

■ CITY

Rethink on policy for street people

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PLANS are afoot by the City to have its Street People Policy reviewed as national legislation does not directly address homelessness in a single statute.

Mayoral committee member for community and health services Zahid Badroodien said: "According to the Constitution, a concurrent responsibility rests with the province and national government to address welfare services, which includes services specific to the homeless community. A review of our Street People Policy seeks to clarify the roles of each stakeholder in order to meaningfully address the holistic care of homeless individuals."

At the recent Homeless Agency Committee meeting, the City said there were two by-laws closely associated with the Street People Policy. This includes the by-law relating to streets and public spaces, and the prevention of noise and nuisance by-law.

The committee recommended a review and amendment of the law enforcement protocol with street people as well as a review of by-laws relating to homelessness, with the aim of shifting the regulatory environment from criminalising homelessness to establish appropriate support programmes to combat homelessness.

"With the aim of devising a strategy for how the City addresses the issue going forward, and effecting meaningful change in the lives of those who find themselves on the street, we will be undertaking a series of dialogues with the street people sector to help inform the strategy," Badroodien said.

Yesterday, public hearings got under way to discuss the policy review in Claremont. The Community Chest was facilitating engagements. Chest chief executive Lorenzo Davids said: "A major concern regarding shelters is the culture and the way shelters fail to serve people, as the homeless feel unconsulted in the programme designs offered to them. The ongoing theme that emerges is that homeless people no longer want to be treated as 'patients, residents and passive actors' in their rehabilitation and restitution.

"They want to be engaged in designing their own care and future."