

Good morning, Speaker, Aldermen, Deputy Mayor, Whip of Council, Councillors, Municipal Manager, Directors, Officials, Members of the public, the media, and to our residents tuned in on our YouTube Channel.

We have experienced some extremely devastating losses in these passed two months, and I think it only apt to have a moment of silence to commemorate the loss that has been felt by officials within our municipality. Speaker, if you would permit me. Thank you all and please accept our sincerest condolences to all who have lost loved ones during this time. Our hearts, go out to the bereaved.

Mr. Speaker, as we move to give our residents and the rest of Council an account of all that we have been busy with during the past two months, I must emphasise that as a well-functioning municipality in the Western Cape, we have to be examples to teach other municipalities how to govern as our President stated. Let's get started.

Since our last address, Mr. Speaker, I am happy to announce that we have spent 100% of our BFI grant funding. I will repeat, as of September 2025, George Municipality has spent 100% of the R1.115 billion Budget Facility for Infrastructure grant. We have spent the entire grant we received in just three and a half years – this is six months ahead of the projected four-year period. With our BFI grant and supplementary funding from the

municipality, we were able to invest into 12 major components of bulk water and sewer infrastructure. Many of these works were implemented in phases to ensure long-term sustainability.

To our residents in Thembaletu, I am so extremely proud to announce that we have officially unveiled the Ilisoletu logo. I know there are some councillors in this Council who incorrectly claim that “there is nothing going on in Thembaletu.” Residents, this is simply not true. We have said on multiple occasions that we govern for the WHOLE of George Municipality and the work being carried out at this precinct is just one example of the stellar work we are doing in this neighbourhood. Cllr Toto, I would like to thank you and the community members in ward 13 who participated in creating the logo for this precinct. It will go a long way in bringing identity to this development and all who make use of it. Residents, Ilisoletu is more than just a development, it is an investment into the future of Thembaletu.

The Ilisoletu precinct consists of eleven investment packages that have been identified to drive social and economic development. We are promoting social cohesion in this area. We know that there are many social ills, across our city, none of us are completely protected against this. But as a municipality, we need to ensure that we put mechanisms in place to mitigate this harsh reality. This is why Ilisoletu is so important. I will focus a bit on Project 7 of the precinct, this project comprises the Park

Run and Trim Park Recreation Route and during the 2024/2025 financial year we upgraded sidewalks along Ntaka, Schaap and Bomvana Streets. We have invested over R3 million in upgrading sidewalks related to the recreation route and a further R450 000 will be allocated to the final sidewalk section, while street furniture and lighting along the route will require approximately R 350 000 which brings the total investment to nearly R4 million. Through projects like the Ilisoletu precinct, we are bringing our residents together, creating safe and open spaces and restoring dignity. This is how successful government restores dignity.

Now Mr. Speaker, while I am on the subject of restoration and dignity, earlier this month we handed over homes to residents at our Metro Grounds housing development as well as at Erf 325. In what I refer to as a housing handover blitz, we handed over 112 houses to residents over the span of three days. In this, we also celebrate a first for George as we handed over our first-ever dedicated housing to military veterans.

During these handovers, I had the honour of joining the National Deputy Minister of Human Settlements Tandi Mahambehla and MEC of the Department Infrastructure in the Western Cape as we handed over 30 keys and title deeds to our military veterans. George is the only municipality in the country where residents receive their homes, and title deeds on the same day. In doing

so, we not only preach restoration, but we actively practice it because with your title deed comes immediate ownership.

I would also like to keep our residents updated regarding the handover of houses thus far:

- **Syferfontein Project:** 874 homes completed with 860 title deeds transferred, plus R4 million invested in greening and landscaping
- **Metro Grounds Project:** 322 families already moved in, with R192 million investment delivering 632 Breaking New Ground homes across three phases

This is proof that despite the challenges we face with our housing backlog, partnerships and perseverance deliver results. Every home that we hand over gets the next beneficiary closer to receiving theirs.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to speak directly to our residents at this point. Especially those who are on our housing waiting list. We know that the wait feels long and sometimes overwhelming, but we see your patience and we acknowledge your hope and each time we handover a home, it brings you that much closer to receiving yours, so we thank you for your patience.

In keeping with our innovative measures, we have also officially launched our 24-hour law enforcement service, marking a significant milestone in community safety and crime prevention.

As one of South Africa's fastest-growing cities, George has faced mounting challenges with crime and safety concerns. As a municipality, we have responded decisively to these challenges by building on our already established 24-hour CCTV monitoring network with round-the-clock boots on the ground.

The new 24-Hour Law Enforcement Rapid Response Units feature a contingent of 29 dedicated officers, strategically deployed across four key operational areas:

- **Emergency**
- **Response**
- **High-Visibility Patrols**
- **Specialized Operations**
- **Emergency Support**

This pilot phase represents a significant investment in community safety, complementing the city's existing 24-hour CCTV monitoring infrastructure. The phased implementation will see various law enforcement components gradually integrated into extended shift operations, ensuring community safety.

Mr. Speaker, about a week ago I had the honour of hosting the inaugural Community Relief and Partnership forum which brings together NGOs and NPOs to create a coordinated approach in managing any unforeseen or disaster response. The establishment of this forum comes as response to devastating events that have impacted our communities in recent years. I

want to thank organisations like the Pacaltsdorp Community Business Association, the Lions, Empower, the Thembaletu Business Chamber, Love George, the Round Table, to name but a few for joining us for our inaugural meeting. This is how successful government builds partnerships.

The newly established forum creates a formal platform for enhanced collaboration, enabling all participants to pool collective expertise, resources, and knowledge to better serve residents during times of crisis and will meet once a quarter.

The forum is designed as a collaborative platform rather than a replacement for existing organisational roles, emphasising partnership and knowledge-sharing among participants.

Then Mr. Speaker, in a proactive bid to safeguard the water security of the Garden Route Dam, we have launched a comprehensive alien vegetation management programme in the Katrivier catchment area. This strategic initiative aims to restore ecological balance and improve water flow into one of the region's most critical water sources. This is how successful government protects natural resources.

The alien vegetation clearance in the Katrivier catchment represents a vital step in protecting the Garden Route Dam and conserving every precious drop of water. Alongside our R1.115 billion Bulk Infrastructure (BFI) investment, plus R300 million in municipal funding for upgrading treatment works, reservoirs, and

pump stations, we are securing a reliable water supply for all residents. Together, these initiatives demonstrate our unwavering commitment to long-term water security, environmental sustainability, and building a resilient future for George. Councillors, here you can see, it is not just about applying for grants and receiving it, but it's also us, as municipality coming to the table to show that we are proactively doing our part also to further water security.

Now, Mr. Speaker, Councillors, let us take a look at what our departments:

Civil Engineering Services

Our Civil department has been hard at work, and they have replaced and installed over 1 500 water meters in the Conville and Parkdene area. Above and beyond this we have also replaced 12 km of water pipes in the same area. To add to this, I would also like to give our residents and Council a summary of all valve chambers that we refurbished on our bulk water supply pipelines over the past 14 months:

- Total cost of project – R 3 585 150 excluding VAT on completed works for the 2024/25 financial year from CRR
- Total project cost for 2025/26 financial year R 2 987 400, 62 excluding VAT also from our CRR

This is what you call proactive work in the space of water security and water resilience. This is how a successful government maintains infrastructure.

Community Services

We officially launched our new weighbridge at our landfill site last month. Now Mr. Speaker, a weighbridge is required at all landfill sites in our country for accurate waste tracking, ensuring proper waste charges, and meeting South African Waste System (SAWIS) reporting requirements in order for planning future site capacity.

The newly installed weighbridge is high tech, fitted with a number plate recognition camera, robots and new software. This is how a successful government manages waste efficiently.

Community Safety and Mobility

In terms of this department, residents will be happy to know that we have appointed two examiners for driving licenses, both who have already assumed their positions. These two appointments will reduce waiting periods which we are aware is a headache for our residents, what I want to bring across to our residents is that we are continuously working on bettering our services.

Our CCTV control room has also seen major successes in these past few months; they have been able to track stolen vehicles

which led to the arrest of a suspect. It has also led to the arrest of suspects who have stolen copper cables, as well as laptops and laptop bags.

Our fire services attended the G20 summit, had a successful display at the annual agricultural show, successfully executed the first controlled burn for the cleaning of the Katrivier, and will be taking on ongoing operations for the Katrivier clearing.

This how successful government fights crime within a local government mandate, provides emergency services, and maintains law and order.

Corporate Services

Our Corporate Services team has been hard at work with upgrading our halls, they have:

- Tiling of Waboomskraal Hall's ablution facilities.
- Tiling of Lawaaiikamp Hall, kitchen.
- Purchased of Laptops for new Councillors.
- Installed Aircon units in the Civic Centre's main hall
- Painted Thembaletu Hall's interior.
- Buffed and varnished the floor of the Conville Community Hall.
- Replaced the lighting in the Parkdene Hall
- Painted the interior of the PARKDENE Hall

Above and beyond that, our department has also successfully installed high resolution cameras in our council chambers so that our residents can also be a part of what takes place in council sessions.

Then on a Human Resources side, our placement process has commenced after the approval of a revised organisational structure which came into effect on 1 March 2025. To date, five directorates have already been supplied with individual placement letters.

Electrotechnical Services:

Our Schaapkop substation is one of the main substations within our municipal area and currently only has a 1 x 120 MVA transformer. Our tender for the second transformer has closed and is currently being evaluated. The appointment of the successful service provider is expected within the next two months.

Furthermore Mr. Speaker, in our pursuit to better serve our residents, become more energy resilient and less reliant on the ever-increasing ESKOM tariffs, we have changed our focus to buying energy from Independent Power Producers (IPPs.) We have embarked on two parallel processes, short term and long term PPA. The bid for the short term IPP was advertised with a request for a proposal to provide renewable energy to the

municipality for a three-year period. The tender is set to close on 31 October 2025.

This is how a successful government ensures energy security.

Planning and Development:

Our Planning and Development Department continues to excel across multiple divisions. In terms of the Spatial Planning Division, the amendment of the 2023 MSDF will commence this term in preparation for the next generation IDP.

We are currently investigating five different parcels of land with potential for development, catalytic to economic growth, job creation and provision in the demand for affordable housing. The aim of these investigations is to package the land release to invite investors to develop the infrastructure needed to unlock the potential of these sites.

Among the sites investigated is a site for proposed mixed use development along the R102, which will enable industrial expansion and, once fully developed can yield approximately 11 000 employment opportunities.

On the side of Environmental Planning, we have developed Riverine Maintenance Management Plans for the Gwaing, Meulen, and Schaapkop Rivers and their tributaries and are now open for comments. These plans will enable responsible maintenance of municipal infrastructure in sensitive water

courses and marks the first steps to ensuring ecological infrastructure is preserved and their functioning is enhanced and ensures that our urban green infrastructure is not compromised by urban growth.

A draft Climate Action Plan has been adopted and will be subjected to participation in order to refine and improve our response to the impacts of climate change. Steps that will take us closer to being resilient and ensuring our city remains safe and green.

Furthermore, Mr. Speaker, from a strategic growth and development standpoint, our department has successfully hosted major events that showcase George to the nation and the world:

We hosted the:

- Cantamus Choral Festival in early August which brings together approximately 1500 students from across the country and is the largest schools choir festival of its kind in the country.
- George Agriculture Show which is one of the oldest most beloved agricultural shows in the country.

This is how a successful government promotes tourism and economic growth.

Mr. Speaker, as I conclude, what I have presented today is a comprehensive account of how a well-functioning municipality operates.

Of course, Mr. Speaker, I say all this with the most gratitude to those who are responsible for these successes – our amazing municipal officials. Thank you to each of our directors for your leadership, thank you to Municipal Manager for steering the ship, and thank you to our MMCs for your oversight role. I ask only that we continue on this trend so that we can continue to be a municipality that our residents can be proud of.

Thank you.