To:
Executive Mayor - City of Johannesburg
Cllr Parks Tau

From:
Cllr Anthony Still - on behalf of the mandated people listed below.

By Hand

Date: 1 April 2016

Dear Cllr Tau

Deterioration of, and safety in, Parks, Open Spaces, and the Braamfontein Spruit

Towards the end of 2015 residents in my Ward, as well as some neighbouring Wards, brought to my attention their increasing concern and frustration at the deterioration of open spaces and public parks in their areas. After some discussion they agreed to add weight to a letter to you by signing a petition about the matter. The petition read as follows.

It is an often publicised claim of the City of Johannesburg that it is a green and environmentally friendly City. On their website it is stated: “As the custodian of this green heritage, our aim is for a greener environment for the present community and future generations. We are committed to upholding and maintaining Johannesburg's 'green crown' and will continue to manage the parks portfolio in a manner ensuring Johannesburg remains one of the greenest cities in the world.”

We, the undersigned residents of Johannesburg, believe that the City is failing to manage its public parks and open spaces and we wish to register our strong concerns as follows:

1. Public open spaces, such as those along the Braamfontein Spruit, and Public Parks are becoming home to an increasing number of vagrants leading to unacceptable e-coli levels and litter pollution, with concomitant health risks to users of these public facilities.

2. These spaces have also become a haven for criminal activity and pose a safety risk to users. This was graphically demonstrated by the recent murders and rapes in Rhodes Park. Safe use of open spaces and parks for recreation, walking and cycling is becoming increasingly problematic. This flies in the face of the City's "green" objectives, and events such as the recent Eco Mobility Festival which aim to make the City more liveable.

3. The 22km Braamfontein Spruit area is the longest urban green lung in the world and should be a flagship feature of the City, yet the flora and fauna is being decimated on a daily basis. Further, the structural integrity of the Spruit is rapidly deteriorating. The City claims to have no money to ameliorate this. We find this unacceptable.

4. In desperation, residents and activists groups are doing a considerable amount of voluntary and civic work to prevent further environmental deterioration, as well as having to themselves arrange security measures to reduce the risk and impact of people living illegally in public open spaces. While ratepayers are doing what they can at their own expense, they cannot be expected to do what is the mandate of the City.
The City falls far short of effectively managing our City’s public parks and spaces and allocates minimal resources, energy, and imagination to this purpose.

In the light of the above, we would like to send a mandated delegation to meet you at a suitable venue, preferably ‘on site’ to:

• express our strong dissatisfaction with the status quo
• explain what we are doing to help
• table suggestions for improving the situation
• hear from you as to the City's plans for, and policy on, effective management of public parks and open spaces, including interventions for homeless people.

Close to 1 000 residents/ratepayers have signed this petition - a full list of names is attached. Since then the problem has intensified, and I face daily pressure from people frustrated at, for example, the vagrants in the George Lea Park on the corner of Sandton drive and William Nicol – the gateway to the Sandton CBD. As another example, users of the Braamfontein Spruit - which category includes pedestrians on the way to and from work, recreational walkers, runners, cyclists, and birders - are increasingly intimidated and inhibited by resident vagrants. It would be a tragedy if people are less and less able to use this public amenity over time. There are many other examples I could cite.

So, as per the above petition, I would like to ask you for a meeting in which a delegation of mandated individuals could meet with you to discuss the situation. This would be Chairs of Residents’ Associations and representatives of advocacy bodies and will be drawn from the list below.

We will fit in with your diary so may I ask that you suggest a time and date.

Regards

Anthony Still
Councillor - Ward 90
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Organisations and persons behind this letter and petition.

• Combined Residents’ Associations of Ward 90
  o Dianne Webb – Chair

• Craigpark Residents’ Association
  o Wendy McAllister – Deputy Chair
  o Sue Wilson – Environmental portfolio and Oerder Park
  o Patrick Duff – Hugh Wyndham Park activist
- Paulette Malcolm – Environmental activist

- Parkmore Community Association
  - Ishmail Hendricks – Chair
  - Kate Wardle – Deputy Chair

- Bordeaux South Residents’ Association
  - Elinor Bodinger

- Bla irgowrie Community Association
  - Gail Jelley
  - Shirley Tebbit

- Hurlingham Glenadrienne Craighall Residents’ Association
  - Veronica Vurgarelis – Chair
  - Lois Evans – Environmental portfolio

- Lower Sandhurst Community Association
  - Lori Klein – Administrator

- Old Parktonians Club
  - Lizette Dreischer – Club manager

- Neil Evans – Spruit maintenance activist and JUMA cycling event

- Gerrit Fourie – Spruit activist and organizer of regular clean-ups

- Fiona Clucas – Spruit activist and sponsor of clean-ups

- Willowild Community – Pauline Dickson

- Riverlodge Complex – Tony Norval