

Deputy Mayor, Speaker of Council, Chief Whip, Aldermen, Councillors, Acting Municipal Manager, Chief Financial Officer, Directors, officials, and most importantly, the residents of George —

Today, I stand before you to present the Adjustment Budget for the 2025/2026 financial year. Now, Mr Speaker, as I deliver this adjustment budget, some may ask, “Why now?”

To them I say: I am your Mayor. I am here to listen. And I am here to act.

An adjustment budget is not merely a compliance exercise. It is a demonstration of responsible governance. It reflects our ability to respond to realities, recalibrate where necessary, and ensure that our strategic objectives remain firmly on track. It is a sign of responsiveness. It allows us to refine, realign, and ensure that every rand works harder for the residents we serve.

I stand before you not to make promises, but to demonstrate delivery. We have listened to our residents. Governance must be practical. It must be measurable. And it must be felt in the daily lives of our people. And because we listen — and because we care — we have increased our operating budget by R103.3 million.

A job creates dignity and this increase in our adjustment budget, will see more opportunities rolled out to our EPWP programme. During this council meeting, I will seek support to establish an EPWP Oversight Committee to strengthen transparency and accountability in the implementation of the EPWP programme within our municipality.

Mr Speaker, residents, we have experienced challenges in the implementation of this programme. Some of these challenges stem from within our ranks where internal mechanisms are being manipulated to advance political agendas. Individuals entrusted to serve impartially have, in certain instances, used this programme to advance their own affiliations rather than fairness.

Let me be clear: this programme exists to serve the people — not a connected few.

That is what responsible leadership does. It listens. It reassesses. It adapts. And then it acts decisively. This is why in this adjustment budget; the following groundbreaking initiatives will be undertaken to ensure safety for our backyard dwellers.

Let me address an issue that has been used recklessly in this municipality: the plight of backyard dwellers.

For some, the struggles of backyard residents became a political tool — used to spread misinformation, to inflame emotions, and to mislead our residents, rather than to provide solutions. That approach does not restore dignity. It exploits vulnerability.

We will not exploit our people. We will help them.

We are not here to mislead — we are here to lead.

Anyone can identify a problem. Leadership provides solutions.

With this increase in our operating budget, we will issue a call for proposals for modern technology solutions, like Nu Tech housing, for safety support structures and assistance. We already earmarked over R2 million for this initiative alone.

Yes, Councillor, we are pursuing alternative and innovative approaches that provide dignified dwellings for residents in distress.

Dignity. Safety. Security.

And we do so while creating local employment opportunities.

Dignity is not a slogan. It is service in action. Mr. Speaker, we are not exploiting our residents in their time of need, we are not playing on their emotions. We are listening, we are providing solutions. We are leading.

In response to residents' concerns regarding the green belt, I conducted a site visit after residents made contact with me raising safety and environmental hazards. This morning, I am pleased to announce the appointment of 20 additional EPWP workers as part of this budget to assist with cleaning and environmental management in all areas of our city, which includes the green belt.

Furthermore, the Department of Forestry, Fisheries and Environment has provided funding for an additional 100 EPWP workers to focus specifically on cleaning our water bodies.

That is 120 employment opportunities created.

We listen.

We respond.

We act.

Other key contributors to the operating budget include:

- R24.6 million increase in operating grants, primarily for GIPTN operations.
- R15.2 million decrease in electricity revenue due to lower consumption patterns.
- R17.7 million projected increase in property rates and service charges, driven by growth in our ratepayer base.
- R32.6 million increase in interest earned due to disciplined investment of surplus funds.

These figures reflect financial stability and prudent management.

Capital Budget:

Following the mid-year assessment, directorates reviewed project progress and realigned cash flow projections. As a result, the capital budget increases by R79.5 million.

Key adjustments include:

1. R44.7 million in bridge financing to complete GIPTN Streets projects, pending additional funding from National Treasury. We will not allow administrative delays elsewhere to stall progress here. We plan responsibly. We bridge strategically. We deliver consistently.
2. Electro-Technical Services adjustments — R16.7 million reallocated into outer financial years. Projects are not cancelled. They are responsibly phased.
3. R5.8 million allocated to finalise the compost plant, reducing landfill volumes and strengthening environmental sustainability. Clean governance includes a clean city.
4. Funding allocated to upgrade community halls and the Rosedale area office following direct engagement during a Mayoral Walkabout. We listened — and we budgeted accordingly.
5. R800 000 additional investment in CCTV infrastructure. Safety is foundational.

While many municipalities face fiscal distress, George remains financially disciplined and people centred.

To the residents of Uniondale: earlier this year, community leaders approached me with a proposal for a Mayoral Easter Tournament to unlock tourism and sporting potential.

I am proud to confirm that this tournament will proceed, with R50,000 allocated in direct support, alongside in-kind services.

Uniondale is not an afterthought. It is integral to George.

The planned extension of Go George services to Uniondale, in partnership with the Provincial Department of Mobility, signals inclusive growth and integrated planning.

We see you.

And we are investing in you.

We are also proceeding with the electrification of backyard dwellings — not to entrench informality, but to ensure safe access to basic services while residents await formal housing opportunities.

The housing backlog is a national challenge. Progress has not kept pace with demand in many areas. While we continue to engage constructively with our national counterparts regarding projects such as UISP in Moeggehuur, we will not stand idle.

Mr. Speaker, Councillor and residents, some may say that these changes are being brought about because it is an election year, but to them, I would like to echo the words of my predecessor, Ald von Brandis, “when you’re in local government, every year is an election year, and every day you build towards that campaign.” These changes are to continue the momentum, to continue the change, to continue the responsive governance, to continue governing in the best interests of our people. In local government, every year is a year of accountability. Every day is a day to deliver.

This adjustment budget is about stability in uncertain times.
It is about disciplined governance when others falter.
It is about listening, adjusting, and delivering.

We are strengthening infrastructure.
We are investing in safety.
We are expanding opportunity.
We are protecting dignity.

And we are doing so responsibly.

George will not drift.
George will not delay.
George will lead.

Let us move forward together — confident, focused, and united behind a municipality that works.

Thank you.