

Subcouncil - Matters Receiving Attention Report

Subcouncil 4

Agenda Item No:	04SUB 21/2/2020	1	MOTION: REMOVAL OF STANDPIPE TAGS IN RAVENSMEAD - WARD 25
Author:	Ardela van Niekerk;		
How Resolved:	Consensus		
Meeting Date:	2020/02/20		
Outstanding:	76		
Directorate:	URBAN MANAGEMENT		
Department:	Councillor Support		

Preamble:

MOTIVATION

Chairperson, my motion deals with a report that served before Subcouncil 6 and titled close-out report to provide water to backyarders via Tag Standpipes installed in the streets in Ravensmead, Fisantekraal and Samora Machel. This report holds serious consequences for Ward 25 of which I am the Ward Councillor as this report did not serve before Subcouncil 4, but only before Subcouncil 6 on 17 January 2020, although this Subcouncil has a direct interest in the matter. Not only did this report served before Subcouncil 6, but it also served before Subcouncil 7.

However, I could not ascertain whether the report served before Subcouncil 23 as it affects the area of Samora Machel, where these Tag Standpipes were also rolled out as a pilot project together with the area of Ravensmead and Fisantekraal.

BACKGROUND

As can be observed from the contents of the attached report, the City took a decision during 2007 to implement and install water management devices as part of the Leaks Repair and Debt relief programmes on private properties, in its quest of supplementing the Leaks programme. Only during 2011, did the Technical Department of Water Demand Management embarked on a pilot project to install Tag Standpipes on the side-walks in the areas of Ravensmead, Fisantekraal and Samora Machel with the sole purpose of supplementing the Leaks Programme. Chairperson, as explained in the attached report, the installation of Water Management Devices (WMD) on properties of homeowners restricted their daily allocation to 350 litres, which necessitated the need to private backyarders with access to alternative water supply system. At the time, the Water Demand Management branch was looking for non-permanent solutions to supplement the leaks programme (installation of water management devices) as well as reduce the number of call-backs for operational teams, where backyarders are dependent on water from the homeowners. In this instance a number of standpipes were installed in the areas of Ravensmead (57), Fisantekraal, (52) and Samora Machel (23). According to the report, it appears as if these pilot projects soon proved to be very beneficial in helping the backyarders and apparently paid itself back in a very short space of time.

JURISDICTION

The area of Ravensmead consists of two Wards namely; Ward 10 and Ward 25 where Standpipe Tags were installed, the majority standpipes that have been installed, are in Ward 25, and yet no discussions and or engagements took place between the Councillor of Ward 25 and the relevant Line Department. It also appears as if certain actions and proposals to remove the Standpipes, emanated from certain discussions which was held between the line Departments and the Ward Councillor of Ward 10 which also forms part of Ravensmead. However, these sentiments and discussions were never conveyed to me as the Ward Councillor for Ward 25 which also forms part of Ravensmead.

Chairperson, based on the aforesaid, the Line Department prepared a report on the matter which was submitted to Subcouncil 6, and he following Recommendations were proposed to Subcouncil 6 which was endorsed and agreed-upon, and I quote:

SUBCOUNCIL 6 RESOLUTION

*That the proposed actions **BE NOTED** by Subcouncil 6:*

1. That all the standpipes in Ravensmead be removed completely;

2. That an education awareness program be implemented for all members of public who will be affected by this decision;
3. That loss control be approached to initiate the condemnation process for the infrastructure;
4. That the technical operations section of Water Demand Management drives the process to completion.

A similar report was also prepared for Subcouncil 7, who adopted the following resolution:

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED

That the proposed actions w.r.t removal of tag standpipe pilot projects due to failing infrastructure, which cannot be maintained as set out in the report **BE NOTED**, subject to the following:

1. An audit report pertaining to the locations of the standpipes located in Fisantekraal to be provided,
2. Public engagement with affected residents in close proximity to the taps.
3. Alternative measures to be investigated and reported.

Chairperson, I must express my concern that another Subcouncil took a decision that also affects our Subcouncil in respect of the broader Ravensmead area, without consulting and/or engaging with our Subcouncil, something which affects the majority of the community that resides within Ward 25 and as such, Subcouncil 4. I am equally concerned at the lack of engagement by the Department.

I am even more concerned that it appears that no public engagement took place with the affected community and that no alternative measures are being recommended to accommodate the affected community. The Community of Ravensmead is a poor community with more than 50% of its inhabitants being unemployed, resulting in more hardship to these and other families which is an indictment to our already impoverished community. Prior to 2011, council as a Caring City, not only approved this project together with other similar projects and included it into its 5 YEAR IDP Plan and budgetary processes, but council also improved the infrastructure at enormous cost which will relate to fruitless and wasteful expenditure. Chairperson, I need not remind this Subcouncil, that our primary role is to represent the people who live in our Wards. In this regard, I provide a bridge between the community that I serve and the Subcouncil and Council.

As a Councillor, I am thus the elected representative of the People and I am mandated as an elected representative to make decisions on their behalf and to keep them informed about issues that affects and that will affect them in future, which in this instance is not delegated to another councillor representing another Ward or an official to take a decision on my behalf without consulting with me or my constituency.

I believe that good communication and engagement with our community is central in order to put the message across about what the council is doing and how communities can become involved. Councillors as such serve as a communication link between the Council and the Community and therefore must communicate all activities of the Council to the relevant constituent members of the public in the interests of increasing transparency and promoting public involvement in these activities.

Resolution Details:

1. That Subcouncil 4 endorse the status quo pertaining to the installation of Tag Standpipes on the side-walks in Ward 25, Ravensmead and that it not be removed.
2. That the Technical Department of Water Demand Management continues to manage and undertake the maintenance of these standpipes as it were during the past, or engage with Informal Settlements Unit regarding the operation and maintenance of the Standpipe Tags and discuss where the overall responsibility lies in terms of this function.
3. That a more formalised approach be adopted in terms of the issuing of new tags to backyarders.
4. That the community be trained in the operation of the Tags.
5. That the current standpipes and tags be reprogrammed to eliminate the existing tags being in the wrong hands to enable them to activate the taps to collect water.
6. That in the event that the Department intend to pursue continuing with the discontinuation of the Tag Standpipes in Ward 25, Ravensmead, an audit be undertaken pertaining to the locations of the standpipes located in Ward 25 and Ward 10 Ravensmead.
7. That a public participation process and engagement with the affected residents in close proximity to the taps be undertaken, and
8. Alternative measures to be investigated and reported.

Department: **Councillor Support**

Responsible Officer(RO): **Ardela van Niekerk**

Response Date Comment from RO

1. When the matter of the standpipes were first brought to our attention based on the email sent by Cllr Jaqueline Visser during Nov 2018, it did not come to our attention that the standpipes were installed in another ward in Ravensmead under Cllr van Reenen.
2. However, the survey and mapping which was done by Informal Settlements as well as the EPWP door-to-door survey by Water Conservation was done for all the standpipes, including those in the portion of Ravensmead under Cllr van Reenen.
3. About half of the standpipes falls within SC 4 Ward 25 with De La Rey Road dividing the area from SC 6 where the remainder standpipes were initially installed.

The report on tagged standpipes was tabled in Sub Councils 6, 7 and 23 and not in Sub Council 4. This was not intentional but at the time of submitting the report it was not known that there is another sub council involved (it was thought all Ravensmead was under Councilor Visser). As much as Councillor Visser did follow up with the Water and Sanitation department to provide a way forward on the stand pipes there were already talks in the Department to look at ways to close out the project on tagged standpipes, in the three areas that the pilot project was done.

The main challenge on trying to go for a permanent implementation of the tagged standpipes project is that:

1. there is no policy to make this project permanent at Council level
2. and the standpipes have reached their useful life span, have made their benefits and most WMDs are at full flow
3. Making the project permanent requires use of a lot of resources i.e. project management, issuing of tags, issuing of lost tags, ensuring that those tags are not abused.

The sub council in Fisantekraal, Samora Machel and part of Ravensmead have already agreed to the discontinuing the project.

The recommendation which has been also agreed in the other three sub councils is to do an education and awareness program before the removal of the standpipes.

It is recommended to remove the standpipes also in the portion of Ravensmead under Councillor van Reenen. An education and awareness programme is done first. The landlords of backyarders will be required to provide water to the people renting as these people pay and the landlord pays for water which is above the free basic water portion.

Once also approved in the portion of Ravensmead under Councilor van Reenen and as soon as it is feasible to do Public Engagements the water conservation will lead in door to door engagements by first liaising with Councillor van Reenen and engaging the community.

The previous report submitted to sub councils is also supported by Alderman Zanthea Limberg as there is no policy or mandate in place to provide water to backyarders on private property