

## **MAYOR TO FOLLOW UP ON THE N11 UPGRADING**

**MOKOPANE:** The Mogalakwena Local Municipality (MLM) held its Inaugural Council sitting for the term 2021-2026 where all (64) elected MLM Councillors were officially sworn by Magistrate T.S Boloka at Oasis Lodge.

The newly elected Mayor, His Worship Cllr Ngoako Saggie Thulane Tauetsoala thanked the African National Congress (ANC) for placing trust in him to lead Mogalakwena Local Municipality.

Mayor Tauetsoala indicated that he does not take his position for granted and the new ANC led administration will work tirelessly to bring about the change desired by the people of Mogalakwena.

Mayor Tauetsoala thanked all the hardworking volunteers who dedicated so much of their time on various campaigns and the families that supported them.

“We have a lot of experience in our new Council chamber: past Councillors and past multiple term Councillors. More encouragingly, we have strong, vibrant and new councillors whose energies will bring material change in the lives of our people. I want to thank the previous Council whose term of office was riddled with difficulties and challenges. Despite all that, I would like to take a moment to honour their service and sacrifice,” said Mayor Tauetsoala

Mayor Tauetsoala indicated that it will be unjust for him not to extend his gratitude to officials and municipal administration whose resilient spirit during trying times must immensely be appreciated.

“The elections are over, the voters have spoken, and with that, comes a tremendous sense of colossal responsibility. Now it is time to get to the work for the people. Over the next five years, as councillors we must commit to engaging with the community to deal with the challenges and opportunities in our municipality. Our broad goal is to be informed, to collaborate and build consensus on the issues our people are facing,” added Mayor Tauetsoala.

He made a commitment to the residents that as the ANC led administration, they represent every citizen of Mogalakwena Local Municipality, whether they voted for ANC or not because that is how democracy works.

“Our municipality is faced with huge challenges. But they are not insurmountable. Our high-level diagnostic analysis reveals that our municipality has a big cash flow problem. Our total infrastructure amounts to 5 billion and we have responsibility to maintain this infrastructure. Our water, electricity and road infrastructure are dilapidating and some painfully are at the state of decay. At the same time, our municipality has experienced a litany of theft incidents of

transformers in our electricity substations and our water equipments,” added Mayor Tauestsoala.

He emphasised that these realities have caused immeasurable pain, suffering and hardship to majority of our people in this municipality, particularly those in the rural areas.

“Our socio-economic climate is extremely urgent and requires extra-ordinary actions and interventions. Our people are desperately in need of water, salt, bread, electricity, proper road and functioning public transport system on a daily basis. Therefore, we must talk about the importance of urgently moving forward and move away from rhetoric of political campaigns. We must work together in building better communities on urgent basis,” continued Mayor Taueatsoala.

Mayor Taueatsoala emphasised that it must be their commitment to ensure that the municipality, walks out of the current cash flow quagmire and that they must urgently review the revenue enhancement strategy which must result in the reduction of municipal expenditure and improvement of collection of rates and taxes.

Mayor Taueastsola said if the municipality fail to reduce the expenditure and to collect rates and taxes the cash flow situation cannot improve and ramifications of failing to improve the municipal cash flow position simply means potholes on the roads cannot fixed, water infrastructure cannot be refurbished and cannot accelerate the provision of electricity in the municipal jurisdiction.

“We must attempt to avoid the usage of external service providers on the services that the municipality has capacity to render. We have approximately 14 plumbers in our administration who can perform plumbing services to our communities, why do we outsource this function to external contractors? We have municipal water trucks that can supply water to our communities, why do we have to outsource this function to external contractor? Our finance department has capacity to develop Annual financial statements for this municipality, why do we have to outsource this function to the external accountants or auditors,” asked Mayor Tauestsoala.

He emphasised that by avoiding the use of the external contractors or service providers, will assist the municipality to save a lot of financial resource and improve the cash flow position. He added that with money saved, the municipality will maintain the infrastructure and deliver services to the communities.

“We must accelerate the bulk water supply projects that are funded by Department of Water and Sanitation to ensure that water is available to our communities. Masodi sewerage plant must be implemented through public private partnership with our mining outfit Ivanplats, I will

lead that process with immediate effect. I will also be following up the N11 upgrading project and bypass that is going to be done by SANRAL in collaboration with Mogalakwena Local Municipality, Anglo American Mine and Ivanplats,” continued Mayor Taueatsoala.

“Being financial prudent must be non-negotiable! In 2017/2018 financial year, our municipality received Disclaimer as audit outcome from the Auditor General. In 2018/2019 financial year our municipality received Adverse opinion, in 2019/2020 financial year our municipality received Adverse opinion. It is of critical significance that municipality must improve on the audit outcomes in the next few years and being financially prudent is the first step in that direction,” emphasised Mayor Taueatsoala.

He added that more importantly, they have a duty to strengthen the municipal governance structures for instance Municipal Public Accounts Committee (MPAC) which was not capacitated to perform its oversight role and that implementation of financial recovery plan must be on top of the agenda.

“It is a reality that COVID-19 has destroyed lot of jobs and the growing proportion of South Africa’s workers have been forced into the informal sectors to make their livelihoods. Big and small business which were the cornerstones of employment and job creation have suffered a big blow and some may not be resuscitated. I am convinced that if we can configure ourselves differently, we would have different strategic partners that we can work with to revitalise our local economy,” continued Mayor Taueatsoala.

Mayor Taueatsoala said no one can deny the fact that the biggest challenge facing the municipality is the soaring unemployment confronting the people and almost one in three of our residents are without work.

“The youth and women of our municipality are the biggest casualties of this pandemic. Job creation should be the number one priority of this administration. We understand that the actual role of local government in job creation, is to create an enabling environment for businesses to establish themselves, flourish, and thereby create permanent jobs,” said Mayor Taueatsoala.

“Because a job is a means to dignity and self-improvement and small businesses create jobs. They have an abundance of potential waiting to be unlocked and they have the ability to expand into employers of our people. That is why small business development will be the focus of my term in office. We must put extra-ordinary efforts in strengthening partnership with private sector in order to revive our local economy, create jobs and building better communities,” said Mayor Taueatsoala.

Mayor Taueatsoala said Mogalakwena Local Municipality is a host of the second biggest platinum mine in the world and therefore is better positioned to improve the lives of its residents.

He emphasised that corruption is a cancer in the society and they must fight corruption wherever it rears its head.

He added that as part of their efforts to stamp out corruption, the municipality has established hotline number with full time personnel dedicated to receiving anonymous complains and reports of corrupt activities and that they will re-enforce the hotline office to ensure that all matters reported are investigated and referred to the law enforcement authorities for further investigation and prosecution.

“Our administration will do all that is practically possible to cooperate with law enforcement in the prosecution of corruption case. Corruption erodes confidence our people have in the public institutions and therefore it is critical to restore the public confidence in Mogalakwena Municipality,” said Mayor Taueatsoala.

“The public image of this municipality has been tainted and even investors have no confidence to bring financial resources for infrastructure development in this municipality. We are duty-bound to restore the financial integrity of our municipality,” continued Mayor Taueatsoala.

“Under my stewardship, I will engage our stakeholders and affirm that we will deal with corruption mercilessly in our municipality. We must communicate the message of hope, not of despair to our resident. This Council can be builders of commerce and jobs, of community infrastructure, roads and sports facilities, but equally as important, builders of a safe and crime free communities,” said Mayor Taueatsoala.

Former Prime Minister of the United Kingdom, Winston Churchill said, “You’ll never reach your destination if you stop and throw stones at every dog that barks.”

“Let us all come together and work in shaping the future we all want. Together we can, unified we will, with a municipality that listens and acts for the will of the people. It is time to seize our opportunity to deliver on our commitment and get the job done. We will build better community together,” Mayor Taueatsoala signed off.