CITY OF JOHANNESBURG

COUNCILLOR DR RABELANI DAGADA

MEMBER OF THE MAYORAL COMMITTEE

FINANCE

BILLING CRISIS TO BE HISTORY BY END OF 2017/2018 FISCAL PERIOD

The City of Johannesburg is closer to remedying all billing woes in the municipality, following an 88% query resolution rate at a Billing Open Day on Saturday, 12 August 2017.

Hundreds of previously frustrated customers left pleased with the City's attempt to bring its frontline services to their doorstep, to enable the prompt resolution of lingering billing woes. It was a testament to the fact that the municipality is determined to eradicate billing issues whilst curbing its increasing debt.

The Executive Mayor Cllr Herman Mashaba and the portfolio Head of the City's Finances Dr Rabelani Dagada led a high-level team from the Revenue Shared Services Centre (RSSC) to assist customers to resolve long-standing billing issues as well as settle their debt with the City.

Services the City offered at Emmarentia's Marks Park during the Billing Open Day included adjustments on disputed accounts, electricity consumption queries, as well as refuse, sewer and tariff queries. The City also dealt with requests to link or de-link meters and water consumption queries.

By the end of the second week of August, encompassing the Billing Open Day, a total of 88 percent of billing queries logged for the months of May and June, including those on 12 August had been resolved. The City expects the oldest billing query in its system to be only from February 2017; effectively meaning that long-standing billing issues are being resolved expeditiously.

Currently, only 17, 797 billing queries are yet to be resolved. Of these, 53% are 30 days old, 30.87% were between 31 to 60 days old, while 7.98% are between 61 to 90 days old. The City expects to resolve all queries older than 90 days by the end of August 2017.

Dr Dagada said his department was determined to "fix it" by the end of the current fiscal period. "We are taking decisions here and now. By the end of March next year, we will be talking about the legacy of the billing crisis and talking about it as if it's history," he said.

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Although the Billing Open Day has also enabled the City to update its customer database, the municipality is still grappling with a high number of disputed accounts related to water and electricity consumption, but plans are in motion to "fix it".

"Our Revenue Shared Services Centre continues to resolve queries, working overtime to daily targets. Our goal is to ensure that 90% of all registered queries are not older than 30 days by December 2017. " said MMC Dagada.

Earlier in the day, Mayor Mashaba led a team of technicians to a resident's home in Sofiatown, which had been billed on a wrong meter since 2010. The matter has since been rectified, much to the delight of the customer.

The municipality has established that Region F has the highest number of open queries at 18.99% of the total population of the City, followed by Region B at 16.95% while Region E holds 12.23%. These regions have, on average the highest number of open queries in all areas of the metro.

"We are hosting Billing Open Days so that residents can hold us accountable, but it shouldn't end there," said Mayor Mashaba. "There has been a public outcry regarding the billing crisis. We are now moving into every region to fix it. By November we would've visited at least four more regions," the Mayor explained.

Similar Billing Open Days will be held in all regions of the Metro in upcoming months to grant the City an opportunity to reduce the backlog of incorrect municipal accounts and rectify anomalies in the SAP system.

"You must first recognise that there is a problem and then fix it. Nothing that is hidden can be resolved. In this case, the City has admitted that there is a problem and has devised a plan to fix it," said the Speaker of Council, Vasco Da Gama.

Remedying the billing crisis will improve revenue collection, increase infrastructure development and enable job creation and the delivery of quality basic services.

Issued by Councillor Dr Rabelani Dagada
MMC of Finance

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