

## NALA CRACKS WHIP

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### **The newly appointed municipal manager has vowed to pursue criminal charges against senior officials implicated in corruption and bolster service delivery**

The municipal manager of the Nala Local Municipality, Chris Mkomela, has reaffirmed the local authority's commitment to speed up service delivery and vowed to bring fraudsters who had stolen from the municipality to book.

This follows an exposé by The Weekly last year of a damning KPMG forensic report, which found evidence of widespread fraud and corruption by senior municipal officials.

Mkomela made this undertaking during the public protector, Advocate Thuli Madonsela's visit to Monyakeng, Wesselsbron this week.

This was Madonsela's follow-up visit since instituting an investigation that was prompted by wholesale maladministration that crippled service delivery in the municipality last year. The mismanagement of funds saw contractors being paid for projects they had not completed. These include road and sewerage rehabilitation projects.

In a bid to address this challenge, the Free State provincial government appointed Mkomela as municipal manager. He is a former district director of Xhariep District Municipality and administrator for the Masilonyana Local Municipality.

"I admit that the municipality is not in a satisfactory state. That is why, as leaders, we must ensure municipal services reach the community especially those they need desperately. I promise that the new management will listen to the people and keep them updated with any shortfalls," said Mkomela.

Mkomela also promised to provide the police and the office of the public protector with all the required information needed to prosecute those who have swindled the municipality. The list of contractors who also did not honour their contracts will also be provided.

The municipality will continue with completion of sewerage system; the laying of pipes and the construction of manholes.

The provincial government and the national treasury have also promised to support the municipality to confront its service delivery challenges.

"National treasury has released funds because they understand our situation. However, these funds are released with conditions. These conditions include submitting financial statements on time and completing our infrastructure programme," said Mkomela.

The national treasury threatened to withhold all financial transfers to the municipality late last year. This was because of the municipality's persistent breach of financial management prescripts and alleged management of funds. The municipality had also failed to submit the necessary audit reports documents to treasury since 2009."

# The Weekly

Meanwhile, the former municipal manager, David Shongwe, is facing criminal charges related to defrauding the Nala Local Municipality. He is also facing 20 charges ranging from wasteful expenditure, to failing to follow legal tender processes. These include irregular and fruitless expenditure.

The former technical director, Sydney Nxumalo, is facing eight charges of misconduct. They include lying and misleading the KPMG forensic investigation auditors. Nxumalo also recommended payment to service providers who did not offer services to the municipality.

A draft forensic report on the findings of the KPMG revealed that there was a lack of compliance with Municipal Finance Management Act (MFMA), which resulted in wasteful expenditure. This led to Shongwe and Nxumalo's suspension.

Shongwe approved a contract valued at R2.6-million but the Nala Local Municipality ultimately paid the service provider R6.3-million; exorbitantly R3-million above the original amount.

He was also charged with paying for bucket eradication project despite the task not having been performed and failed to recover the monies owed to the municipality by these companies.

Shongwe was also believed to have supplied R160 477.74 worth of fuel to 207 private cars, which were not on the municipal list of cars to be fuelled.

All these monies that were heedlessly spent left the municipality financially crippled. The municipality currently needs R30-million to finish the waste water treatment plant that is said to be only 60 percent finished. This means not all people in Monyakeng can use waterborne toilets that were already built in their yards.

Other unauthorised and wasteful expenditure was found to be of the bucket eradication construction in Kgotsong, which caused the municipality R2.9-million and phase three of this project amounted to R3.5-million.

The phase four incurred R10 268 412 of the wasteful and fruitless expenditure. Shongwe is also alleged to have failed to manage the municipality's bank account properly. He allegedly allowed 264 transactions in December 2008 to go through without any supporting documents.

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