

Verwysing/Reference:
Navrae/Enquiries: D Nasson

14 April 2021

Ms Vuyisa Barbara Mfeketo
Department of Human Settlement
Office of the Head of Department – Correspondence Hub
Western Cape Government
27 Wale Street
CAPE TOWN
8000

Dear Sir / Madam

RE: UNFAIR TREATMENT: COMPLAINANT CYNTHIA BLESS

We refer to the above and your email of even date. Please find herewith our municipal response:

1. Cynthia Bless is the recipient of a housing subsidy approved by the Department of Human Settlement Western Cape on 01 September 2020 for the Vredebes Housing Project, Ceres.
2. The Witzenberg Municipality consists of the towns of Ceres, Wolseley, Tulbagh, Prince Alfred Hamlet and Op die Berg. With the registration of the Vredebes Housing Project, the Witzenberg Council decided that the project will be for the entire Witzenberg community, which is also the first integrated housing project of the Municipality.
3. During the first phase of the project, 600 serviced plots were approved and it was therefore the intention that 600 top structures would be built. Due to Eskom's electricity capacity problems, only 229 top structures have been built to date - 147 of these are single dwellings, 32 semi attached, and 50 duplex dwellings.
4. In drawing up the criteria regarding the beneficiaries, the Council's Housing Committee gave preference to beneficiaries in the category 60 years and older. The single dwellings were also allocated to this category of beneficiaries including two disabled beneficiaries.
5. Mrs Bless's housing subsidy application was approved on 01 September 2020, as informed by the Province, of which Mrs Bless was also notified.
6. At the time of the approval of the project, the single and semi-attached dwellings were

already occupied or allocated in terms of the established criteria and the only available housing was the duplex dwellings.

7. Due to the disability of Mrs Bless's son, the Committee was of the opinion that it would not be practical and feasible to allocate the dwelling to Mrs Bless.
8. The Committee's decision was therefore that Mrs Bless should be given priority at the first available single dwelling.
9. Mrs Bless was part of a group of dissatisfied residents who organised a protest action regarding the Vredebes housing project. She was also part of a delegation that met with the Municipality, Human Rights Commission and South African Police to negotiate housing issues. During her last meeting, where a settlement was later reached, she left the meeting after an outburst of anger and in no obscure language made everyone understand that she would rather file criminal charges before speaking further to the Municipality.
10. Mrs Bless now arrives at the Municipality a few months later, on the 07th of April 2021 where she informs a Housing officer that she is going to occupy a municipal building (commonly known as the Nduli Police Station).
11. This building referred to was damaged and looted during a protest march and is in a dilapidated state and not suitable for human occupation.
12. On the 09th of April 2021, the Municipality received a complaint that Mrs Bless was doing construction work at the municipal building.
13. The Law Enforcement Unit of the Municipality was dispatched to the premises where they removed the roof panels and window frames which was Mrs Bless was busy installing.
14. Mrs Bless was requested to leave the premises and a criminal charge of trespassing was also laid at the Ceres Police Station.
15. Mrs Bless was definitely not in peaceful / lawful occupation or possession of the building and the Municipality exercised its right to protect its assets. Mrs Bless still refuses to leave the premises.
16. The matter is now being referred to the Housing Committee on an urgent basis for further consideration and discussion.

Yours faithfully,



DAVID NASSON
MUNICIPAL MANAGER

/mdk