

# Free State

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## Debts to be written off once indigent audit is complete

### *Kamogelo Seekoei*

An audit of all the names that appear on the Mangaung metro municipality's indigent register will have to be completed before their old debt is written off.

The decision to audit the list came after the DA submitted recommendations to the council last week. DA councillor, Werner Horn, who spoke exclusively to The New Age yesterday, said the recommendations were accepted by the council last week. This came after the DA refused to accept the indigent register as it was presented in council by the municipality.

The party had said the list left "a lot to be desired" due to the errors and unanswered questions that arose from it.

In the statement councillor Attie Terblanche had questioned among other things, why other wards in the municipality were not included in the indigent register. They wanted to know what would happen when council cancelled old debt and whether the indigent people would receive pre-paid electricity meters.

"What about the people who earn just over R2400, where are they going to get the money for a 30% deposit to pay their overdue accounts in monthly instalments," Terblanche said.

The DA also wanted to know why the addresses of people on the indigent register were not included.

"Why did the municipality not cut off people's services and allow these accounts to accumulate to these amounts?" he asked.

According to the government's indigent policy, indigents are defined as those people who are unable to make monetary contributions towards basic services, due to a number of factors no matter how small the amounts seem to be.

Any household earning less than the amount stated by the Financial and Fiscal Commission from time to time (currently R800) qualifies to be registered as indigent.

Typical examples are pensioners, students, the unemployed, disabled persons and single parents.

The register determines the amount of money that a municipal entity receives from the national treasury.

It also determines the free basic water and electricity that the municipality should receive. Horn said they were satisfied with the decision taken by council to audit the list before implementing the writing off of debt.

"We are satisfied because some people who were on the list were not supposed to be there," Horn said.

He said by virtue of being on the register a person's old debt was supposed to be written off but an audit would seal everything.

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