

**REMARKS BY COUNCILLOR RETIEF ODENDAAL
THE HONOURABLE EXECUTIVE MAYOR OF THE NELSON MANDELA BAY
MUNICIPALITY
TO: NMBM WARD COMMITTEE INAUGURATION CEREMONY
WEDNESDAY, 30 NOVEMBER 2022, FEATHER MARKET CENTRE AT 09H00**

Programme Director: Mr Dumisani Mbebe

- *Honourable Speaker of Council: Cllr Gary Van Niekerk*
- *Honourable Deputy Executive Mayor: Cllr Mkhuseleli Jack*
- *Honourable Chief Whip: Cllr Bill Harington*
- *Honourable Councillor Rano Kayser: MMC Constituency Services*
- *Honourable MMCs*
- *Ward Councillors*
- *Mr Selwyn Thyse: Acting City Manager*
- *Ms Nosipho Xhego: Executive Director Corporate Services*
- *NMBM Constituency Services Management & Staff*
- *Ward Committee Members*
- *All Protocol Observed*
- *Ladies and Gentlemen*

Greetings!

- Thank you for the opportunity to welcome you all and to express my profound thanks and appreciation to all the Ward Councillors and Ward Committees Members in the Nelson Mandela Bay Metro for the sterling work rendered during the nomination process and run-up to elections.
- This occasion provides us with an opportunity to formally welcome the newly elected incumbents of Ward Committees and to commend them for their commitment and the support they will give the Nelson Mandela Bay Municipality and our Communities during their term in office.
- As we confront the enormous challenges facing this municipality, we pause for a while to celebrate one remarkable achievement of this coalition government since taking office. Yes, we are extremely proud of this day, the inauguration of ward committees, after having a highly successful and well-orchestrated campaign driven and owned by communities, followed by nominations and elections, and culminating in this day, the formal inauguration and establishment of Ward Committees in the NMBM.
- This inauguration of Ward Committees is evidence of our collective commitment to deepen our local democracy as prescribed by the local government system that places communities at the heart of reconstruction and development. It is in view of this that Ward Committees has great importance and relevance for our future developmental prospects in the NMB Metro.
- Hence, the establishment of ward committees is a direct response to the enabling legislation pertinent to local government, which challenges us to work towards establishing and improving mechanisms and systems for community participation.
- Ward Committees is an important and critical feature of local government. Therefore, this Coalition Government is totally committed to building vibrant and sustainable communities. The success of the Ward Committees in the NMBM will depend by and large on the commitment of all community structures to take advantage of what ward committees can offer. Now is the time to move from legislative theory into developmental practice and service delivery.

- The NMBM, through the Ward Committee system, encourages communities to make a structured and cohesive impact on local policy and programmes that will have a definite bearing on the Integrated Development Plan in the NMBM. In this respect communities should not be seen as passive participants but as active agents of change and development.
- I cannot emphasise it more than to say, that through your effective and constructive interventions and participation we have a real opportunity to make a palpable difference to the very core of our communities by addressing bread and butter issues and by strengthening the connection between the Nelson Mandela Bay Municipality and the Communities of the Nelson Mandela Bay.
- Together we can achieve a term in office that inspire renewed optimism and because of your positive contribution we will significantly deepen and encourage the increase in the participation of our communities in determining their future.
- It is because of the role of Ward Committees that we will be able to identify the critical role of community leaders and civil society as vital in nurturing habits of participation around critical issues of interests and visions that engage our people in civic life.
- As members of Ward Committees, you must never forget that our enemy is poverty, unemployment, and inequality. Therefore, we have the collective responsibility to demonstrate to our communities that we are a caring municipality and that we value the involvement of all our people in their own development.
- Through programmes of Ward Committees, an enabling environment is encouraged that afford participants an opportunity to engage one another in constructive discussions, to better understand the importance of functional ward committees, and to join hands with local government in building a caring Metro.
- We must not forget that we are accountable to the communities we serve. We will have to work together and work closer with our communities because our communities are our partner in sustainable development and effective and efficient service delivery. And importantly, we must remember that our programmes are aimed at creating jobs, fighting poverty, and charting a sustainable development path.
- As local government we are acutely aware to the need of eliminating corruption and to develop an effective and co-coordinated response in the fight against corruption. To win this war, we rely on our communities, organized religious bodies, non-governmental organizations, the media, organized labour, and the business community. All our efforts depend largely on the functionality of community structures on the ground.
- Ward Committees are the means for deepening local democracy and a vehicle through which a productive and involved citizenry can be established. Ward Committees thus have a crucial role as a conduit between government and communities.
- In the NMBM we have Ward Committees of different functional strengths, however, we will continue to work with these Ward Committees by strengthening their capacity to empower communities and in so doing add value to the advancement of all our citizens.
- We commend and welcome the commitment by the Constituency Services in the NMBM, under the hand of the MMC Rano Kayser, to social mobilization and the consultative processes which we deem as crucial for progress and sustainable development.

- Indeed, as local government we have increasingly begun to initiate the new modes of developmental local governance, including the critical dimensions of social mobilization, public participation, and partnerships with stakeholders in our communities.
- It is for this reason that the social mobilization and consultation process, as envisaged by the Constituency Services, is essentially a means to bring all communities and stakeholders together for identification of important issues. And thereby, developing consensus on the programmes and plans, and ensuring resources and commitment of all stakeholders for the implementation of these programmes and plans. For achieving this, a careful analysis of the stakeholder groups must be made, and the consultations must be kept open to all stakeholder groups.
- Importantly, these consultations are not ‘one-off’ events, but as a continuous process of dialogue among the respective communities and government to inform the programmes and plans of the Nelson Mandela Bay Municipality.
- Our efforts together should result in a shift of attitude of people toward government from being seen as apathetic and inefficient to that of a dynamic, caring, and efficient government. It must create the appropriate conditions for initiating constructive engagement and through building trust and bringing local government closer to the people.
- In conclusion, I wish to take this opportunity to thank all the ward committee members for being part of our partnership to build harmony and prosperity in the NMB. We appreciate your commitment and collective contribution to improving service delivery in your wards and for being the critical link within communities.

We thank you.