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TK Gumede

Despite large-scale looting in the Housing Development Agency that works with local and provincial governments to provide housing needs for the poorest of the poor, the national minister of human settlement, MS Lindiwe Sisulu, has introduced a national housing needs register (NHNR) database to avoid further corruption and embezzlement of funds. The register will enable households to register their needs for adequate shelter. (In October last year the Auditor-General's office had found that 18 contracts with a value of almost R1 billion were awarded without inviting competitive bidding and this left the housing agency with R11 million deficit and was ordered to repay R2,3 billion back to the treasury).

This transpired at the presentation by the provincial department of human settlement for IAT members held on July 11, 2019 in the Council chambers.

The credible database, the committee was told, will protect councillors who are often accused of corruption or malpractices in the allocation of houses, as citizens will be able to check their own details and place on the waiting list.

The NHNR is a web-based application that contains records related to the needs of households for adequate shelter based in captured housing needs questionnaires.

The NHNR is not going to be used to qualify or disqualify respondents but rather registers a specific household's housing need at the level of a municipality and is not an application for a subsidy.

The system seeks to ensure a fair, equitable, transparent and auditable process of inviting potential beneficiaries for housing subsidies when housing opportunities becomes available and is a key tool for the implementation of the allocation guidelines.

In view of the delay with the national document, the province of KwaZulu-Natal has developed an allocation policy based on the draft national policy and is to be presented to the current MEC Ms Peggy Nkonyeni after consultation with local municipalities.

The policy requires the establishment of an allocation committee consisting of both provincial and municipal officials who will be responsible for selecting potential beneficiaries from the NHNR.

To ensure the process is not stalled, KZN has embarked on the introduction of the NHNR by planning to pilot its implementation in the following nine municipalities namely, KwaDukuza, eThekweni, Msunduzi, Ray Nkonyeni, Alfred Duma, uMhlathuze, Newcastle, uMngeni and eDumbe.

However, the implementation of the NHNR system is expected to impact on various stakeholders due to its relation with the subject of waiting lists and housing allocations. In view thereof, an extensive consultation was undertaken in 2015 to 2016 as per the request of the previous MEC Ravi Pillay.

As a result, an implementation toolkit has been compiled consisting of the implementation plan, communication plan, training manual for field supervisors and field workers and poster inviting registration.

• Cllr Gumede is the DA spokesperson on Infrastructure and Technical Portfolio Committee of KwaDukuza Council.