

ROMITA HANUMAN

THE Municipality's Business Support and Markets Unit has teamed up with First National Bank (FNB) to help small businesses.

At a recent signing ceremony, the bank committed itself to providing financial and non-financial services to small, medium and micro enterprises.

Online banking will be one of the tools available to busi-

nesses that register for the bank's programme.

City Manager Michael Sutcliffe said, "I am really delighted at this partnership. We have had a long association with FNB and this partnership will help us achieve our integrated development goals."

"We must recognise the importance of the private sector.

If we build partnerships like these, the government and the private sector can contribute to building the economy."

Preggie Pillay, FNB Regional Director, said, "With the help of Anneline Chetty and her Business Support Management team, we made it possible."

He explained the benefits

and aims of the partnership. "We want to give something back to the community and help small businesses to grow. We will provide mentorship as well.

"The aim is to create jobs and make sure they are sustainable.

"We are delighted to partner with the Municipality. The

work starts now. We have to make it workable in order to see the benefits."

Business Support and Markets Unit Head Philip Sithole encouraged stakeholders to support the informal sector.

"There are 35 000 permits in place, and about 100 000 jobs that stem out of those. We must all support this sector and hopefully through this programme, we can help them grow," he said.

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IN BRIEF

Refugees stage march

A SMALL group of Rwandan and Congolese refugees this week marched on the City Hall, where they handed over a memorandum calling for action against injustices in their home countries.

The Municipality's Head of International and Governance Relations, Eric Apelgren, received the document on behalf of Mayor Obed Mlaba.

It calls for:

- An international tribunal in the DRC;
 - The immediate resignation of Rwandan President Paul Kagame;
 - The prosecution of perpetrators of genocide; and
 - The establishment of a truth and reconciliation commission in Rwanda.
- Apelgren said the memorandum would be passed on to the South African International Relations office, for forwarding to the United Nations. "We are not taking sides, but simply want to ensure peace and harmony in the continent, so the memorandum will be passed on," he said.

ETA donates Wheelchairs

THE eThekweni Transport Authority (ETA) wrapped up its October Transport Month activities with a donation of wheelchairs and food parcels to needy people.

ETA Head Thami Manyathi said, "We want to improve public transport. More buses must be able to accommodate the disabled."

Andrias Ngcobo, a wheelchair user, said, "We are happy about the Municipality's wheelchair-friendly Sukuma service, because taxi and bus drivers are impatient and we end up struggling to get around."

Alzinah Zungu, of the Disabled People South Africa, thanked the Municipality. She said they offered bursaries to help disabled people and can be contacted at 031 701 2951 or 072 338 5827.

Playing with perceptions

FREQUENCY, Lumens, Place, an interactive art installation that uses light and sound, opened at the Durban Art Gallery last week.

Dean Henning, who created the work with Vaughn Sadie, said, "The intervention of the audience allows the space to be in constant flux.

"The initial state of the space changes and responds to the movement of the audience who continually alter the composition of the room."

Durban Art Gallery Acting Director Musa Mncwabe said, "We don't allow people to touch art in the gallery, but with this one they may."

The exhibition runs until the second week of December.

Bank support for SMMEs

Top posts for Treasury team

ROMITA HANUMAN and NHLAKANIPHO KHANYILE

A TEAM of Durban Treasury staff swept the boards at elections for office bearers of the Institute of Municipal Finance Officers (Imfo) at the body's recent annual conference in Durban.

Newly elected President of the Institute, eThekweni's Chris Nagooroo, said, "This will be a very challenging position. I will be heading the institute, which has been around for 81 years and is made up of local government professionals from all over the country."

Peet du Plessis and Philile Madonsela, also from eThekweni, were appointed Vice President and Chairperson respectively. They will serve for two years.

Nagooroo said the positions were voluntary. "Nobody gets paid to be a member of Imfo. We have practical workshops regularly throughout the country to empower our members. We want them to be more professional and we aim to instill discipline and ethical behaviour."

The conference was held at the Inkosi Albert Luthuli International Convention

Centre and speakers included Mayor Obed Mlaba, who congratulated the institute for its efforts in improving the skills of municipal finance officials. He said pupils should be encouraged to take an interest in the Municipal finance field. "This can be done by inviting pupils to visit municipalities so they can learn more," Mlaba said.

Deputy Minister of Co-operative Governance and Traditional Affairs Yunus Carrim urged delegates to support the Local Government Turn-around Strategy.

"Only 54% of our country's population has access to the four basic services, which are water, sanitation, electricity and refuse removal.

"To accelerate service delivery more effective monitoring and greater integration and coordination are required across all spheres of government. The department is undertaking a major skills audit of municipalities so these posts will be filled by skilled, committed and motivated people," Carrim said.

Imfo Chief Executive Patrick Mnsisi described the conference as a success.

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HONOURED: Deputy City Manager Krish Kumar with his team from the Treasury who have been elected to top positions with the Institute of Municipal Finance Officers. They are from left, Chris Nagooroo, Philile Madonsela and Peet du Plessis
Picture: ROMITA HANUMAN

Advice for Municipal job seekers

PEOPLE who have applied for jobs at the Municipality have been reminded that it is impossible to reply to every one of them to let them know whether they have been successful or not.

Head of Corporate and Human Resources Dave Cloete said the Department was often inundated with public enquiries, with some people even criticising the Municipality for not recruiting them.

He said the Municipality's recruitment process had been approved by the employer and unions.

"All applications for advertised posts are given attention by the recruitment departments of the units concerned. As the Municipality receives thousands of applications for advertised posts, it is not possible to reply to every applicant," Cloete said.

All employment adverts advise applicants that if they have not been contacted within three months of the closing date, they should consider themselves unsuccessful. - Themba Nyathikazi

Consolidated billing cuts costs

THEMBA NYATHIKAZI

THE Municipality's newly consolidated billing system, combined with easier ways to receive and pay bills, has resulted in a big increase in revenue collections, said Deputy Head of Arrears, Philile Madonsela.

The new bills consolidate the electricity, water, and rates bills into one statement. Previously utility bills were posted monthly and the rates bills annually. This means customers are able to budget

properly because all charges are in one statement.

Madonsela said the Municipality has cut its administration costs because fewer bills are posted, enabling more services to be provided.

The consolidation process has been going on for more than two years and 60% of accounts have been consolidated so far.

The Municipality has also introduced an easier way for customers to receive, and pay, their monthly utility bills. The e-billing system lets cust-

omers view their bill through the internet or e-mail, as well as pay with ease.

All customers need to do is register and the bill will be e-mailed to them.

Krish Kumar, the Deputy City Manager: Treasury, said, "The process began early last year. The software was developed and tested and the Municipality went live in December. The idea was to use technology to make life easier and more cost effective for the Municipality and its customers".

The system allows for time-of billing.

Property owners can also register with their tenants so both will receive the bill.

To take advantage of the e-billing service, register at www.durban.gov.za/eaccount reg.

The Municipality will then e-mail your bills to you and you may pay the account online using a link to the EasyPay payment system.

Call 031 324 5000 with any queries.

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Reminder to property owners

THEMBA NYATHIKAZI

THE Municipality has reminded property owners that they are responsible for any outstanding amounts owing on the property for rates or services, even if it was their tenants, not them, who ran up the debts.

Deputy City Manager: Treasury, Krish Kumar, said, "In terms of Section 118 Municipal Systems Act, an amount due for Municipal service fees, a surcharge on fees, property rates and other municipal

taxes, levies and duties is a charge upon the property and enjoys preference over any mortgage bond registered against the property."

He said the Municipality reserved the right to cancel a contract with a tenant in default and register the property owner for services on the property. "No new services will be permitted on a property until debts on it are paid, or suitable arrangements are made to pay such debts," Kumar said.

This means property owners

who wish to sell the property will be unable to effect transfer until these debts have been settled. Where the property is owned by more than one person, each person is liable jointly and severally for all Municipal debts charged on the property.

Refuse removal is part of the property debt, payable by the owner.

Kumar said the owner remained responsible for paying any Municipal debt on a property, even if the Municipality was in the process of

pursuing the outstanding amount from other parties.

Should any dispute arise about the amount owing, the customer must continue to pay all amounts not subject to the dispute.

Prepaid meters will not be installed until all outstanding debt has been paid in full. In addition to these debts, the owner may be held liable for any tampering with meters and municipal equipment on the property as well as any charges arising from that.

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