# Mayoral Speech: 29 July 2021

Good day

Speaker, Deputy Mayor, Aldermen, Chief Whip, Acting Municipal Manager, Directors, Officials, Media, Guests

I would like to begin my speech by referring to our George representatives on the international sporting stage.

It is with great pride that we congratulate Bianca Buitendag on winning a silver medal for surfing the Olympic Games in Tokyo. It is fascinating to appreciate what she achieved as an outsider to finish second after eliminating both of the No2 and No3 in the world to get into the finals. George Municipality provided her with sponsorship support for the Olympics and I believe that her performance will provide us and our surfing beach, Victoria Bay with significant promotional mileage. We look forward to conveying our congratulations to this great ambassador on her return to George.

We also wish to congratulate our George schooled athletes Elroy Gelant and Joanne van Dyk on being in the South African Olympic team and wish them well in their appearances during these Games.

Branco Du Preez, a member of the Blitzbok Sevens squad at the Olympics was also schooled in George.

It is also with great pride that we recognise and congratulate yet another Outeniqua old boy Duhan van der Merwe on his selection for the British and Irish Lions Rugby team currently locked in battle with the Springboks. At least George can claim that we have had someone in the winning side with the victory of the Lions last week-end.

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We are also experiencing and living through the Covid-19 third wave in George and the Garden Route. On behalf of Council and the Municipality I wish to express our condolences to the families of staff members who have recently lost their lives or have lost love ones.

Many of our staff members and councillors have suffered from Covid-19 in recent weeks and we wish them all the best in their recovery. We all need to ensure that we keep safe and adhere to the necessary safety protocols. The vaccination programme is underway and we should continue to encourage registration for vaccination.

The following are extracts from a report received last night:

* 1. During the first wave March to October 2020, 73 employees contracted Covid-19 with 3 fatalities reported.
  2. During the second wave October to January 2021, 131 employees contracted Covid-19 with 4 fatalities reported.
  3. Since February 2021 a total of 115 employees contracted Covid-19 with 3 fatalities reported.
  4. A total of 319 Municipal employees tested positive for Covid-19 since the start of the pandemic with a total of 10 fatalities.
  5. The Municipality currently has 48 active cases, with 30 awaiting Return to Work clearance.
  6. The Municipality has over the past 7 days reported 15 new cases.
  7. Currently all services are being rendered and all Directorates are operational
  8. Public has limited access to Municipal buildings due to Covid-19 safety protocols
  9. All employees that can effectively work from home, continue to do so. All other staff are operational at their respective offices.
  10. The routine disinfection of all Municipal buildings is ongoing either on a weekly or bi-weekly schedule.

## George overall figures

* 1. George has seen a welcome decline in active cases for the last 2 days since reaching the peak on 26 July 2021 with 2 769 active cases reported on that day. The first wave peaked at 783 on the 27 July 2020 and the second wave peaked at 2 173 on the 15 December 2021.
  2. George has the highest active cases per 100000 in the Western Cape. 1212 per 100000 active compared to Garden Route with 851 per 100000 and Western cape with 491 per 100000.
  3. There are currently 2 545 active cases as of 13:00 on 28 July 2021 and 618 have succumbed to the virus.
  4. A total of 144 new infections has been reported in the last 24 hours. Distribution of the virus is widespread and no clear hotspot areas has been identified.
  5. The Garden Route currently has 5 269 active cases as of 13:00 on 28 July 2021 with 1 779 deaths.

## Report on current hospital admissions

a. George Hospital is under severe pressure with a total of 106 patients of which 18 is in the Critical Care unit. Both of Covid-19 ward and High Care units are full.

b. Harry Comay the step-down facility of George Hospital has 25 patients

c. Medi Clinic George is very busy with 25 patients in the General Covid-19 ward and 12 in the critical care unit

d. Medi Clinic Geneva hospital has 8 patients in the General Covid-19 ward.

The vaccination program is ongoing.

Offices were made available to DOH for use at the Sentrum Clinic

All 11 Municipal Libraries assist members of the public to register for the Covid-19 vaccines.

George Municipal radio slots have been utilised by Department of Health for vaccine updates.

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On 12 July 2021 our country experienced a bout of public unrest and looting mainly in KwaZuluNatal and Gauteng that caused billions of Rands of damage to infrastructure, buildings and businesses. Hundreds of lives were lost and much consternation has been created among all sectors of our population.

The Municipal Manager and I were called to an extended Cabinet meeting by the Premier of the Western Cape where he implored all of us to remain calm and to plan for and assess the risks of any outbreaks in each of our municipalities.

After that meeting all the political parties represented on Council were requested at short notice to discuss the issue of a united declaration supporting peace in our communities. I want to extend my gratitude to all political parties in our Council for your leadership in supporting this declaration and the roles that you have played in ensuring calmness, peace and safety for all our communities during a particularly tense and difficult period of time.

The Municipal Manager also called an immediate meeting with leading business groupings and SAPS in George to discuss the situation and the briefing that we had received from the Premier and other roleplayers during the Cabinet meeting earlier that day. We are thankful that we were able to reach out to the participants on that virtual platform, even though it was extremely short notice and by no means covering all the essential stakeholders. We also need to thank SAPS, neighbourhood watches, security companies, even taxi associations and all others for ensuring our safety during those nervous days.

Unfortunately, there were some Fake messages that were circulated during these anxious hours.

The enormity of the damage to infrastructure and livelihoods is still being determined. There are lessons to be learnt from this experience for all of us as we move forward. We also think of the many citizens in our country who experienced the ravages and concerns of food and medicine shortages, possibly the loss of jobs, etc.

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During the course of the past month or two, the Municipal Manager has led a team of senior staffers in the finalisation and submission of our application for admission into the Budget Facility for Infrastructure (“BFI”) programme for the 2021 adjustment period. This programme is administered within National Treasury with rigorous admission requirements. Our application for R1 billion has needed to concentrate on security of water supply, sludge treatment, balancing dams, reservoirs for Thembalethu and Pacaltsdorp. It is a testament to the skills, dedication and attention to detail of our team that we were able to progress to the stage of being able to present our application to the National Treasury team that would take this to adjudication level.

I was invited by the MM to accompany our team to the virtual meeting where our application was presented. Our team worked until 03h00 on the morning of our presentation. At 07h30 a dry run was held by the team with final adjustments being made to slides minutes before the presentation took place from 09h00 to 11h00 on Friday 9 July.

Further explanations and justifications were required which meant our team had to work through the weekend to complete a final submission on 13 July. Further clarifications have been provided in recent days.

We now await adjudication. If we do not achieve success here, we will need to proceed to seek other avenues which appear to be open to us. In each case we can only be successful if we ensure absolute adherence to exemplary best practice of good governance.

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In turning to the achievements of some of the Directorates up to June 2021 and the past month, the following is worthy of attention:

As at 1 Jan 2021- we had spent 2,3% of MIG funding

As at 30 June 2021-we have spent 100% of MIG funding; this means we spent 97,7% of MIG funding in last 6 months.

The MIG Stormwater projects were completed in Andersonville, Zone 9, Zone 1 and New Dawn Park, while Phase 2 is still underway in New Dawn Park and Zone 9.

During the recent heavy rains, these stormwater systems have already proved their worth with no new complaints arising.

The Package Plant that will temporarily provide relief for waste water treatment will commence its trial installation period in the first week of August.

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At Electrotech we welcome new Director Bongani Mandla who has been with us since the beginning of July with the new Senior Manager Distribution starting next week.

The first Wheeling Agreement has been signed that will now permit the implementation process.

The Electrotech team is also actively working to rebuild a culture of safety in the workplace.

An Unplanned Power Outage on Thursday 15th July at Tamsui Substation was  due to an 11kv circuit breaker that failed. The Customers affected were the entire Industrial area, Deville Park, Portions of  Thembalethu, and George CBD, Bos en Dal, Groeneweide Park, Erf 325 and certain farms Herold's Bay. The Electrotechnical Team worked hard to restore the supply to all customers. The directorate is challenged by having equipment that is either in the final stages of their lifecycle or beyond it. It is evident that additional funding will be needed for maintenance and / or replacement.

The team managed to assist keep supply on to the Medic Clinic, during loadshedding after consultation with Eskom at short notice (Request came after 16h00 when loadsheding was scheduled for 20h00). This was done to ensure we can supply the hospital's ICU rooms which were not yet connected to a backup generator, which would have led to loss of life for patients on ventilators should electricity not be provided during that critical hour.

I have received a letter of gratitude from the chief operating officer of MediClinic for the assistance of the Municipal manager and our Electro-tech team in ensuring that their lights stayed on.

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At Town Planning and Building Control we have achieved the following:

100% of building plans were approved in June within legislated timeframe. This is an improvement from March (68%), April (74%) and May (72%). We have temporary employees assisting here.

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Today I am highlighting some of the work being done by our George Junior City Council. Cllr Liza Stroebel quietly works with this group of young leaders. I have invited our talented Junior Mayor, Ludolph Pedro to deliver the speech he delivered at the Western Cape Provincial Parliament’s Youth Parliament a few weeks ago just after I complete this speech.

The following is a brief extract of the work that this team of young leaders has been doing over the past six months:

Delivery of sanitary shoeboxes to the Phambili Women’s Shelter in Rosemoor; donating supplies to Oudtshoorn Dogs in Need; a drug awareness day at Bethesda Child and Youth care Centre; cupcakes to Tuiniqua Old age Home and the Night Shelter; various workshops, competitions and interactions involving youth and gender interests.

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Comments relating to the interim results for the April-June 2021 quarter will be made during the course of the tabling of that item.

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Thank you to our staff for all your efforts in bringing us through year-end and into the new financial year. It is much appreciated.

Ald Leon van Wyk

29 July 2021