



HAPPY NEW YEAR
2026

Welcome back and warm wishes for the New Year!

As we step into 2026, we are pleased to reconnect with you through the first edition of our newsletter for the year. This space reflects both how we engage with communities across the City of Johannesburg and how that engagement translates into action through the work of the Office of the Joburg Ombudsman.

The past year was marked by important milestones that strengthened public trust and brought our services closer to residents. Among these was the launch of our streamlined online complaints portal, which now allows residents to lodge and track complaints in a more transparent, efficient and accessible way.

These efforts were reinforced through sustained community engagements. During Mandela Month, we walked alongside communities in Poortjie to “cover soles and inspire souls,” reflecting Madiba’s spirit of service and compassion. Our seven-week “Here to Hear You” Ombudsman Citizen Information Clinics reached all seven city regions, while our third Annual Joburg Ombudsman webinar brought together officials, thought leaders and residents to deepen dialogue on municipal service delivery and administrative justice.

Beyond these initiatives, our broader community outreach continued to expand. Through partnerships with local organisations and targeted engagement in under-served areas, we have worked to ensure that access to information and support extends beyond the city centre. Each interaction strengthens accountability and contributes to a more responsive local government.

At the same time, we remain focused on resolving residents’ concerns effectively and within reasonable timeframes. During the previous quarter, our Complaints and Investigations Unit demonstrated strong performance. In line with its Standard Operating Procedures, which allow up to six months for the finalisation of complaints depending on complexity, 296 complaints were assigned for investigation. By 30 December 2025, 228 had been finalised, representing a 77% finalisation rate for new complaints and exceeding the quarterly target by 22%. This performance reflects our continuous commitment to timely and thorough investigations.

Looking ahead, we have more programmes planned, from Citizen Information Clinics and Open Days to our Annual International Ombuds Webinar. We look forward to working together with you throughout 2026!

Ombudsman information clinics deliver real change

Last year, residents came forward with their stories and the city listened. Concerns raised during the 2025 Ombudsman Citizen Information Clinics led to meaningful corrective actions, proving that when communities speak up through the Ombudsman, their voices don’t get lost but lead to change.

In several areas, complaints lodged at the clinics triggered direct intervention by the city’s departments. Unsafe conditions were addressed, illegal operations were investigated and long-standing service failures (issues people had lived with for far too long) finally began moving toward resolution. These outcomes demonstrate that our clinics are truly resident-focused, designed to respond to the needs and concerns of the people they serve.

Nowhere was this more visible than in Protea Glen, Soweto. Following complaints raised by residents during the Soweto leg of our clinic campaign visits, an illegally operating bakery that posed serious health and safety risks was shut down. Illegal electricity connections were removed, unsafe structures demolished and the property owner compelled to begin the formal rezoning and approval process. What had once been a looming threat to the community was finally resolved, thanks to residents’ courage and the City’s swift response - proof that raising concerns through our clinics leads to real, tangible outcomes.



Illegal bakery operations in Soweto prior to intervention, highlighting unsafe food handling practices.

Building on these successes, the 2026 Citizen Information Clinics will run from 5 February to 26 March, under the theme **“Working together to deliver real solutions.”** This year, as before, Ombudsman services will go straight into communities, breaking down barriers and making it easier for residents to get help right where they live.

The clinics are going a step further. Complaints won’t just be logged but will now be tracked simultaneously through follow-up Open Days, giving residents a real opportunity to see progress, receive updates and engage directly with the departments responsible. Our focus is clear...faster responses, visible results and accountability residents can see in action.

“This initiative is about action. When residents raise concerns, we intervene, we follow up and we deliver solutions that improve daily life”- Ombudsman, Advocate Siduduzo Gumede.





Come meet our investigations team and connect with us at one of the following venues, near you:

Date	Region	Venue
05 February	B - Ward 102	Ferndale Recreation Centre
12 February	D1 - Ward 14	Protea South Multipurpose Centre
19 February	A - Ward 95	Diepsloot Youth Centre
05 March	E - Ward 109	Marlboro Community Hall
12 March	G - Ward 09	Lenasia Civic Centre Rose Ave
19 March	C - Ward 84	Roodepoort City Hall
26 March	F - Ward 54	Crown Gardens Recreation Centre

Table 1: 2026 Ombudsman Citizen Engagement Clinic Schedule

Date	Region	Venue
07 February	B - Ward 102	Randburg Civic Centre
21 February	A - Ward	Lonehill Fire Station
07 March	E - Ward 91	CoJ Sandton Regional Offices
28 March	C - Ward 70	CoJ Roodepoort Regional Offices
09 May	D2 - Ward 28	No. 13141 Martinus Smuts Drive, Diepkloof, Zone 1
23 May	G - Ward 09	Lenasia Civic Centre

Table 2: 2026 Ombudsman Open Days Schedule

The Citizen Information Clinics provide Johannesburg residents with a vital lifeline, offering a platform to raise concerns and play an active role in shaping positive change across their communities. Your voice matters—be heard, be involved, and be the change.

For more information, please contact Corrine Lekhoane, Communication Unit Deputy Director, on 081 309 8360 or email Corrine.Lekhoane@joburgombudsman.org.za.

How Planning Law Enforcement and the Ombudsman protect the dignity of our neighbourhoods

When Mr. Elvis Baloyi, a resident of South Hills, raised concerns about an illegally operated tavern across from his home, his complaint reflected more than a planning dispute - it highlighted the real, daily impact that unlawful land use can have on families and neighbourhoods.

The property, illegally operating as a tavern and restaurant in a quiet residential zone, became a constant source of chaos: late-night noise disturbing one's sleep, unsafe behaviour put families on edge, public sanitation deteriorated and unapproved structural changes loomed over the neighbourhood. These conditions tore at residents' sense of safety and community, showing just how deeply unlawful land use can affect everyday life.

The complaint was received and escalated through our office, which played a critical role as an independent channel for the resident's concerns. By formally referring the matter to the Department of Development Planning and monitoring the City's response, the Ombudsman ensured

that the issue was addressed promptly, transparently and in line with due process(es).



Image source: Liquor License Consultant

Following the referral, the City of Johannesburg's Planning Law Enforcement Unit conducted inspections that confirmed ongoing contraventions of the City of Johannesburg Land Use Scheme, 2018. A Section 56 fine was issued, photographic evidence was compiled and compliance was monitored. When the illegal operation continued despite enforcement action, the matter was escalated to the Johannesburg Magistrate's Court.

On 27 August 2025, the court issued warrants of arrest against the operators for continuing to trade without the required approvals - a strong signal that planning laws are enforceable and that persistent non-compliance will not be tolerated.

Note: To help with our investigations, we urge residents to safely file reference numbers and all communication with the city. Call us on 010 288 2800 or WhatsApp 081 365 0225 for more information.

NEW APPOINTMENTS

We are pleased to welcome Ms. Rambuda, a highly regarded High Court attorney with over a decade of experience in legal advisory services, complaints resolution, mediation and litigation, as well as Mr. Shaku and Mr. Nkomo, who bring substantial expertise in investigations, forensic analysis, administrative inquiries, fraud prevention, compliance inspections and the protection of citizens' rights.

These appointments will significantly strengthen the Complaints and Investigations Unit's investigative capacity, enhance our team's capacity and further improve service delivery to the residents of Johannesburg.

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