

Speaker of Council – Cllr. Sean Snyman

Honourable Members of George Council

Municipal Manager, Directors

And Our esteemed guests in the gallery

I stand here before you today as a result of my fellow councillors who believe in my potential to lead, unify, and charter a cohesive way forward for all residents of this great city. I am grateful for the opportunity and the vote of confidence. I stand before you today as well, as a result of my family, and at this point I would specifically like to mention my beloved late father Eugene Von Brandis, who served in this very same council for many years – I know that he is proud of his daughter this morning. To my mother, wife, family and loved ones here today, thank you for your continued and unwavering support. I am not only honoured by the responsibility of the role bestowed upon me this morning, but I am truly humbled at the opportunity that I have been given today. I am excited about this new journey which lies ahead, this is not only a new chapter for me as the Executive Mayor of George Municipality, but it is a new chapter for each and

every single one of us. As we tackle this new course head on, I ask only for your trust as we venture ahead. I want to be the Executive Mayor who welcomes open communication, and in this spirit, I would like to implore all councillors to feel free to use this opportunity to communicate freely. Let us meet, converse, and chart a way forward so that we can work together to make this the best municipality for our residents. We may have different party names, but every difference in opinion is not necessarily a difference of principals. We are all united under the banner of wanting our City to thrive. Lastly, I would like to assure each and every single resident that I am the Executive Mayor for **ALL** of you. I am committed to you, I am here to serve you, I am here for you and the betterment of our municipal area, and I will work exceptionally hard not only to gain your trust but to uphold it. To my colleagues who I have had the honour and privilege of working with for so many years, I want to say that our work is guided by our vision of a just and safe city, where power is used responsibly, possibilities are endless, and opportunities are abundant. We believe that equity and inclusion are the cornerstones of our great democracy and as a municipal council we will uphold these

standards. We have been chosen to serve at the behest of our residents and it is my intention to ensure that we do this to the best of our ability.

As many of you will be aware, George is the fastest growing Secondary City in our country, and while this may bring along enormous opportunities, it also presents us with numerous challenges. The recent census outcome has shown that our population growth has outpaced our:

- Staff complement.
- Operational budget
- Overall income
- And income from services and charges

The only aspect that our population growth has not outpaced is our Capital Budget, and this is largely due to the work done by my predecessor Ald Leon Van Wyk and team when we successfully secured the BFI grant of over R 1 billion. As your new Executive Mayor, I would like to chart a way forward where the new team and I combat these challenges as best as we possibly can. As the leader of this council my focus will be on four focal points which I deem extremely important in

steering George on the course I believe it should be. I would like to focus on the following:

1. Capacity Building
2. Decentralization of Government
3. Renewable Energy
4. Stimulation of Economic Development

Capacity Building

As I mentioned earlier the rapid growth rate of our secondary city is far outpacing our staff complement. As your new Executive Mayor, it is my intention to address this as a matter of urgency. An organisational restructuring is already underway to ensure that higher efficiency levels across all departments are delivered, in doing so, we intend to further improve customer satisfaction. Our municipal staff component will need to grow to keep up with the needs of our growing population, we have more residents who need the services that they moved here for and therefore the onus falls on us to provide it.

Decentralisation of Government

It is my firm belief that good governance starts with a responsive government. One that heeds the call of its residents. When traveling along the municipal area I have been told that access to client services is not as readily available to all of our residents. These utterances then give credence to why decentralising a government is so extremely important so that every resident has equal access to all the services we provide. As your Executive Mayor, I will make it my duty to enforce this, so to our residents who live in the outer lying areas of George Municipality, residents of Uniondale, Haarlem, and Noll to name a few – in case this has not been made abundantly clear to you, we govern for you too.

As a commitment myself, along with our mayoral committee, and senior management, will ensure that client services are made readily available to all residents of George, and I mean **ALL** residents.

Renewable Energy

In light of the energy crisis we are facing as South Africans, George Municipality has already started investing in renewable energy as a main focus for this year. With additional supplementary programmes being rolled out such as the new smart lighting pilot project, the benefits will extend far beyond just technical efficiency. The project aims to enhance the safety, comfort, and well-being of our residents by reducing lighting failures and optimising resource use.

Economic Development

As a core mandate, a municipality needs to ensure that the municipal area they serve is run well enough to attract businesses and investments. With all the development going on in the area, I am sure that we can all attest to the work being done here. But my goal is to go a step further. We know that George is the economic hub of the Garden Route District, and we need to ensure that our policies and strategies are in full alignment to accommodate the growth that we anticipate. However, while many governments can successfully set policy

and strategy, they often fall short with implementation. This is why I will focus on driving economic growth and development through working harder to reduce red tape. We need to become a municipality that focuses on the ease of doing business so that companies **WANT** to set up shop in our area. We need to ensure that we are not only accommodating but that we roll out the proverbial red carpet so that opportunities are created and executed successfully. So, we will have to focus on ensuring successful implementation through fit for purpose appointments of those that understand what our goals are.

I want to assure you that this is a government for each and every single citizen of George Municipality. Together with the administration we will work tirelessly to ensure that we deliver on the expectations that our residents place on us. Now, I have made various commitments to you, but I need your commitment too. Our democracy cannot work without the participation of the people within it. So, I would like to implore you to actively get involved in processes where the public voice needs to be heard. When we have public participation – get involved, when we host community meetings – attend, when there are calls for inputs in our IDP – submit them. We can only

make George Municipality the place we want it to be if we do this together.

So, as we move our secondary city into a new direction, I want all of you to know that my primary goal is that we work together to get things done for the betterment of all residents within George Municipality, thank you.