

## MAYORAL ADDRESS TO ORDINARY COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON 28 SEPTEMBER 2023

Good Morning Speaker, Deputy Mayor, Aldermen, Chief Whip, Councillors, Municipal Manager, Directors, Officials, Members of the Media and the Public

Over the past couple of weekends, we have experienced extraordinary weather conditions across the Western Cape that have caused much damage to infrastructure and private assets.

During the storm surge, the extent thereof was probably much worse than was expected resulting in more damage than anticipated. We are extremely grateful to our emergency teams and the various service delivery teams who were called in to deal with the clean-up operation from the Sunday, escalating on the Monday after the exceptionally high tides had settled.

During the on-site inspection at Herold's Bay on Sunday morning, decisions were made to remove debris that could cause further damage during the next high tide. This included the removal of the generator for the sewer pump station to ensure it was not damaged any further. Wooden walkways and bridges, signboards, electrical kiosks, benches, paving and the retaining wall were either destroyed or damaged. The full costing of the damage will no doubt run into millions of rands. Damage was also caused at Gwaiing, Victoria Bay and Wilderness beaches.

We extend our sympathies to the family and friends of the elderly lady who passed away after being caught in a monster wave with other onlookers in the Leentjiesklip parking lot.

Much damage has been caused to private property and critically to the primary sand-dunes along the coastline.

In the days following the storm surge, SANParks and our municipality undertook the mammoth task of trying to move sand deposited under the N2 and railway bridges across the Touw River and within the lagoon area to ensure that flood waters from the massive rain storm over the past weekend did not swamp the surrounding area.

While receiving 99mm of rain over the weekend of 23-25 September, George was extremely fortunate to have not had much damage in comparison with the deluge of rain that fell in the municipalities of Overstrand, Cape Agulhas, Theewaterskloof, Langeberg, Stellenbosch and Drakenstein where there has been considerable damage to infrastructure and other assets. Yesterday, on 27 September we were requested to render assistance to Overstrand, and our 35000 litre fire tanker and a 7000 litre water tanker left yesterday to provide help.

By last night, Overstrand had already been without electricity for 90 hours and had run out of water with numerous pipelines damaged and requiring repair. This picture is similar in other areas around the Western Cape.

Over the past few years, our municipality has intensified our efforts to improve stormwater infrastructure in vulnerable areas and to be more prepared for adverse weather conditions that appear to be occurring more regularly. We are fortunate to have received disaster relief grant funding of over R200m following the November 2021 floods that are being applied to repair and restore damage that was incurred at that stage.

I believe that it is this dedication to duty in maintaining our infrastructure along with the service delivery ethic that has played an invaluable role in minimising possible damage. We are thankful to management and staff for their commitment to undertake the work they are doing for George.

Over the past few weeks, we have experienced a fair amount of damage to electrical infrastructure, including last evening on the Eskom side of the Schaapkop electrical substation. Much work is being done on preventative maintenance in the view of ongoing loadshedding. Electrical equipment is expected to operate on 24/7 basis and accordingly the incidents of damage occur as loadshedding takes place or on the restoration of power thereafter.

There is major concern about the spikes in electricity usage that occur following periods of loadshedding with the restoration of power particularly after 16h00 to 18h00 causing excessive peaks as households rush to prepare meals, use appliances, stoves, geysers, etc.

I raise this point because our public will collectively need to become self-disciplined to reduce their electricity demand.

Within the Parkdene and Conville areas, there has been damage to a substation that will require fairly extensive repair work. Electrotech has been working to relay power to the area and to undertake repairs to provide power until more permanent repairs can be undertaken. This is an example of the risks we now face as a result of loadshedding.

In recent weeks our repair teams have also had to deal with water pipeline breakages as well as lack of water pressure in the Skuinsbank Street area in Herolds Bay. We thank all our teams who undertake these repairs.

I would also like to comment on the green shoots that are appearing in the economy.

We are in ongoing discussions with the WC Dept of Education about the schooling needs for George with the Dept having earmarked the need to plan and develop 4 schools as quickly as possible.

It is pleasing to note that construction on the new MediClinic development is commencing. There are numerous housing developments underway across George that will provide additional accommodation. These developments add to the housing stock and will also spur on the development of more housing in the affordable sector.

The development of a major industrial park close to the Airport is also welcomed as this will add to warehousing space and cold storage that is needed.

A number of entrepreneurs have indicated that they have expansion plans that will result in more employment opportunities in George.

We are now at the end of the third quarter of 2023 and I would like to thank our Municipal Manager, Directors and their teams for work this quarter. Thank you too to the Councillors for their continued work this quarter.

Thank you, Speaker.