



Thabo Manyoni: Mangaung's outgoing Mayor and local government's vocal advocate

Thabo Manyoni's role as Executive Mayor of Mangaung comes to an end next month, but as a vocal chairperson of the South African Local Government Association (Salga) it is unlikely that this will be the last that is seen of local government's outspoken advocate. Some of Manyoni's more recent views are considered in this Profile as well as how he may continue to influence the local government terrain.

Future uncertain for local government champion

Manyoni is well known in local government circles; as Chairperson of Salga and Deputy Chairperson of the United Cities Local Government for Africa, as well as Executive Mayor of Mangaung (whoswho.co.za) with a nomination as World Mayor in 2014 under his belt (www.ofm.co.za).

Manyoni holds a Bachelor of Arts and a diploma in Business Management, and has a background in voter education with posts including CEO of the Free State Tourism Board, Municipal Manager of Maluti a Phofung, Executive Director for Economic Development and Planning of Mangaung, as well as Chief Whip of Mangaung, and MEC for Police, Roads and Transport in the Free State Provincial Government (www.tourism.gov.za).

Manyoni was the first to admit surprise when the ANC announced that Olly Mlamleli, current Free State MEC for Cooperative Governance, would be fielded in upcoming elections as Mangaung's mayoral candidate for the ANC - a move that has been read as being influenced by gender considerations (www.timeslive.co.za).

It has also been speculated that Manyoni and Mlamleli may simply swap their current roles in which case Manyoni's insights into Mangaung may prove useful in overseeing the Metro's expanded boundaries (to include Naledi local municipality) that will take effect after August.

Although unclear what role Manyoni will be playing in local government's next term (www.ofm.co.za), as Deputy Chairperson on the ANC in the Free State he is likely to remain influential in the Province. A lack of clarity as to

his future after elections has also not left Manyoni mute on issues facing local government; expressing hard-hitting views on boundaries and inter-governmental powers and functions.

Last week Manyoni criticised mergers that drained municipalities rather than bolstering new structures - a very real danger in our view - calling for revisions to the legislation to allow for at least 20 months of meaningful assessments of viability, as well as greater funding for newly-merged entities (www.timeslive.co.za). But Manyoni also waded in on the perennial and contentious debate on the viability and cost of different spheres of government with the view that we should scrap provinces in favour of metro and district municipalities (www.rdm). A view that might well be challenged by the reality that a number of districts are unable to carry out their existing functions very well, never mind an additional set of functions ceded from provinces.

It remains to be seen where Manyoni's future will take him with these views, but it is unlikely that local government has seen the last of him.

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