

BUDGET 2020/2021:

Due to COVID-19, not simply an adjustment but a total revision

During a virtual meeting held on Wednesday, 27 May 2020, the third review of Overstrand's five-year Integrated Development Plan and an amendment served before Council. On the same day, Council also unanimously approved the budget as tabled by Executive Mayor Dudley Coetsee.

According to Speaker Anton Coetsee, this is a remarkable achievement and reflects a tremendous vote of confidence in the Mayor, the municipal manager and the administration as a whole.

The address delivered by the Mayor on the day is published below:

For 2020/2021, our strategic direction set in the five-year IDP remains unchanged. The IDP review articulates the development needs of our communities and the municipality whilst also stating the specific initiatives for the 2020/2021 financial year. As we are all aware, the municipal budget funds the delivery of the IDP.

The national lockdown, imposed as a result of the COVID-19 virus, and the various regulations promulgated by national government under the national state of disaster have, unfortunately, had a devastating effect on the economy of South Africa, and Overstrand is no exception.

The tourism industry, which forms the backbone of the Overstrand economy, came to an abrupt halt on 26 March this year. This has had an adverse effect on many of our businesses, particularly smaller businesses, as well as our ratepayers.

Comments received from the public on the 2020/2021 draft budget mostly concerned the effect that COVID-19 had and is having on our economy.

Considering the effects that the COVID-19 lockdown is having on our economy as well as the comments received from the public, the draft budget could not, as in the past, simply be adjusted: The entire budget had to be revised.

In this budget, we have considered the impact that COVID-19 has had on our ratepayers as well as on the ability of the municipality to continue to operate and provide infrastructure and a high level of services that are only fully used during relatively short holiday seasons.

Following a number of reductions in the interest rate, the Reserve Bank has forecasted an inflation rate for the 2020/2021 financial year of 4.7%.

Given the current challenges that our ratepayers and the municipality face, the increase in all municipal tariffs, with the exception of electricity, will be reduced from the proposed 5.9% in the draft budget to 4.5%. This includes the first 6 kℓ of water consumed. The cost of electricity from Eskom to the municipality will increase by 6.9% and in terms of the directive from NERSA, the electricity tariff to municipal consumers will increase by 6.22% – a decrease from 15% that was included in the draft budget.

The increase in property rates will also be reduced from 6.9% proposed in the draft budget to 4.5% for all categories of property.

Special rating areas have been approved for Hermanus, Onrus-Vermont and Kleinmond. The rate requested varies per area and is included in the list of tariffs. I wish to thank the chairpersons and members of the three steering committees for their work and dedication in finalising these SRAs on behalf of their respective communities.

As in the past, an amount R6.5m, or R500 000 per ward, has been budgeted for ward-specific projects that are infrastructure related. To contribute to reducing expenditure, no budget is provided for the Mayoral Fund nor is funding provided for grants-in-aid or contributions towards festivals.

In March, Council approved that businesses and residential ratepayers who found themselves under financial stress may enter into an extended-term payment agreement with the municipality for their March and April municipal accounts. Today, I will ask Council to extend this concession to include the May and June accounts as well. For tenants who cannot use the property rented from the municipality for the purpose for which it was intended, I will also ask Council to extend the exemption from paying rent until the end of June.

As mentioned earlier, the tourism industry has been particularly hard hit by the lockdown regulations. Consequently, I will ask Council to approve a temporary adjustment for all accommodation establishments to be charged the residential property rates tariff retrospectively from April through to June.

Given the uncertainty of how long the various lockdown regulations will remain in place, the above concessions may well have to be extended in the new financial year.

The current three-year collective SALGBC salary agreement for municipal

employees came into effect on 1 July 2018.

Municipalities must, in terms of section 71 of the Local Government: Municipal Systems Act (Act 32 of 2000), comply with collective agreements.

According to the principles of the agreement, salary increases were approved at 6.25% for the 2020/21 financial year. This was based on the average inflation for the period February 2019 to January 2020, with a minimum of 5% plus 1.25%. Salary notch adjustments of approximately 2% have also been included in the salary budget.

The remuneration of councillors is determined by the Minister of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs. The proclamation with regard to the 2019/2020 increases was only published during April 2020 and set salary increases at 4%.

No indication for 2020/21 has been received yet and, therefore, remuneration adjustments for councillors have been factored into the 2020/21 budget at the same rate as the 2019/2020 determination.

The 57 new permanent staff positions included in the draft budget have been withdrawn. This includes the additional law enforcement staff. The Law Enforcement Division will be reorganised to allow for the planned K9 units for Gansbaai and Kleinmond to be established.

The drivers' licence testing centres planned for these two areas have been postponed.

To assist in rebuilding the economy of the Overstrand, R15m has been provided for temporary positions to help in creating jobs for our residents.

All items of a capital nature that can result in job creation for our people have also been included in the budget, particularly where this will address ageing water reticulation systems, sewerage projects and, importantly, storm-water projects.

To this end, the following items have been included in the capital budget:

| | |
|----------------------------------|---------|
| ■ Zwelihle sewer upgrade | R13,75m |
| ■ Zwelihle storm-water upgrade | R 8,39m |
| ■ Kleinmond sewer upgrade | R13m |
| ■ Masakhane storm-water | R 4,50m |
| ■ Overhills storm-water | R 2,2m |
| ■ Betty's Bay storm-water | R 3,31m |
| ■ Hermanus storm-water | R 2,60m |
| ■ Hermanus waste recycling plant | R17,96m |
| ■ Hawston sports complex | R 9,44m |
| ■ Hawston business hub | R 4,87m |
| ■ Mt Pleasant sports field | R 2,46m |
| ■ Hawston R43 intersection | R 2,19m |
| ■ Hermanus well fields | R10,5m |
| ■ Pringle Bay reservoir | R 6,13m |
| ■ Gansbaai reservoir | R 7,88m |
| ■ Hermanus CBD regeneration | R 7,10m |

Level 2 water restrictions in the Hermanus area introduced from 1 June 2018 are still applicable. The first level of water restriction tariffs is also still applicable in Hermanus.

In summary, the proposed increases for a household for the coming financial year (2020/2021) are as follows:

| | |
|-------------------------------|-------|
| • Property rates: Residential | 4.5% |
| • Electricity | 6.22% |
| • Water | 4.5% |
| • Sewerage tariffs | 4.5% |
| • Refuse tariffs | 4.5% |

Property rates for business and undeveloped erven will also increase by 4.5%.

The average increase of a household municipal account will be about 4.4% excluding electricity and 5.3% including electricity.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the public for their participation and input during the IDP review and budget preparation process.

I also wish to extend my sincere appreciation to the Councillors and the administration who contributed to compiling the 2020/2021 operating and capital budgets. Particularly, I would like to thank those who literally worked night and day to complete the total revision of the draft budget, thus enabling us to table the 2020/2021 budget today.

2020/21 BUDGET IN A NUTSHELL

Total Revenue (Incl. Capital Grants):

R1.287bn [down by 3.1%]

R46m [Housing services]

R44.3m [Housing Top structures]

Total Expenditure:

R1.342bn [up by 3.8%]

Accounting Deficit of R54.5m

Tariffs:

Property Rates 4.5%.

Electricity Basic and Consumption charges 6.22%.

Water 4.5%.

Sewerage 4.5%.

Waste Removal 4.5%.



Capital Budget:

10.2% increase in Capital Budget amounting to R303.7m.

Additional projects after community consultation R8.1m.

Roll over projects from 2019/20 amounting to R99.1m.



Water: Only indigent households receive first 6 kℓ free. An increase of 4.5% across the whole range of basic and consumption tariffs, decreasing by 1,2% from last year.



Sewerage: Sewerage tariffs will increase by 4.5% which is decreased by 1,2% from last year.



Waste Removal: The tariff for waste removal will increase by 4,5% which is decreased by 8.31% from last year.

WATER QUALITY AT MUNICIPAL WATER SCHEMES

| OCTOBER 2019 - MARCH 2020 DESCRIPTION OF TEST | UNIT | STANDARD AS PER SANS 0241 | AVERAGE TEST RESULTS FOR POTABLE WATER TEST SAMPLES AT: | | | | | | | | |
|--------------------------------------------------------|---------------|------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|----------|----------|----------|---------------|-----------------|----------------------------|----------------------|
| | | | Buffelsrivier (Rooi Els, Pringlebaai & Betty's Bay) | Kleinmond | Hermanus | Stanford | Gansbaai | De Kelders | Pearly Beach | Baards- keeders- bos | Buffels- jagsbaai |
| pH | (pH) units | ≥ 5 to ≤ 9,7 | 7,4 | 8,3 | 6,8 | 7,4 | 7,8 | 7,5 | 7,8 | 9,3 | 7,5 |
| Electrical conductivity | mS/m | ≤ 170 | 27,3 | 32,6 | 48,6 | 68,2 | 87,3 | 68,3 | 51,5 | 70,6 | 167,7 |
| Turbidity | NTU | ≤ 1 | 0,3 | 0,2 | 0,3 | 0,3 | 0,4 | 0,2 | 0,2 | 0,4 | 0,3 |
| Colour | mg/l as Pt-Co | ≤ 15 | 4,0 | 4,0 | 4,5 | 4,7 | 4,5 | 5,0 | 4,0 | 8,8 | 4,7 |
| Iron | µg/l as Fe | ≤ 300 | 36,8 | 31,0 | 94,2 | - | 34,7 | - | 35,2 | 35,0 | 33,2 |
| Manganese | µg/l as Mn | ≤ 100 | - | - | 21,3 | - | - | - | - | 22,2 | - |
| Aluminium | µg/l as Al | ≤ 300 | 83,2 | 38,2 | 50,8 | - | 198,8 | - | 22,8 | - | - |
| E.coli | Count/100ml | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |

The Department of Water & Sanitation (DWS) recommends that municipalities periodically publish information on the quality of drinking water supplied to consumers. Water quality is measured against Code 0241 as set by the South African National Standards (SANS) for drinking water.

On the accompanying drinking water quality table the average scores attained by Overstrand Municipality's nine water treatment plants from October 2019 to March 2020 can be seen. Water samples are collected monthly by an accredited laboratory where different bacteriological, chemical and physical parameters are measured.

Overstrand Municipality's water quality is of an outstanding quality, with 100% of the average results complying with Code 0241 as set by the South African National Standards (SANS) for drinking water.

When the drinking water quality does not comply with SANS 0241, corrections are made at the water purification works and in the reticulation network if applicable. The drinking water quality is then retested against the SANS 0241 limits for compliance.

WASTE WATER EFFLUENT QUALITY

| OCTOBER 2019 - MARCH 2020 DESCRIPTION OF TEST | UNIT | DWS GENERAL AUTHORISATION STANDARDS (Applicable to all WWTW's except Hermanus) | AVERAGE TEST RESULTS FOR FINAL EFFLUENT TEST SAMPLES AT: | | | | | Hermanus Permit Authorisation Standards |
|-----------------------------------------------------|---------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------|---------|----------|-----------|----------|--------------------------------------------------|
| | | | GANSBAAI | HAWSTON | STANFORD | KLEINMOND | HERMANUS | |
| pH | (pH) | 5.5-9.5 | 7,1 | 8,5 | 7,7 | 7,7 | 7,5 | 5.5-9.5 |
| Electrical conductivity | (mS/m) | 150 | 165 | 157 | 143 | 125 | 178 | 5000 |
| Faecal coliform bacteria | (count/100ml) | 1000 | 490 | 15 | 327 | 406 | 112 | 1000 |
| Chemical oxygen demand | (mg/l) | 75 Max | 52 | 54 | 45 | 182 | 47 | 75 Max |
| Ammonia nitrogen | (mg/l as N) | 6 Max | 2 | 14 | 7 | 53 | 6 | 7 Max |
| Nitrate nitrogen | (mg/l as N) | 15 Max | 8,6 | 0,2 | 3,8 | 0,7 | 2,5 | 17 Max |
| Nitrite nitrogen | (mg/l as N) | | 0,2 | 0,3 | 0,2 | 0,9 | 0,2 | |
| Total suspended solids | (mg/l) | 25 Max | 9 | 17 | 19 | 114 | 11 | 25 Max |
| Ortho-phosphate | (mg/l as P) | 10 Max | 5 | 3 | 3 | 2 | 5 | 10 Max |

The Department of Water & Sanitation (DWS) recommends that municipalities periodically publish information on the quality of drinking water supplied to consumers as well as final waste water effluent quality results.

Waste water effluent quality is measured against standards as set by DWS, which are classified as either General Standards, or Special Standards.

The table for waste water effluent quality illustrates Overstrand Municipality's average effluent quality parameter measurements at the 5 treatment plants over the past six months. Samples are taken for analysis on a monthly basis by accredited laboratories.

Overstrand Municipality's final waste water effluent quality complies 84% overall.

When the final effluent quality does not comply with the General Standards, corrections are made at the treatment works. The final effluent quality is then re-tested against the General Standards for compliance.

MUNICIPAL ACCOUNTS: WHAT 2020/21'S MONTHLY MUNICIPAL ACCOUNTS WILL LOOK LIKE

(Please note these figures are not approved by NERSA)

| MONTHLY BASKET OF TARIFFS - SINGLE RESIDENTIAL 2020/21 | | | | |
|------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|---------------|-------------|
| <u>High consumption with prepaid electricity meter</u> | Year 2019/20 | Year 2020/21 | Amount | % increase |
| Valuation: R3 500 000 | | | | |
| Rates | 1 311,69 | 1 370,72 | 59,03 | 4,50 |
| Sewerage* Tariff Code: SE7A1+SE8A | 601,15 | 628,20 | 27,05 | 4,50 |
| Infrastructure basic charge: water, electricity & sewerage | 53,54 | 53,54 | 0,00 | 0,00 |
| Refuse Once per week | 185,49 | 193,84 | 8,35 | 4,50 |
| Water 50 kℓ | 1 147,06 | 1 198,68 | 51,62 | 4,50 |
| VAT 15% | 298,09 | 311,14 | 13,05 | 4,38 |
| SUBTOTAL | 3 597,02 | 3 756,11 | 159,10 | 4,42 |
| Electricity: Prepaid meter 1500kWh | 3 205,11 | 3 404,47 | 199,36 | 6,22 |
| VAT 15% | 480,77 | 510,67 | 29,90 | 6,22 |
| TOTAL | 7 282,89 | 7 671,25 | 388,36 | 5,33 |

| MONTHLY BASKET OF TARIFFS - SINGLE RESIDENTIAL 2020/21 | | | | |
|------------------------------------------------------------|---------------|---------------|--------------|-------------|
| <u>Sub-economic consumption (Indigent)</u> | Year 2019/20 | Year 2020/21 | Amount | % increase |
| Valuation: R100 000 | | | | |
| Rates | 19,01 | 19,87 | 0,86 | 4,50 |
| Sewerage* Tariff Code: SE7A1+SE8A | 217,55 | 227,34 | 9,79 | 4,50 |
| Infrastructure basic charge: water, electricity & sewerage | 53,54 | 41,70 | -11,84 | -22,11 |
| Refuse Once per week | 0,00 | 0,00 | 0,00 | 0,00 |
| Water 10 kℓ | 45,88 | 47,94 | 2,06 | 4,50 |
| VAT 15% | 47,55 | 47,55 | 0,00 | 0,00 |
| SUBTOTAL | 383,53 | 384,40 | 0,87 | 0,23 |
| Electricity: Prepaid meter 350kWh | 356,55 | 378,73 | 22,18 | 6,22 |
| VAT 15% | 53,48 | 56,81 | 3,33 | 6,22 |
| TOTAL | 793,56 | 819,93 | 26,38 | 3,32 |

| MONTHLY BASKET OF TARIFFS - SINGLE RESIDENTIAL 2020/21 | | | | |
|------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|---------------|-------------|
| <u>Medium consumption with prepaid electricity meter</u> | Year 2019/20 | Year 2020/21 | Amount | % increase |
| Valuation: R2 500 000 | | | | |
| Rates | 931,49 | 973,41 | 41,92 | 4,50 |
| Sewerage* Tariff Code: SE7A1+SE8A | 361,40 | 377,66 | 16,26 | 4,50 |
| Infrastructure basic charge: water, electricity & sewerage | 53,54 | 53,54 | 0,00 | 0,00 |
| Refuse Once per week | 185,49 | 193,84 | 8,35 | 4,50 |
| Water 25 kℓ | 438,01 | 457,72 | 19,71 | 4,50 |
| VAT 15% | 155,77 | 162,41 | 6,65 | 4,27 |
| SUBTOTAL | 2 125,70 | 2 218,58 | 92,89 | 4,37 |
| Electricity: Prepaid meter 800kWh | 1 642,85 | 1 745,04 | 102,19 | 6,22 |
| VAT 15% | 246,43 | 261,76 | 15,33 | 6,22 |
| TOTAL | 4 014,97 | 4 225,37 | 210,40 | 5,24 |

| MONTHLY BASKET OF TARIFFS - BUSINESS - 2020/21 | | | | |
|------------------------------------------------------------|------------------|------------------|-----------------|-------------|
| <u>Business - Medium (Three-phase)</u> | Year 2019/20 | Year 2020/21 | Amount | % increase |
| Valuation: R3 200 000 | | | | |
| Rates | 2 303,73 | 2 407,40 | 103,67 | 4,50 |
| Sewerage* Tariff Code: SE7A1+SE8A | 614,85 | 642,52 | 27,67 | 4,50 |
| Infrastructure basic charge: water, electricity & sewerage | 53,54 | 53,54 | 0,00 | 0,00 |
| Refuse Once per week 3 | 556,47 | 581,51 | 25,04 | 4,50 |
| Water 40 kℓ | 874,84 | 914,21 | 39,37 | 4,50 |
| VAT 15% | 314,96 | 328,77 | 13,81 | 4,39 |
| SUBTOTAL | 4 718,39 | 4 927,95 | 209,56 | 4,44 |
| Electricity: Credit meter 7000kWh | 14 150,57 | 15 030,74 | 880,17 | 6,22 |
| VAT 15% | 2 122,59 | 2 254,61 | 132,02 | 6,22 |
| TOTAL | 20 991,54 | 22 213,29 | 1 221,75 | 5,82 |

| MONTHLY BASKET OF TARIFFS - SINGLE RESIDENTIAL 2020/21 | | | | |
|------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|---------------|-------------|
| <u>Low consumption with prepaid electricity meter</u> | Year 2019/20 | Year 2020/21 | Amount | % increase |
| Valuation: R1000 000 | | | | |
| Rates | 361,19 | 377,44 | 16,25 | 4,50 |
| Sewerage* Tariff Code: SE7A1+SE8A | 265,50 | 277,45 | 11,95 | 4,50 |
| Infrastructure basic charge: water, electricity & sewerage | 53,54 | 53,54 | 0,00 | 0,00 |
| Refuse Once per week | 185,49 | 193,84 | 8,35 | 4,50 |
| Water 15 kℓ | 273,33 | 285,63 | 12,30 | 4,50 |
| VAT 15% | 116,68 | 121,57 | 4,89 | 4,19 |
| SUBTOTAL | 1 255,73 | 1 309,47 | 53,74 | 4,28 |
| Electricity: Prepaid meter 600kWh | 1 196,49 | 1 270,91 | 74,42 | 6,22 |
| VAT 15% | 179,47 | 190,64 | 11,16 | 6,22 |
| TOTAL | 2 631,69 | 2 771,01 | 139,32 | 5,29 |

| MONTHLY BASKET OF TARIFFS - VACANT ERVEN - 2020/21 | | | | |
|------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|--------------|-------------|
| <u>Valuation Average</u> | Year 2019/20 | Year 2020/21 | Amount | % increase |
| Valuation: R250 000 | | | | |
| Rates | 162,69 | 170,01 | 7,32 | 4,50 |
| Sewer can connect Availability | 121,65 | 127,12 | 5,47 | 4,50 |
| Refuse Availability | 92,74 | 96,91 | 4,17 | 4,50 |
| Electricity Availability | 335,34 | 356,20 | 20,86 | 6,22 |
| Water Availability | 136,50 | 142,64 | 6,14 | 4,50 |
| Infrastructure basic charge: water, electricity & sewerage | 53,54 | 53,54 | 0,00 | 0,00 |
| VAT 15% | 110,97 | 116,46 | 5,50 | 4,95 |
| TOTAL | 1 013,42 | 1 062,89 | 49,47 | 4,88 |

STORM-WATER UPGRADE IN HERMANUS FINALLY UNDERWAY

Having followed a proper bid process, which was rather protracted due to Covid-19 restrictions, Overstrand Municipality has now officially appointed Meyer Beton Siviele & Boukontrakteurs as contractor to undertake construction work on storm-water infrastructure in Hermanus' CBD and industrial area.

The contractor will operate under supervision of Element Consulting Engineers and will work on upgrading and revitalising storm-water and sewer infrastructure in Hermanus' CBD (Main Road, Marine Drive and High Street) as well as in the town's industrial area (Mimosa and Prellwitz Streets).

As per the proposal submitted by the contractor, installation of storm-water pipes will commence in Marine Drive, followed by Main Road and then High Street.

It is anticipated that construction in the industrial area will commence mid-July.

Due to delays caused by the Covid-19 lockdown, the contractual completion date of this project has been postponed from December 2020 till February 2021.

In the interim, the consulting engineers are conducting extensive internal and external inspections of affected properties in an attempt to document existing damage and cracks to buildings prior to the commencement of construction work.

Cooperation in this regard will be appreciated, and affected parties are welcome to contact Element Consulting Engineers via Dennis Hendriks, Senior Manager: Engineering Services Tel no: 028 313 5059 or Cell no: 082 416 8676 dhendriks@overstrand.gov.za

CASHIERS OPEN FOR BUSINESS

All municipal rates halls and pay points are once again open to the public. Strict social distancing measures will apply and the wearing of a face mask is compulsory. In addition, municipal officials dealing with the public will be screened daily and their work stations will be sanitised regularly.

For the duration of Level 3 restrictions, operating hours will be as follows:

HERMANUS ADMINISTRATION: Mondays to Fridays: 08:30 – 15:30

GANSBAAI-STANFORD ADMINISTRATION: Mondays to Fridays: 08:00 – 15:30 with a lunch break from 13:00 – 13:45

HANGKLIP-KLEINMOND ADMINISTRATION: Mondays to Fridays: 08:00 – 15:30 with a lunch break between 13:00 – 13:45

Although residents can once again pay their accounts at the cashiers, we would like to encourage those who can to make use of the online option instead.

Account payments via EFT can be made to the following bank account:

➔ **Nedbank Account Number 1190136899**

Type of account: Current Account

Universal Branch Code: 198765

Branch: Inland Garden Route

(Please note that this is indeed the correct branch for Overstrand Municipality.)

SWIFT Code: NEDSZAJJ

Reference: Please use your numerical 12-digit account number as reference.

Account payments can also be done via the Pay@ and Easy Pay systems.

Balance, general account queries and requests for duplicate invoices or accounts can still be made by sending an e-mail to enquiries@overstrand.gov.za. Alternatively, call the OVERSTRAND SWITCHBOARD number 028 313 8000 for general enquiries such as municipal accounts, progress with the approval of building plans, et cetera, or call the administration in question directly on the following numbers:

➔ **Kleinmond: 028 271 8400**

➔ **Stanford: 028 341 8500**

➔ **Hermanus: 028 313 8000/8111**

➔ **Gansbaai: 028 384 8300**

Pre-paid electricity can be bought via your mobile phone (download the app from the Play Store), via your banking app or online (home.ontec.co.za). Should you need assistance, call Ontec on 0861 220 244 or e-mail servicedesk@ontec.co.za

Tokens are also available from retailers such as Pick 'n Pay, Checkers and Spar as well as certain fuel stations (Engen) and various other outlets.

VIRTUAL FENCE PROVES EFFECTIVE IN RETURNING VOËLKLIP BABOONS TO THEIR NATURAL HABITAT



Since the implementation of a virtual fence in mid-February 2020, Human Wildlife Solutions (HWS) has noticed a marked decrease in the number of occasions on which individual baboons have left the Voëlklip troop to venture into town on their own. In addition, when a baboon did enter town, it did not travel as far into town as before.

The HWS virtual fence is an innovative new tool to keep troops in their natural habitats, providing a sustainable environmental solution to human-wildlife conflict. This non-invasive system works by mimicking natural deterrents and boundaries the troop is too anxious to cross.

In the case of the troop roaming the mountains above Hermanus, anxiety is created by simulating sounds and smells associated with baboons' natural predators, such as leopards, thereby creating an invisible psychological barrier.

Beyond a reduction in human-wildlife conflict, other positive environmental benefits are associated with getting baboons to return to their natural habitats, such as restoring the biodiversity of the ecosystems in which they are commonly found.

"Our intention is to conserve the incredible balance of biodiversity and unspoilt nature of the Fernkloof Nature Reserve," HWS project manager, Dr Phil Richardson, said.

"Based on observation, through their highly varied and adaptable foraging behaviour, baboons have multiple effects on their environment. They dig up bulbs, scratch through fynbos debris and eat flowers, fruits and berries.

"All of these aid seed dispersal and create microclimates for seed germination. Therefore, given the key role they fulfil in the environment, total removal of problematic troops has never been an option," he explained.

On fitting GPS radio collars to some individuals, HWS noted that these baboons had healthy teeth and gums. This is an indication that they are still feeding extensively on their natural diet of fynbos and not consuming too much unnatural, high-energy human foods that can cause several health problems in baboons such as poor dentition, obesity and diabetes.

"This is yet another reason why managing household waste correctly is so important," Richardson cautioned.

"Baboons have to learn – after many, many years of raiding – that humans no longer offer easy food. This vital change is only possible if every person plays a part in the management process. From our side, we will continue to deploy the virtual fence to make baboons wild animals again, thereby restoring the natural balance."

To request more information on the virtual fence, e-mail info@hwsolutions.co.za or visit www.hwsolutions.co.za.

The dedicated Voëlklip hotline number for reporting baboons is 071 588 6540. The Pringle Bay baboon hotline number is 079 431 5956.

HAVE YOU RETURNED YOUR LIBRARY BOOKS YET?

Although all public libraries will remain closed to the public for the duration of Level 3 restrictions, those who have borrowed any library material prior to the national lockdown should have returned these by now to avoid being fined for late returns.

Given that no-one could access libraries during Levels 5 and 4 of the lockdown, library users were afforded a grace period exempting them from having to pay any fines on late returns. That period ended 23 June 2020.

For the sake of maintaining social distancing and to avoid physical contact with library material, all public libraries will unfortunately remain closed to the public in as far as borrowing "new" books and/or accessing reference material is concerned.

Nevertheless, library personnel all over Overstrand have now returned to work to accept returns of previously borrowed material. When returning library books, strict safety precautions must be observed though. Please place the books and any other library material you are returning in a carrier bag on which your name and library card number are clearly displayed. The reason for this is that all returned material will be "quarantined" for 72 hours before being processed by library staff.

Also be sure to wear a face mask when you return your books and do note that strict social distancing and sanitation measures will be observed at all times.

Libraries will be open from 08:30 till 15:30, Mondays to Fridays, to accept returns.

Overstrand's librarians also kindly request all library users to report any "lost" material as soon as possible.



PROGRESS WITH FERNKLOOF MANAGEMENT PLAN

By rights, the final draft of the Fernkloof Nature Reserve Protected Area Management Plan (FNR PAMP) and its concomitant recommendations should have served before Council by the end of May 2020.

Unfortunately, since Covid-19 restrictions meant that the usual consultation and decision-making process could not be followed, Councillors were only able to workshop this item on 8 June 2020.

At the time, the draft FNR PAMP was presented and thoroughly discussed.

After due consideration, it was agreed that the final draft would only be submitted to Council once it has been considered by means of a normal procedural cycle which would afford ward and portfolio committees an opportunity to discuss the document and its recommendations. Obviously, the timing of these discussions is dependent on Covid-19 regulations allowing the latter committees to convene.

Meanwhile, all interested and affected parties are welcome to peruse the document in question which is now available on Overstrand's official website. Go to www.overstrand.gov.za, click on Documents, Strategic documents, Environmental Management, Fernkloof.