

Extract of Bobby Stevenson's DA Shadow MEC for Safety and Liaison, speaking on the Budget Vote of the Department of Safety and Liaison 1st of June 2016

Honourable Speaker, the multi sectoral task team established by the Honourable Premier under the head of the department of Safety and Liaison needs to make rapid progress when it comes to eradicating gangsterism in the Northern Areas of Nelson Mandela Bay Metropolitan Municipality.

This is a community that is living in fear of these gangsters. Almost daily people are either killed or injured in the gang violence that is taking place. If anything, it has not gotten any better, but has in actual fact got worse. When one looks the mother of a two year old child, in the eye, that was killed in December in the crossfire of bullets, the real pain and suffering that is being inflicted into that community is brought home.

Given the multi sector approach that is necessary to fight gangsterism, there is a huge onus on the department to up its game and get results.

A critical component to fighting gangsterism in the Northern Areas is having a well-established Metro Police Service that can assist in eradicating this scourge. Recently, a so called Metro Police Service was launched in Nelson Mandela Bay.

This is an issue that is important to me because I first proposed it in the City Council of Port Elizabeth in 1989. I was also the Portfolio Councillor for Safety and Security in the days when we had multi-party executives. So I have come a long way with this issue.

I was extremely disappointed to see the manner in which the Metro Police Service for Nelson Mandela Bay was launched. It was shambolic.

The Municipality has had more than four years since 2012 to ensure that the Metro Police Service was established in terms of the Police Act.

What we have had up to very recently, is a highly paid Metro Police Chief without a force.

Some blunders which have been drawn to my attention are the following:

1. The so called establishment has been simply an amalgamation of some traffic officers and security staff.
2. Proper vetting has not taken place. Some members are currently being vetted now. Some have criminal records and cannot be appointed in terms of the Law. Expungements in terms of Section 27 1(b) of the Criminal Procedure Act, can take anything from 8 weeks to 4 months.
3. You cannot become a Metro Police Officer without a National Senior Certificate, not everyone complies.
4. Many of the current appointees have not completed the Metro Policing Bridging Course.
5. Many of them are not competent to carry fire arms and need to comply with the Fire Arm Act before they can be issued with fire arms; that is why many of them are unarmed.
6. Each appointed Metro Police Officer should be issued with a name badge displaying that he is a Metro Police Officer. If this is not worn, they are deemed to be illegal and cannot issue traffic fines. They must also be issued with official appointment certificates that they have to carry when they are on duty.
7. A civilian oversight committee is to be established as well.

It is clear that this whole process has been steam rolled as an election ploy. And it is not operationally ready to comply with the requirements. The unions are also adamant that they want the municipality to illegally agree to a 4 notch salary back pay for administrative staff before the processes can proceed. This proposal was not approved by a full council meeting approximately 4 years ago.

What we need in Nelson Mandela Bay to fight crime and gangsterism is a properly established Municipal Police Service with an Anti-Gang Unit and an Anti-Drug Unit attached to it. These two units could make a significant difference in combating gangsterism in the Northern Areas.

In Cape Town these two units are making significant progress.

We also want to see such a Metro Police Service equipped with the right technology, and some of the technology that a Metro Police Service should have at its disposal is something called "Shot Spotter".

What Shot Spotter does is immediately after a shot goes off in a community, it triangulates to within 2 meters from where that shot was fired and this immediately gets fed through a control point and a drone can be launched to hover overhead and it can start taking pictures and vehicles can also be dispatched immediately to this point.

We need to embrace new technology in the fight against crime. This type of technology along with extensive use of cameras and number plate recognition cameras is being used in the city of Cape Town.

We want to see a Police Service that is launched properly and that is compliant with legislation and that also works for

the people. This department has a job to oversight this process and make sure that it is compliant with legislation. This house needs an explanation as to why this has not happened. What steps will the MEC and her department be taking to fix this mess?

The people of Nelson Mandela Bay want to see change. They want to see crime going down and the number of visible police going up in their communities. We need to make better progress in the fight against gangsterism and this department has a huge responsibility to ensure that it has what it takes to take Nelson Mandela Bay forward again. We in the DA certainly will.