



## **CHAIRMAN'S REPORT - 2019**

Dear HRA Member

A year ago, I wrote to you against a background of the social unrest which ravaged sections of our town and which damaged brand Hermanus. Whilst the damage was severe and the disruption was pervasive, there has been a return to a measure of normalcy as we used to experience it. At the same time there is a new normal that is in the process of establishing itself. I will describe it to you.

Following the general election last year and the heightened tensions that it brought, a veneer of calm has settled over many of the issues and there has been little unrest. There is a clearer understanding of the linkage between social unrest and the long-term negative effect on the lives and livelihoods of all of us in Hermanus. Many communities have become polarised both within and towards others outside and the efforts to bring about social cohesion have been made more difficult and no less important. There are simmering tensions around a host of issues as people and organisations look to apportion blame. In many cases the municipality is cast as the villain without that necessarily being the case.

Crime is on the increase and safety and security is top of mind for most of us in the area where the HRA gains its support.

The reality is that unless the diverse communities in Hermanus work together in seeking a better life for our collective selves, life is going to continue to be tough. It is into this space that the dynamic around HPP and the SRA is fed. I will deal with them in more detail further on.

## **Bi-Annual 2018 Survey**

The results of the survey were shared with you early this year and indicated growing concerns around safety, security and law enforcement, public participation processes and the management of social tensions. An important function of the survey is to clarify the mandate that you our members give the EXCO of the HRA in terms of where and how our efforts should be directed. To this end, we identified the following as our priorities and have devoted our efforts in pursuit of them.

- Safety and Security
- Management of Social Cohesion and Tensions
- Baboon Management
- Water Security
- Preservation of Fernkloof Nature Reserve
- Quality of Public Participation in Municipal Affairs

What follows is feedback on each on of these important aspects.

### **Safety and Security**

In February the board of HPP informed the community that as of the end of June 2019 they would no longer be able to receive funding from ratepayers via the Municipality and consequently it would have to cease operating once its fund were exhausted. Following a protracted and often acrimonious process a new board has been elected to run the operations of Public Protection.

Concurrent with this dynamic, the OM made it clear that the only basis upon which Safety and Security services as provided by Public Protection could continue would be through the creation of a Special Rating Area (SRA) and that we would have to go through the long and arduous process of establishing it. Following a meeting with the OM and a small number of interested parties, the HRA initiated the process with one of our members as the sponsor. I could fill many pages with an account of the cut and thrust of the proposals and counter proposals and the views expressed both in support and opposition to it but the bottom line is that the SRA process is firmly underway. It has not been plain sailing and the OM has not always been as

accessible as we would have liked but the Steering Committee under the Chairmanship of Michael Farr is hard at work.

Owing to regulatory delays and some significant differences in interpretation of the SRA policy between the administration and the steering committee, the process is seriously behind schedule and the plan to hold public meetings in December is unlikely to be met. Notwithstanding the difficulties that have been experienced we are hopeful of a positive outcome. The initial Perception Survey has been completed and we await the analysis from Douglas Parker and Associates. This analysis will enable the steering committee to revisit the business plan in order to present it for approval by the OM and then to ratepayers in seeking approval of the establishment of a SRA. The delays have pushed this process out and meetings will only be able to be held in January 2020. A key milestone in the approval process is meeting the deadlines for inclusion in the IDP and the budgets for the next financial year.

As a member of the HRA you are encouraged to give your vote to establishing the SRA as this, in our view, is the only legal and practical means of restoring and also enhancing the provision of the Safety and Security services we have become accustomed to.

### **Management of Social Cohesion and Tensions**

Our efforts in this regard have centred around attendance of meeting of the Zwelihle / Hermanus Stakeholders meetings chaired by Masizole Mnqasela, the speaker of the WC Legislature in seeking solutions to the housing crisis in Zwelihle.

These meetings have given the people of Hermanus the opportunity to engage one another in an open forum in discussing social dynamics, housing and the effect of unrest on the economy and how this affects all of us.

The positives flowing from these engagements are the Better Living Model Housing project in Zwelihle and better understanding of the points of view of different communities. The on-going interactions have in my view contributed significantly to a calmer more peaceful Hermanus.

## **Baboon Management**

At the onset of last festive season, the HRA distributed pamphlets on dealing with baboons in affected areas of Hermanus. Although these were well received, the problems with baboons persisted. Following a protracted engagement with the Province and Cape Nature, the OM has succeeded in gaining control of the process of managing baboons in the Overstrand. In conjunction with Human Wildlife Solutions it is anticipated that control of problem animals will soon be established. We look forward to positive developments.

## **Water Security**

Despite recent late good rainfall and the De Bos Dam standing at 57%, level 3 water restrictions have been imposed and there is no immediate prospect of them being lifted. The reality is that Hermanus cannot rely on the dam for its water supply and a significant volume of what we consume comes from ground water sources. The sinking of two new boreholes and the underutilised capacity of existing ones will ensure continuity of supply for the foreseeable future.

We encouraged all water users to continue to use this precious resource sparingly.

## **Preservation of Fernkloof Nature Reserve (FNR)**

Our involvement with FNR has been to encourage the efforts of the “Hands Off” movement and to keep a watching brief on the process of formulation and hopefully finalising the Management Plan. Whilst much progress has been made, the remaining sticking points are the issues of zoning and development. Under the municipal zoning of OS1, areas of future ‘development’ are permitted by consent use. This means that if a contentious development plan is tabled before Council and it is consented to (approved) then it can go ahead. This could have serious consequences for the future preservation of this most precious asset. We will keep you posted of developments.

## **Quality of Public Participation in Municipal Affairs**

A significant and important component of our engagement with the municipality is through the Ward 3 Committee where we play an active role in representing what we

believe are the best interests of our members. In keeping with our constitution, we work in co-operation with the Municipality and as a consequence our engagements are productive, our requests for action are responded to and our inputs are valued. This is the business end of our role in being the voice of ratepayers and we will continue to give it the time and attention it deserves.

An additional important component of our participation in municipal affairs is the review of town planning submissions made to the municipality. Deviations from planning regulations and requests to set aside title deed restrictions on properties in Wards 3 and 4 are routinely referred to the HRA for comment. Over the past year Jan Cilliers has undertaken this task with characteristic enthusiasm and attention to detail.

### **CBD Revitalisation**

The CBD Revitalisation project as it relates to the storm water in both High St and Main Road and the pedestrianisation of High St. was meant to commence in May and to have been completed by now. We are both disappointed and appalled that this important project has been delayed. It is apparent that the administration has prioritised getting a clean audit with regard to minor procurement issues over the economic wellbeing of the CBD. We have made our sentiments on this issue known at the Ward 3 committee regarding what we perceive as mismanagement and will be closely monitoring progress when the project commences in the new year.

### **Executive Committee**

The EXCO has had an interesting and challenging year with the issues around HPP with the establishing of an SRA taking centre stage. Jenny Howard has come on board as our minute's secretary and her fresh new approach and insightful opinions are valued.

Sadly Hedley Tarlton, our current treasurer, is experiencing some serious health challenges and he has indicated that he won't be able to continue. He has asked me to find a replacement. Hedley has served the HRA faithfully for many years and we will miss his quiet demeanour.

We continue our search for an administrative secretary and encourage you to consider volunteering for this portfolio. The responsibilities are not time consuming or onerous and among the benefits are the sense of making a positive contribution to the community as well as working with a team of dedicated and committed individuals.

The EXCO is made up as follows:

- Brian Wridgway                      Chairperson, Ward 3, Social Cohesion
- David Worrall                        Vice Chairperson, Water, Electricity and CPF
- Bob Stanway                         Transport, CBD revitalisation
- Vacant                                 Finance and Administration
- David Shreeve                        Publicity and Membership Development
- Arlene Ross-Smith                    Baboons, Tourism and Social Media
- Jan Cilliers                            Westcliff Residents Association, Town Planning
- Michael Farr                         Special Rating Area (SRA)
- Jenny Howard                         Minutes Secretary

## **Membership**

Our membership stands at 426 with only 217 being paid up which is only 51 %. With some 5500 ratepayers in Ward 3 alone we are under represented and this has led to some debate both within and outside of the EXCO. Should we continue to regard those who haven't renewed their subscriptions as members and should we continue to correspond with them or not? How significant are we in truly representing ratepayers in our area? These are questions we will grapple with in the new year. The Bi-Annual Survey has also highlighted the fact that our membership is predominantly white, male and fairly aged. Our challenge is to grow our membership, to make it more diverse and more representative of the community.

## **Finance**

Notwithstanding expenditure exceeding that of last year but with income being on par, we managed to increase both net income and accumulated funds. The current picture looks like this.

|                   | 2019    | 2018    | Change  |
|-------------------|---------|---------|---------|
| Income            | 49,273  | 50,467  | -1,36%  |
| Expenditure       | 32,622  | 18,123  | +79,94% |
| Nett Income       | 16,663  | 32,524  | -48,7%  |
| Accumulated Funds | 150,283 | 133,620 | +12,47% |

Some significant increases in expenditure are the Survey, Financing of the SRA, Printing and Meeting costs, contributions to the upgrade of the Cemetery and upkeep of Children’s Parks. As always funds are disbursed only when there is consensus on the EXCO and when it is believed that the cause is in keeping with the HRA’s role in the community. In this context the EXCO has pledged financial support to the SRA to a maximum of R50, 000, all of which we expect to recoup should the process be successful. In short, our spending is carefully controlled and the financial situation is healthy.

**Looking Forward**

As we look forward to next year, I believe we need to focus on the following three aspects, namely growing our membership in order to more fully represent ratepayers in our area, support for the establishment of the SRA and supplementing the structure of the EXCO for optimal performance. I trust that we will be able to count on your on-going support.

**In Conclusion**

Once again, I wish to thank my fellow EXCO members for their selfless service and their support and encouragement during what has been a turbulent year.

Kind regards

**Brian Wridgway**  
**Chairperson**