

# **CITY OF CAPE TOWN**

**21 FEBRUARY 2018**

## **STATEMENT BY MAYORAL COMMITTEE MEMBER FOR SAFETY AND SECURITY; AND SOCIAL SERVICES, ALDERMAN JP SMITH**

### **City responds to claims around the cancellation of the Bayhill Premier Cup**

The City of Cape Town notes with concern the comments attributed to the South African Football Association (SAFA) about the cancellation of the Bayhill Premier Cup in Cape Town. This is the latest in a series of misleading comments by SAFA about the upcoming soccer season and contingency plans that have been in effect during the prevailing drought crisis.

For the record, the City has not cancelled the Bayhill tournament as we are not the event organisers. In fact, there have been multiple positive engagements with the organisers aimed at finding a way to allow this tournament to continue, and to prepare the fields required for this purpose, within the limitations set by Level 6B water restrictions.

The City recognises the importance of the tournament in the development of young soccer players. Last year the City did everything within its power to ensure that this tournament went ahead, including the trucking in of non-potable water to irrigate fields ahead of the tournament. Similar efforts were in place in preparation for the 2018 instalment of the tournament.

During a meeting this morning, the organisers indicated that they had decided to cancel the tournament for a number of reasons which they will elaborate on in due course. It is indeed a pity that the tournament has had to be cancelled, but we thank the organisers for their mature view of the drought crisis and the impact it is having on life as we know it.

In terms of the comments attributed to SAFA Cape Town in recent days and the allegation that the City 'does not have a plan' to deal with the impact of the drought on local football, allow me to state the following:

- On 29 January 2018 the City requested that SAFA (and other sports federations) submit a list of their most important fixtures so that we could prioritise the fields required for irrigation with treated effluent or borehole water

- This was reiterated at a mass communication session held with all sporting federations on 10 February 2018
- Numerous federations (cricket, rugby, softball and baseball) have already made significant changes to their fixtures and schedules. The City has yet to receive this list from SAFA
- Furthermore, it was decided that the City's 29 artificial turfs will be used to accommodate as many of the major soccer fixtures as possible and that their use would be determined by SAFA
- The City has suggested a number of contingency plans to ensure that sport can continue as far as possible, such as the use of community halls for junior games where a soccer ball is replaced with a softer, indoor ball
- SAFA has not provided any proposals around how it would like the remaining playable fields to be booked in order to ensure that the most effective and equitable approach is taken
- SAFA has yet to present any proposals around how it intends to adapt its season during this water crisis. Indeed, the communication we have seen issued from SAFA has focused on:
  - (a) the intention to continue with business as usual despite the continued destruction of the grass playing fields, an approach that will render many of them unplayable for years to come as the City will not have the money to reinstate these fields when all the grass has been stripped
  - (b) blaming the City for not accommodating their usual fixtures and play hours despite numerous and lengthy engagements around the impact of the water crisis on the maintenance of grass fields

We do not know how else we can get the message across to SAFA that, as part of the 'new normal' we all find ourselves in, the City's ability to irrigate its grass playing fields is severely compromised. Continued play on these fields will mean that they will be stripped of all grass. It takes in excess of R400 000 and 3 million litres of water to reinstate a field once it has reached this state. This means that it will likely be many years before the City will be able to get these fields back to a reasonable state for play.

If the soccer fraternity recognizes this fact and reduces play on these fields until the rains come, there is a chance that soccer leagues can be accommodated on fields later in the year. We recognise that the current water crisis is negatively impacting on the functioning of the various sports codes and we are committed to working with all concerned to ensure that the impact is minimised, whilst still taking the necessary steps to preserve the city's remaining water resources. The Social Services Directorate is also reprioritizing budget in the financial year starting in July 2018 to improve sporting facilities by building additional artificial pitches, sinking new boreholes and expanding the treated effluent reticulation network to allow for better irrigation of playing fields which we are not allowed to irrigate with potable water.

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