

Tshwane Comes Off Second Best On Corruption Claims

Written by Rudi Prinsloo
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The City of Tshwane has been left with a bloody nose after challenging a Carte Blanche expose of fraud, corruption, incompetence and nepotism in the administration.

The Broadcasting Complaints Commission said on Thursday it had dismissed a string of 25 complaints by the city against a hard-hitting programme broadcast by M Net in October last year.

The commission said in a statement the city had produced no evidence to counter many of the claims.

It had even "compounded the fraud" in one matter, related to the appointment of the executive secretary of the chief of metro police, by giving incorrect information in its complaint documents.

The commission said Carte Blanche had tried repeatedly for almost a month to get comment from the city on the allegations, and that when comment came, the night before the broadcast, it contained only "bare denials" of two allegations, and "a general denial" of others.

"In the event, the reasonable viewer of the programme is left with the uncomfortable impression that incompetence, fraud, corruption, nepotism and other illegalities are so rife in the Tshwane metropolitan municipality that the mayor has no answer to the allegations, or, worse still, that she is not even aware of the issues raised," the commission said in a statement.

The programme dealt with, among other things, claims that metro police chief Mpho Mmutle had been reappointed even though he had been clocked driving 181 kilometres an hour, had allowed his deputies to use Volvos bought for high speed patrols, and had played a role in awarding a multi-million rand tender for guns to a company that existed on paper only.

The programme also dealt with what the commission said was the irregular appointment of one of Mmutle's relatives, a KSB Sekhudu, as his deputy.

Mmutle had sat in on the selection process without declaring his interests.

It had emerged, the commission said, that Sekhudu had not been previously employed by the SA Police Services, as his CV appeared to claim.

The city had complained about a Carte Blanche claim that Mmutle's executive secretary Alice Lebelo did not even have a typing qualification, and that the post was fraudulently created for her.

However Carte Blanche's lawyers had produced an internal e-mail from the city's human resources department, dated August 29 last year, saying a starting date had been agreed for Lebelo, but that a sham process of appointing her should be followed to obviate "problems and grievances".

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"This e-mail is clear evidence that there was an agreement between the officials to have [Mmutle's] choice of secretary appointed and to then fraudulently advertise the post, despite the fact that a decision to fill the post had already been taken," the commission said.

"To compound the fraud, it is stated in the complaint document, dated 1 November 2008, in paragraph 18.3, that '(t)he position was advertised and the process of filling it has not yet been concluded.'

"With all this damning evidence at their disposal, we are convinced that the respondent [Carte Blanche] was truthful with its comments on the appointment of the commissioner's secretary."

The commission said Tshwane had failed to back up its complaint about claims it on occasion spent up to R300,000 on hiring venues out of the city, when it had its own upmarket conference venue that would cost a fraction of the price.

The city had also complained about a Carte Blanche reference to the number of bodyguards used by mayor Gwen Ramokgopa, but had said the actual number "is a security matter that cannot be openly discussed".

"The complaint is dismissed," the commission said.

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