



Keynote Address to the BCMM Council Open Day by the Executive Mayor, Cllr Xola Pakati

16 May 2018

Programme Director, Speaker Councillor Alfred Mtsi

Deputy Executive Mayor, Councillor Zoliswa Matana

Chief Whip of Council, Councillor Mzwandile Vaaiboom

Fellow Councillors from our Metro

Religious Leaders present

Traditional Leaders present

Management of the City

Members of the Community and Stakeholders

Ladies and Gentlemen, good morning!

It is with great pleasure and honour that I get to be speaking to you in this Council Open Day which is held with the intention of deepening democracy and ensuring that we streamline the views of the people of the metro in our planning. We believe that this gathering will go a long way in strengthening governance and democracy in our city.

We are almost in the middle of the calendar year and towards the end of our second financial year as this current term of council as we assumed office in August 2016, just after the start of the 2016/17 financial year. This means that the vision, which is mainly contained in the manifesto of the governing party, should be visible and that we should be at the stage of actualising its intentions.

The year 2018 has been declared by President Cyril Ramaphosa to be the year of former President Nelson Mandela and we have taken upon ourselves to ensure that we honour the centenary of this icon by increasing the speed and tempo of our service provision. We have also ensured that we take major steps that will improve our governance and administrative methods so that we make our municipality to be a key instrument in the service of all our people.

The Role of Citizens in the Municipality

Members of the Community,

Ever since our election as this current council, we have ensured that we are in constant contact with the citizens of our metro so that their views find expression in our programmes. Our intention is to ensure that the thinking of the people that we serve is streamlined in the development planning of the municipality.

We are doing this not because of our own goodwill but we are instructed by the people's Freedom Charter which asserts that; "All bodies of minority rule, advisory boards, councils and authorities shall be replaced by the democratic organs of self-government." This statement is instructive in that it requires that democracy should be a true instrument for the realisation of our people's aspirations.

We have always ensured that we engage our communities through the Mayoral Imbizo programme which we held at the close of last year and we have recently completed intensive and fruitful Integrated Development Planning consultations as earlier alluded to. Today's Council Open Day is held with the intention of concretising the suggestions of our people in our IDP and budget processes.

It is important to note that the participation of our communities in our processes is not only limited to the budgeting process. The Council of our metro has an operating Ward Committee Public Participation Framework whose sole intention is to foster direct involvement of residents and local organisations in the decision-making processes of the municipality.

This framework provides processes that give effect to a culture of community involvement in decision making and further fosters accountability by public representatives. Councillors are thus expected to have monthly meetings in their wards where they receive people's suggestions and report on progress on earlier made proposals.

We believe that public accountability is a key aspect of our objective of creating a well-governed city and we always seek to create platforms where we report to our people above those that are stipulated in local government legislations. As the Executive Mayor for instance, I have an open-door policy with members of the public. This is done in a carefully coordinated manner where time is availed on certain days on my diary so that I can have meetings with various members of the Buffalo City Metro community.

Major Achievements of the Current Council

Honoured Guests,

Allow me to brief you on some of the major service delivery highlights of the current council. It is our view that plans of the municipality can better be implemented by a capable and developmental institution. The reality is that this can only be achieved through a visionary political leadership and competent administration driven by high levels of ethical conduct, efficiency and professionalism.

Immediately after the council was constituted in August 2016, we established proper delegation of functions within the executive and appointed 10 Portfolio Committees with their heads. We further established a Mayoral Committee which meets monthly to consider the work of the various committees.

We can report here that the municipality has a well-functioning audit committee and risk management is being institutionalised across the organisation. Immediately after we assumed office we committed ourselves to achieving improved audit outcomes and it is through these efforts that we have achieved an unqualified audit opinion from the Auditor General after many years.

Whilst the inauguration of council and the establishment of committees stabilised political leadership in the institution, we still faced challenges in the administration due to the non-availability of a fully employed City Manager. We can report that we have dealt with this challenge of administrative instability as we employed a city manager last year.

We have managed to fill many Head of Directorate(HOD) posts and we are only left with one post to fill. We are placing serious emphasis on

performance management of our senior managers so that they optimally serve the institution.

It is also important that we indicate that we have made the wrangling between the administration and the political leadership a thing of the past. The odd culture that we observed where councillors were too involved in the administration whilst administrators were too involved in politics is disappearing into the horizon.

We are therefore making outcries of political interference history, but we have emphasised ethical and professional conduct from the managers so that we are not compelled to always intervene in administrative matters. Members of the public can rest assured that we have a seamless political and administrative interface.

We have developed other methods of broadening the capacity of municipality by re-establishing the Buffalo City Metro Development Agency and getting the services of Government Technical Advisory Centre (GTAC). The Government Technical Advisory Centre (GTAC) partnership is proving very helpful and we are on course in our process of institutionalising the Metro Growth and Development Strategy (MGDS).

The Development Agency is operating as a principal economic development institution of the municipality and it is given the responsibility of planning and implementing major development projects in the municipality. Some of the major projects that the agency is responsible for are the development of the East London Beach Front and the Sleeper Site Project.

Service Delivery Interventions contained in the Draft Budget

Ladies and Gentlemen,

In order for us to fulfil our mandate of improving the lives of our people we have decided to ensure that 70 percent of our total capital budget is allocated to infrastructure development. This is why it was easy for us to properly complete projects of the magnitude of the Fleet Street and Oxford Street road upgrades and make significant strides in the Qumza Highway project.

The capital budget for the next financial year is projected to be R1,7 billion. In the next financial year R335 Million will be provided for the upgrade and provision of waste water infrastructure and R199 million will be made available for the provision of water. The upgrade and construction of our roads has been allocated R240 million in the next financial year and the provision of integrated human settlements has been allocated 100 million.

In the current financial year, we had allocated an amount of R148 million for the upgrade of our electricity service and in the next financial year we will be allocating R121 million for this purpose. We are therefore moving with speed in providing electricity to our people, including the electrification of informal settlements.

We observed the increased need for us to upgrade and modernise of our transport infrastructure and it is for this reason that the budget for this has moved from R134 million in the current financial year to R195 million in the next financial year. All these are with an intention of ensuring that this is indeed a city to live, work, play and invest in.

Particular emphasis is being placed on Waste Management, more particularly refuse collection and the eradication of illegal dumps. R 67 Million has been allocated purely for this purpose and already 20 compactor trucks have been procured and will be delivered by the end of June 2018. We believe that this will go a long way in ensuring that we clear illegal dumps and optimise on our waste collection.

It is important that we attract new investors by identifying targeted areas of investment in the productive economic sectors. We are in the process of developing and customising a basket of investor attraction packages. We will also develop programmes and interventions that are aimed at retaining the existing industrial base. To make this job easy, the Directorate of Economic Development has been allocated R81 Million in the next financial year.

We will strengthen our partnership with the Department of Rural Development and Agrarian Reform(DRDAR) and develop a long-term intervention for food production and economic development in our rural areas.

To unlock economic development and ensure spatial integration we want to ensure that the municipality directs urban development and for this purpose we will identify strategic land parcels and identify land uses for them to drive our development programme.

We also identified the need to provide socio-economic infrastructure in newly developed settlements and to this effect all settlement plans will make provision for socio-economic infrastructure. This is so that the

human settlements that are created are truly habitable spaces with the relevant amenities.

It is important that I make a commitment that we are doing everything in our power to ensure that our capital budget for the current financial year is fully spent despite the slow pace which has been widely reported in the media. We are also taking major steps in addressing some of the contractors which are notorious for doing work of poor quality, thus wasting already constrained resources.

In Conclusion

Ladies and Gentlemen,

We are doing all we can to ensure that this city is developed to proper standards and that consumer confidence in the municipality is increased. I have tried to give the basic highlights of what we have been doing ever since we arrived in council and what we intend to do in the next financial year.

We went to all the wards to consult our people about the draft reviewed IDP and where we are in implementing their ward priorities. Almost all the meetings were smooth and seamless with few areas where the meetings could not proceed well. I must reiterate that the intention of the consultations, like this one, was to ensure that the views of the citizens are infused in the mainstream planning of the city. It should however be noted that this does not take away the responsibility that we have as elected leaders.

Allow me to emphasise this point by borrowing at length from a speech of former President Nelson Mandela in 1996 at the National Summit for Organised Local Government where he said:

"Interaction and co-operation on policy issues and co-ordination of activities must become second nature. This does not however mean that government must be paralysed by the need to consult. As elected representatives we have a duty to take decisions. Some decisions may be popular but others not so popular. The fact remains that progress and development are dependent on well-thought out decisions."

Ladies and Gentlemen, I thank you!