

## News

### ShotSpotter contract revived in bid to stem crime

By Andisa Bonani - 09 September 2024



**TRACKING CRIME:** The Nelson Mandela Bay municipality has finally awarded a company with a ShotSpotter contract

Image: SUPPLIED

The Nelson Mandela Bay municipality has finally awarded a ShotSpotter contract that lapsed last December.

#### ADVERTISING

The system, piloted in Helenvale in 2017, saw crime levels drop.

It will now be rolled out in hotspots including Motherwell, New Brighton and Kwazakhele.

ShotSpotter, an acoustic gunshot detection system that alerts police to gunfire within a city's ShotSpotter coverage area, has been credited with reducing shootings in the city. The awarding of the contract was discussed at a safety and security committee meeting on Friday.

Councillors raised concerns about why it took so long to get it operational.

Safety and security political head Stag Mitchell said the contract had been awarded and would be up and running soon.

"The award letter was signed and sent to the contractor on Thursday [September 5].

"We are waiting for the service provider to accept the award and soon after the full service of the ShotSpotter will be activated," Mitchell said.

"This time around, the system will be extended to all crime hotspots and will serve as a deterrent in the huge number of deaths caused by firearms reported daily."

Mitchell said the system would help in eradicating the exchange of illegal firearms.

He said they were working to restore the metro's mobile surveillance vehicle (MSV) and if they could do so, the city would be on its way to becoming a safe place for all.

The MSV, purchased for about R6m in 2010 before the Fifa World Cup, has been parked at the municipality's Harrower Road depot for nearly two years due to the city's failure to service it.

The vehicle, the first in SA at the time, has 360 degree long-range surveillance equipment that can operate day and night, even under adverse weather conditions. When deployed, the vehicle can track a person up to 10km away.

It records clear video footage up to a distance of 7km and can identify if a person is carrying a firearm at a distance of 3km.

The municipality will have to fork out about R2.5m to get the MSV operational again. DA councillor Jason Grobbelaar said despite the need for crime-fighting tools, resources and upgrades within the department, only 57% of budget spending had been achieved in the last financial year.

"Failure to spend allocated budgets severely hurts our efforts to fight crime which has escalated to the highest levels ever seen in the Bay," Grobbelaar said.

"A clear lack of oversight by the MMC [member of mayor committee] in ensuring budgets are spent is unacceptable.

"We are supposed to put measures in place to safeguard them, but when budgets are not spent, Mitchell has neglected his duties."

ANC councillor Morris Ngabase said he was not impressed by the delays in awarding the contract in a city where people lived in fear in their homes.

"It's disheartening that while we're faced with high levels of crime there are still delays in awarding important contracts like these that could save people's lives," Ngabase said.

"We need to pull out all the resources at our disposal to fight against crime and the awarding of this contract will help us to do exactly that, which is why we fully support the revitalisation of the system."

Ngabase said he believed that one of the best ways to root out crime was through intelligence, but because informers were not protected, many were scared to speak up.

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