



# Wes-Kaapse Provinsiale Parlement Western Cape Provincial Parliament IPalamente yePhondo leNtshona Koloni

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## **Report of the Standing Committee on Agriculture, Environmental Affairs and Development Planning, dated 30 November 2021, on the 2020/21 Annual Reports of the Department of Environmental Affairs and Development Planning, and its Entity CapeNature, for the year ended 31 March 2021.**

The Standing Committee on Agriculture, Environmental Affairs and Development Planning, having deliberated on the Annual Reports of the Department of Environmental Affairs and Development Planning and its Entity, CapeNature, for the year ended 31 March 2021, referred to it, reports as follows:

### **1. Introduction**

Section 113(3)(b) of the Constitution requires that “Members of the Executive Council of a province must provide the legislature with full and regular reports concerning matters under their control.” Section 65 of the Public Finance Management Act, 1999 (Act 1 of 1999) requires the Minister of each Department and public entity to table an annual report in the legislature within six months of the end of each financial year.

As part of its oversight function, the Standing Committee on Agriculture, Environmental Affairs and Development Planning (the Committee) deliberated on the Annual Reports of the Department of Environmental Affairs and Development Planning (the Department) and its Entity, CapeNature, on 18 November 2021.

Annual reports are the key instruments for departments to report on performance measured against their performance targets and budgets as outlined in their Strategic Plans and Annual Performance Plans.

The Annual Report Programme for the 2020/21 financial year was advertised in various newspapers, inviting stakeholders and members of the public to participate in the discussions.

The Committee deliberated on Part A: General Information, Part B: Performance Information and Part D: Human Resource Management of the respective Annual Reports.

### **2. Department of Environmental Affairs and Development Planning**

#### **Overview**

Key highlights for the year under review included the completion of the Provincial Spatial Planning Performance Management Report, consistently meeting targets on waste licence applications despite the severe COVID-19 pandemic disruption, ongoing monitoring of water quality in both the Berg and Breede River and Estuary and the development of a toolkit, the Regional Socio-

Economic Projects (RSEP) Reconstruction Framework to assist municipalities to determine areas for spatial and socio-economic integration and transformation. Several intergovernmental environmental compliance and law enforcement blitz operations were conducted successfully.

The Department also compiled the 2021/22 Municipal Support and Capacity Building Strategy for all 30 municipalities in the Western Cape and published the accompanying Municipal Support and Capacity Building Evaluation Report.

The Department obtained a clean audit for the year under review. It achieved 99.3% of its programme expenditure on its allocated budget. In terms of its annual performance targets, 96% of these targets were achieved and 4% were partially achieved, the latter mainly due to demand driven indicators.

## **2.1 Key findings and concerns**

- 2.1.1 The RSEP Programme was an intergovernmental programme operational in the Western Cape, aimed at neighbourhood development and spatial justice. Grant funding was provided to the participating municipalities in order to implement spatial upliftment projects in neglected areas. The Programme supported a large number of projects financially, operationally and technically. Despite the budgetary challenges and fiscal targets during the year, the Department expanded the RSEP Programme to the towns of Swellendam, Heidelberg and Riversdale. The footprint for the Programme reached 19 towns across 12 municipalities in the Western Cape.

The Department developed a toolkit, the RSEP Reconstruction Framework, to assist municipalities to determine areas for spatial and socio-economic integration and transformation in order to, among others, address the segregated nature of towns, urban sprawl, neglected neighbourhoods and under-serviced areas.

The Committee welcomed the initiative as environmental design will play an important role in preventing crime and building social cohesion but remained concerned about safety aspects in rural towns. The Committee was unable to determine whether policies were in place to improve safety through urban and rural design and spatial planning.

- 2.1.2 The Provincial Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan was a mechanism of the Department that aimed to ensure that all stakeholders operating in the Province act in a coordinated and collaborative manner with regards to biodiversity conservation, its sustainable use, and the fair and equitable sharing of benefits arising from the use of genetic resources. The Department reported on the successful annual review of the Provincial Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan but was unable to provide the Committee with the specific targets that were initially set in order to achieve this.

## **3. CapeNature**

### **Overview**

CapeNature continued to strengthen good governance and achieved good results in the past financial year. This resulted in another unqualified audit for the sixth consecutive year. The Entity set 17 performance indicators that were distributed throughout its four programmes which were aligned to that of the Western Cape Government and achieved 100% of all predetermined objectives.

Highlights for the year under review included the creation of 1 212 job opportunities, the implementation of 46 compliance inspections and the completion of 1 138 stakeholder learning activities. The revenue generated from eco-tourism was negatively impacted as a result of lockdown regulations. However, CapeNature recovered during the second half of the financial year and generated approximately R28 million in revenue.

The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the economy resulted in CapeNature reducing their budget which resulted in operational expenditure being lower than previous financial years.

### **3.1 Key findings and concerns**

- 3.1.1 As CapeNature's staff compliment extended to remote areas across the Province, the Committee expressed concern with regard to the management of staff to ensure productivity and the optimum utilisation of resources. CapeNature reported that it has monitoring, control and evaluation mechanisms in place in this regard.
- 3.1.2 The Committee expressed concern that many people may be transgressing onto land owned by CapeNature without the necessary approval and permits and that Reserve Officers are often not present over weekends to conduct the necessary checks. This state of affairs remained a challenge for CapeNature as it was not able to fully control access to its nature reserves and therefore was not able to gauge the level of compliance of members of the public. CapeNature has started to look at remedies to address this problem.
- 3.1.3 The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic had a debilitating effect on the tourism and hospitality sector. This impact necessitated the removal of the tourism income indicator as part of the in-year Annual Performance Plan amendment process. The removal of the indicator for the 2020/21 financial year was done in consultation with the Department of the Premier and Provincial Treasury and will be reinstated in the 2021/22 financial year. CapeNature did however set an internal target which would act as a benchmark for the new financial year.

Even though there may have been uncertainty of regulations and restrictions during the COVID-19 pandemic as the lockdown levels were amended, the Committee expressed concern that a target that was set and which had a huge impact on the crucial aspect of sustainability, could be removed with the reasoning that setting this target was a risk as it would not be achieved.

### **4. Resolutions/Actions**

- 4.1 The Committee REQUESTED that the Department provides it with:
  - 4.1.1 The policies, processes and/or related documents that have been reviewed to improve safety through urban and rural design and spatial planning that assists in building social cohesion in communities;
  - 4.1.2 A report on land invasion that may have taken place on land parcels assembled for development and on protected areas, outlining the current status and the mitigating plans that are in place; and
  - 4.1.3 The Annual Review Report of the Provincial Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan outlining the targets that were measured.

## 5. Conclusion

The Committee congratulated the Department and CapeNature on sterling work under difficult circumstances and was satisfied that the predetermined objectives for the 2020/21 financial year were adequately achieved and that it was accurately reported.

The Committee noted its appreciation for the responses of the Department of Environmental Affairs and Development Planning and CapeNature to the scrutiny of the Annual Reports and thanked the Minister, Head of Department, Board Chairperson and Chief Executive Officer of CapeNature as well as the officials for their contributions and efforts in this regard.



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**MR AP VAN DER WESTHUIZEN, MPP**

**CHAIRPERSON: STANDING COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE, ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS AND  
DEVELOPMENT PLANNING**

**DATE: 30 November 2021**