**1 NOVEMBER 2018**

**STATEMENT BY THE CITY’S MAYORAL COMMITTEE MEMBER FOR TRANSPORT AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT, COUNCILLOR BRETT HERRON**

***The DA Caucus stopped the disposal of the Salt River Market, Woodstock site, for affordable inner-city housing development. I cannot in good conscience sit by and watch the party lie to the public about this, nor can I continue to meet with communities and promise to deliver housing when it is clear that many in the party – enough to stop projects – are opposed to the provision of well-located affordable housing. The DA has abandoned its own objectives of Freedom, Fairness, Opportunity and Diversity. They have broken their election promises by rejecting their 2016 manifesto. This is no longer the party of principle and due process that I joined. I am resigning and wish to thank the excellent professional teams I worked with, and the citizens of Cape Town for the opportunity to serve them.***

**Stalling the delivery of affordable housing:**

Yesterday afternoon I met with the City’s housing officials and representatives from Communicare, one of the City’s non-profit social housing partners, to discuss the implications of the DA Caucus’s not to support the disposal of the Salt River Market for the development of affordable housing.

I was thus also able to share my side of the story with them and thank them for their efforts thus far.

At the outset, let me reaffirm how proud I am of our housing department and their performance during these two years that I have been the political leader of that department. Not only did we almost double the delivery of housing in Cape Town by implementing a turnaround strategy, and in doing so, exceed the annual delivery target for the first time ever since the City of Cape Town metro government was formed 18 years ago, but we also developed plans to almost double that delivery again within the next 4 to 5 years.

I am certain that, given our exceptional record already, further accelerated delivery would be possible to achieve – IF we received the support and due sense of urgency that the City, indeed the country’s, housing crisis demands.

The accelerated delivery of more social housing is **absolutely critical** to achieving accelerated housing delivery in South African cities.

In Woodstock and Salt River, these subsidised rental opportunities would also offer some guarantee of a safe refuge for those long-standing families and pensioners who have lived here for decades or even generations and are increasingly unable to afford to stay.

According to our data, the majority of families in Woodstock and Salt River are tenants, and the majority would be qualify for subsidised social housing.

From meeting with residents, communities and those advocating for greater social justice in our society, and because of my push for the City to deliver more, and better-located, housing, I have been labelled a “comrade” by some of my DA colleagues. However, the model we advocate to deliver social housing in Cape Town is identical to that used in Australia.

It is neither radical nor populist and these attempts at fear-mongering or labelling me are indicative of the lack of leadership and commitment our residents deserve.

The delivery of social housing is critical to alleviating Cape Town and South Africa’s housing crisis because most of the people on our housing demand database do not qualify for free government RDP/BNG housing. A combined family income of just R3501 per month would disqualify a family from a free housing (BNG) opportunity. Social housing has the benefit of being able to accommodate families earning up to R15,000 per month, with an inbuilt cross-subsidisation mechanism that allows for the higher income earners to subsidise lower income households like pensioners.

It is within this context, and a growing and urgent need to really support, not hinder, the delivery of housing and other services to those citizens who need it most, that I must express my disgust in both the refusal of the DA Caucus to support the disposal of the Salt River Market site and especially a small cabal led by the ward councillor for the Woodstock Salt River area who championed that the recommendation to sell the site to Communicare, at a discounted price, be removed from the agenda.

I have watched the lies and spin that have been fed to our residents through media enquiries since Thursday. On most of those media enquiries I have been asked to comment. I have refused to do so because I will not defend the lie that there were some technical issues with the report that needed fixing.

This decision is yet another ridiculous tactic that has been playing out over the last few months.

Numerous hurdles and delays have been placed before my team in relation to this and other proposed affordable housing developments, and now it is clear there has all along been tacit high-level political support, or perhaps even direct interference, in these objections to the delivery of affordable housing in Cape Town.

Over the last year we have been plagued by

* Delays due to requests for amended report templates;
* Refusal to support property disposals because high level City finance officials query whether the delivery of housing is even something that the City should be doing;
* Gross inflation of property values for sites earmarked for the development of affordable housing.

**The DA has abandoned FREEDOM, FAIRNESS, OPPORTUNITY and DIVERSITY**

It is clear that some in our party are clinging to the racial exclusivity of residential areas engineered by apartheid.

Thursday’s decision to reject this proposal exposes what I have come to see for myself.

The Democratic Alliance is a lost party and a lost cause.

During Helen Zille’s period at the helm, the DA became renowned for upholding the law and rigorously adhering to due process. As a lawyer myself, these were heady days for the DA. Strong and incredibly principled leadership attracted many like-minded people to the party and made it a party I was prepared to campaign, fight and work for.

However, although I still believe in these principles, I cannot pretend that I am in a party that itself champions these beliefs and principles.

The DA tells South Africans that we stand for Freedom, Fairness, Opportunity and Diversity, but their actions show that this is mere lip service and window dressing.

There has been a lot of discussion about racism in the party and I do believe it exists. But in my opinion racism is only one of the problems, there are deeper and more fundamental problems:

It is clear that there has been a complete abandonment of the values of FREEDOM, FAIRNESS, OPPORTUNITY and DIVERSITY.

When the DA speaks of **FREEDOM**, I am no longer sure whose freedom we are trying to protect. The DA fought in court to afford parliamentarians the freedom of choice to “vote with their conscience”, but then fought AGAINST the exact same principle at local government.

Despite a court instruction, Councillors who chose to vote with their conscience were targeted by so called “loyal” party members. We have yet to see any action taken against the members who partook in defying the instruction of the court.  
  
Whilst we publicly advocate for **FAIRNESS**, the double standards within the party are becoming increasingly obvious.

A simple example.

I am disappointed at how the party is fanning allegations related to a $35 hotel nights’ accommodation cost - which I failed to declare as I was honestly unaware this was not paid for by the City.

Yet there is no flurry of media statements or any action about the undeclared funding of a swanky party with an open bar at the most expensive hotel in Cape Town, the One and Only, when a DA leader has a party there.

In any event the birthday cake, that did get some attention, cost more than my one night in a hotel in China.

My cheap hotel bed was not a personal gift to me – it was a place to sleep in a city in China whilst I was on an official trip. I haven’t seen the same amplified response from the DA about the birthday cake which was most definitely a personal gift and was undeclared.  
  
We tell South Africans that the DA is the party of fair **OPPORTUNITY**, but the inner workings of the party remain overwhelmingly white and male. Indeed, I suspect over the next few days we may even see some old Nat Party members who have remain embedded in the Caucus being elevated and rewarded for their roles during the last few months.

Despite window dressing, the white dominated upper echelons of power within the DA have not transformed. I should not be surprised.

In the same caucus meeting where the charge was led and the decision was made to withdraw the affordable housing project, the Caucus Deputy Leader, JP Smith speaking in support of withdrawing the report, said “transformation” is a swear word to him and whenever he hears it he is just switched off and becomes suspicious.

Cadre deployment is rife and party loyalists are gratuitously embedded in the professional administration.

Craig Kesson, a few years ago was a junior DA researcher in parliament, has been elevated to an Executive Director and now earns about as much as the President of France. He is the Executive Director of a department for which he has no experience to lead.

The appointment of Andrea De Ujfalussy, a close friend of DA CEO Paul Boughey, raised some eyebrows when she moved from her political post to Dr Kaiser’s office and has now recently been moved to manage the City Manager’s office. Or to manage the City Manager.

The inner cabal’s blocking of Mmusi Maimane’s attempt to introduce a broad concept of **DIVERSITY** to the party a few months ago are well publicised. After that powerful group blocked his attempts for reform, I sometimes wonder if he still believes in the principles of the party he is scripted to recite.

I think that the abandonment of the principles of the party - of Freedom, Fairness, Opportunity and Diversity – are very clearly demonstrated by the conduct of a handful of insiders in the Cape Town caucus.

I have had to fight many battles this last two years just to get the DA manifesto implemented.

There are simply too many examples of the hypocrisy within the party to mention in a single press release.

**One cannot make a horse (or ass) drink.**

One can lead a horse to water – demonstrate and show what a future vision for our city and society could and should be – but one cannot force it to drink, or in this case, force a majority of people to become enlightened when they openly choose to block the actions necessary to achieve an integrated, socially just future.

It was the blocking of the inner city affordable housing development that has been the final straw for me.

A cabal of white DA councillors blocked the project.

Over the past few weeks I had been hearing that the ward councillor, Dave Bryant, was lobbying for the project to be blocked.

I have been in public meetings with him where residents of Woodstock were pleading for affordable housing in the area. He never said he opposed the project. In the caucus on Monday last week this cabal raised some tenuous concerns at best. I have attached my response to each of their concerns below.

Some of these requests to my mind border on extortion, others are completely misinformed and demonstrate the clear purpose was to collapse the delivery of well-located affordable housing.

This cabal scripted a note and, not being brave enough to openly voice their objections, they selected a compliant coloured DA councillor, Angus MacKenzie, to do their bidding in the Council meeting.

When property items are legitimately withdrawn from the council agenda based on concerns of a ward councillor it is a well-established practice in our caucus that the ward councillor speaks in council and motivates the withdrawal.

Dave Bryant didn’t have the balls to do his own dirty work.

The abandonment of this site is symbolic of their empty promises made to voters and I refuse to allow my voice to be used to mask the lies being released to the press.

I cannot in good conscience continue to serve the citizens of this country in my current role when it is now proven to me, and clear for all to see, that the DA has no desire or urgency to tackle the critical problems like housing that we should be addressing.

Their manifesto promise to integrate communities is a lie and I have been wasting my time trying to implement this while behind the scenes the insiders have been killing the projects off.

I told my staff that if we undertake all this work and the caucus rejected it, I would have to resign as I could not, with any credibility, continue to meet with communities and promise that we were doing everything we can to assist them.

**I therefore resign as a member of the DA with immediate effect.**

I hope through my exposure of these immoral actions that public pressure can be brought to bear on the elected representatives who are denying housing and opportunity to our citizens who need it most.

I hope that the public continues, and in fact further increases, their support to our City housing officials who are equally despondent.

I hope, as this Salt River Market site demonstrates, that the public understand that sometimes delays and delivery constraints may, despite the best efforts of our hardworking officials, be beyond their control.

**The Bowmans Allegations:**

As I am sure you are aware, I have been the subject of a multi-million Rand Bowman’s investigation and these reports were fortunately finally made public.

I expect that the DA will use this to justify my resignation from the party, but I assure you that it was I who asked for this investigation and I deny any allegation of corruption.

The first report (http://bit.ly/2yDjbYs), makes no findings against me whatsoever

With regards to the second report (<http://bit.ly/2COxGfg>), let me reiterate: despite its almost 2000-page length, I as a lawyer cannot find any reference to a single document or suggestion by any person that I have taken part in any corrupt actions.

In my opinion, the investigations have been nothing short of an expensive witchhunt designed to defame me. This is to be expected. As we know, this same report has been used to defame others who are not even mentioned in it.

It is clear that the facts of the matter are irrelevant to the DA leadership.

Even though I am resigning from the DA, and will lose my seat in Council, I will not run away from their investigations. I offer to cooperate fully so that they can bring them to an end speedily and welcome that these dippy charges have been referred to SAPS quickly.

**My future:**

I know many people will immediately want to know what I will do now. I never entered politics to get a position. I became involved in active politics because I saw that our promised democracy was being undermined by the ANC and I wanted to do my bit to fight for a better country.

I will continue to do that and the DA has just proved that it is not the vehicle for the change we need in our country and our city.

It is clear that DA is not a party that will ever govern this country. It is a lost cause, having abandoned both process and principle.

To be elected to govern this country requires leadership and vision. Most importantly it requires an authentic passion and care for the people. So much so that you are willing to champion and lead even when it is difficult and uncomfortable.

The DA does not have this calibre of leaders in their midst or in their VIP lounge.

As I mentioned, I am a lawyer by training and many years ago, after returning from living and working in New York, I became involved in legal skills training and ran a Law School, which I still own.

I look forward to offering more leadership and management to the Law School with my new-found free time.

I am passionate about cities and governance and, through an international scholarship received in recognition of my public service record, I am currently enrolled for an MSc in Cities degree through the London School of Economics. I will now be able to give more focus to this challenging post-graduate degree.

I remain committed to improving this City and country, which I believe can be achieved by working for a better future for our citizens.

I wish to thank the many professionals within our administration who remain dedicated to their work and in their belief in focussing on delivering quality services to our citizens.

I also humbly thank the citizens of Cape Town for the opportunity to serve them during this last decade in local government public service. It has been a privilege and quite sincerely my greatest honour.

ENDS

Media enquiries: Brett Herron, 082-518-3264, [bherron@mweb.co.za](mailto:bherron@mweb.co.za)

**Appendix: Memo to DA Caucus and others relating to the concerns raised regarding the disposal of the Salt River Market Site for affordable housing.**









