

Executive Mayor's Speech at Media Breakfast:

On behalf of the Steve Tshwete Local Municipality, I heartily welcome you to this important occasion, at which I want to establish the basis for a future sound and mutually beneficial relationship with you, the ladies and gentlemen of the media.

A free press is one of the major cornerstones of a democracy and South Africa prides itself on the fact that it has the freest media in Africa, due to our dynamic Constitution and the Government's commitment to being both accountable and transparent.

One of the vital roles that the media fulfils is to be a watchdog on behalf of society on the activities of the government of the day and how the taxpayer's hard-earned money is being spent.

It is thus necessary and normal for the media to criticise the authorities when they have valid grounds to do so, but with any freedom also comes responsibility, and they thus also have a duty to praise the elected representatives of the people when they have done something right.

The high ethical standards of your noble profession demand that you balance your reporting on negative aspects of what those in power do, by also reporting

with the same prominence and enthusiasm on the positive accomplishments they achieve.

Unfortunately, as we all know, bad news sells newspapers, but in the most sincere interests of nation-building (as espoused by the late Aggrey Claaste, former Editor of the Sowetan, who coined the phrase) and uniting this wonderful Rainbow Nation, I appeal to you not to ignore or downplay genuine development and concrete achievements that the National, Provincial and (in our case) the Local Government are indeed making.

Local Government is primarily concerned with the efficient delivery of basic services (like electricity, water, sanitation and refuse removal) on a grassroots level to the ordinary citizens and businesses of South Africa, to provide and maintain basic infrastructure (like roads, street lights and much more) and to create a climate wherein future development and economic prosperity can occur.

In doing this effectively we rely on the media to convey news with regard to this to the residents we serve and the rest of the country, for which this national and provincial award-winning municipality has always been cited as a sterling example for other towns and cities to emulate.

Other news that the Steve Tshwete Local Municipality is generating is steps that it is taking on an on-going

basis to locally promote and support Mpumalanga Premier Thabang Makwetla's five Flagship Projects for this province, which are designed to drive development.

They are:

1. Heritage, Tourism and Greening Mpumalanga. This province has heritage sites like the Kruger National Park, Graskop, God's Window and Botshabelo, which falls within the jurisdiction of this municipality. Children must be taught about the beauty of various cultures and their heritage. Tourism has the potential to create much employment.
2. The Maputo Development Corridor.
3. The Moloto Development Corridor. Nearby areas like KwaNdebele will benefit by the jobs it will produce.
4. Water for all.
5. The acceleration of management to deliver services.

I would like to now move on to specific major projects that the Steve Tshwete Local Municipality has made provision for its 2008/2009 Budget. They are the following:

- Banquet Hall - a 65 million rand project.
- Serving of stands.
- Establishment of rural villages.

I thank you.