



Fostering Citizen Engagement | Accountability | Transparency | Good Governance

OCAN COMMUNIQUÉ

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FROM THE CHAIR

The first half of 2025 has seen a significant leadership change within the Overstrand Municipality (OM). The previous Executive Mayor stepped down and a new one was deployed. Transitions of this nature present the opportunity for the restructured leadership team to take stock of how the municipality is performing (from a citizen perspective), how to restore key stakeholder relationships and trust, boost civic engagement and collaboration, and realign priorities. A leadership change also offers a chance to refocus the municipality's vision, something which is sorely lacking.



Citizens across the Overstrand have a vested interest in a well-led, operationally effective and financially sustainable municipality. Given the nature and scale of challenges the municipality faces, there is an obvious need for public private partnerships.

Appointing a new Mayor and carrying on with business as usual is NOT the solution to challenges faced. OCAN holds the view that a citizen summit could be the vehicle for transformative change within the OM. A citizen summit is a public forum that brings together residents, community groups, civil society organisations, local government officials, and other stakeholders to discuss pressing local issues and key challenges. A summit of this nature creates a structured, inclusive, and transparent space for dialogue between citizens, the political leadership and the administration, the purpose of which is to find solutions that would shift the OM from Good to Great.

Ratepayers are the life blood of a municipality. Engaged and informed ratepayers strengthen democracy at local level. When municipalities fail to meet citizen expectations, they lose the trust of ratepayers. When this happens, civic discontent, non-payment, and protests follow, undermining good governance.

The results of a comprehensive online and independently administered ratepayer satisfaction survey should be a key input to the proposed citizen summit. It is common knowledge that many Overstrand-residents are concerned about transparency, meaningful public participation, accountability, above inflation annual rates and tariff increases and the OM's spending habits. The OM cannot move forward without addressing citizen concerns. Time has come for a new social compact between the OM and the constituencies it serves to rebuild trust and co-create solutions. Advocating for change, OCAN is fully committed to support the Overstrand Municipality in building an inclusive, resilient and economically vibrant institution, and positioning the Overstrand as an investment destination of choice.

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THE ROLE OF OCAN and *Why You Should Join Us*

Local government shapes our communities, but without oversight, financial mismanagement and inefficiencies may go unchecked. The Overstrand Municipality is known for its clean audits and strong service delivery, yet ongoing public oversight, engagement and participation is vital to sustain this performance.

OCAN advocates for responsible financial management, sound development planning, equitable service delivery, and high operational standards by leveraging civil society expertise. OCAN conducts research, engages in dialogue with the municipal leadership, and will hold officials accountable when necessary. For the Overstrand to remain well-run and financially stable, residents must be informed and involved. Supporting OCAN fosters oversight and collaboration, ensuring lasting community benefits.

OCAN wishes to thank our supporters for their ongoing financial contributions.



CURRENT INITIATIVES

REVIEW OF THE OVERSTRAND MUNICIPALITY'S PERFORMANCE

On 31 March 2025 OCAN published a review of the OM's performance based on the outcome of the final audited annual report for 2023|24. On the surface residents and investors see a municipality that is by and large operationally efficient. The recipient of several awards, the Overstrand Municipality (OM) has received clean audits for 12 consecutive years. Service delivery is generally good. Considering the Auditor General's opinion, we see an institution that is financially healthy.

However, upon closer scrutiny, OCAN noticed a few disturbing trends. These include the OM's growing dependency on grants and subsidies, the decline in capital spend and infrastructure development and renewal, employment-related cost that remains stubbornly above the norm set by National Treasury, an over-reliance on electricity revenue and the perceived absence of a cost containment mindset.

In a WhatsApp-message distributed on 25 March 2025, the Municipal Manager referred to the OM's 'dilapidated fleet'. The situation is the result of several years of significant under-investment in fleet renewal. A dilapidated fleet directly impacts service delivery. This matter is now receiving attention.

Particularly concerning is the OM's very limited investment in people development. The success of any business depends on skilled and motivated employees. This under-investment might explain why the OM is struggling to fill key roles from within, and why they are spending so much on contractor services – significantly more than the norm set by National Treasury.

For a high-level overview of the report, please click [HERE](#): OM Performance Report 2025

The Overstrand Municipality's (OM) annual draft budget has again drawn criticism, underscoring the need for reform. Ratepayers are frustrated by the complex, unclear budget report and poor communication from the Finance Directorate. Public feedback highlighted high proposed rates and tariffs, excessive executive salaries, and a lack of visible cost-saving or innovation.

Concerns persist about whether the OM Council properly scrutinises the budget or simply rubber-stamps it. Many see the public participation process as a formality, with copy and pasted responses and little indication that citizen input shapes the final outcome.

The OM is urged to simplify budget reporting with a clear executive summary. Recommendations include overhauling the operating model for efficiency, strengthening Council's oversight role, and involving civil society experts in the Budget Steering Committee. Investment in fleet renewal, infrastructure, and clear cost-saving targets is essential. A performance system for senior managers should tie bonuses to results. Calls include reducing executive pay, trimming headcount, freezing director salaries, and reassessing rates and tariffs for affordability and fairness.

For more detail please click [HERE](#): OCAN's Overstrand Budget Review Report 25-26

Following meetings with the Office of the Auditor General (Western Cape) during November 2024 and May 2025, OCAN had a productive meeting with the Auditor General and the Overstrand Municipality on 2 July 2025.

We are awaiting the AG's final report, as well as additional data the Municipal Manager and his team will make available. Once our integration of the findings has been verified by both the AG and the OM, the findings will be shared in the public domain.

We are hoping that this matter will be finalised by the end of August 2025. Investigations of this nature take time to complete.

UPDATE ON INVESTIGATION INTO ALLEGED FRAUD

McKinsey's research, based on surveys of 750+ leaders and 60+ interviews, identifies what sets high-performing public sector leaders apart. These leaders operate under tight budgets, political pressures, limited autonomy, and intense scrutiny. Yet, they excel by applying six key disciplines: [1] Set a clear direction by defining a vision, translating it into strategy, and allocating resources creatively. [2] Mobilise through leaders by building capable teams and modelling accountability. [3] Align the organisation by shaping culture, designing for success, and aligning talent with impact. [4] Navigate government by coordinating across departments and building political support. [5] Co-create with stakeholders by engaging citizens, businesses, and media to design better policies. [6] Manage personal effectiveness by leading with character, building strong support teams, and sustaining energy and purpose.

Reference: *Honing leadership excellence in the public sector*, McKinsey & Company, April 2025

HONING
LEADERSHIP
EXCELLENCE
IN THE
PUBLIC
SECTOR



HOLDING YOUR MUNICIPAL OFFICIALS TO TO ACCOUNT

In order to be able to hold your municipal officials and elected councillors to account, you need to know what their roles and responsibilities are. There are two key reference documents that should be referred to and that are freely available online.

The Handbook for Municipal Councillors (2011) issued by the South African Local Government Association (SALGA), and the Guideline Document on the Roles and Responsibilities of Councillors, Political Structures and Officials, also issued by SALGA.

To access the SALGA Website, please click [HERE: SALGA Knowledge Hub](#)

What started out as the Garden Route Ratepayers Alliance, has now morphed into the Ratepayers Alliance that covers a much wider geography. Initially representing 28 ratepayer and home owner associations across the Garden Route, the rationale for its establishment was growing frustration with deteriorating municipal governance, poor service delivery and lack of meaningful public participation.

The Alliance was formed to strengthen collaboration, share knowledge, and present a united front in demanding ethical leadership, fiscal responsibility, and accountability from local and district municipalities, regardless of political affiliation. It represents thousands of residents who are no longer willing to be sidelined while public funds are mismanaged and input from communities is ignored.

In a bold move, the Alliance recently issued a blanket rejection of the 2025/26 Integrated Development Plans and budgets, citing consistent disregard for well-researched objections and repeated failures in public participation.

OCAN is in contact with the Alliance.

RATEPAYERS' ALLIANCE

MYOUTA NEWSLETTER

The Overstrand Community Action Network is modelled along the lines of OUTA (Organisation Undoing Tax Abuse), an initiative that seeks to empower communities across South Africa in holding local government authorities to account.

To stay abreast of what is happening in citizen activism and how you too can contribute as an Active Citizen, we recommend you signup to the myOUTA Newsletter which goes out monthly as an update to OUTA Supporters.

Subscribe to OUTA's newsletter for powerful stories, actions that matter, and the fight for accountability in South Africa. **[Click here to Access OUTA's Website: OUTA](#)**

We may live in a beautiful "bubble". We may live in a seemingly well-run municipality. Clean streets, reliable services, quick responses. That's today. But what about tomorrow? How do we make sure it stays this way? How do we stop waste, prevent corruption, and service decline before it creeps in?

Not everyone shares your bubble, and sitting back won't prevent decline or fix what's broken.

Municipal performance won't change from the top down. Real change starts when you stand up. Active citizenship is more than voting. It's showing up, speaking out, and holding local councillors and municipal managers accountable. It's researching, asking tough questions, attending meetings, supporting local community groups and efforts, demanding transparency and participation.

When citizens actively engage, things improve. When citizens question and challenge plans and budgets, local authorities are held to account. Budgets are spent wisely. Broken systems get fixed. Communities become stronger, fairer, and safer.

So don't wait for someone else to stand up for your community. Be the voice, the guardian, the builder. Start where you live. Being a passive citizen in your bubble is over.

YOUR COMMUNITY NEEDS YOU TO BE AN ACTIVE CITIZEN

CALL TO ACTION

Make a difference by supporting OCAN. Become a Supporter. If you subscribe to OCAN's ideals and purpose, we request you to register as an OCAN-supporter at no cost. Supporters are at liberty to make monthly or once-off financial contributions, but it is not a requirement for subscribing as a supporter.

Go to the following link: <https://ocan.co.za/supporter-levels/>

Edited by Mike Murray

