

# The Weekly

## HEADS ROLL AT NALA

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The municipal manager of the Nala Local Municipality, David Shongwe, was relieved of his duties on Monday after allegations of corruption and financial mismanagement were levelled against him.

The municipality falls under the Lejweleputswa District Municipality and includes the towns of Bothaville and Wesselsbron.

Credible sources within the municipality expressed confidence in the firm decision regarding Shongwe's suspension taken by council. They said it was a clear indication that "government is now seriously tackling corruption head-on" in this cash-strapped municipality.

The MEC for Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs, Mamiki Qabathe, was also present when the resolution was taken. Shongwe's suspension follows a damning forensic audit report released by auditing firm KPMG.

The Weekly revealed in November that irregular, unapproved, and wasteful expenditure which cost the municipality millions of rands was occurred at the municipality over a two-year period. The report, which is in possession of The Weekly, covered tenders awarded by the municipality from 1 July 2008 to 30 June 2010 and painted a grim picture.

The report found, amongst other things, that there were misrepresentation of facts and information on tender documents, soliciting of corrupt payments, misappropriation of assets, and creation of documentation. The report also found that half of the 51 tenders awarded by the municipality contravened its own supply chain management.

According to the report, there was also manipulation of the supply chain management process in 14 percent of the contracts, falsification of documents in eight percent of the tenders, and breach of internal control process in 69 percent of the tenders awarded.

In one instance the report revealed that the municipal manager allegedly received bribes from a contractor amounting to 10 percent of the tender.

Shongwe was the chief financial officer during the awarding of the 30 of the 50 controversial contracts and became municipal manager during the awarding of a further 11 projects.

The former mayor, Mpai Mogorosi, and current speaker Nozililo Mashiya are also in the firing line.

The report found that Mashiya had used the council credit card to purchase liquor worth R10 000, whilst Mogorosi faces allegations of erecting a security wall around the mayor's house without adhering to the supply chain management policies. Additional renovations were also allegedly made inside the house in violation of a council resolution.

Qabathe said this week the department will further probe the allegations made in the KPMG report against Mogorosi and Mashiya. She added that should the duo be found guilty, they will be called to account.

According to a source, Shongwe's relationship with employees of the municipality had also deteriorated.

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“His appointment as the municipal manager with Sidwell Nxumalo as the technical director only served to add oil to the burning fire. He perpetually faced workers’ wrath in the form of wild cat strikes as they wanted him out by all means necessary. The KPMG report surely served as a catalyst for workers to get rid of them once and for all. As such the province had to intervene to provide direction.” According to the report, Shongwe and Nxumalo were the only two accountable officers at the municipality when it came to financial management and procurement. Consequently, the council has reportedly roped in the provincial government to advise on how to tackle the report as it involves senior officials.

The provincial head of the Department for Cooperative Governance, Kopung Ralinkontsane, confirmed that following the presentation of the report to the council, the department was requested to assist with the implementation of the recommendation thereto regarding criminal litigation, disciplinary procedures, and discovery of money mismanaged.

The provincial spokesperson for the department, Senne Bogatsu, said the province will deploy an official to the embattled municipality to act as municipal manager from next week until a permanent appointment is made.

Meanwhile, municipal workers’ union Samwu has welcomed the suspension.

The secretary for the Lejweleputswa region, Joseph Mkhombeni, said the union played a critical role in ensuring “culprits were kicked out”.

“After all, these are the people who were hampering service delivery in the municipality. We also wish to express our appreciation regarding the intervention of the provincial government. We are positively looking forward to the new municipal manager who will be seconded by the province. Our appeal to the leadership, however, is that they should consider people with real community interests at heart, not people solely motivated by the perks of office and monetary rewards.”

Towards the end of 2011, Samwu vowed to continue with their strike action until Shongwe and Nxumalo were removed from office.

Neither Shongwe, Nxumalo, nor the mayor of Nala, Theko Mogoje, could be reached for comment at time of going to press.

[Source: [www.theweekly.co.za](http://www.theweekly.co.za)]