**Report of the Select Committee on Security and Justice on the 2022/23 Budget Vote 5, Annual Performance Plan (App) of the Department of Home Affairs, Dated 01 June 2022**

1. **INTRODUCTION**

The National Council of Provinces represents the provinces to ensure that the provincial interests are taken into account in the national sphere of government as stated in section 42(4) of the Constitution. One of these functions is to hold the government to account in respect of how the taxpayers’ money is used. It detects waste within the machinery of government and public agencies. Thus it can improve the efficiency, economy and effectiveness of government operations.

The Department of Home Affairs (DHA) carries out its mission in line with its commitment to citizen empowerment and inclusivity, economic development and national security, by:

* Being an efficient and secure custodian of citizenship and civil registration
* Securely and strategically managing international migration
* Efficiently managing asylum seekers and refugees
* Efficiently determining and safeguarding the official identity and status of persons

 The DHA’s services are divided into two broad categories: civic services and immigration services.

On 18 May 2022, the Select Committee on Security and Justice met with the Department on Home Affairs to receive a briefing on the Department’s Annual Performance Plan and budget. The report represents the main discussions and recommendations of the Committee.

1. **DISCUSSIONS / RESPONSES BY MINISTER/ DEPARTMENT**

**2.1 War on Queues**:

All members raised concerns regarding the long queues which citizens have to wait in to access the services of the Department of Home Affairs. The Minister responded that the war on queues is one big issue facing the Department. He informed the Committee that there are short, medium and long term solutions to this problem. The Minister explained that the problem does not always reside within the Department of Home Affairs. The Department will focus on online booking systems as this seems to be working well. This will obviate the need for people to buy space in queues and counter corruption which is difficult to deal with. Last month, 412 Home Affairs offices were down for more than 3 hours, sometimes systems are down for a whole day. The Department found that this related to 1 cable being down at SITA. The biggest challenge is outside the control of the Department of Home Affairs. Infrastructure in SITA and Home Affairs are some challenges and the Department is looking at sourcing IT services from outside of government. Most of the Department’s office space is also hired and they would like to build customized home affairs offices. Staff shortages also contributes to the problem in that if 39% filled, there are fewer people servicing clients. The move to filling 42% of posts will still not be adequate. The Minister informed the Committee that more detailed plans will be outlined in his budget speech.

**2.2** **Suspensions**

Members wanted to know the length of time officials are suspended and the amount these suspensions cost the Department. The Department is handling this in terms of the Public Service Management Regulations. If the employer moves too fast, they may transgress the regulations. Delays are caused by employees as they know the law very well, and because they do not wish to have certain chairpersons presiding over a particular matter. Those suspended receive their full salary whilst on suspension.

**2.3 Unemployed Youth**

Members wanted to know what is being done about this and what the current challenges are. The Department is working with National Treasury and they are currently finalizing a revised business plan.

**2.4 Digitization of records**

Members wanted to know what the Department is doing to improve its IT capacity and the digitization of its services. The Minister responded that there are 300 million records from the year 1895 which are all manual records. The lack of digitized records therefore causes further delays as it takes months for staff to go through 300 million files which further contributes to citizens having to return to the Home Affairs offices on numerous occasions for updates on their applications, particularly if they wish to alter information on their ID documents.

**2.5 Media engagements and rural communities**

Members wanted to know more about their media outreach programmes and how it will reach rural areas. The Department has a strong stakeholder management forum including provincial, districts and civil society organisations. This has been working well and they use community media and mobile units have been increased to 110 mobile units and they are looking at buying more which will increase the reach to rural areas.

**2.6 Biometric Management System**

Members wanted to know the reasoning for the increase in this target from 24 ports of entry in 2021/22 to 34 ports in the current financial year. Members also wanted to know what challenges the Department encountered. The Department responded that it had challenges with procurement and supply chain management during Covid as there was a shortage of services. However, now they are able to place their orders and are receiving the appropriate equipment to proceed.

**2.7 Northern Borders**

Members wanted to know in respect of the borders from Northern Cape to KZN, how many borders are still closed. Members expressed concern that due to this, the economy is down in some of these towns. The Department reported that they have reopened Alexander Bay and they have implemented a process through DIRCO, with neighbouring countries to reopen borders. They reported that Gemsbok has also been re-opened.

**2.8 Service Delivery**

Members wanted to know what the Department is doing to ensure efficient and effective service delivery on a provincial basis. The Department is busy implementing a service delivery model. They are reviewing a number of areas including customer segmentation and looking at key resources with key partners and other government departments. The Department offered to present this model to the Committee at a later stage.

**2.9 Passports**

Members wanted to know what processes the Department has in place to reduce the length of time for the issuance of passports. The Department has a pilot project which will be rolled out in the UK at the beginning of June 2022 to reduce the turnaround time for passports applied for abroad. If this pilot is successful, they will use this model for all other countries.

**2.10 Budget allocation to Provinces**

Members wanted to know what informs the budget allocation to provinces. The Department normally uses the baseline and also reviews how the provinces spend their budget throughout the year. The Department looks at the actual spending of branches to assist provinces who are running out of money. This is monitored on a monthly basis.

**2.11 Targets for Smart Identity Documents**

Members wanted to know why the Department is not reverting to the pre-COVID-19 annual target of issuing 3 million Smart ID’s in a financial year. The Department responded that due to Covid-19 this was reduced and they then reviewed this. The target has been revised now that the Disaster Management is no longer in place. As the financial year progresses, the Department will go back to the 3 million target as over time they want to do away with green ID books to reduce incidents of fraud.

**2.12 Vacancies**

Members wanted to know what the Department is doing to increase capacity and to fill vacant posts. The Department responded that it currently has to fill 187 posts. They have advertised the posts and are in the process of filling the posts. Capacity issues are challenging and they are working towards improving this by utilizing HR capacity and collaborating with Institutions of Higher Learning and using interns to fill posts. The Minister responded that this is a big problem from 5 years ago as National Treasury gave departments a ceiling for appointments. People also left through natural attrition and they were unable to fill vacancies. There are many vacancies in frontline offices and this contributes to long queues. Treasury has since given the Department some extra money for civic services. They are currently trying to fill posts of immigration officers.

**2.13 GBVF awareness raising**

Members wanted more information on the GBVF plan of the Department and how it is currently being rolled out. The Department responded that theirsexual harassment policy needed to be revisited. The policy has been improved. The implementation plan includes awareness sessions talking to both men and women within the Department and providing information on what needs to be done and mechanisms in place to ensure proper reporting to address matters quickly. The Department is working with other stakeholders. The Department offers support to officials in cases where GBVF has been reported and they are putting together communication material so that clients also know the steps they should take when experiencing such incidents.

**2.14 Law Enforcement Inspections**

Members noted that the target for law enforcement inspections has increased by more than 100% and wanted to know whether the Department has the capacity to address the targets and what challenges exists in this regard. The Department indicated that law enforcement inspections are important in terms of ensuring that people are in South Africa lawfully. The Department is currently supporting BMA increase in number of operations and twice a month they have officials deployed on operations and inspections. They have also targeted a couple of Fridays each month when they conduct inspections and roadblocks around Gauteng Province, which supports police operations to deal with issues of illegal migration. The Department is also actively requesting tip offs on illegal activities.

**2.15 Permanent Resident application target**

Members wanted to the Department to explain the target of 85%. The Department responded that since January 2022, they opened up for applications for permanent residence. They have implemented an intervention process of appointing 16 new adjudicators on the permanent residence committee. On 1 June 2022, the Committee will sit and adjudicate new applications with a particular emphasis on the APP targets. One area that requires a dedicated focus is on the verification of supporting documents as the allocation of permanent resident status is an important responsibility. They will verify bank statements and comply with POPIA with a focus on achieving this target.

**2.16 Fraud and Anti-corruption**

Members wanted to know the percentage of cases on fraud and corruption that were finalized and why the baseline percentage is so low and what challenges are in place and as well as what measures the Department will put in place to improve performance. The Department responded that anti-corruption is focused on 4 pillars. The Department conducts trend analysis and reviews processes regularly and then makes recommendations to close loopholes. The target of 66 % was due to the capacity that they had. The target will increase annually. The Minister responded that convictions occur via courts and the Department works closely with the Hawks. There is a lot of work going on in terms of disciplinary action, however some cases go to labour courts 3 times through the appeals system, which are lengthy and creates further delays. The Minister responded that there have been some arrests by the Department. The Counter Corruption unit is however not adequately staffed and they intend filling 12 posts to strengthen the counter corruption unit. They conducted an operation in Krugersdorp and received tips from communities in respect of photo swops and fraudulent identity documents, which proved very useful.

**2.17 Border Management Authority (BMA)**

Members wanted an update on the progress and or challenges related to the implementation of the BMA. The Minister responded that the BMA is still a branch incubated in the Department of Home Affairs and they are hard at work to make it a stand-alone by April next year. The BMA Act provides for 9 ministers to be part of an inter-ministerial committee selected by the President. BMA is going to bring government Departments together. Those Police officers at the border posts reporting to SAPS will have to make a choice whether to be transferred to BMA. The proclamation allows the President to transfer certain functions from one Minister to another and the President may transfer staff. Department of Health officials will also be transferred to BMA. No transfers will be made from the South African Defence Force or SARS. Implementation protocols will determine the collaboration with BMA in terms of the working arrangements.

**2.18 Border Management Authority (BMA) – Staff morale**

Members wanted to know, with the implementation of the BMA and the movement of staff, whether staff were leaning towards taking packages and what the morale of staff was generally. The Department responded that thus far, they have had no official engagement with staff in ports and they will do this in a systematic manner. They are currently working/engaging with unions to ensure there is no confusion. In terms of their informal engagements, they have not seen any negative push back from staff and in fact they seem quite excited about the process.

**2.19 Closed Border Posts**

Members wanted to know which borders are still closed and when they will all be re-opened. Members also wanted to know which 6 border posts have been identified for redevelopment. The Department responded in respect of the 53 land border posts, 24 are open and 29 are still closed. 22 commercial ports are open except Swaziland. In Namibia, there are 6 posts, 3 are open and 3 are closed. Those that are open are synchronized in terms of distance. Capacity challenges are preventing the Department from opening all the ports. The Department indicated that the following border posts have been identified for redevelopment: Beitbridge, Maseru Bridge, Kopfontein, Lebombo, Oshoek and Ficksburg.

**2.20 Illegal Migration**

Members were concerned that they were not receiving reports of the arrests of illegal migrants and were further concerned that the Department is mainly focused on African migrants and not those from European countries. The Minister responded that due to the nature of investigations, the information is not always forthcoming but they are doing lots of work behind the scenes discreetly. The Minister also wanted to correct the wrong perception that they are only chasing illegal migrants from the African continent. As a result of the 2010 world cup legacy project, any flight from any country, 24 hours before arrival has to send a list of all passengers and they are stopped before coming to South African borders. The Department does not solely focus on African continent illegal immigrants.

1. **RECOMMENDATIONS**
	1. Committee members expressed their concern in respect of the long queues at the offices of the Department and encouraged it to implement its short, medium and long term plans in respect of the ‘war on queues’ to address this matter with speed to ensure effective and efficient service delivery. The Department should continue to implement the measures that are currently working in all provincial offices.
	2. The Department should move with speed in rolling-out its piloted plan of “booking a space” to all the provinces in order to be able to fight the long queues that are experienced by the citizens when visiting Home Affairs offices.
	3. Committee members welcomed the detailed implementation plan for the BMA. Members recommended that the Department should strictly adhere to the plan in order to ensure that the BMA is implemented within the stipulated timeframes and provide regular updates to the Committee.
	4. The BMA should start a process of fully engaging all those who are working within the border posts as to avoid any negative push backs / conflicts that may arise.
	5. The Department should maximize its efforts to address fraud and corruption and work closely with the relevant law enforcement agencies to ensure that arrests are made speedily.
	6. The Department should work towards digitization of all its manual documents and address the challenges it has in respect of IT capacity which will further contribute towards efficient service delivery in all provinces.
	7. The Department should continue to curb illegal migration through its law enforcement operations by working collaboratively with law enforcement agencies and with the communities. The Department should also closely monitor the private airstrips as there are those illegal migrants who are entering the country through those.
	8. The Department should find lasting solutions to the filling of vacancies and continue to collaborate with Institutions of Higher Learning and to use interns to fill posts. The Department should address this as a matter of urgency, particularly in respect of the filling of vacancies of frontline staff.
	9. The Department should continue to rollout more mobile units as this will increase the reach of the Department in rural areas and ultimately improve service delivery.
	10. The Department should ensure that every effort is made to work speedily on re-opening the closed border posts and to redevelop the border posts it has identified in the APP.
	11. The Department should ensure that it makes every effort to reduce the turnaround time for the issuance of passports.
	12. The Department should continue its awareness raising initiatives in respect of GBVF and ensure that officials receive the necessary information as well as support.
2. **CONCLUSION**

The Committee thanked the Department and welcomed the presentation and plans on the implementation of the BMA. The Committee will, conduct oversight over a pilot border post, once the BMA has been implemented. The Committee further indicated that it will hold a meeting with the Department focusing on the ‘war on queues’. The Department was encouraged to fill vacancies as quickly as possible to ensure improved service delivery to all citizens. The Department was further encouraged to deal decisively with corruption to ensure that officials are arrested speedily.

The DA abstained from the adoption of the report.

**Report to be considered.**