

# Audit digs up more dirt on the city

*EPWP found to be 'dysfunctional', DSW strikers tell of jobs for pals*

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DURBAN'S Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP) has again fallen under the spotlight with an internal audit report describing it as "dysfunctional" and calling for a full probe.

In a recent report to the city's executive committee, the audit panel found that internal control systems in the EPWP were not working.

Contrary to the city's initial denial, it also said some councillors were involved in the recruitment processes for jobs. It found this to be a violation of the programme's recruitment guidelines.

EPWP workers from the Cleansing and Solid Waste Unit (DSW) downed tools last week, calling for permanent employment by the city.

They gathered at the Springfield Park depot, waiting for feedback from the city on their grievances.

They claimed they had been paid just over R3000 a month since 2008 and were on contracts that were renewed every three months.

Speaking to The Mercury last week, one of the strikers said the city had allegedly employed "seasonal" workers permanently. But they were only meant to assist during the festive season.

The worker, who asked not to be named, said most of the EPWP workers were temporarily employed since 2008. Although they interviewed for permanent posts, jobs were allegedly given to those who had not worked as long as them in the programme.

"There are councillors and senior officials who took our jobs and gave them to their pals. We've been waiting for so many years but are never considered for the permanent positions, which is unfair," the worker said.

The city said last week that it was doing "all it can to resolve the issues as speedily as possible for service to go back to normal".

EThekweni Municipality's spokesper-

## WHAT IS THE EPWP?

THE Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP) is a key part of the government's response to poverty and unemployment.

Job creation and skills development are among its priorities, and government at all levels is required to create their own projects.

It was started in former president Thabo Mbeki's era in 2003.

son, Mandla Nsele, advised residents to keep all refuse on their properties as refuse collection and street sweeping in and around Durban were affected.

In an email to The Mercury, Nsele said the city adhered to the recruitment guidelines, which stated that those involved in managing the recruitment process should act in a way that demonstrated professional integrity.

"To ensure the programme's aims are achieved, ward councillors do assist by identifying the indigent in their communities for recruitment for the EPWP programme," Nsele said.

The DA has written to the Human Settlements and Infrastructure committee chairperson, Thanduxolo Sabelo, in the wake of the sudden protest.

Refuse collection failed in several areas, from South Durban's uMlazi, Chatsworth, and eManzimtoti, north to Newlands and Collingwood areas.

According to the DA, a series of conversations with DSW staff revealed that EPWP beneficiaries decided to voice their concerns by locking DSW employees in their depots.

Nsele told The Mercury that the municipality would be developing an action plan to address the issues raised by the audit committee, "including

those affecting the EPWP".

In the audit committee's report to exco, it was also revealed that the budget for the programme was overspent by 76% for the last financial year.

The 76% overspend amounts to about R50 million.

The report also found that there was non-compliance with Section 2 of the programme's ministerial determination, which required EPWP workers to be employed temporarily.

The committee recommended that based on the "magnitude" of the internal control deficiencies, a full investigation be conducted into the EPWP.

Last month, the DA lodged criminal charges of corruption against municipal manager Sipho Nzuza and other senior officials.

The Mercury reported then that the DA accused the governing party of a "jobs for comrades" scandal, and for deliberately acting to restrict access to jobs relating to waste collection in uMlazi.

The allegations followed a municipal decision to stop outsourcing and take over waste removal functions in uMlazi after contractors failed repeatedly to perform the function.

The council then announced that more than 300 people would be permanently employed by the municipality to collect waste in the uMlazi area.

The DA's spokesperson on Public Works and Infrastructure, Patricia Kopane, alleged: "The ANC sought to deliberately exclude members of the community from employment opportunities by directly interfering with the recruitment process."

According to a research report by the SA Cities Network in June, some of the key challenges facing eThekweni's EPWP included the need for additional mandatory compliance requirements.

It reported that there was late implementation of projects due to poor planning and delays in procurement processes.

07/10/2019

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