEMENT BY THE EXECUTIVE MAYOR OF KNYSNA, CLLR THANDO MATIKA

Response to Notice of Intention to Intervene in Knysna Municipality

I acknowledge receipt of the notice issued by Western Cape Minister of Local Government, Environmental Affairs and Development Planning Mr Anton Bredell, indicating his intention to intervene in Knysna Municipality in terms of Section 139 of the Constitution. This is a serious development that merits a clear, factual and balanced response indicating our significant efforts to address longstanding challenges. While the notice raises concerns, the measurable progress this municipality has made, particularly since Council adopted the Consolidated Executive Obligations Monitoring and Enforcement Framework (CEOMEF) in June 2024, is of vital public interest.

Let me be clear, Knysna Municipality has not stood still. Since adopting the CEOMEF plan, we have taken decisive action to implement structural reforms and enhance service delivery. Over the past year, Knysna Municipality has methodically implemented the Section 154 Support Plan and made notable strides in governance, infrastructure and environmental compliance.

Governance and Institutional Reform

A series of administrative and governance improvements were undertaken in August 2024, as outlined in the initial implementation report.

- A comprehensive communications strategy was developed to enhance transparency and public confidence.
- The frequency and quality of executive management meetings improved, ensuring consistent strategic direction.
- The Internal Audit and Audit Committee regained functionality, supporting compliance and financial oversight.
- Updates to the Spatial Development Framework and Land Use Management System were initiated to better align planning and budgeting.
- Key vacancies were prioritised for filling and the organisational structure has been tabled for review.

By February 2025, the municipality had:

- finalised the **appointment of critical senior managers**.
- achieved 97% completion of the Audit Action Plan.
- broadened the rollout of smart metering for both water and electricity.
- tabled a budget-funding plan addressing sustainability beyond the 2024/2025 financial year.
- improved revenue management and expenditure control practices.

Service Delivery and Infrastructure

In December 2024, several infrastructure and environmental milestones were reached.

- The revamped waste transfer station achieved 100% containerisation of waste, eliminating previous environmental hazards caused by stockpiling.
- Key mechanical systems such as conveyor belts and hydraulic equipment were repaired.
- Odour management systems were reinstated.

- Stormwater inspections and corrective maintenance enhanced runoff- and odour management.
- An external audit yielded a 91% environmental compliance score.

Water and Sanitation Progress

A 23 January 2025 oversight visit by the Deputy Minister of Water and Sanitation reaffirmed that resolving Knysna's water and sewer challenges requires intergovernmental and community cooperation. Progress includes:

- upgraded pumping stations and reticulation networks.
- increased functionality at the wastewater treatment works.
- smart meter installations to curb water losses and improve billing accuracy.
- continued support in planning and compliance efforts from the Breede-Olifants Catchment Management Agency (BOCMA) and the Department of Water and Sanitation (DWS).

I introduced hands-on initiatives to reinforce transparency and oversight, such as the **Friday Site Visits**, which bring leadership directly to project sites and service hotspots.

Section 154 Monitoring and Reporting

A multi-stakeholder Steering Committee, comprising representatives from the municipality, Provincial Government, and National Government, was established since the adoption of the Diagnostic and Support Plan on 1 March 2024 to oversee implementation and ensure accountability. Regular Steering Committee meetings, held both virtually and in person, provided a structured platform to monitor progress, escalate issues, and coordinate support across all three spheres of government.

The latest Section 154 progress report was tabled before Council on 12 February 2025, supported by a comprehensive monitoring and reporting framework. Highlights from the latest report include:

- strengthened consequence management protocols.
- better alignment between planning, budgeting and service delivery through revised Integrated Development Plan integration.
- expanded interdepartmental coordination using dedicated support teams.
- the use of performance dashboards and escalation protocols to track Section 154 outcomes.

Environmental Compliance and Skills Development

The municipality responded to a notice from the Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment (DFFE) regarding wastewater non-compliance in May 2025.

- Mechanical defects at the wastewater treatment works were promptly addressed.
- A multi-stakeholder workshop held in April included DFFE, BOCMA, DWS, the Municipal Infrastructure Support Agency (MISA) and provincial departments to address discharge regulations.
- The municipality committed to weekly effluent quality reporting and applied for a coastal discharge permit.
- The Energy and Water Sector Education and Training Authority, in coordination with the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR), launched a training programme for local process controllers.

Partnerships and Long-Term Impact

Knysna's recovery is built on partnerships. Ongoing collaboration with national and provincial government, PetroSA, DFFE, DWS, CSIR, MISA and local civil society has unlocked resources, guided technical responses and aligned intergovernmental roles. We continue to

engage with the South African Local Government Association and Treasury to strengthen municipal finance capacity.

Seen in their parts, and as a whole, these interventions represent an unambiguous response to every support action and formal notice received over the past 18 months. From infrastructure rehabilitation and audit remediation to environmental enforcement and institutional upskilling, our progress is documented, measurable and continuous.

As Executive Mayor, I reaffirm our commitment to cooperative governance and invite continued collaborative engagement with provincial and national entities. For our residents, the changes that include containerised waste collection, wastewater plant functionality, smart meters and stronger governance, are tangible proof of our turnaround.

The journey is far from over, but Knysna is on the correct path. We are ready to sustain and accelerate this momentum, working together in the best interests of this community.

ENDS

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