

Premier slams municipalities

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Free State municipalities must act if communities have justified complaints, provincial premier Ace Magashule said on Thursday.

"Where communities are right, do the right thing," Magashule told a meeting of Kopanong municipality councillors in Jagersfontein.

The town's residents torched two historic buildings, the municipal offices and part of the town hall, during service delivery protests at the beginning of the month. The protesters handed a memorandum complaining about a long lists of issues such as bad or no service delivery, roads, refuse collection, lack of projects and the behaviour of the local town councillor.

Magashule said the town's residents were not known for being hostile and their anger came out of wanting to see service delivery start happening.

The premier was told a task team that was set up in June would handle and oversee most of the community's demands.

Kopanong executive mayor Xolile Matwa said their complaints were genuine, which Magashule reiterated.

He admitted service delivery was lacking in Jagersfontein and said the municipal budget approved in March 2009 would address many of the concerns.

During a public meeting in a walled-off open field - which locals said was the unfinished Jagersfontein stadium - by late Thursday afternoon, Magashule told a large group of residents that town planners would arrive within the week.

Although the crowd seemed pleased with Magashule's commitments, they were not pleased with arrangements regarding local councillor Mapaseka Gaba.

"Down Gaba down," the crowd chanted while Magashule greeted them.

Residents alleged Gaba used offensive language and showed no respect for members of her constituency.

"Sy vloek mense, die ou mense (She swears at people, the old people)," a woman shouted.

Another claimed that when they complained about the roads Gaba only remarked that "she was driving a big car which could handle the roads".

Magashule's spokesman Teboho Sikisi said a task team that was set up with residents agreed problems regarding Gaba were "political".

"The regional chairman of the ANC would be tasked to solve this issue. It could take some time as due processes have to followed."

Sikisi said the residents' demands about service delivery would be handled with the different provincial state departments, the municipality and the task team. - Sapa

