

The Weekly

MASILONYANA EXONERATES THE POOR FROM RATES INCREASE

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The Masilonyana Local Municipality will maintain their current electric tariff structure to accommodate poor residents even if this might have a negative impact on municipal revenue base.

This was announced by Mayor Steve Koalane during the tabling of the municipal budget speech last week. The budget came after the upliftment of section 139 by the provincial department of cooperative governance, human settlements and traditional affairs. This means the municipality can now run its own affairs after been placed under administration by the provincial government for almost three years.

The decision to keep tariffs the same was also informed by the NERSA announcement of the revised bulk electricity price increase of 13.5 percent from July 1 for municipalities. The municipality provides free electricity to 5 997 indigents.

“The aim is to subsidise the lower consumption users. The municipality must enter into discussions with NERSA regarding the suitability of the proposed stepped tariffs compared to those already implemented by the municipality.

The percentage increase of Eskom bulk electricity tariffs are far beyond the mentioned inflation target. “Given that these tariff increases are determined by external agencies, the impact they have on the municipality’s electricity tariffs are largely outside the control of the municipality. Discounting the impact of these price increases in lower tariffs will erode the municipality’s future financial position and viability,” said Koalane.

The municipality will, however, increase refuse removal rates by six percent. The increase, which will be effective from July 1, will also include water sale and sewerage. Indigent households will be exempted from the increase.

“The social package assists households that are poor or face other circumstances that limit their ability to pay for services. To receive these free services the households are required to register in terms of the Municipality Indigent Policy,” said Koalane.

A free basic services package includes 50 kilowatts (kWh) of electricity per month. The municipality also provide 10 kilolitres of water, fully subsidised refuse and sewerage removal and property rates. In the event of death, the municipality provide free digging and preparation of a grave at their site.

Provision of houses, roads and jobs still remain the biggest challenges that Masilonyana Local Municipality.

“As a municipality, Brandfort in particular, we are proud to have been identified as a beneficiary municipality and a host of a launch for a special housing programme called Women’s Built. This project was launched last year and it is a Human Settlement programme focusing on providing housing brick laying skill to 56 women from Masilonyana municipality. The project has built 66 houses in Brandfort. There are 463 house built in Masilonyana since 2010.”

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Water scarcity has remained a challenge for many years in this municipality. Koalane also said there have been interactions with various departments, in particular, the department of water affairs on this matter. The water crisis persists in Brandfort and Windburg.

The department of water affairs has committed R8 million from the Regional Bulk Infrastructure Grant (RBIG) to deal with the water crisis. The money will be used for bulk water infrastructure project to install the main pipeline from Theunissen to Brandfort.

DWA have trained 27 municipal process controllers to ensure that water and waste treatment works meet regulatory requirements and operational compliance.

The municipality has a total budget of R 45-million for the 2012/13 financial year. The infrastructure development projects to be undertaken include the first phase of the construction of the raw water pipeline from Theunissen to Brandfort worth R8 million. Water meters will also be installed in Theunissen starting this month. The project will cost the municipality R10 million.

Other developments in Windburg include the construction of a 0.8 kilometres residential distribution street, the upgrading of storm water drainage, construction of a reservoir and the eradication of 1 261 buckets.

“Our sincere appreciation goes to the provincial government for their timely intervention when it was needed, and for its upliftment when it realised that the municipality was now better positioned to be led by Council and its management. Indeed it can be said that a lot has been achieved during the period of intervention and it has done enough but could not do everything,” concluded Koalane.