

GUARDS FOR NGWATHE OFFICIALS

31 January 2012

The newly appointed municipal manager and other managers of the Ngwathe municipality have been allocated bodyguards following the ongoing strike by employees in the area.

Thabo Mokoena, who has been sent to Ngwathe to resolve the mess at the municipality, had to get two bodyguards as the workers' strike continued this week. The acting chief financial officer has also been allocated two bodyguards as well as the mayor, as workers' protests escalated.

Ngwathe includes the towns of Parys, Vredefort, Heilbron, Koppies and Edenville.

Mokoena has been deployed by the provincial government to stabilise the municipality. The workers are demanding he be removed. Mokoena was head of Ficksburg municipality's legal department before his deployment to Ngwathe.

Local police spokesperson Col Ramokgosi Mushata, said police intelligence had been called in to investigate the torching of three houses that belong to two municipal officials and a clerk at the municipality.

Mokoena said he remained firm.

"I came here to do my work and I will not let workers interfere," he said.

The former chief financial officer, Tladi Mokoena, was suspended after approving hefty salary increases. He had taken over from former municipal manager, Norman Selai, who was suspended four months into the job.

Since Moekoena was responsible for the portfolios of the municipal manager and chief financial officer, it was found that he allegedly approved both salaries for himself.

Municipal workers went on strike in November last year when the council ruled that increases given them by the previous council were illegal, suspended them and demanded that the workers reimburse the council.

Three people, including former acting municipal manager Paris Maroe, former procurement manager Makale Mogale and former municipal manager Selai are out on R1000 bail each, together with a supplier, Ephraim Somhlaho of Victor Enterprise.

Their case is in connection with the sale of diaries to the municipality at a price of R900 each, even though a local supplier gave a quote of R50 each.

[Source: www.thenewage.co.za]