

TOUGH TALK

City Hall to reject dubious debts

Era of selling air to council is long gone, new town clerk tells creditors

By CASPER WAIHAKA

The Nairobi City Council will not pay billions of shillings in dubious debts.

New town clerk Philip Kisia said he would rather stand in court than pay questionable claims.

"We will have to use a microscope to scrutinise the debts as the council will not pay for air," he said after he took over the office yesterday.

"I will not approve any payment if it is not clear what has been supplied to the council. I urge such creditors to proceed to court as I will not be first town clerk to be charged."

Unaccounted for

Mr Kisia sent the warning as it emerged that out of a total debt of Sh31 billion, it was not clear how Sh8 billion had been incurred.

He said after consulting the chief officers and the various committee chair persons, he had learnt that Sh23 billion had been spent on infrastructure and the rest was unaccounted for.

Mr Kisia was speaking at the hand-



Nairobi town clerk Philip Kisia (left) talks to his predecessor, Mr John Gakuo, during the hand-over ceremony at City Hall yesterday. Mr Kisia said questionable debtors would not be paid. Photo/PETERSON GITHAIGA

over ceremony presided over by the Permanent Secretary in the ministry of Local Government, Mr Sammy Kirui, who called for an end to ugly incidents that have in the past characterised the relationship between the mayor and the town clerk.

Surprisingly, former town clerk John Gakuo was praised by mayor

Geoffrey Majiwa who, on a number of occasions, tried to forcibly remove him from office.

The mayor commended Mr Gakuo for his efforts to improve the city and assured the new town clerk of his support and that of the councillors.

"We are ready to work together and we should strive to avoid conflict be-

tween the two arms of council," he said. Mr Gakuo told his successor that he was "very lucky" and recalled: "During my first week as town clerk, there was a major demonstration as the workers had not been paid three months' salaries and they were actually coming for me."

He advised Mr Kisia to push for transparent use of public funds. "Collecting revenue and rates is one thing but safeguarding it here at the council is a matter of life and death."

Mr Kisia said he had received lots of goodwill messages from residents and said one area that needed to be enhanced was customer care. "I am going to support transformational management which will embrace reforms and consultation with all stakeholders."

Improved security

He praised the transformation of the city through planting of trees, improved security and street lights during Mr Gakuo's tenure, saying it "inspired hope that it can be done."

The town clerk called on councillors to only approve funding for projects that are in the budget. "I am asking all councillors, with humility, to ensure that money will be spent according to the budget," he said, adding that he would be consulting the provincial police boss on security issues.

After the hand-over ceremony, a brief full council meeting was held to change signatories.

BRIEFLY

NAIROBI

Eatery owner denies fighting customers

A businessman was yesterday charged with fighting customers in his restaurant. Mr Rajesh Raj Gandhi, the owner of Peppers Restaurant in Westlands, was jointly charged with his employee, Mr Samuel Lung'aho Kundukuvi. The two, represented by Mr Cecil Miller, denied the charge before Kibera senior resident magistrate Cosmas Maundu and were released Sh5,000 cash bail each. The case, which will be mentioned on May 22, will be heard on July 30.

NAIROBI

Trader charged with kidnap plot

A businessman was yesterday charged with conspiracy to kidnap. Mr Edward Omond Ochieng denied the charge before a Kibera senior resident magistrate, Mr Cosmas Maundu. The court heard that between September 18, 2008, and March 12, 2009, M Ochieng conspired to kidnap Anaar Osman Gamrai, the wife of debt collector Shabbir Ali Jusab. Mr Jusab, a Briton was earlier charged with the same offence. The cases will be consolidated on Monday.

THEIKA

33 pigs killed to stem killer flu

The municipal council yesterday killed 33 stray pigs in what it said was a precautionary measure against swine flu. The town's public health officer, Dr Hassan Mwasimbwa who led the operation, said animals reared in the municipality were a health hazard to the community. He said the council would get rid of all stray animals in its jurisdiction and prosecute the owners for going against the Public Health Act, which forbids the rearing of animals within the municipality.

NAIROBI

Colleges set to pick teacher trainees

Selection of more than 8,000 candidates for primary school teacher training colleges begins on Monday. Basic education director Leah Rotich yesterday said registration would be between May 11 and 29 and candidates should apply at their zonal education offices. Applicants should have scored a minimum of mean grade C (plain) at the Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education examination.

Kenya eyes seat in global rights council

By NATION Reporter and Correspondent

Kenya has declared its candidature for a seat at the global Human Rights Council.

Elections for all the vacant seats at the council will be held next Tuesday and the results are expected to be endorsed at the 63rd session of the UN General Assembly to be held in September.

News of Kenya's decision came as European Union envoys in the country claimed that cases of intimidation of human rights activists were on the rise.

A statement from the Czech Republic embassy, the current chair of the group, expressed concern at alleged threats against activists.

The envoys, who had lunch with the activists at a Nairobi hotel, pledged EU support for human rights groups.

Fifth time

Senior government officials have been drumming up support for the country to get one of the five vacant seats reserved for Africa in the council. The continent is entitled to 13 seats in the council.

States elected to the council only serve for three years and are not eligible for immediate re-election after serving two consecutive terms.

Kenya will be seeking to be a member for the fifth time,

having served in the council from 1984 to 1986; 1992 to 1994; 2001 to 2003; and in 2005.

In its submission to the president of the 63rd session of the UN Assembly, Mr Miguel d'Escoto Brockmann, and which was obtained by the *Nation* yesterday, the country expressed its commitment to the protection and promotion of human rights throughout the world.

Work closely

The submissions were made by officials from the country's permanent mission to the UN, which is headed by Mr Zachary Dominic Muburi-Muita.

While building up its case, the country said it had and will continue to play an important role in the mediation and resolution of regional conflicts.

The government said it had worked closely with the council by inviting various special rapporteurs to the country.

The country expressed its commitment to the protection and promotion of human rights

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PRESS RELEASE

Recent reports in a cross section of the print and electronic media have indicated that there have been certain changes at Postal Corporation of Kenya as a result of a draft forensic audit conducted on one of our products, Postapay.

We wish to take this early opportunity to assure our esteemed customers that in line with the Terms of Reference of the forensic audit which among other things sought to identify weaknesses and controls of the said product, the final Forensic Audit Report will be used to improve the product value proposition and not necessarily to punish staff as suggested in certain media.

Further, we wish to assure our customers that it is business as usual at Postal Corporation of Kenya and that they should continue to conduct business with us without any fear whatsoever.

We thank you for your continued support!

Fred Odhiambo
POSTMASTER GENERAL
POSTAL CORPORATION OF KENYA