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Dear Members,

The three biggest issues we are currently addressing follows:

Over-development.

We believe it is critical that Bitou Municipality refrains from approving any further multiple-unit housing developments which will add even more strain on our limited natural resources. For this very reason, Bitou has imposed Level 4 water restrictions and applied for State of Disaster status yet inexplicably continues to approve housing developments placing even more strain on the water resources that have already been exceeded.

Lately Bitou has taken a band-aid approach by approving housing developments based on ad-hoc water and sanitation solutions such as boreholes, rainwater tanks, packaged sewerage plants, to be built by the developer and operated by the body corporates or HOAs in future.

With regard to water this merely shifts the burden of providing the product from the municipality but obviously still draws from the same resource. It does not increase the resource, does not address the real problem and increases the demand on the finite resource.

Operating sewage plants is a specialist and expensive operation requiring full time operational control and monitoring. Bitou is simply not geared to monitor the proliferation of privately owned and operated sewage plants. If anything goes wrong it can have a disastrous effect on the environment, especially when located in environmentally sensitive areas such as in close proximity to the Keurbooms lagoon.

A further long-term negative effect of the practice is that all future revenue for

All in all it is an extremely risky approach and has clearly not been thought through properly and while it favours development and developers it can/will be harmful to the environment and residents.

The bottom line is that empirical evidence revealed that Bitou has exceeded the water resource in 2025, and that under the circumstances the municipality is legally prohibited from approving any further development utilising municipal water resources.

Although we draw 80% of our water supply from the Keurbooms River, the imposition of punitive water tariffs is based on the number of days of water available mainly from the Roodefontein Dam.

Our reality is that the Roodefontein Dam's catchment (Piesang River) has become overloaded with farm dams that have to fill before run-off reaches the Roodefontein Dam. This means that even in normal rainfall periods the resource now lacks the ability to replenish the dam in the normal course and due to neglect the Keurbooms transfer pipeline can no longer be used to replenish it. The dam level will likely only reach above punitive tariff levels in times of prolonged above average rainfall so it is likely that we will be charged punitive water tariffs as a norm.

The only long term solution is to accelerate the development of storage capacity. Sadly this critical component has been neglected by Bitou as the construction of the Wadrift dam has been delayed for more than a decade. The process has restarted since the drought and will take another decade to complete assuming it does progress to completion this time.

We are requesting a moratorium on multiple unit housing development approvals until Bitou can provide adequate water and sewerage capacity to support them. We have appealed to the Provincial Department of Environmental Affairs to ensure that Bitou complies with environmental legislation that mandates a halt in development until service capacity is adequate. In the seven months since water restrictions were imposed, we have seen very little progress on water security, no short-term plan, and the budget does not show a short-term priority.

Letter to province

As you are aware from the widespread reporting and comments in the media and social media, Bitou Municipality's Deputy Mayor Nokuzola Kolwapi very publicly committed several breaches of the Firearms Control Act on 21 December 2025 when she fired a handgun into the air while surrounded by a crowd. Afterwards she put out a statement admitting her criminal acts and trying to justify her actions. The only other official response at the time came from her coalition partner, DA Councillor Bill Nel who reiterated her justification.

The incident was reported to the SAPS by a member of the community. Ample video footage from various sources was freely available.

Despite the overwhelming evidence, she was not arrested as the community expected and called for. Upon public enquiry, the NPA obfuscated but then eventually advised the complainant that Kolwapi would face charges, not in terms of the Firearms Act, but inexplicably would face vague and unspecified charges under environmental legislation related to making a noise. (Environmental Conservation Act 73 of 1989, Regulation 13(1), read together with sections 3(1)(f), 13(2), and 25 of the Act).

The RPA has written to AfriForum, the organization who have successfully privately prosecuted a very similar case against Malema, to ask for their advice.

Closer to home and completely separate from the criminal charges, Kolwapi's conduct amounted to serious breaches of the Code of Conduct for Municipal Councillors. Legally it is the duty of the Chief Whip of council, the Speaker and council itself to enforce the code by means of the internal procedures.

Despite Kolwapi publishing an admission immediately after the incident the process has stalled and Cllr Nel has stated that it cannot continue until such time as the criminal case has been finalized.

The reality of the situation is, however, that the two processes are completely divorced from each other and there is no legal reason to stall the internal legal process as is being done. Given that the Auditor General criticizes the Bitou council for its failure to hold miscreants to account, it is shocking but not surprising that they are doing so again in this instance. Nel and the rest of the councillors know what the law requires and their choice not to comply can only be deliberate.

Letter to AfriForum

Budget and IDP for 2026/27

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Electricity - 12.75%

Water - 3.7% Basic with Level 4 tariffs on consumption

Sewerage - 3.7%

Waste removal - 3.7%

Property rates - 3.0%

Most of the services are in line with inflation, but electricity remains the biggest concern. At a time when households are already under pressure, the electricity increase raises serious affordability concerns and is being used as the primary revenue source. Water tariffs are also concerning since drought tariffs are seemingly inescapable for the next year or so.

Debt from outstanding household accounts is at R465 million, almost half the budget, so rather than cut costs, and there is plenty of fat to cut, they are compensating with cross-subsidization to fund the shortfall by those residents who pay their rates, similar to what is being done in Cape Town.

The DA claims to have instructed its mayors to reject the NERSA and ESKOM price increases to shield the public from the effect of the increases. For example, Mossel Bay is only increasing their electricity by 8.5%, compared to Bitou's 12.75%. We can only hope that Mayor Kamkam and her DA colleagues comply with the party policy.

Letter Re Electricity Tariffs

Responsiveness.

As we have experienced, openness and responsiveness are sadly lacking in our council and municipality. Silence, obfuscation and misrepresentation of facts and the law remain the norm and in the apparent absence of political guidance and discipline seems set to continue for as long as the current councillors and officials remain in control. This is not something the RPA can remedy. Only the voters can hold them to account at the ballot box.

Kind regards,

Tony Blignaut

