



CHAIRPERSONS REPORT

Calendar year 2025

Dear Hermanus Ratepayers,

A year has rushed by since last year's Annual General Meeting on 26 March 2025. The first few months were occupied in undertaking a process of renewal which included: developing a new strategy, co-opting members to the HRA executive committee (HRA EXCO) to expand the skills base, finalising our new website, establishing a PayFast payment gateway and membership platform, and promoting membership. During the year we had some natural attrition of members from the EXCO. With the changes in the HBC leadership, Rae Du Plessis was replaced by Jana Smith as the current chair of the HBC. Dale Lautenbach also retired during the year. We thank both Dale and Rae for their contributions.

The HRA EXCO has the following members currently leading the organisation:

- **Ken Briggs:** Ken is a development economist and currently the Chairperson of the HRA EXCO. He is the managing partner of a boutique consulting firm, where he specializes as a development economist working in both the private and public sectors. He leads our local economic development portfolio.
- **Russel Schierhout:** Russel has retired to Hermanus Heights after a lengthy corporate career spanning 36 years with the Standard Bank (4 years) and BHP Billiton Limited (32 years), specialising in banking and treasury. He currently leads our communications and administration portfolio.
- **Tobie Louw:** Tobie lives in Fernkloof and is a professional engineer with vast experience in the consulting and engineering businesses, specializing in major urban infrastructure provision. He has extensive experience in bulk water infrastructure and contract management and a special interest in the conservation of our fauna and flora. He currently leads our infrastructure and conservation portfolios.
- **Deon de Kock:** Deon retired after 35 years in Military Management. Since moving to Hermanus in 2018, he has been active in community service, currently serving as the Chairperson of the Westcliff Residents Association (WRA) and representing the community on the Westcliff Ward 4 Committee. Deon also participates in the reactivated Community Police Forum (CPF) on safety and security related issues.
- **Ian Paterson:** Ian lives in Voëlklip and is the Managing Partner of a leading futures research, strategy, human resources and organizational design consultancy. He is also a philatelist with a specialized interest in history and the preservation of heritage. Ian currently leads our heritage portfolio.
- **Francois Huysamen:** Francois was co-opted on to the HRA EXCO to provide information systems and technical back-office support, where he has already made valuable contributions in establishing our website, setting up our back-office systems, including the new PayFast payment gateway membership renewal system.
- **Steve Georgala:** Steve is a well-seasoned entrepreneur having interest in both South Africa and Europe. He represents his local "Voëlklip, waterfront" community, while also having a strong passion for supporting the upliftment of disadvantaged communities.

- **Jana Smith:** Jana is our most recent co-opted member and is currently the chair of the Hermanus Business Chamber (HBC) and a prominent Estate Agent in Hermanus. She provides a useful link between the HRA and the HBC.

During the year the HRA has remained focused on the guiding principles developed during its renewal strategy. These include the following:

- Improve two-way communication (lobby and listen) between the community and Overstrand Municipality (OM) through fostering regular and structured interaction at both an executive and operational levels.
- Provide strategic support to ratepayers through listening, to understand and respond to the issues and concerns of ratepayers.
- Playing an oversight role to ensure that the OM applies good governance and prudent financial management, ensuring “value for money” in its response to the needs of the community (ratepayers and the broader communities).

In accordance with our strategy, we have tried to not get drawn into matters that are not of a common concern to the ratepayers and/or where we believe we will not be able to make a meaningful contribution. We have also aim not to get engaged directly in matters that are being addressed by other community represented bodies, although we will have a voice and will engage and support the appropriate bodies in their endeavours.

Over the year the main activities undertaken by the HRA have been focused on developing robust communication and interaction with the Municipality and matching the functional requirements with the available capacity and interests of the HRA EXCO members. The key highlights of the year include the following:

Organisational development:

- Established a formal linkage with the Hermanus Business Chamber (HBC) resulting in the HBC chair being co-opted to the HRA EXCO.
- Bedded down the new HRA website, along with the PayFast membership payment gateway system trialled in 2025.
- Benchmarked HRA against several ratepayers’ associations in Cape Town.
- Developing the membership base through communicating the purpose and functions of the HRA and the work being done within the portfolio structures. Over the 2025 calendar year, the active HRA WhatsApp Updates group grew to over 585 participants. However, our annual paid-up membership at the close of the December 2025 calendar year was a rather disappointing 94. This is a matter that requires attention.

Municipality interaction:

During the year we have established solid communication channels with the municipality at political, executive and operational levels.

- Most notably this has included establishing a scheduled monthly meeting with the Municipal Manager, which has proven to be extremely valuable and productive in resolving community issues, while also giving the HRA insights into the OM’s challenges and constraints.
- At a functional level we retain regular interaction with key portfolios.

A key area of concern is around a growing erosion of the expertise and experience in the municipality, exacerbated by challenges in appointing appropriate persons to senior positions. For example, there remains four key directorship posts vacant. In addition, concerns about the current structure and resourcing not being properly balanced with key directorates and functional areas being neglected, such as Economic development, environmental management and tourism – critical in the OM context. We are pleased to note that a Chief Financial Officer (CFO) has just been appointed after the post being effectively vacant for more than a year.

We must thank the municipality for providing these opportunities for interaction with the HRA and enabling open, frank, and at times, robust debate. As before, we continued to play an active role in the Ward structures.

Functional activities:

The HRA has been actively participating in the following key initiatives.

- **Integrated Development Plan (IDP) and budget comments:** The HRA provided detailed comment on the Integrated Development Plans (IDP's) and the 2025/26 budget. (Submitted comment available on the HRA website document repository). We were recently instrumental in jointly arranging a workshop with the senior leadership of OM. The purpose was to identify some key points that should be considered in the future IDP for OM.
- **Ward Committee participation:** As a member the HRA has had ongoing and active participation on the ward committee structure, where the HRA has been instrumental in challenging the OM and raising a wide range of ratepayers concerns and views
- **Tender processes:** The HRA has continued playing a key role behind the scenes in trying to resolve and unblock the tender process issues pertaining to the De Mond, OK site and Voëlklip Erf 4833 developments in the interests of the Hermanus community.
- **Oversight over critical OM Infrastructure:** The HRA has on an ongoing basis been reviewing key aspects of the Hermanus infrastructure to ascertain the status and development plans to ensure adequate capacity for the future. Tobie Louw leads this portfolio, currently actively monitoring the following key aspects:
 - **Bulk water supply:** Liaison with the Engineers at OM regarding the long-term planning for sustainable bulk water sources for Hermanus.
 - **Hermanus Wellfields monitoring:** Participating in the Hermanus Monitoring Committee (HMC) that monitors the Hermanus Wellfields' performance to ensure sustainable delivery. HRA's participation include feedback on the management of this important water source. (HMC meeting analysis and comment available on the HRA website news and media repository)
 - **Fernkloof sewer project:** Liaison with OM infrastructure department towards expediting the waterborne sewer project for Fernkloof and Kwaiwater, ultimately alleviating the negative financial and environmental impacts by removing the need for tanker services.
- **Dog Walking:** The HRA investigated the issue of dog walking in the context of the approved by-law that made no provision for off-leash dog walking. Based on the HRA community survey a motivated proposal motivating responsible dog ownership and opportunities for off-leash walking was submitted to the Overstrand Municipality. The report was followed through the Ward Committee structure, resulting in the opening of leash and off-leash dog walking areas (zones) on Grotto Beach and other areas in the broader Overstrand. After further liaison, signage was eventually erected at the commencement of the 2025/26 holiday season.
- **Support to community organisations:** The HRA provides ongoing support to other community organisations, including the Hermanus Baboon Action Group (HBAG), Hermanus Public Protection (HPP), Overstrand Community Action Network (OCAN) and the Hermanus Business Chamber (HBC). In this regard more recent activities have included the following:
 - Providing support and input to HBAG on addressing the current baboon management crisis earlier in 2025.
 - Participating with the HBC parking investigation as well as with their Swallow Park upgrading initiatives.
 - OCAN in engaging in issues common to the broader ratepaying communities.
 - Hermanus Botanical Society in assisting with the maintenance/improvement of the Fernkloof Nature Reserve hiking trails.

HRA finance overview:

At the end of the year (2025) we had an active membership of 585, as reflected in our HRA Updates WhatsApp forum. It is important to note that the HRA contribute to worthy projects in Hermanus. During the past year HRA made R5k donations to each of the following deserving community groupings: The Cliff Path Management Group (CPMG), the Cliff Path Action Group (CPAG), the Hermanus Botanical Society (BOTSOC), ringfenced for the Bergstapper Team's trail maintenance in the Fernkloof Nature Reserve (FNR), the Hermanus Business Chamber (HBC) for its Swallow Park initiative and finally the 2025 Christmas Lights campaign. We also provided energy drinks and sweets to our firefighters during the fire season.

However, going into the new financial year we have cash reserves of only R84,945. This is partly due to very low membership contributions. During the year we only received R11,900.00 through membership and donations. We need to canvass for increased contribution to boost our funds.

It is evident that during 2025, the HRA has played, and succeeded in developing a constructive engagement process with the municipality which is already bearing fruits in ensuring that our community receives the recognition and services they deserve.

We believe during this year the HRA EXCO, have continued to establish a firm base on which we can develop further to ensure that we address the issues and concerns of our members. We acknowledge that we have mainly focussed on major common challenges to Ward 3 and have not been able to address all issues of our constituency. As we develop more capacity through EXCO membership and active ratepayer participation we will be able to expand our sphere of activity and interest. In this regard we wish to thank Mike Bourne (*Hermanus Heights resident and HRA ordinary member*) for his ongoing support in reviewing the municipal budget and the electricity charging regimes, and John Little (*Voëlklip, resident and HRA ordinary member*) who provided valuable assistance with the dog survey and report.

In conclusion, to enable us to serve the community effectively, I need to emphasise that increased membership and contribution is critical to ensure that the HRA becomes a more representative body for Hermanus ratepayers, providing a strong base to engage with and lobby OM. We will continue supporting the Hermanus ratepayers, to ensure that our community receive the recognition and services that they deserve.

Our aim for 2026 is simply to keep expanding our involvement and service to the Hermanus community, particularly in terms of supporting the municipality in its strategic thinking and planning

Ken Briggs

(HRA Chairperson)

Please do not hesitate to contact us if you wish to find out more about the HRA and/or wish to join by following the link below to our website.

[Hermanus Ratepayers Association](#)