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Photo by: Leon Sadiki

SPECIAL EDITION

New Sheriff takes the reins at Joburg's Anti-Corruption Unit

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Group Forensic and Investigation Services

Anti-Fraud and Corruption
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New sheriff takes reins

By Pearl Rantsekeng

Photo by: Leon Sadiki



Lizzie Ramogale has been appointed as Acting head of the City of Joburg's Group Forensic and Investigation Services(GFIS)

There is a new sheriff in the City and her name is Lizzie Ramogale!

Ramogale (49), has been appointed Acting Head: Group Forensic and Investigation Services (GFIS), a position left void by General Shadrack Sibiba who has rejoined the South African

Police Service.

GFIS is an independent department that was established in 2016 to tackle fraud and corruption crippling the City of Johannesburg (CoJ).

The department reports functionally to the CoJ Group Audit Committee and ad-

ministratively to the city manager.

Although the unit has no prosecuting powers it has a great working relationship with the South African Police Services (SAPS) and Chapter 9 institutions such as – the National Prosecuting Authority and the Asset Forfeiture Unit.

Beyond conducting investigations, GFIS also plays a role in prevention, detection and investigation of cases until conviction. Ramogale is well prepared for the role, having worked under the general, a man she and many in the department hold in high regard.

She has come a long way from her days as a young girl from Moletji, in Makgodu village in Limpopo Province.

A librarian by profession, Ramogale moved to Gauteng in 1996 when she stud-

ied for a post graduate degree in B-Information Management at the then Rand Afrikaans University now known as the University of Johannesburg. She also holds a Masters Degree in Project Management.

Upon achieving this qualification, she worked at various state organs including the Gauteng Department of Sports, Recreation, Arts and Culture (SRAC).

She was responsible for the provision of information, reference and research services

in different libraries in both local and provincial level.

From SRAC Ramogale joined the Department of Community Safety as deputy director responsible for Police Performance Monitoring and Evaluation. A position she held for nine years. As well as investigation of all reported cases of service delivery by the police.

"This is where my law enforcement knowledge was enhanced as we had to monitor the performance of police entities namely





– the Ekurhuleni Metro Police Department (EMPD), the Johannesburg Metro Police Department (JMPD), the South Africa Police Service (SAPS) and the Tshwane Metro Police Department (TMPD).

“Which is how I ended up in my current position as acting head at the end of May,” she explains.

Ramogale says she has been touched by the support from other colleagues despite challenges like staff shortages.

She says: “I can’t explain it, but so far it’s been okay... I think the transition went well, but fear is also there and I think that is what is keeping me up at night.”

Ramogale’s first port of call as acting head has been to fill some of the senior vacant posts.

She has also, in the short space that she has been at the helm, identified a few areas that need attention.

She says: “We had to review our terms of

reference for investigations so they could assist us in tightening up our internal controls for investigations. We also just wanted to make sure that when cases go to court, they don’t get thrown out for lack of evidence.

“Secondly, we had to make sure that the recommendations emanating from our own investigations are implemented. This will help strengthen our recovery processes for the monies due to the City.”

Ramogale says

they've also introduced the code of professional standard investigations as they had been using the generic code for the CoJ employees.

She adds: "Our aim is to make sure that when you're an employee of this department and an investigator you must stand apart from the rest. This should reflect in the way you conduct yourself during interviews; how you manage confidential information; how you manage the crime scene; how you write a report and package evidence and how you conduct yourself when testifying whether in court or a disciplinary

process."

Ramogale's post is not for the faint-hearted and as such, she adds, it has meant that she has to be extra vigilant.

When not juggling work, Ramogale is out exercising.

"I'm an athlete by nature and I love to cycle or just run to help me destress. Cycling is a new acquired hobby that I started last year, which has been a nurturing experience," she says.

Asked what Women's Month means to her, Ramogale says it is an opportunity for men to learn about the role

women play and also for women to ensure that men understand that women are here to make a meaningful contribution.

"It is an opportunity to highlight the value women have and how they empower the community and society at large.

"For example, group forensics is seen as a male dominated environment and for me, as a woman, to come this far means a lot. But more than that, it is the confidence the City has shown in appointing me to fill the position of acting head."



GFIS employees

Photo by: Leon Sadiki

Protecting the City's budget

By Pearl Rantsekeng



Photo by: Leon Sadiki

Director of Forensic Information Management Centre Helen Masera

Mashiane Helen Masera has come a long way from her days picking grapes in Senwabarwana village in rural Limpopo.

As Director of Forensic Information Management Centre (FIMC), Masera, a former policewoman, holds a position that is the highest after that of head of Group Forensic Investigation

Services (GFIS).

"FIMC is about minimum information security standards which I am passionate about," explains Masera.

"The national development plan is about development of people, the national anti-corruption strategy is about fighting corruption," she says.

"To win, we use a multi-disciplinary approach. You have three spheres of government that are inter related and inter dependent - Home Affairs, SAPS as well as the State Security Agency (SSA).

"When I first joined the city, one of the things I noted was that there was a lot of economic sabotage with no con-

Photo by: Leon Sadiki



Helen Masera

sequences.

"People were burning substations and we started to work with the different units to follow through on these matters.

Masera joined the department last December having moved from Polokwane where she worked as director for the Transversal Ethic Security and Investigations Unit in the office of the premier. A position she held for two years.

"There I had to ensure that we have ethical employees and strong investigation capacity. I had to make sure that we integrate with all state agencies that investigate corruption and establish forums led by the department of public administration," she explains.

She mentions her involvement in the Musina-Makhado Special Economic Zone (MMSEZ) as one of her career highlights.

Masera's rise to the top has not been meteoric. She has had to work her way from the moment she qualified as a teacher in 1999.

She had no choice but to accept a post as a fruit picker at a local farm in her rural town of Limpopo.

"There were no teaching posts available, and picking grapes paid a meagre R12 per crate," she recalls.

While working on the



Helen Masera

farm, Masera decided to sign up as a police reservist and was lucky to get signed up into the police service in 2000 a job she held for 7 years.

Working as a police officer gave Masera an edge in investigations and experience in case management which have both come in handy in her post as FIMC director.

"Case management is

about whistle blowers calling in, getting cases, responding to them and referring them for investigation and updating them when the investigation is closed," says Masera.

She is quick to point out that she joined the City of Joburg because of Former Hawks Head General Shadrack Sibiya, who was Head of GFIS. Sibiya resigned

recently to go re-join SAPS.

"The general is passionate about fighting fraud just like me. I am an ethics person and I believe in the City. My desire is to one day become a police commissioner or City Manager, God willing."

Masera says she doesn't subscribe to the notion of "boys club or girls club" but believes in gender

mainstreaming.
“The essence of women in leadership is to assert themselves but also respect men. Look at women like Prof Puleng Lenka-Bula from Unisa, former Public Service and Admin Minister Ayanda Dlodlo, former Public Protector Thuli Madonsela and UCT vice-chancellor Mamokgethi Phakeng. We could learn a lot

from these women,” she says.

Masera says nothing in life is guaranteed.

“Now when I leave the office I pack it as if I am not coming back. It is also the job requirement of GFIS and we must lead by example – minimum security standard – clean desk policy.”

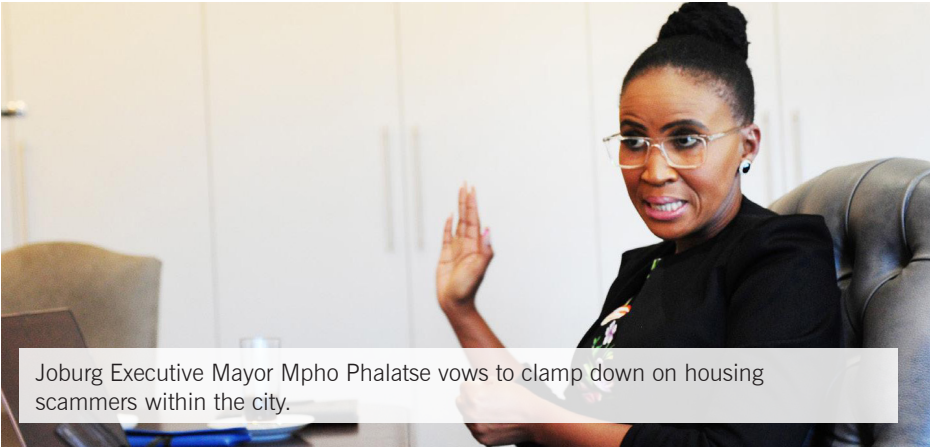


Helen Masera

Photo by: Leon Sadiki

Crackdown on housing scammers

By Pearl Rantsekeng



Joburg Executive Mayor Mpho Phalatse vows to clamp down on housing scammers within the city.

DESPERATE times call for desperate measures. Housing syndicates in the City of Johannesburg are resorting to sophisticated tactics to rob unsuspecting residents, and the City is clamping down.

The organised syndicates have an individual pretending to be Councillor Mlungisi Mabaso, the newly appointed MMC for Human Settlements in the Johannesburg Multi-Party Government.

Addressing the me-

dia, Executive Mayor Mpho Phalatse accompanied by Mabaso and Gauteng Forensic and Investigation Services (GIFS) Acting Head Lizzie Ramogale, said victims of public housing scammers were being asked to pay between R3,000 and R20,000 to speed up their housing applications.

This money is supposedly meant to "help move things along" or "kick-start the process". Only two people have been arrested but it is suspected that certain Johannesburg

housing officials may be assisting criminals.

"As we dig deeper into this matter, it is becoming clear that we are dealing with multiple syndicates who might be working closely with human settlement officials. The law enforcement agencies are working together to try to centralise all cases," said Phalatse.

The City has roped in law enforcement agencies at all levels to bring criminals to book. These agencies include senior officers



Joburg Executive Mayor Mpho Phalatse

from SAPS Hillbrow, the Hawks, Organised Crime from National SAPS Head Office, as well as GFIS. This approach aims to repair and rebuild the country's economic capital so that Johannesburg can truly be called a City of Golden Opportunities.

The deliberate action by MMC Mlungisi Mabaso and the Department of Human Settlements is a result of a growing trend, where scammers create fraudulent social media accounts to swindle unsuspecting victims by promising them an opportunity to either jump the

Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) housing queue or to sell them non-existing houses.

"As a multi-party government, we wish to make it very clear on this matter, the Department of Human Settlements, its officials and entities, would never ask that beneficiaries pay for RDP homes and would not assist them to jump the queue. RDP houses, the application thereof, and the allocation are free of charge to qualifying residents," Phalatse clarified.

The immediate action by the City came after numerous complaints by walk-in clients as well as callers who have lost their hard-earned cash to scammers.

Modus Operandi

The scammers use various fake social media accounts with the councillor's face and the department's name to offer credibility to their fraudulent endeavours. They often use phone calls and social media platforms like Facebook, WhatsApp, TikTok, LinkedIn and Twitter to lure their victims, as it offers a sense of an-



Joburg Executive Mayor Mpho Phalatse

onymity.

They target Johannesburg-based residents who are in dire need of housing and they get them to pay a “deposit”. The perpetrators convince victims to pay via Pep, Shoprite, Standard Bank and Capitec Bank.

“Those that qualify for RDP houses are already destitute, and asking someone who is already struggling to live a life of dignity to pay for a free service is beyond immoral, it is something someone without a

conscience would do,” said Phalatse.

The alleged fraudsters are said to have registered cellphone numbers in the councillor’s name. Last July, a case of fraud was opened at the Johannesburg Central Police Station. The case was later handed over to the Hillbrow Police Station and in February this year, three suspects were apprehended in Limpopo. The suspects were found in possession of fake posters emblazoned with pictures of the councillor.

Tokolli Sedibe (29), Thuli Katjedi (29) and Ronny Magabe (35) appeared in court for their bail applications in February, and their next court appearance will be on 1 September.

Preventative Measures

The Johannesburg Department of Human Settlements is currently in the process of getting all its social media accounts verified, to distinguish fraudulent accounts from the department’s official pages.

Councillor Mabaso



and the Department of Human Settlements will continue to issue statements, conduct media interviews and carry out awareness campaigns warning against these scams. "We will lay charges against anyone who seeks to defraud the City's residents."

Furthermore, the police have advised the department and the councillor to encourage victims to open cases of fraud to help strengthen the current case with the Hillbrow SAPS. Last month, the City visited Braamfischerville and Phiri in Soweto to help scammed residents open cases.

Where to report housing scams

Residents are urged to remain vigilant, scrutinise all the information they receive, and follow only the official social media platforms of the City of Johannesburg.

The Johannesburg Department of Human Settlements is calling on all community members to report any suspicious activities or individuals to GFIS at the Sappi Building, 48 Ameshoff Street, 6th floor in Braamfontein or to call the fraud hotline number on 0800-002-587. Another option is to send an email to [whistle@](mailto:whistle@joburg.org.za)

[joburg.org.za](mailto:whistle@joburg.org.za).

In addition, there are outreach programmes to educate communities, and confidentiality is guaranteed.

The official social media accounts of the Department of Human Settlements are:

Twitter: @COJDOHS
Facebook: City of Joburg Human Settlements Department

Instagram: Department of Human Settlements

Picture Gallery

Photos By Leon Sadiki

Group Forensic and Investigation Services department officials together with Johannesburg Metropolitan Police Department (JMPD), City Power and Johannesburg Water During a recent fraud awareness campaign at Alex Mall.





