

Honourable Speaker

Fellow Councillors

Our distinguished Comrades from the REC and PEC

Our guests from CoGTA and SALGA

MM and Management

Good Morning....

....When we assumed office in August 2016, we all were proud and encouraged to have been elected into the leadership of an institution named in honour of such iconic historical figures as Prophet Enoch Mgijima. All of us were ready and eager to tackle the many challenges faced by the demoralized majority in our community head on. At the time we felt so enthusiastic because we thought it was going to be an easy ride. We were so confident because we thought we could ride on the many achievements attained by democratic governance since 1994. We thought it would be an easy ride because our government, the ANC government, implemented a massive social safety net that saved millions of our countrymen and women from starvation. Today, as we meet here, we would all agree that the task was not as easy as we would have wanted it to be.

By the time we assumed office we took over massive electricity networks provided in previously deprived areas, water and sanitation, hundreds of new houses, new roads, etc. All these new developments needed to be maintained and sustained while we still had to satisfy the continued demand for closing the ever-increasing backlog in all these areas without the requisite financial resources. You will recall, fellow Councillors, that we converged a few kilometres away from here in towards the end of 2016 to develop strategies to deal with these challenges. With the manifesto of the ruling party guiding us, we emerged from that session with a determination to continue creating better living conditions for all our constituencies as have become customary of any African National Congress government structure over the more than two decades in power.

Fellow Councillors you will recall that when we assumed office, we were confronted major worker instability. This was one of the first major challenges we had to deal

with as it had the potential of totally derailing the amalgamation effort. The confrontation between the employer and employees was successfully diffused and simultaneously and today we have, as far as I am concerned, a stable workforce, ready to deal with the many service delivery and transformational confronting us all daily. We continue with our efforts to bring further stability and certainty in the workforce as you will hear from the Municipal Manager later today.

The IDP and Budget for the 2017-2020 period has been adopted by Council and we continue to strive reaching the goals we set out to achieve in that guiding document with the limited resources at our disposal. In the interest of time, I will not repeat what we have achieved in the past 16 months and the many challenges we had to resolve reach those achievements. During the day, you will receive comprehensive briefing from management on service delivery milestones we have reached during the short period of us being in office.

Right from the start in August 2016, this Council have embraced and cultivated the concept of participatory democracy. Over the past sixteen months we have made every effort to be as close to our communities as possible and have embarked on a number of outreach and consultation sessions. This process belongs to all of us and not just a few elected individuals. For the remainder of our term, we will have to continue with this strategy of bringing government closer to the people.

Comrades, Fellow Councillors, let me also hasten to say, that we had our fair share of growing pains over the past sixteen months. It is especially important mention that at this time when brother is fighting brother and sister fighting sister to try and get a better position, we have managed to survive and keep the ship afloat. My fervent prayer today is – as we go forward, love your brother and sister as you love yourself and think before you speak and spread slanderous stories to damage reputations of others. I ask you to live your life by this principle.

We need to appreciate the continued assistance and guidance we have received from our national and provincial counterparts whenever we needed it and the abundance of help from SALGA. As far as I am concerned, they had and will in future never have a choice to do so because firstly, Local Government is that sphere

of government closest to the people and who bear the brunt for any failures regardless of who the responsible sphere or entity is.

Fellow Councillors, as we get ourselves ready in developing new strategies and programmes for the year ahead, let us not get complacent and keep bearing in mind that indeed we are still confronted with the legacy of apartheid where we still grapple with addressing issues of infrastructure backlogs and continuing weaknesses in service delivery, budget constraints etc. We have successfully navigated this new entity through the challenging first transitional phases and I would like to believe that we will ultimately emerge successful.

On that note, Fellow Councillors let us engage freely and openly today as we listen and absorb what the MM and Management has to offer us.

I thank you