

## Durban draft budget tabled

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Municipal manager Sibusiso Sithole has announced a total draft budget plan of R31.3-billion at a full council sitting at Durban's City Hall.

The budget makes provisions for increases in sanitation, solid waste removal, electricity and water tariffs.

Electricity is expected to go up by 11 percent, while general rates are set to increase by 6.5 percent.

Other noticeable increases include water services. The municipality is targeting an increase in water tariffs of 12.5 percent in residential areas, while businesses will be drained by a further 15.5 percent on what they are already paying.

"The high increase for water is attributed to the 17.2 percent increase of bulk purchase [from Umgeni Water], backlogs and the construction of the Spring Grove Dam, adding between four to five percent of the increase to water which is a once off increase. However, the removal of the fixed charge for water is welcomed," said Sithole.

Some of the major projects undertaken by eThekweni include the northern and western aqueducts, combating water loss as well as a new depot in Amanzimtoti, valued at R24-million.

Another major capital project to be rolled out is R507-million for road rehabilitation.

In an effort to address a shortage in burial space, provisions are being made to set aside land for a new cemetery, as well as an upgrade of the Mobeni Heights facility.

The municipal manager has stressed the importance of the public consultation process.

He says the broad principles behind the plan are outcomes-based, and must be sustainable, affordable and realistic.

He has highlighted a number of free basic services based on the municipality's rating system.

Properties valued up to R185 000 will now pay R20 per month on rates. No rates will be charged for the first R120 000 of all other properties.

He says provisions will also be made for pensioners, child headed households and disability grantees.

Copies of the budget are available online, at public libraries and at regional centres.