

Hawks, spooks, public protector probe DA corruption claims

By Siyabonga Mkhwanazi  Jun 19, 2018



Cape Town - The Knysna Municipality has become the latest DA-led council to face a probe over claims of corruption following a report from the National Council of Provinces (NCOP) in Parliament.

Public Protector Busisiwe Mkhwebane's office confirmed that they were investigating the matter after receiving a report from the NCOP. "We note the findings and recommendations of the NCOP. We also confirm that our officials did not take part in the petition process. The public protector is already investigating," said Mkhwebane's spokesperson Oupa Segalwe.

The report, which was adopted by the NCOP, said Mkhwebane would need to dig deeper into some of the issues.

Chairperson of the select committee on petitions and executive undertakings in the NCOP Dumisani Ximbi said they became concerned about the situation in Knysna after a community activist, Mike Hampton, brought the allegations to their attention.

The committee conducted three hearings on the matter and produced a report with some findings.

It wants some of the tenders to be investigated in order to test allegations related to the funding of Knysna Tourism with taxpayers' money, the illegal awarding of the integrated strategic development framework (ISDF) tender to a consortium that had not scored the highest points, the illegal appointment of a municipal manager and the alleged unconstitutional blocking of Hampton's communication at local and provincial levels of government.

Hampton has long campaigned against corruption in Knysna, saying he has endured vilification, abuse, threats and intimidation from some of the highest offices in the province and the DA, which is governing the town.

Hampton said they wanted the facts out in public on the allegations of corruption in the municipality and that he was happy something was finally being done.

"After seven years the government is finally treating this widespread corruption seriously. The citizens of the Western Cape deserve the same rights and protection as the rest of South Africa.

"What's debatable is whether the public protector should be handling this. I believe her organisation is broken, like everything else, caught up in factional loyalty where some choose the DA over duty," Hampton said.

The consortium awarded the ISDF tender is led by a local property developer. Knysna Tourism was funded with taxpayers' money when it was a private company.

The Western Cape treasury had set up a task team to investigate the ISDF tender and the findings were submitted to the municipality. But the Knysna Municipality contested the findings.

Ximbi said they wanted to get to the bottom of the allegations. The NCOP wants Mkhwebane to report back in 60 days.

"We asked the public protector to investigate, especially why the Western Cape government did not take part. We asked to help them, as the select committee, with the investigation and they did not want us to," said Ximbi.

But this has been denied by the department of local government, environmental affairs and development planning in the Western Cape.

Head of department Graham Paulse said they had investigated the allegations.

"The fact of the matter is that the department completed its work with regard to the allegations raised a few years ago. A final report was drafted and handed over to the relevant municipality at

the time.

“Regarding findings and outcomes, the final report is not the department’s to make public, but belongs to the municipality in terms of due process,” Pause explained.

The Hawks in collaboration with criminal intelligence swooped on various offices in the DA-led Langeberg Municipality earlier this month, raiding its tourism office, municipal buildings, a private business and 15 homes following allegations of fraud, corruption and money laundering.

This came after a number of offices at George Municipality were raided in April, including business premises and private homes during a search-and-seizure operation, following allegations of fraud and corruption in procurement processes and the awarding of tenders by the municipality.

Other DA municipalities being investigated by the Hawks include Kannaland, Beaufort West and Oudtshoorn. Approached for comment, Knysna Municipality said: “We have taken note of the report of the NCOP.

“The matters mentioned in the Hampton report have been investigated by the municipality’s own public accounts committee as well as the George office of the public protector.

“The municipal public accounts committee has already made recommendations to the council in respect of possible remedial action.

“The municipality has always co-operated with all stakeholders and two previous executive mayors made representations to Parliament’s select committee on petitions and executive undertakings.

“The municipality can assure the public protector of our full support in her investigation into these matters.”

Political Bureau