

Councillor Henning de Wet

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14 September 2022

To: City Manager: City of uMhlathuze
CC: Central Registry: City of uMhlathuze

WRITTEN QUESTION: AIR QUALITY – COAL DUST

As a resident and Ward Councillor in the City of uMhlathuze, I am extremely concerned about black dust particles covering our residential suburbs. This dust is believed to be airborne coal dust that is carried into residential suburbs by Southern winds, allegedly from Transnet and Grindrod (amongst other sources) operations in and around the Port of Richards Bay.

I have therefore created a survey on 05 September 2022 and by 06 September 2022, with the aim of understanding the extent of the matter and the severity of the matter. I have received 256 responses from residents (see attached) confirming that they are severely affected and are potentially suffering health implications due to this exposure.

It should be noted that this is not a new matter, but one that residents have had to endure for a number of years. Residents have especially noticed an increase in dust pollutants during the past few years.

Here are some photos residents shared to support their complaints:



Questions

With the above background, I write to you the following questions with the expectancy that you answer them as accurately and truthfully as possible and provide detailed explanations for all questions:

1. Has the City of uMhlathuze received complaints of airborne black dust in residential suburbs?
 - 1.1. If so, were these investigated, and what was their outcome?
2. With regards to public complaints relating to dust particles/air pollution;
 - 2.1. What channels do residents have at their disposal to log complaints?
 - 2.2. Has the City received any complaints in the past 12 months?
 - 2.3. Has complaints received been investigated? – provide information relating to both the investigation and investigation outcome.
3. Does the City of uMhlathuze have dust fall-out monitoring systems in place to record these particles?
 - 3.1. If yes, where are these stationed?
 - 3.2. If yes, does the City have PM2.5 monitors?
 - 3.3. If no, please elaborate.
4. Has the City conducted any studies or is the City aware of any reliable studies conducted with the aim to determine the potential health implications these particles might have on public health?
 - 4.1. If yes, please provide me with a copy of this.
 - 4.2. If no, does the City have any plans to conduct such a study, and by when?
5. Does the City know the cumulative impact pollutant emitters have on our air quality?
 - 5.1. Please elaborate on the environmental and health impact these have on our communities.
 - 5.2. Does the City make this information freely available to the public?
 - 5.3. Does the City have live data available to the public for various pollution zones?
 - 5.4. What action has been taken against non-compliant emitters?
 - 5.5. What are the total tonnages of coal/antracite permitted to be stored at once within the City of uMhlathuze jurisdiction – Are these compliant with the Land Use Management Scheme?
6. Does the City of uMhlathuze have an Air Quality Management By-Law?
 - 6.1. If yes, where can residents and customers access this By-law? (*also provide a DMS number*)
 - 6.2. If no, are there any plans to develop such a By-law, and by when?
 - 6.3. If no, what legislation is used for compliance/enforcement purposes?
7. Considering the large amount of black dust particles residents are continuously exposed to, and taking into consideration the responses received to my survey;
 - 7.1. Is the City of uMhlathuze satisfied with the Air Quality?
 - 7.2. Is the City of uMhlathuze satisfied with the dust residents are forced to endure?
 - 7.3. Is the City of uMhlathuze concerned about the potential environmental and health implications?
 - 7.4. What will be done to mitigate this situation?



8. In terms of the City's Air Quality unit;
- 8.1. Does the unit have adequate capacity to fulfill its mandate effectively and timeously?
 - 8.2. Are there any shortcomings in terms of air quality monitoring systems or equipment?
 - 8.3. What can Council do, in terms of budget allocations, etc. to assist the Air Quality Unit in reaching its full potential?

Considering the seriousness of the matter and that answers should be available, responding to the above questions should not take more than 14 business days. Therefore, your response is expected within 14 business days from the date this set of written questions was submitted to your office.

It is also expected that your office acknowledges receipt of this written question and provides me with a DMS number for reference.

This done and signed electronically on this 14th day of September 2022



Cllr HPC de Wet
City of uMhlathuze
Ward 3 Councillor

H P C DE WET
COMMISSIONER OF OATHS
EX OFFICIO/COUNCILLOR
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WARD 3

