RESIDENTS in uMlazi will see service delivery first-hand when a number of safety upgrades are undertaken in various wards in their community.

These measures, which include building a transit camp for displaced families as well as building retaining walls, follows an oversight visit to the area by eThekwini Mayor Zandile Gumede and City officials in December where safety concerns were raised by residents.

A report tabled at Full Council on Tuesday, 31 January requested funding to address safety and life threatening issues in the following wards in uMlazi namely 78, 79, 81, 82, 84, 85, 86, 87 and 88.

The funding will assist with the construction of retaining walls in order to secure houses that are at risk of collapsing, the provision of storm water management, the construction of a transit facility and the construction of 1 700 metres of footpaths.

It will also provide for the demolition and reconstruction of 20 storm damaged houses and the relocation of 123 displaced families, currently occupying Municipal halls. The families were temporarily placed at the halls following a storm disaster.

The report states that the challenges faced by residents emanated from an in loco inspection conducted by Councillor Gumede along with Human Settlements officials in December last year. These challenges include 14 houses that have been deemed unsuitable for human habitation as they were built on steep terrain and are at risk of collapsing as a result of soil erosion due to heavy rains.

There are also around 123 families occupying Municipal halls and the old uMlazi bakery, who are in need of housing opportunities.

Land has been identified to construct a transit facility to accommodate the families of the 14 houses at risk of collapsing. Technical assessments have been completed on the site which belongs to the Municipality and is suitable for development.

New land needs to be identified by the Municipality to accommodate the other displaced families. There is no space in existing transit facilities to accommodate these households. However, the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Human Settlements will provide funding for material in order to construct temporal structures for the affected families.

The department is also screening the 123 families to verify if they meet the requirements to receive a housing subsidy and additional land will be acquired to provide a permanent housing solution for those qualifying beneficiaries.

Meanwhile, retaining walls will be built for 68 houses. Councillor Gumede said while others were on holiday she was busy on the ground visiting uMlazi and meeting with affected residents. She said interventions were needed as these were people’s lives at risk.

“I know that there are similar issues in other wards which will also be addressed. At the moment, this is the plan for uMlazi. I have to commend the hard work by the chairperson of the Human Settlement and Infrastructure committee, Mondli Mthembu and officials in dealing with this matter,” she said.
CITY RECEIVES AN UNQUALIFIED AUDIT OPINION WITH FINDINGS

ETHEKWINI Municipality received an unqualified audit opinion with findings for the 2015/16 financial year. While it is a regression from the clean audit outcome achieved the previous year, the Auditor-General (AG) is still impressed with the financial management of the City.

The audit outcome was presented at the eThekwini Full Council meeting on Tuesday, 31 January by Phakamisa Stamper, a Manager at the AG’s office in KwaZulu-Natal.

Stamper said the gap between the City achieving a clean audit and the outcome received is very small and urged the City to “close the gap” to ensure an improved income.

“As the auditor general we are saying there is one thing to close, just tighten controls and the Municipality will be fine. Irregular expenditure has decreased from R1.2 billion in 2013, dropping to about R200 million in the 2015/2016 financial year. We are happy with the progress made but the Municipality needs to further close those gaps,” he said.

eThekwini has achieved unqualified opinions with findings in the 2011/12, 2012/13, 2013/14 financial years and a clean audit in the 2014/15 financial year. Elaborating on the outcome achieved by the City, Stamper said the AG found that there have been a number of legal claims lodged against the Municipality. Material water losses have also resulted in revenue losses for the City as a result of illegal connections and deteriorating infrastructure. Also, the Municipality made a provision for bad debts of R3.01 billion on consumer debtors as the recoverability of these amounts was doubtful.

He further reported that reasonable steps were not taken to prevent irregular expenditure as required by section 62 of the Municipal Finance Management Act. Also that there was a slow response by management to implement adequate monitoring controls to prevent irregular expenditure.

“At the request of the accounting officer, the City’s Integrity and Investigations Unit performed internal investigations from 1 July 2015 to 30 June 2016 which were based on allegations of financial misconduct and non-compliance of Supply Chain Management (SCM) regulations by council employees. A total of 15 investigations were finalised, of which the accounting officer is currently assessing the outcomes. A further 15 cases are still in progress,” he said.

Stamper said some improvement have been made since the previous financial year in the financial and performance management cluster.

He said the Mayor and accounting officer have committed to intensifying oversight over the controls, processes and policies pertaining to the awarding of Section 36 contracts and adopting a zero tolerance approach on irregular expenditure by ensuring appropriate action be taken from investigations arising.

“They have also committed to monitor the progress with the design and implementation of IT governance framework and IT controls with the Executive Committee performing oversight through the quarterly reporting by the Audit Committee.”

He said to achieve a clean audit the City must continue with existing levels of monitoring and review controls exercised by senior management and the additional assurance provided by internal audit. The City must also timely deal with transgressions by employees with stipulated legislation. Management must also monitor controls over compliance checklists to ensure all required documentation as required by Supply Chain Management regulations are received and evaluated before awards are made. The Municipality must also maintain a strong oversight environment provided by the audit committee and assurance work provided by internal audit.

eThekwini Mayor Zandile Gumede said the newly elected Council has committed to fight corruption.

“Our team in treasury is doing very well in this regard. I urge officials to follow correct procedures so we do not have irregular expenditure so we can get the desired outcome from the auditor general.”

She said the issues raised in the AG’s report will be addressed. “We will fill vacant posts and will deal with water loss, outstanding debts and the legal claims against the City. We welcome this report as it is an eye opener for us. We missed getting a good report but hopefully with the measures implemented we will achieve a better outcome next time,” Gumede said.

The Auditor General of South Africa exists to strengthen our country’s democracy by enabling oversight, accountability and governance in the public sector through auditing and thereby building public confidence.

The AG examines three areas namely fair representation and reliability of financial statements, reliable and credible performance information for predetermined objectives and compliance with key legislation on financial and performance management.
CITY’S SAFETY PLAN FOR GLEBELANDS COMMUNITY RESIDENTIAL UNIT

THE CITY will spend R22.8 million over two financial years, namely 2016/17 and 2017/18 to ensure safety at the Glebelands Community Residential Unit (CRU) in uMlazi.

A report tabled before the Executive Committee on Tuesday, 31 January outlined the intention of the Human Settlements Unit to appoint a service provider to undertake a conditional assessment and the management and maintenance at the Glebelands CRU for three years. This follows other interventions to maintain peace at the CRU including a peace rally convened in 2014. The rally was an attempt to bring harmony and stability in the facility. The meeting identified issues that were contributing to the violence and instability.

The report recommendations come after a December 2016 site inspection at the Glebelands CRU by Mayor Zandile Gumede and members of the Human Settlements and Infrastructure Committee where it was noted that emergency interventions were required to address various issues. These issues include sanitation, water loss, access control, refuse collection, overgrown verges and grounds and poor lighting.

Furthermore the Public Protector’s office investigated issues at the Glebelands CRU and tasked the Municipal Manager to take appropriate measures to promote a safe and healthy environment at the CRU by ensuring that refuse is collected and removed at regular intervals. Also that infrastructure is repaired where necessary and that the hostel grounds are maintained and grass verges and fields are trimmed on a regular basis. Lighting both inside and outside the CRU blocks must also be improved as part of the Public Protectors recommendations. The report before the Executive Committee states that the appointed service provider must be reputable and suitably experienced in undertaking this type of work. The proposed scope of work will include:

- Conditional assessment as the first phase of the asset in relation to emerging issues raised by the Public Protector report;
- Maintenance plan and implementation approach;
- Rehabilitation strategy and implementation plan of all work required; and
- Operationalisation approach in relation to revenue management and control.
ANNUAL MARITIME SUMMIT TO CONNECT PORTS, SHIPS AND COMMUNITIES

The 2nd Annual Maritime Summit will be held in Durban from 29 to 31 March, where government leaders, academia, experts in the maritime sector and other related industries will meet to discuss ways to grow and promote Durban’s maritime industry.

CONNECTING ports, ships and communities to improve efficiencies as well as enhance safety and security for the benefit of the economy and the residents of Durban, will be the focal point of discussion during the 2nd Annual Maritime Summit.

EThekwini Municipality in partnership with the EThekwini Maritime Cluster (EMC) will host the event from 29 to 31 March. The summit will take place at the Maritime School of Excellence (MSOE- Old Airport Site).

Role players from maritime shipping and transport industry, ocean resource companies, shipping houses, insurance companies, financiers of port developments, infrastructure and logistics companies, government, port authorities, executives and operational managers, lawyers, capacity-building institutions, international maritime organisations will all benefit from the interactions and brainstorming sessions during the summit.

The programme includes two-days of presentations and discussions under four broad topics of innovation, skills and training, enterprise development and marine manufacturing with the morning of the third-day dedicated to port and City tours.

A survey of attending delegates last year, showed that the conference had met their expectations with over 90 percent saying that they could put what they learned into immediate use, said Thato Tsautse Managing Director of EMC.

“We anticipate 300 South African and international delegates from the maritime sector, government and academia will again attend to deliberate ways of growing and promoting Durban’s maritime industry,” she said.

This year’s summit will also include a maritime industry exhibition and presentations on maritime careers.

The summit culminates in a sailing competition at the Port of Durban.

Furthermore, the summit supports National Government’s New Growth Plan (NGP) 2030, Operation Phakisa and is aligned to the eThekwini Municipality’s Integrated Development Plan, which as part of its eight point plan, which seeks to develop a prosperous, diverse economy that creates employment and provides a platform for growth, empowerment and skills development.

“We cannot achieve this on our own and we are collaborating with the maritime industry and government departments to make this summit a success,” said Tsautse.