

## COMMITTEE REPORT OF THE PORTFOLIO COMMITTEE ON PREMIER'S OFFICE; FINANCE; ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND TOURISM:

### UNANNOUNCED OVERSIGHT VISIT HELD IN THE NKOMAZI LOCAL MUNICIPALITY, EHLANZENI DISTRICT, 30 July 2019 – MAHUSHE SHONGWE NATURE RESERVE (MTPA)

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#### 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. In addition, sections 114 and 133 of the Constitution, read together with rules 218 and 131 of the Rules and Orders of the Mpumalanga Provincial Legislature (the Rules) directs the Legislature to hold the Executive accountable for the exercising of powers and performance of functions.

In carrying out its constitutional oversight and public participation mandate, the **Portfolio Committee on Premier's Office; Finance; Economic Development and Tourism** (the Committee) conducted oversight visits in the Nkomazi Local Municipality (the municipality) on 30 July 2019.

This report reflects the issues that emanated from the oversight activities during the said date, which will need further intervention of the **Department of Economic Development and Tourism** (DEDT) and its parastatal **Mpumalanga Tourism and Parks Agency** (MTPA).

#### 2. PURPOSE OF THE OVERSIGHT ACTIVITIES

The Committee assessed progress on projects that are assisted by the Department of Economic Development and Tourism (DEDT) and Mpumalanga Tourism and Parks Agency (MTPA). The Committee wanted to ensure that the DEDT's and entity's delivery of core mandated services is fast tracked.

### 3. METHOD OF WORK

As per the Legislature programme, the Economic Cluster had oversight visits planned for the period 30 – 31 July 2019 at the Nkomazi Local Municipality. The oversight visit was unannounced.

- On 30 July 2019, the Committee conducted the oversight visit at the Mahushe Shongwe Nature Reserve in the Nkomazi Local Municipality.

### 4. OBSERVATIONS AND COMMENTS

**The Committee observed the following:**

- The Mahushe Shongwe Nature Reserve is situated in the Nkomazi Municipality on the extreme South-Eastern part of Mpumalanga in a broad valley between the Lebombo Mountains in the East and the Great Escarpment in the West.
- The Mahushe Shongwe Nature Reserve is a community owned reserve (Mzinti); the smallest Provincial nature reserve (1 139 ha) in Mpumalanga and the land is managed by the Matsamo Tribal Authority.
- The reserve was proclaimed as the Mahushe Shongwe Nature Reserve by Proclamation No 12 of the Provincial Gazette No 132 of 29 March 1996 by the MEC for Environmental Affairs, Mpumalanga Province.
- There are no land claims on Mahushe Shongwe Nature Reserve. It is a community reserve that was identified by the Mzinti Tribal Authority to utilise for the purpose of conservation and beneficiation it may bring.
- MTPA entered into a lease agreement with the Matsamo Tribal Authority. The agreement commenced in April 1996 and subject to the terms and conditions will terminate on 31 March 2046; however the current lease agreement is under review as a result of certain limitation clauses, which in essence prevent maximizing benefits to the Mzinti communities caused by the previous regime.
- The entity indicated that the lease agreement under review is at an advance stage and it seeks to maximize landowner and community benefit.
- During the 2013/14 financial year, Mahushe Shongwe and Mawewe Cattle Game Project received Environmental Protection Infra-structure Program (EPIP) funding from the National Department of Environmental Affairs amounting to R10 000 000.00 for erection

of a 7 kilometre Game Proof Fence, Establishment of new ranger Picket and upgrading of Tourism Camp for Community Events.

- The reserve manager confirmed that the R10 000 000.00 was spent on the Mawewe Cattle Game Project and all the deliverables were achieved and that the funds were utilized accordingly. He reported the following challenges in the Reserve namely the lack of electricity and water due to a solar system that is not working and members of the community vandalizing the structures.
- During the 2015/16 financial year the Reserve further received an amount of R18 000 000.00 from the National Department of Environmental Affairs for Construction of the Bridge linking reserve, Upgrading of the picket into the Office Complex, upgrading of reserve manager's house, upgrading of the Mthomeni recreational facility, camp and swimming pool, store-room, Gate Entrance and the Guard House.
- The vacancy rate is 48%. Six (6) field ranger positions are filled out of a total of thirteen (13) positions (54% vacancy).
- The reserve closed in 2017/18 financial year due to construction, as a result, there was no income generation during the past two (2) financial years.

## **5. INTERACTION WITH THE NATURE RESERVE MANAGEMENT**

### **5.1. MAHUSHE SHONGWE NATURE RESERVE**

Mr MJ Nkosi: Reserve Manager at the Mahushe Shongwe Nature Reserve gave an overview on the Reserve. He further indicated that there were no activities taking place at reserve as the project for renovations was suspended.

Mahushe Shongwe Nature Reserve is a community owned reserve and maintains good relations with local community structures and Traditional Leadership. A priority is given to local communities regarding employment and business opportunities and the local community benefits regarding income related to game hunting and sales.

#### **The reserve management indicated the following challenges:**

- There are no activities currently and as a result there is no revenue generation, due to the renovations.

- The suspension of the project, which resulted in workers not receiving their income.
- There is poaching.
- Shortages of staff.
- Dispute between two (2) chiefs.
- Vandalizing of Mawewe Cattle game project.
- Lack of water.

### **5.1.1 FINDINGS MADE BY THE COMMITTEE**

**After the interaction with the reserve management the Committee noted the following:**

1. The suspension of the infrastructure upgrades project due to the amendment of the business plan by the National Department of Environmental Affairs.
2. The employees who signed the 18 months contract were left with no income after the suspension of the project. The project has been suspended for eight (8) months to date.
3. The reserve is not located on a prominent tourism route and is relatively isolated with no marketing strategy.
4. Infrastructure upgrades in the reserve has commenced and 50% of the allocated funds has been used to date.
5. There is no common ground between MTPA and the National Department of Environmental Affairs in relation to the projects at the reserve.

### **5.1.2 RECOMMENDATIONS MADE BY THE COMMITTEE**

**After the deliberations, the Committee resolved on the following:**

1. The entity must ensure that all relevant and required documents are furnished to the National Department of Environmental Affairs so that the project is implemented as planned.
2. The entity must ensure that the beneficiaries of the project are kept posted regarding their employment status and also ensure the fast tracking of resuming the project.
3. The entity must strengthen its marketing strategy as well as a sustainable commercial/tourism strategy to increase revenue generation sources.
4. The entity must monitor the infrastructure upgrades to ensure that the project is completed on time and that the funds allocated to the project are utilized for the planned purpose.
5. The entity must ensure there is a Service Level Agreement between them and the National Department of Environmental Affairs to avoid the inconsistencies noted above.

The Committee moves that the House adopts the report with the above recommendations.

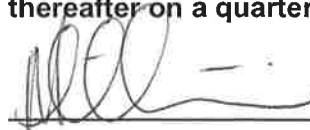
## 6. CONCLUSION

The Chairperson would like to take this opportunity to thank the Members of the Portfolio Committee for their active participation and constructive contributions during the oversight visits.

In addition, the Chairperson extends a word of appreciation the Mahushe Nature Reserve manager for availing himself to deliberate on matters pertaining to the above mentioned projects, the Nkomazi Local Municipality Speaker, the councillors and all other stakeholders for their co-operation during the oversight work of the Committee.

The Chairperson would also like to thank the support staff for contributing to the production of this report.

**Unless otherwise stated the Department of Economic Development and MTPA are required to investigate the observations and findings in this Committee report and implement all the House Resolutions. The report detailing progress in the implementation of all recommendations should be forwarded to the Committee by 30 September 2019 and thereafter on a quarterly basis.**



**HON M LATCHMINARAIN (MPL),  
CHAIRPERSON:  
PORTFOLIO COMMITTEE ON  
PREMIER'S OFFICE; FINANCE;  
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND TOURISM**

22.08.2019

**DATE**