

Honourable Speaker, Members of Council, Acting Municipal Manager, Directors, and Members of the Public,

Good morning.

Today, I have the distinct privilege of presenting a draft budget that builds on the difference we are already making. Last year, we tabled a budget of difference. This year, we deepen that commitment—not only to extend that difference, but to ensure that it is felt more clearly, more fairly, and more widely across our municipality.

Mr Speaker, this is a budget of responsiveness. It is a budget shaped by listening—listening to the lived realities of our residents—and, more importantly, acting on what we have heard. Because leadership requires action, not noise. And this budget demonstrates how we lead to make a difference.

At a time when households across our country are under pressure from the rising cost of living—when electricity prices, interest rates, and unemployment continue to weigh heavily on families—we are confronted with a simple but difficult question:

How do we remain financially sustainable while protecting our residents from further hardship?

Our answer is clear: we act responsibly, and we lead decisively.

Residents of George, today I will table a draft budget worth nearly **R5 billion**, it consists of a capital budget of **R791 151 494** and an operating budget of **R4 018 249 831**. This is a draft budget shaped by the voices of our residents, and one that shows that we have listened.

Tariff Increases

We begin where it matters most—**with tariffs**.

For the 2026/2027 financial year, average tariff increases are set at **3.7%**, in line with CPI. This applies to:

- Property rates
- Water
- Sanitation
- Refuse
- Other municipal services.

This is not by accident. It is a deliberate choice:

- A choice to protect our residents.
- A choice to avoid overburdening middle-income households.
- A choice to lead with responsibility.

In real terms, this means that we are protecting our households from increases above inflation.

Electricity:

Mr Speaker, electricity remains one of the most pressing concerns for our residents. We have all seen how our residents actively engaged with us regarding the proposed increases from NERSA. I raised these concerns in Council. I wrote to NERSA. We took this matter to the public through participation processes.

Following that extensive public engagement, and after formally raising the concerns of our residents with NERSA, we were confronted with a **9.01% increase in Eskom's bulk tariffs**.

Many municipalities have simply passed this increase directly on to their residents.

We have chosen a different path.

Through careful planning and responsible decision-making, we will implement a **7.88% increase** on electricity across the board.

This means that the municipality is absorbing a portion of the increase. We are not shifting the full burden onto our residents. We are sharing that burden.

That is what responsive governance looks like.

That is what leadership in action looks like.

Assistance to Vulnerable Residents

Mr Speaker, supporting our most vulnerable residents is not optional—it is fundamental. It is a responsibility we simply must fulfil.

In this budget Mr. Speaker, residents we are introducing one of the most progressive indigent support frameworks we have implemented to date. We are building on the groundbreaking step we took last year, and we are further extending our reach to even more households.

We are expanding support to our residents as follows:

- **Level 1 support:** Up to four times the SASSA grant (R0 – R9 680)
- **Level 2 support:** Up to six times the SASSA grant (R9 681 – R14 520)

This expansion brings many working-poor households into the support net for the first time.

Level 1 households will receive free basic services.

Level 2 households will receive a 50% subsidy.

Inwoners, ek wil dit duidelik stel:

- Vlak 1-deurnisondersteuning geld nou vir huishoudings wat tussen R0 en R9 680 verdien.
- Vlak 2-deurnisondersteuning geld vir huishoudings wat tussen R9 681 en R14 520 verdien.

Leierskap vereis aksie, nie geraas nie. So maak ons 'n verskil.

We are also further increasing our free basic electricity provided to indigent households.

We are also further increasing free basic electricity for indigent households.

I would like to share a moment from a public meeting in Convent Gardens. A resident, Mr Gouws, asked a simple but important question:

“Kan die munisipaliteit nie meer krag vir ons deurnis inwoners voorsien nie?”

We listened. We went back to the drawing board. We engaged.

And today, I can confirm it is possible.

We are increasing free basic electricity from **70 kWh to 80 kWh per month**—an additional **10 kWh per month** for qualifying households.

This is not symbolic. It is practical relief.
It is responsiveness translated into action.

Support for Low to Middle-income and Pensioner Households:

Mr. Speaker, we are also strengthening our support for low to middle income households and pensioner in the following ways:

- Property rate rebates increased to **40%** (up by 10%) for households earning less than **R198 000 per annum**
- Property rate rebates increased to **20%** (up by 10%) for households earning between **R198 000 and R217 800 per annum**

For pensioners:

- A **40% rebate** (up from 35%) applies to those earning up to **R429 000 per annum**
- This applies to the first **R2 475 000** of the property value
- Applicable to residents over the age of 65, for their primary residence

This ensures that our pensioners are not priced out of their homes.

Infrastructure Development and Investment

Mr. Speaker, while it is important to provide relief, we must also continue to invest in the future. This budget continues to prioritise infrastructure for all wards across the municipal area. I would like to speak to some of these investments:

Civil Engineering Services:

- Over R6 million stormwater upgrades for Haarlem.
- Nearly R9 million stormwater upgrades for Thembaletu.
- R10 million for upgrading of streets in Uniondale including Hospital Street, Victoria Street, Aberdeen Street and Gardener Street.

- R3.6 million for the upgrade of Nelson Mandela Boulevard in Thembaletu.
- Over R14 million for the upgrade on Pacaltsdorp Pumpstation 3.
- R3 million for the upgrade of Uniondale sewer network.
- R14 million for the Phase 2 upgrade on the Gwaing WWTW.
- R8 million for the upgrading of Pacaltsdorp water works in Andersonville.
- Over R1.5 million for the upgrade of water reticulation works in Rosemoor.
- R8 million for groundwater exploration.
- R2 million for the Malgaskraal dam.
- R14 million for the development and equipping of alternative water sources.

Above and beyond some of the infrastructure projects that we are undertaking, we are also investing:

Community Safety and Mobility:

- R4 million for a medium pumper fire truck.
- R32 million for the replacement of sprinter busses.
- R2.5 million for CCTV optic fibre.
- R5.5 million for fibre link to the N2

And Mr Speaker, let me make this real.

Just yesterday, many residents saw a video circulating of a cable thief stealing from the back of a municipal vehicle.

Because of our investment in CCTV and law enforcement:

That individual has already been identified, tracked, and arrested.

This is exactly why we invest in technology and enforcement.

Because when we say we are improving safety—
it must translate into visible consequences for crime.

Community Services:

- R5 million for cemeteries – George.
- R4.5 million for the extension of new cemeteries in the Uniondale area.
- R5 million for the building of a compost plant.
- R3.5 million for compactor trucks.

Mr Speaker, dignity in our communities is not abstract—it is practical.

That is why we have allocated **R20 million** in this budget for the rollout of wheelie bins.

This rollout will extend to:

- Formal areas
- Informal areas

- Green belt areas
- Areas affected by baboon activity

Because every resident deserves to live in a clean and dignified space.

Corporate Services:

- R575 000 for the Rosedale community centre and area office.
- R120 000 for the upgrade at the Pacaltsdorp community hall.
- R900 000 for the upgrade at the Touwsrante community hall.

Electrotechnical Services:

- R2.5 million for high mast lighting.
- R5 million for the upgrade of the Tamsui substation.
- R3 million for street lighting.

Responsible Governance

Mr Speaker, this budget puts our departments to work, and we will hold them accountable for delivering on what has been set out here today. It is critically important that this is not just a budget on paper, but one that is truly felt by our residents in their daily lives. This requires us to continuously assess how we implement our programmes and whether our methods of implementation are effectively serving our communities in the best possible way. Mr Speaker, with the announcements I have made, it is important to emphasise that while we are providing relief and driving meaningful difference, this must be supported by ongoing reflection and improvement. We must be willing to return to the drawing board where necessary, to review our by-laws and ensure that our implementation is accurate, efficient, and fully aligned with the needs of our residents.

Our residents must not only be informed about the difference we are making and the change we are bringing—they must experience it and benefit from it in a real and tangible way.

Furthermore, our capital programme is disciplined:

- It is prioritised
- It is funded responsibly
- And it is structured to avoid placing unnecessary pressure on tariffs

Because **today's relief must not become tomorrow's crisis.**

Mr Speaker,

This is a budget that reflects:

- A government that listens.
- A government that responds.

- A government that acts.

We now call on our residents to participate in shaping it further. The public participation process will commence shortly, and we encourage all residents to make their voices heard.

Tell us where we can go further.

Tell us where we can do better.

Because responsiveness is not a once-off exercise—it is a continuous commitment.

Mr Speaker,

As we table this draft budget, we do so with a clear understanding of the responsibility entrusted to us. This is not just a financial document—it is a commitment. A commitment to protect our residents where we can, to invest where we must, and to lead with purpose at all times.

We have made deliberate choices in this budget. Choices that place our residents first. Choices that reflect the realities people are facing every day. And choices that ensure that while we provide relief today, we are also building a municipality that can sustain and grow into the future.

This budget reflects a government that does not stand still in the face of challenges, but one that responds, adapts, and acts. Because ultimately, our responsibility is not only to manage resources—but to improve lives.

Every rand in this budget is a choice—and we have chosen our residents.

Leadership requires action, not noise.

And this is how we lead to make a difference.