STATE OF PARLIAMENTARY VILLAGES CONCERNS COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC WORKS AND INFRASTRUCTURE

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Parliament, Tuesday, 10 March 2020 – The Portfolio Committee on Public Works and Infrastructure is concerned about the maintenance of all the buildings and properties owned by the Department of Public Works and Infrastructure (DPWI). The committee raised several issues with the maintenance and security of parliamentary villages, which it believes the department and the South African Police Service (Saps) should prioritise.

The DPWI and Saps appeared before the committee today for a briefing on parliamentary villages, particularly their security and maintenance. The committee was concerned to learn that the Parliamentary Villages Management Board has not met since 2017, while the villages’ residential committees, elected in 2019, have not met collectively as the Parliamentary Villages Management Board.

These structures have an important role to play in the proper functioning of the villages, and their dysfunction poses a security threat, the committee said. The committee told the department to ensure that the Board meets before the end of March 2020.

The committee heard from Saps that the most recent risk assessment in the three villages was conducted in August 2012. The committee then told Saps to conduct an assessment as soon as possible. The committee was also concerned to hear that security at parliamentary villages is not within the funded mandate of the Saps and that the villages are currently not included within the Risk Management Support System (RIMAS). The committee noted the importance of establishing a security dispensation for MPs so that Saps can begin conducting security upgrades at the villages.

The committee was also concerned to hear about the lack of police visibility at the villages, which has led to criminals walking freely around the villages, as well as the non-functioning of the alarm and intercom systems. The committee will monitor the DPWI’s commitment to activate these systems.

The committee also told the DPWI to fast-track the process of renovating the houses containing asbestos materials, as the asbestos poses a serious health risks to MPs occupying those houses. The government took a decision in 2008 to prohibit the use of asbestos in immovable structures and the presence of asbestos in these structures contravenes that decision.

The committee has also requested the department to speedily resolve the issue of dilapidated buildings at some villages, as these add to the security risk. The committee will hold both the DPWI and Saps to their commitments to deal with the maintenance and security challenges by end of August 2020.

ISSUED BY THE PARLIAMENTARY COMMUNICATION SERVICES ON BEHALF OF THE CHAIRPERSON OF THE PORTFOLIO COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC WORKS AND INFRASTRUCTURE, MS NOLITHA NTOBONGWANA.