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City of Johannesburg Executive Mayor, Cllr Dada Morero: 8th Electricity Imbizo Talking Points

21 October 2026

Core message: Infrastructure investment, community impact, fairness and the City's service delivery priorities.

MMC for Environment and Infrastructure Services, Cllr Jack Sekwaila; Acting CEO of City Power; ward councillors; community leaders; officials; and residents gathered here today, Greetings.

We are here because the electricity challenges facing communities across the Lenasia Service Delivery Centre require our attention as the leadership of the City of Johannesburg.

We recognise that residents in Lenasia South, Ennerdale, Lawley, Vlaktefontein, Finetown, Freedom Park, Zakariyya Park and surrounding communities have experienced repeated electricity outages, damaged infrastructure and continuous after-effects of illegal connections.

We understand the frustration that comes with being without electricity, particularly when the same problems continue to affect communities.

For households, electricity is essential for everyday activities. For businesses, it is important for their operations. When supply is repeatedly interrupted, the consequences are felt across the community.

Residents are therefore justified in expecting the City and City Power to explain what is being done to address these challenges and how electricity services will be improved.

This is why the Electricity Imbizos are important. They bring the City's leadership closer to communities and create an opportunity for residents to raise concerns directly with those responsible for electricity services.

Non-Executive Directors: M Kharodi (Chairperson of the Board), M Kekana, N Kgope, W Mathamela, S Mlazi, P Mokhele, N Mtembu, S Nkwanana, M Seopela, M Qhomane

Executive Directors: C Tlouane (Acting Chief Executive Officer), R Sadiki (Chief Financial Officer) - Company Secretary: M Smith

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But these engagements must also be about demonstrating what is being done to respond to those concerns. One of the most important challenges we must address is the condition of our electricity infrastructure.

As we have heard from City Power, parts of the network serving communities across the Lenasia SDC have exceeded their intended lifespan. This contributes to recurring equipment failures, prolonged outages and increasing pressure on maintenance teams.

We cannot continue addressing these challenges through repeated repairs alone. We must invest in renewing ageing infrastructure, restoring equipment that is out of service and strengthening the network so that it can provide a more reliable electricity supply.

This is why several infrastructure projects have been identified across the Lenasia SDC, with investments directed towards substations, network improvements, electricity supply capacity and public lighting.

One of the major projects is the R45 million renewal of Hopefield Substation, where infrastructure was damaged by fire. This project involves replacing damaged electrical equipment and restoring infrastructure that is currently out of service. Once completed, the improvements are expected to strengthen the reliability of electricity supply to the surrounding area, reduce restoration times and improve the safety of operational personnel. The project is expected to be completed in December 2029.

We also have a R4.5 million investment at Lenasia South Substation, which involves replacing ageing electrical and supporting equipment. This renewal is expected to be completed by June 2029.

At Ennerdale Substation, R4 million has been allocated towards replacing ageing high-voltage circuit breakers, with completion expected in June 2027.

These are important interventions because ageing equipment increases the risk of faults and failures. By renewing this infrastructure, we are addressing some of the underlying weaknesses that contribute to recurring electricity interruptions.

At Lehae Substation, R700,000 has also been allocated towards replacing damaged protection equipment, which is essential for protecting the electricity network when faults occur.

These projects demonstrate the importance of investing in infrastructure that can support a safer and more reliable electricity supply. Beyond renewing ageing infrastructure, we must also ensure that the electricity network has sufficient capacity to meet the needs of the communities it serves.

This is particularly important in areas where development is taking place and additional electricity supply will be required.

The R15 million Trade Route Substation project is an important intervention in this regard.

The project involves constructing a new Eskom high-voltage switching yard and control room, which will allow Eskom to supply Eldorado Park, Nancefield and Orlando from an alternative transmission network.

This is significant because it will strengthen the electricity supply arrangements serving these communities. The project will also provide additional capacity to supply a portion of the Southern Farms development within City Power's area of supply.

As residential development takes place, electricity infrastructure must be able to support the additional demand. We cannot separate development from the need to provide essential services to the communities that will occupy these areas.

The Trade Route project is therefore important both for strengthening existing electricity supply arrangements and for supporting the electricity needs associated with development. The project is expected to be completed in June 2028.

While these larger infrastructure projects are important, we also recognise that residents continue to experience electricity challenges that require attention now.

We cannot rely only on projects that will be completed over the next few years. There must also be interventions aimed at improving the performance of the existing network.

For this reason, R35 million has been allocated towards restoring electrical infrastructure that is currently out of service.

This work is intended to return equipment to operation, improve the performance of the network and reduce the time required to restore electricity when faults occur. This is particularly important in communities where repeated outages have become a source of frustration.

City Power has also identified investments in communication and monitoring systems at several substations, including Lenasia South, Lehae, Hopefield, Lotus, Lunar and Soweto Local.

These improvements are intended to strengthen City Power's ability to monitor the electricity network, receive information about equipment conditions and manage certain operations remotely.

For residents, the importance of these systems is that they support better identification and management of electricity faults. The objective must be to strengthen the network's performance and improve the institution's ability to respond when problems arise.

Another important issue raised by communities is the condition of public lighting infrastructure.

Streetlights and high-mast lights are essential public infrastructure, particularly in areas where residents are concerned about moving around after dark. When streetlights are damaged, vandalised or not functioning, communities lose an important service.

As mentioned earlier by the Acting CEO, part of the identified infrastructure programme includes R2.85 million allocation towards replacing 300 existing streetlight fittings in Region G. A further R8.125 million has been allocated towards the installation of 25 solar-powered high-mast lights.

These interventions are intended to improve public lighting infrastructure and respond to challenges experienced in affected communities.

However, we must also recognise that investment in public lighting will not deliver lasting benefits if the infrastructure continues to be vandalised or its components stolen.

The protection of these installations is therefore as important as the investment itself.

We encourage residents to work with City Power, ward councillors and law enforcement agencies to protect public lighting and other electricity infrastructure.

As we invest in improving electricity services, we must also confront the challenges that continue to undermine the sustainability of the network.

One of these is the widespread problem of illegal connections, meter bypassing and electricity consumption that is not properly paid for. We have heard from City Power about the low levels of electricity vending in several communities served by the Lenasia SDC.

These figures are concerning because they reflect a serious challenge that must be addressed if we are to improve electricity reliability. We cannot allow a situation where residents who pay for their electricity continue to experience repeated outages because of illegal connections and the overloading of transformers.

When a transformer fails because of uncontrolled electricity consumption, the consequences are not limited to those responsible. Entire communities can be affected, including households that have complied with the requirements of the electricity system.

It is unfair for paying customers to carry the burden of illegal electricity connections and the damage they cause to infrastructure. The objective is to ensure that electricity connections are lawful, households are properly metered and infrastructure is not repeatedly exposed to the conditions that caused previous failures.

We must understand that replacing a damaged transformer without addressing illegal connections and uncontrolled electricity consumption does not provide a sustainable solution. It creates the risk that the replacement equipment will fail again, leaving the same community without electricity.

We therefore appeal to residents to cooperate with City Power's normalisation efforts, ensure that their electricity connections comply with the required standards and purchase electricity through approved channels. This is not simply about collecting revenue. It is about protecting the electricity network, reducing repeated failures and ensuring that paying customers are not continually disadvantaged.

We must also confront the continued theft and vandalism of electricity infrastructure.

The incidents experienced across the Lenasia SDC, including the illegal removal of approximately 2.5 kilometres of cable in Finetown and the vandalism of several substations, demonstrate the seriousness of this challenge.

When electricity infrastructure is stolen or damaged, the consequences are felt directly by residents through outages and delays in restoration. It also undermines the investments being made to improve the electricity network.

We cannot continue directing resources towards repairing and replacing infrastructure that is repeatedly destroyed through criminal activities. Those resources are also needed to renew ageing equipment, strengthen the network and improve services.

This is why the collaboration between City Power, SAPS, JMPD, ward councillors and communities is so important. The arrests made in connection with infrastructure-related crimes demonstrate the importance of continued law enforcement interventions.

However, protecting electricity infrastructure cannot be the responsibility of law enforcement agencies alone. Communities must also play a role by reporting cable theft, vandalism and illegal connections, and by supporting efforts to protect substations, transformers, cables and public lighting infrastructure.

These assets are there to serve residents. When they are damaged, it is the same communities that suffer the consequences.

As the leadership of the City, we recognise that residents want to see progress in addressing the electricity challenges affecting their communities. Community members want to know when damaged infrastructure will be repaired, what is being done about recurring outages and how the investments being made will improve their electricity supply.

The projects outlined today have different completion timelines. Some are expected to be completed during the 2026/27 financial year, while others extend into 2028 and 2029.

It is important that residents understand these timelines and that the institution continues communicating about the work being undertaken. At the same time, maintenance and operational interventions must continue while the longer-term infrastructure projects are being implemented.

We therefore welcome City Power's commitment to continued maintenance interventions, engagement with ward councillors and community leaders, and feedback through regional sessions. These engagements are important because residents must have opportunities to raise concerns and receive information about outstanding electricity challenges.

The Electricity Imbizos must contribute to strengthening the relationship between communities and the institutions responsible for service delivery.

As we conclude today's engagement, I want to emphasise that improving electricity reliability requires a collective effort. The City has a responsibility to provide leadership and ensure that infrastructure challenges receive the necessary attention.

City Power has a responsibility to maintain the network, respond to faults and implement the infrastructure improvements that have been identified. Residents also have a responsibility to protect electricity infrastructure, use electricity lawfully and pay for the services they consume. These responsibilities must work together if we are to achieve lasting improvements.

We cannot continue investing in infrastructure that is repeatedly damaged through illegal connections, cable theft and vandalism. Equally, we cannot allow residents who are paying for electricity to continue suffering because of unlawful activities that place the network under pressure.

The investments identified across the Lenasia SDC are intended to address ageing infrastructure, improve network performance, strengthen electricity supply capacity and respond to public lighting challenges. Our objective must be to move away from a cycle of repeated equipment failures and emergency repairs towards a more reliable and sustainable electricity network.

The people of Johannesburg deserve electricity services they can depend on. Our responsibility is to continue addressing the challenges, implementing the necessary infrastructure improvements and ensuring that the investments made deliver meaningful benefits to the communities they are intended to serve.

I thank you.

ENDS