

REPORT OF THE PORTFOLIO COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION; CULTURE, SPORT AND RECREATION ON THE TAKING LEGISLATURE TO THE PEOPLE (TLP) IN GOVAN MBEKI LOCAL MUNICIPALITY, 14 SEPTEMBER 2017

EDUCATION SECTOR STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT SESSION – DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

1. INTRODUCTION

Section 118 (1) (a) and (b) (i) of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa empowers a provincial legislature to facilitate public access to and involvement in its oversight processes. The Mpumalanga Provincial Legislature conducted the Taking Legislature to the People (TLP) event at Govan Mbeki Local Municipality from 11 – 15 September 2017.

The Portfolio Committee on Education; Culture, Sport and Recreation (the Committee) has a mandate in terms of Rule 119 of the Rules and Orders of the Mpumalanga Provincial Legislature to hold the Department of Education (the Department) accountable through various oversight mechanisms during the course of a financial year. The Department is responsible for Outcome 1 of the Provincial Outcomes (to provide quality basic education).

House resolutions emanating from this oversight visit report will be referred to the Department for implementation and report back to the Legislature.

2. PURPOSE OF THE STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT SESSION

As part of the TLP programme, the Committee engaged stakeholders in the education sector on 14 September 2017 to hear their views and discuss their challenges in a solution-oriented forum.

3. METHOD OF WORK

Invitations were issued to the Department and relevant stakeholders such as the Department of Public Works, Roads and Transport (DPWRT), Provincial Treasury, the Office of the

Auditor-General SA, the Office of the Public Service Commission and SALGA, the Gert Sibande TVET College and the University of Mpumalanga.

The Department was requested to ensure that the School Management Teams (SMTs), School Governing Bodies (SGBs) and Representative Council of Learners (RCLs) were present at the stakeholder engagement session. Invitations were also extended to the South African Police Services (SAPS), as well as teacher unions SADTU, NAPTOSA and PEU.

Subsequently the Committee met on 04 October 2017 to consider and adopt its draft TLP report. The House resolutions emanating from this report were referred to the Department for implementation and report back to the Legislature.

4. GENERAL OBSERVATIONS

There were 64 attendees at the session. The following stakeholders were in attendance:

- Department of Education (HOD and the District Management Team)
- School principals and SGB's from the 27 schools in Bethal Circuit
- RCL's of the high schools in Bethal Circuit
- Teacher unions SADTU and NAPTOSA (PEU was invited but did not attend)
- Govan Mbeki Local Municipality
- Bethal Taxi Association and SC Zondo Transport (service providers)
- Department of Public Works, Roads and Transport
- South African Police Service (SAPS)
- University of Mpumalanga
- Gert Sibande TVET College
- Mpumalanga Regional Training Trust
- Ministers Fraternal (Rev TJ Mtshali)

The following 19 schools were in attendance (out of the 27 schools in the circuit):

- Jim van Tonder Primary School
- Ikhwezi Primary School
- Hoërskool Hoogenhout
- Thandanani Primary School
- Imbekezelo Secondary School
- Bonani Primary School

- Joubertsvlei Combined School
 - Langelihla Primary School
 - Sakhisizwe Primary School
 - Mzinoni High School
 - Enkundleni Primary School
 - AD Nkosi High School
 - Vukanini Combined School
 - Lamlile Primary School
 - Kwaggalaagte Primary School
 - Itjebissa combined School (farm school)
 - Amalungelo Primary School
 - Khuphukani Combined School (farm school)
- There is still much to be done in relation to provision of basic services and infrastructure at schools in Govan Mbeki Local Municipality, for example, toilets, water and electricity, Grade R centres and better infrastructure such as classrooms, laboratories, libraries, fencing, cooking facilities and administration blocks.

6. INTERACTION WITH STAKEHOLDERS

The Chairperson welcomed everyone to the session and invited stakeholders to raise relevant issues.

(a) School principals

The following issues were noted from the inputs made by the principals:

- Schools are inadequately secured and vulnerable to theft of resources such as computers at Ikhethelo Primary School.
- Schools are overcrowded due to shortage of classrooms and shortage of schools;
- There is a shortage of high schools in Bethal.
- Schools are not adequately resourced once they are designated as a Maths, Science and Technology School (MSTA).
- Learners with special needs remain in mainstream schools, which is a challenge. They are however supported by the LSEN unit (Learners with Special Education Needs).

- Some schools are next to taverns, such as AD Nkosi High School. The children arrive late at school and the parents are uncooperative.

The principal of Sakhisizwe Primary School indicated the following:

- The school has serious infrastructure challenges;
- Severe lack of ablution facilities (only 12 toilets for 1 735 learners);
- High rate of learners with no birth certificates as parents are foreign nationals. The principal was requested to submit a detailed list to the Circuit Manager of all the school's needs;
- Shortage of general assistants and clerks.

(b) National Professional Teacher's Organization of South Africa (NAPTOSA)

The Provincial Vice Chairperson, Doctor Masango, addressed the concerns faced by teachers. The following was noted from his inputs:

- Teachers need to be trained on the alternatives to corporal punishment document as provided by the Department;
- All acting positions must be filled;
- The Department was not coming across clear on its policy on foreign teachers;
- The shortage of textbooks at schools was a serious challenge, notwithstanding that schools needed to strictly adhere to textbook retrieval policies;
- The poor state of school furniture (learner desks and chairs) was a challenge.

(c) South African Democratic Teachers Association (SADTU)

- The budget cut that occurred at the beginning of 2017/18 financial year should never be repeated if education is really an apex priority for the Province;
- The non-filling of vacant posts for teachers, circuit managers, curriculum implementers, district office and head office is affecting the quality of teaching and learning; Temporary teachers must also be appointed after three months;
- Vacant posts have not been advertised for more than two years;
- The collapse of the ELRC was not good for the education sector;
- The provision of basic services such as infrastructure and water must be fast tracked as it affects learners negatively.

(d) University of Mpumalanga (UMP)

Professor John Shongwe from the UMP shared a slide show on the UMP development, its faculties and course offerings, which the principals, parents and learners in attendance appreciated. He also provided some information booklets which principals and learners were able to take back to the school to assist with career guidance.

(e) Gert Sibande TVET College

Mr. Jan Pretorius, Vice Principal from the college also shared a slide show on the TVET College, which he linked to the work that was being done in skills development in Govan Mbeki Local Municipality and specifically Bethal and surrounding areas. He indicated that 17 students from Evander and Bethal were studying in China.

Correct streaming of learners was also very important, for learners to be directed into artisan development. The stakeholders were surprised to hear that for every one qualified engineer, seven skilled artisans were needed.

(f) Mpumalanga Regional Training Trust

The CEO of MRTT, Mr. Riaan Oosthuizen also informed the stakeholders about the course offerings of the MRTT emphasizing that youth skills development was a priority of government. There were 677 students at Hydra Arc on the artisan skills development programme, who will qualify within 12 months. He further indicated that although the MRTT did not have a campus in Gert Sibande district, there were mobile units in Govan Mbeki Local Municipality.

6.1. RESPONSE BY THE DEPARTMENT

The following was noted from the HOD responses to the issues raised by the stakeholders in attendance:

- The budget cuts experienced by the Department in 2017/18 financial year would be in effect until the end of the 2018/19 financial year.
- The Department will address the re-prioritization of the budget (currently at 90% on COE and 10% on services).

- The issues raised by SADTU and NAPTOSA were noted; the matter of the collapsed Education Labour Relations Council (ELRC) as raised by SADTU will be addressed.
- The issue of textbooks was being addressed; a service provider was appointed to deliver to schools. The Department received an additional R120 million from EXCO for top up of textbooks.
- The Department was not in a position to absorb all temporary teachers – a legal opinion was awaited in this regard.
- The issues in respect of basic services provision were noted; the Department was addressing these matters but it faces a challenge in that it needs R386 billion in order to meet all the requirements of the Norms and Standards for infrastructure by 2030.
- The Department will work directly with MRTT instead of the Department of Public Works, Roads and Transport to assist with repair and construction of toilets as raised by the principal of Sakhisizwe Primary School. MRTT will be sent to assess the needs of the school.
- The Department does have a need for foreign educators.
- Training on alternatives to corporal punishment will be dealt with through the Teacher Development Programme.
- Regarding taverns operating in close proximity to schools, according to an EXCO resolution taken, these taverns licenses must be revoked. Schools should contact SAPS and the Department of Economic Development and Tourism (liquor licensing).
- The Department will re-allocate mobile classrooms that are not being used in the District, to the schools that need them in Govan Mbeki Local Municipality.

6.2. FINDINGS IN RESPECT OF THE STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT SESSION

After interacting with the stakeholders and the Department, the Committee made the following findings:

- (a) There are too many unfilled posts in the Department which have been filled in acting capacity for too long.

- (b) There was an outcry about the shortage of school furniture at most schools in Bethal and the Gert Sibande District at large is a serious challenge.
- (c) The Department has too many temporary teachers who have not been made permanent after working for more than three months.
- (d) A number of schools indicated the shortage of basic services (mainly toilets) and unsafe infrastructure.
- (e) The Department will utilize MRTT to assist with construction of toilets at Sakhisizwe Primary School.
- (f) The stakeholders indicated that Bethal has a shortage of high schools and that a 4th high school is needed, preferably for an economic/technical stream.

6.3. RECOMMENDATIONS IN RESPECT OF THE STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT SESSION

The Committee recommended that the Department must implement the following and provide a progress report by 30 November 2017:

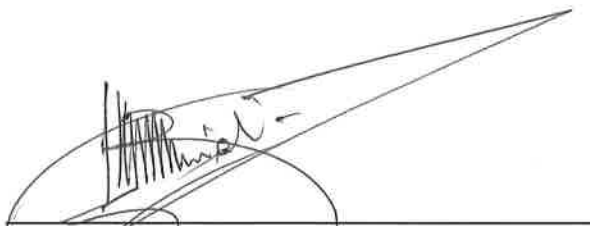
- (a) Prioritize and fast track the filling of all the approved critical vacant funded posts.
- (b) Prioritize the provision of school furniture and submit the Department's plan to address the school furniture needs of schools in Govan Mbeki Local Municipality.
- (c) Temporary teachers who have been employed for more than three months must be made permanent.
- (d) Improve the provision of basic services and infrastructure at schools in Govan Mbeki Local Municipality.
- (e) Provide a progress report on the provision of toilets at Sakhisizwe Primary School by MRTT.
- (f) Consider the construction of a 4th high school in Bethal circuit, which should focus on a technical/economic stream.

The House is requested to adopt this oversight report with its findings and recommendations. The Department is required to implement the House Resolutions contained in this Committee report and submit a progress report to the Legislature by 30 November 2017.

7. CONCLUSION

The Chairperson would like to thank the Honourable Members of the Committee for their constructive input at the Education Stakeholder Session during the Taking Legislature to the People (TLP) at Govan Mbeki Local Municipality.

The Committee appreciated the interaction with the Department of Education, the MRTT, Govan Mbeki Local Municipality and all stakeholders who participated in the oversight visits, public hearing and stakeholder engagement session during the TLP. A word of appreciation is also extended to the Legislature support staff for the support provided to the Committee.



HON. VV WINDVOËL (MPL)

**CHAIRPERSON: PORTFOLIO COMMITTEE ON
EDUCATION; CULTURE, SPORT AND RECREATION**

13/10/2017
DATE