

# City Vision

If the City of Cape Town's municipality is the brain and residents are the body, then the relatively small brain stem would be its councillors, who effectively link the brain with the body.

Without this vital link the City will look left while residents walk to the right – a sure-fire way to a police state or revolution.

Councillor Shaun August, the City's chief whip, elaborates: "One of the most important functions of a ward councillor is to be the voice of all the people they represent and to ensure effective service delivery to them. As such, ward councillors are responsible for reporting to their residents and explaining the decisions of council, ensuring that residents are informed of the proper channels for reporting service delivery requests, and monitoring that these requests are dealt with."

A ward councillor should not be confused with the equally important Proportional Representative (PR) councillor, says August. Like ward councillors, they too need to be available to residents and respond to their communications, but they were not elected by voters, he explains.

They are assigned to a ward by their political party in council and are generally tasked with building their respective parties' profiles in the wards to which they are assigned.

August continues: "Councillors serve on ward committees, where they identify the needs of their community and, although they do not have any decision-making powers, they are the direct link between the community and council."

Councillors serve on subcouncils, where they discuss various municipal matters, which includes service delivery and project funding, says August.

As for the 24 geographically defined subcouncils in the city, August says these exist to make sure that the issues affecting one's neighbourhood are heard and dealt with.

"Subcouncils have been given the power to act on matters such as service delivery requests, building and planning applications, fault reporting, commenting on liquor licence applications, supervising the expenditure of ward allocation budgets (funds that the City allocates to wards in every subcouncil for local municipal projects), and ensuring that bylaws and policy matters are referred to the community for comment."

Subcouncil meetings take place once a month, or whenever an urgent issue arises and needs immediate attention, he says.

"Public participation is a vital aspect of subcouncil work," emphasises August, before adding that there are various ways for the community to engage with the City. The City urges the public to attend these meetings.

“Community-based organisations are voluntary associations representing common interests. They are very important to the City for communication and consultation purposes. Each subcouncil maintains a database of community-based organisations in its own area. These organisations should re-register on a regular basis and ensure that they are mandated to speak on behalf of their communities.

“Ultimately the role of a councillor cannot be overstated and they are well aware of the important function they fulfil.”

August concludes by saying non-performers should either be reported to their political party (normally to the party whip), or if they are transgressing the Councillors’ Code of Conduct, to the Speaker of council.