

Planning Knysna's future starts with listening

Knysna Municipality welcomes residents, communities and organised sectors to the table as work begins on the 2027-2031 Integrated Development Plan (IDP) and Budget.

"The future of Greater Knysna will not be planned behind closed doors. It will be shaped through conversation, participation and the priorities of the people who live, work and invest here," said Acting Mayor Morton Gericke at the inaugural meeting of the Knysna IDP Stakeholders Forum held today, 7 October.

This meeting kicks off the first phase of consultation towards the new IDP and Budget. Ward committees will join the conversation on Saturday 10 October and the broader consultation process will continue beyond the 4 November local government elections to allow incoming political leadership, municipal administration, ward committees and stakeholder organisations to join the planning process. The forum will meet again in April after the draft IDP is tabled.

"Our intention is clear," explained Gericke. "Planning for the next five years must be about the long-term future of the municipality and its communities, and not a once-off consultation exercise. There is a simple principle behind our approach; good municipal planning starts with listening.

"Residents know where services are working and where they are falling short. Businesses understand the opportunities and constraints facing the local economy. Environmental organisations bring specialist knowledge about the area's natural assets. Schools, sporting organisations, community organisations and civil society each see different parts of the bigger picture," he continued. "Bringing these perspectives together will help us make better-informed choices about where limited resources should be directed."

The municipality recognises that there will be difficult choices to make. "The needs are many, while municipal resources are finite. Communities have competing priorities and infrastructure requires investment. Fiscal realities cannot simply be wished away," he said. "Honest discussions will help communities to understand what decisions will be based on. We also welcome constructive criticism."

Gericke made it clear that the forum will not replace ward committees. "The two mechanisms are intended to complement one another: ward-level priorities provide the community perspective from grass root level, while organised sectors contribute specialised knowledge and broader sectoral concerns," he said. "Together, they can help build a more complete picture of what Greater Knysna truly needs."

The Forum is expected to receive feedback on the Spatial Development Framework, municipal finances and infrastructure programme, creating opportunities for stakeholders to track progress and hold the municipality accountable.

Acting Municipal Manager Dr. Richard Martin stressed the importance of innovative thinking. "While they are important, we must aim higher than achieving the strategic objectives that informed previous IDPs. We must explore less obvious possibilities and set specific deliverables outside the usual framework. We live in an exceptional area with unique communities that have differentiated needs. Our planning must evolve beyond the norm to address our unique future needs."

“There is no shortage of challenges facing Greater Knysna. But there is also an opportunity to approach those challenges differently - by welcoming more voices to join the conversation early and to build a new plan based on what those voices have to say,” Gericke concluded. “Our goal is straightforward: to ensure that the future of Greater Knysna and all its communities is shaped with the people who call these places home. Planning for your future starts with listening today. And we invite everyone to be part of that conversation.”

ENDS

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 communications@knysna.gov.za